

# NEWSLETTER 15

## New Directions and New Learning in Later Life

### Taking the Learning to the Learner; Active and Healthy Ageing; Learning Communities

#### Third ForAge Pan-European Conference 2014 in Porto – A Review

The Third ForAge conference took place in Porto, Portugal, from 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> November 2014. It was a great opportunity for professionals and the target group of older people to meet, to network and to share information and experiences. It was a great success.



*Professor John Benyon, University of Leicester, Maria Helena Antunes, Aidlearn, and Luis Jacob, RUTIS, opened the conference*

In the opening session **John Benyon**, ForAge Coordinator from the University of Leicester, UK, emphasised that the conference title embraced not just older people, but also younger people and learning how to age. **Maria Helena Antunes** from AidLearn, Portugal, stressed that senior citizens are a particularly vulnerable group in Portugal and indeed all over Europe. She highlighted the positive benefits and skills that older people can bring to the whole society. **Jim Soulsby**, ForAge Facilitator from the University of Leicester, UK, said that Europe has still not effectively prepared for ageing and that active ageing is a great challenge throughout Europe. **Luis Jacob**, from RUTIS, Portugal, also welcomed the audience and highlighted the opportunities for exchange of ideas and data.

### Politics and Strategies

**Raúl Valdas Cotera**, Programme Manager of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, opened the first plenary session. He spoke

about 'Lifelong Learning for All'. Municipalities are facing challenges, because of the rapid growth of the population and the continuing rise of life expectancy. Many communities have already made learning a key priority as they can see the enormous advantages it brings. However, not all policy makers appreciate this and it is important to persuade them. Literacy is a right to realise other rights. Policy makers and stakeholders should focus on learning. The next speaker was **Ricardo Pocinho**, from RUTIS, Portugal, who stressed the importance of the U3As for the quality of life of older people. He stated that we need to see the practical element of seniors in the whole context. Sometimes we lead people in a way that is easiest for us, but not for them. It is all about the quality of life, for everybody. Ageing is a good thing!



*Raúl Cotera, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning*

### Benefits and impacts of education and lifelong learning

The first speaker of the second plenary session was **Professor Fausto Amaro** from Lisbon University. He spoke on the impact of learning in later life in Portugal. He argued that lifelong learning is not just a concept – it has practical value. There is a need to recycle knowledge and there is a new paradigm of learning.

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Professor Amaro said that in Portugal e-government is becoming more and more important. Thus, learning skills in information technology, amongst other things, is crucial for the inclusion of older people into civil society.



*Professor Fausto Amaro, Lisbon University, Portugal*

The next speaker, **Dr José Salgado**, Clinical Director of the Psychiatric Hospital of Lisbon, started with the Beatles song 'When I'm Sixty Four', noting that this age would now be 74. Unfortunately, Alzheimer's disease (AD) is increasing in developing countries, but there is less age-specific dementia. Mental exercises of 15-30 minutes a day and other stimulation could help to prevent AD, accompanied by stress management and proper nutrition. The next speaker, **Manuel Villaverde Cabral**, President of the Ageing Institute, was unwell so his presentation about ageing in Portugal was read. Older people are cast away in society. When we get old we lose social connections. Active ageing can be an answer and active learning has to be seen in its social context. It is important for older people to stay active, it can improve their health. In good health we do not feel old. Portugal has the highest rate of working seniors, people from 50-60 years, and this is also an aspect of active ageing.

### Workshops and debates

#### Senior Volunteering

Voluntary work is increasingly considered as a social activity within a legal framework. People

are willing to give their hours not for financial rewards, but for other benefits. **Sergio Andreis** from Lunaria in Rome, Italy, discussed the Europe 2020 strategy. There is a trend towards mixing younger and older people. **Anna Grabowska**, from PRO-Med in Gdansk, Poland, presented 'Seniors Working Together', which was an exchange programme for older people from Poland and Turkey. **Chelsea Lazaridou**, from Hellas 50plus in Athens, Greece, focused on art and learning for seniors and how to initiate learning opportunities, for example in painting or music. Many people are afraid of making a mistake. Through art the method is subjective so there is no right or wrong.



*Sergio Andreis, Lunaria, Rome, Italy and ForAge partner*

#### Intercultural Learning

Three good examples of intercultural learning were presented during this workshop session. **Nadežna Hrapková**, from the Comenius University in Bratislava, Hungary, spoke on intercultural work with seniors, where students of opera had the opportunity to travel abroad to see operas. The topic of **Jacqueline McFarlane-Fraser**, from the African Caribbean Women's Development Centre (ACWDC) in the UK, was 'Active and Healthy Ageing among Ethnic Groups'. Many elderly ethnic people arrived very young in the UK to work and study and then they planned to go back to the Caribbean. They did not expect to get old in the UK and now they are still there and demotivated. Their work was low grade and menial and they didn't know their

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way round the infrastructure in the new country. In ACWDC they offered oral history sessions to remember the overt racism and stereotypes when they arrived in the UK. There is also a health exercise programme. The object of goal orientation is motivation. People learn by demonstration and want to reach their potential.



Nadežna Hrapková from the Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia; Jacqueline McFarlane-Fraser from ACWDC, UK and Giselle Janeiro from RUTIS, Portugal

**Dušana Findeisen** from the Slovenian Third Age University, spoke about what older people learned from student mobilisation and protest in the 1970s. In the 1960s young people stepped out into the public arena and changed policy agendas and created alternative education and alternative ways of living. Also, for today's generations there would be an option to create an alternative society.

#### Networking for later-life learning

The third workshops session concentrated on networking for later-life learning. **John Benyon**, University of Leicester, UK, outlined the MATURE project: 'Making Adult Teaching Useful, Relevant and Engaging'. This had developed training for adult educators on the themes of engaging, motivating and reaching older adults who, because of disadvantages, found it difficult to participate in group learning. **Jim Soulsby**, also from the University of Leicester, spoke about educating educators. How can we prepare ourselves and others for

the ageing process? It is important to realise what was learned during the ageing process. This learning should focus on the benefits it can have for individuals and the community.

#### Age-friendly communities

The second day of the conference started with a plenary session. **Professor Paul Kingston**, from the University of Chester, UK, spoke about elderly-friendly environments. The world is changing fast and there is a negative view of ageing. The ageing stereotypes need to be tackled and active ageing and motivation for later life should be promoted. He discussed ethno-geography. Referring to ageing and age-friendly places, it is important to involve older people in the planning process. The aim should be to create an environment where older people feel secure and safe, and a society where lifelong learning and social and civic engagement are fostered and encouraged.



Paul Kingston, University of Chester, UK

The next speaker was **Silvana Caetano**, Municipal Secretary of Public Policy for the Elderly in Bajé, Brazil. Older people form 15% of the population in Bajé. The policy is to help seniors by encouraging family connections and solving difficulties in families. Learning and training is offered, for example about good nutrition, craftwork, every-day life and issues from the news, a cinema workshop, music and capoeira, movement activities and a day care

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centre. The following speaker was **Victor Fragoso**, from the Contemporary Senior University in Portugal. His topic was 'Emotional Education for Seniors'. Negative emotions about ageing are not bad, but they need to be expressed. The transition from active life to retirement and the proximity of death is challenging. Knowledge about emotions can help. Older people balance losses and gains, and their life experiences affect their old age. They should be helped to value their experiences and lifelong learning can assist. The last speaker in this session was **Nuno Abranja** from the Lusófona University in Portugal. He discussed senior entrepreneurship and its contribution to active ageing. Portugal's population is the sixth oldest in Europe. Although most entrepreneurs in Portugal are between 50 and 60 years old, there is a significant number over 65. Older people tend to bring greater life experience, accumulated wisdom, a larger capacity for solutions, and resistance to deceptions and illusions. Seniors can play valuable mentoring or coaching roles.

### The Forage network

In the next session **Jim Soulsby**, Forage Facilitator from the University of Leicester, presented the work of the ForAge network and its vision for the future. When ForAge started in 2012 there was Grundtvig. Now there was Erasmus+ and it is still not clear how this new programme will include older people. Despite the fact that less than 20 per cent of those over 65 years in Europe are participating in learning, older people seem no longer to be a concern in European policy. There have been many initiatives, programmes, courses and projects around later-life learning in EU countries and ForAge has represented them and aimed to draw together all those valuable experiences. **Eugénia Inácio**, Coordinator of the Adult Education programme of the Erasmus+ National Agency in Portugal, spoke next. She said that the ageing of the population affects

everyone. Supporting active ageing is vital across Europe. Mutual learning between the member states could help. Lifelong learning remains important in Europe and also plays a role in the integration of migrants. Erasmus+ offers the KA1 programme for the mobility of individuals and the KA2 programme for cooperation on innovation and the exchange of good practice.



*A section of the large audience paying close attention during the Third ForAge pan-European meeting in Porto*

The following speaker was **Susana Oliveira**, from the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). She spoke about the future of education for older people from the point of view of the EAEA and about its bonds with the ForAge network. The work of the EAEA embraces promoting adult learning for under-represented migrants and seniors. Here is also a further connection with the ForAge network. As an answer to the new Erasmus+ programme, the EAEA has produced a document sent to the European Commission, which stresses its concerns that older people do not any longer seem to be a focus for lifelong learning policy in Europe.

### Workshops

#### Arts and active ageing

**Anderson Amaral**, Brazilian specialist in rehabilitation and stimulation with seniors, presented some interesting practical examples about rehabilitation. **Marina Matache**,

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EUROED Association, Romania, presented ideas about the involvement of seniors in the community. **Maria Helena Antunes**, AidLearn, Portugal, explained the CINAGE project, where older people undertake the critical analysis of European films and gain practical film-making experience. After this **Dulce Roselló**, an older senior artist from Portugal spoke about her fascinating life. The workshop participants raised a lot of questions during the discussion.

#### Intergenerational Learning

**Dušana Findeisen** from the Third Age University in Slovenia spoke on 'Generations and Intergenerational Learning in the ECIL Programme'. The European Certificate in Intergenerational Learning (ECIL) aims to bring generations together as there are many differences between the generations, and between different cultural settings and needs. ECIL has offered an online-course.

**Sacha Vieira**, University of Aveiro, Portugal, spoke about intergenerational learning in community spaces. There is a European project called TOY (Together Old and Young) which focused on children up to nine years and seniors over 55. Through sharing experiences they had fun, learned from each other, and developed meaningful relationships to build age-friendly communities.

The following speaker, **Jorge Mayer**, manager of the volunteer programme of the EDP Foundation in Portugal, discussed a volunteering programme for retired workers. They worked 4 to 8 hours a week with schools and institutions that asked for help. The volunteers were no longer in active work, but they could make valuable contributions and their experiences were valued.

The last speaker in this session was **Paulo Sá** from Tutti per tutti sport, Portugal. He described 'Boccia: A game for all'. People with brain injuries play this game, similar to traditional games. It also supports physical health and wellbeing.

#### Active Ageing and new technologies

The first speaker in this workshop was **Jaime Fonseca**, ISCSP-Lisbon University, Portugal, who discussed ICT usage and learning among older adults. **Claudia Azevedo**, Virtual Campus, Portugal, spoke next about 'Senior Citizens and ICT' and about the appropriation of mobile devices. She was followed by **Anna Grabowska**, PRO-MED, Poland, who outlined online learning and active ageing. The last speaker in this workshop was **Myrto Ranga**, Hellas 50+, Greece, and she described learning games for older Europeans with which she had been involved.



*Closing session and discussion: Jim Soulsby, University of Leicester, UK; Luis Jacob, RUTIS, Portugal; Antonio Macedo, Montepio Bank, and President of the General Council of Senior Universities; Pedro Mota Soares, Minister of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security, Portugal*

#### Closing session

The quality of the papers and discussion during the conference was very high. There was a good, highly positive and cordial atmosphere during the whole conference and this was reflected in the closing session. The ForAge network expresses its warm thanks and gratitude to the organisers at AidLearn and RUTIS in Portugal. More information about the conference presentations can be found on the ForAge website [www.foragenetwork.eu](http://www.foragenetwork.eu).

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