

# Knowledge for active aging

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In the world today, there are an estimated 605 million people aged 60 years and over. The proportion of older people in the world population will continue to increase during the next few decades. By 2025, there will be an estimated 1.2 billion older persons, with two out of three living in developing countries. Only half a century ago, most people died before the age of 50. Since then, better nutrition, sanitation, and living conditions, together with advancements in medical science have increased life expectancy. The challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to delay the onset of disability and ensure optimal quality of life for older people.

Traditionally, old age has been associated with illness, dependence and a lack of productivity. However, current reality does not reflect this outdated view. Most people adapt to change with age and remain potential resources for the community. They contribute through both paid and unpaid activities. Integration into the family and community, independence and participation benefit personal health and improve self-esteem regardless of age.

A very important way to stimulate social inclusion and healthy ageing is through the life-long learning. Learning activities are effective means to increase activity, responsibility and to reduce dependency. Ljudska univerza Jesenice is a public adult education center funded by the local government for providing adult education. So it is our responsibility to assure conditions and learning environments in which older individuals feel welcome and motivated to develop their own knowledge and skills in order to continue to be able to keep active.

According to our experiences effective approaches for learning in later life are those that take into account the knowledge of older people and those that entail learning in groups or networks. Projects and activities for older people at Ljudska univerza Jesenice show the best results when older people are involved in the project design and implementation, when older people contribute to the project as networkers and trainers and when the activity responds to older people's needs.

One of our main objectives in this field is to increase participation of excluded older people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds.

There are a lot of different life-long learning programmes for older people available at Ljudska univerza Jesenice for a lot of types of interest.

The most important is the University of the Third Age Jesenice. 160 students in five different sections are involved in designing and implementation of activities, many also as trainers.

Other courses for older people cover many subjects and may be taken for pleasure or practical interest.

Many older people in our area, particularly those in deprived groups, do not have basic ICT skills which can stimulate their social inclusion and integration.

That's why developing such skills is an important and extensive part of our activities. Additionally we are also taking care that older people who does not have ICT technology available can use that in our institution.

The main aim of *Leonardo da Vinci Mobility project »Knowledge for active aging«* was to get insight in different initiatives, activities and approaches in the field of lifelong learning for older people in London UK.

During the mobility one week programme in October 2011, thirteen participants: education providers, teachers, counsellors and mentors gain knowledge and practical experiences about different life-long learning programmes for older people in London.

Gained knowledge and experiences in all aspect of learning activities for older people providing, enables mobility participants to introduce new approaches, subjects and supporting activities in to Ljudska univerza Jesenice learning activities for elders.



Photo: Archive of Center for Adult Education of Jesenice