

Generation “X” over – Bridge with a view

Špela Koren

Ljudska univerza Radovljica, Slovenia

spela.koren@lu-r.si

“Age is mind over matter. If you don’t mind it doesn’t matter.” (Satchel Paige)

Project frame

Project Generation “x” over is a co-operation between four European countries: Slovenia, Portugal, Belgium and Hungary. The project was written within the frame of lifelong learning program, action Grundtvig partnerships.

Project background

The distance among seniors, people over 50, and the younger generation, people under 25 is a common experience in our society. We believe that strong stereotypes towards one another exist only due to the lack of contact and direct communication.

The project Generation “x” over was written as a respond to given socio – economical background.

The project focus was on intergenerational understanding and breaking up the stereotypes such as: that young people are useless and that older people still live in the past and cannot understand the world nowadays.

Main objective of the project and activities undertaken

The general aim in our project was to build a bridge between generations.

We strived to achieve knowledge exchange and experience sharing - especially concerning different tools and methodology.

To realize this goal partnership countries formed different artistic, computer and modern technologies workshops; where young and older were working together in a constructive way of learning from one another. Workshops were prepared and thought by young; however the content was prepared and suggested by older generation. This built a learning platform for knowledge exchange and place for open dialog.

In the workshops there were topics that addressed all generations and gave different perspective to different topics. Topics and themes given were attractive for both generations and within workshops on a local level new friendship and experiences sharing was evident.

In four international mobility participants got the opportunity to travel and experience new cultures. Every mobility addressed specific topic that was selected at the applicant stage. Themes were: music, fashion and social life, free time, technology and communication.

Each visit was focused on a common product concerning given topics.

Our visit to Belgium had music as a topic. Together generations learned to create music, learned the basics of beat boxing, and got information about world of electronic music and sound.

The visit in Slovenia was oriented to prepare a fashion show, where different generations would present their designs to local community on a big stage in front of wider audience. The fashion collection was prepared from recycled materials and used zipper as a symbol of connection and co-operation.

The Hungarian visit was a presentation of mural painting techniques. Through artistic workshops participants created a collective art – paintings on the walls of youth centre in Gardony.

In Portugal participants used technique of (H)oje Luza, a traditional Portugal way of making ceramics ornaments. At the end all the work of participants was presented in digital installation.

Result

Generally we can summarise that for the learners the project brought a possibility of knowing different realities, extended knowledge and visions of Europe and brought the sharing of talents and resources. It promoted the transmission of cultural traditions and values from older to younger generations, helped to build a sense of personal and social identity while encouraging enhancing social skills. We saw that the interaction with older adults enhanced communication skills, promoted self-esteem, developed problem-solving abilities, and fostered friendships across generations. We could observe how the project had helped to decrease loneliness, boredom, and depression while increasing self-esteem through the opportunity to participate in a meaningful activity.

All in all, the experience of learning by doing and inclusion in the whole educational process empowered people to show their key competences and motivated participants of different generations in further common work.

This project contributed not only to gaining new knowledge and experiences, but showed extraordinary value when talking about building wider social network. Strong friendships, regardless to age, made on visits are still shown as participants from three partner countries are visiting each other and are sharing information and notes of gratitude through different technology options.

“I'm not interested in age. People who tell me their age are silly. You are as old as you feel.” (Henri Frederic Amiel)