



Intergenerational Education, Learning, and Training in Bulgaria A State-of-the-Art Report

**Project GENerate: The Development of a European Certificate
in Intergenerational Learning**

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Introduction/background

The increased social and economic activities in Bulgaria in the transition period should be matched by the necessary conditions to ensure decent and equitable life for older people.

In Bulgaria the research made in this connection is still very technologically driven and conducted mainly by university research centres, national policy reports and studies. But the better active behavior of the elderly in Bulgaria should be accompanied by the adaptation of the training and qualification system to the needs of older people. It is necessary to take action to provide conditions of aging in the healthy development and prevention of socially significant diseases and disabilities, to promote healthy lifestyles and to develop services for older people.

Although the measures and documents adopted, the actual results are not satisfactory - special skills are needed in many professions, in which the job requirements have changed under these fast-evolving technologies. New skills have to be set-up for professionals from various backgrounds. The complexity of all the useful innovations needs professionals who know how to incorporate, install, service, and use the new devices. Currently, there are no specific further trainings available related to the use and development of intergenerational learning systems and tools in Bulgaria.

(1) About generations and the rapport between them

Social world has always been divided. It can be divided into social layers, social classes (it can be divided according to age sex, ethnicity, race or it can be divided into different environments (urban, rural) and it can be as well divided into generations. Now, understanding the division into generations and the rapport between them is of major importance for intergenerational education/training events and learning opportunities

since with intergenerational education an attempt is made at enhancing intergenerational ties and reducing intergenerational frictions.

How is generation defined in your country?

How are generations and the rapport between generations perceived your country ?

Researchers from the Institute of Population Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences published some thoughts about the problems of the relations between generations in family and society.

The majority of the young perceive their parents as tolerant and caring people on whose support they can rely. They think that communicating with their elders in society is beneficial to their development in life and in their professional career. Another part of youngsters, yet tend to perceive adults with different eyes. They regard the experience and wisdom of older generations as useless, and their behavior is characterized by aggression to older people. This aggression, which is a relatively new phenomenon in Bulgarian society, is due to the serious problems that Bulgarian families were faced with in the transition from Socialist to market economy.

Violence that often prevails on the TV screens and in video games is also conducive to such behavior, which is often unconsciously transferred to the older generation. Psychologist Prof. Rumiana Bozhinova from BAS is studying the attitudes of young people to the older generation through a survey among 104 students aged between 20 and 23 years. "The results were a surprise for me for the simple reason that in our society there seems to be an underlying assumption that serious intergenerational contradictions exist and young people are highly negative to adults. It turns out that is not true", Bozhinova says.

"Young people think that the older generation is primarily there for parental support as 92 % of respondents say that. Secondly, we see that they especially appreciate older people for their professional experience, as a little over 87% share this opinion. It is their assessment that the older generation has made outstanding contributions to solving social problems. Only 40 percent of respondents think the older generation holds useful life experience. We have obtained some

interesting results on the behavior of young people related to cooperation and continuity. Over 87% of respondents believe that it is necessary to continue the principles and ideas of the older generation, i.e. to have continuity. The same is the number of respondents that are willing to cooperate with the previous generation. "

As for the negative attitudes of the young, they are related to the control and restrictions imposed on them by their elders. Around 40% of respondents assess the tolerance of parents and say that family control is within reasonable bounds. Only less than 20% believe that their parents impose unreasonable restrictions on them. In professional terms, 40% of those polled say that the elderly should be dismissed when their opportunities for development are severely impaired or exhausted. But 30% of respondents disagree with this and believe that the older generation should release jobs for the young.

What events over the last 70 years, are generally considered as major historic /political / economic / cultural events in your country that somehow changed life of the citizens of your country. (i.e. the Second World War, entrance into the European Union, etc.) Describe how situation changed after these events for different generations? Consider the generations who were at that time aged 20, 40 or 60.

The social transformation processes in Bulgaria have placed the relation between children and parents in a very delicate and complex situation. The existence of a generation gap in a given conditions is quite clear. From the side of parents' generation we could see the parents who are not sure in their parent's decisions. They simply jump from being too liberal to being too overprotective towards their children. The internal relations of the family are still dominated by the patriarchal traditions inherited from the socialist times. They are mixed today with the values of the new individualistic culture. Keeping close to the patriarchal values quite often places the young in a disadvantaged position compared to the elderly family members, who use their valuable knowledge to direct children's development, to plan the priorities of their personal time, etc. This attentiveness continues long after the child outgrows his childhood years. Thus in the family circle the child is rather an object that is to be raised, educated and brought up, instead of being an independent person who has the right of making his own choice and who can bare the responsibilities resulting from that choice.

What characterizes the last twenty years in the development of the Bulgarian society is namely a complex of social, political, economical and cultural transformations, accompanied by a speeded technological development. What are lost are family traditions and values, public respect and confidence.

As it is known the differences between generations have been existing throughout the whole human history. This means that the generation gap is not a new social problem. But during the digital era of information and technologies the gap appears in some new variations. One group of factors that widen the generation gap in the contemporary society is connected with the fact that now the differences between the generations grew significantly in comparison to previous times, particularly with respect to matters as technology and digitalization, fashion, culture, politics and etc.

How do you assess the state of socio-economic equality/ inequality of generations in your country? Which generations are privileged or deprived, integrated or less integrated in society and how does it show?

There might be an endless list of factors that could open and widen generation gap between generations. The potential reasons for generation conflicts are very well studied. As it is underlined in most of the researches, it is a complex of factors which could cause a conflict and it depends on the cultural profile of a given society as well as on its developmental stage.

On macro level the possible factors that could put in a conflict two consecutive generations most often are derived from social cataclysms, political transformations, economic crisis, natural disasters and other notable occurrences of that kind. On the other hand, some positive phenomenon or processes could also cause gap between generations. A good example is the rapid development of information and communication technologies as well as the urbanization and the migration of population. In such cases not only the gap between generations is widening, but also the year intervals of generations are shortening – from 20-25 they are reduced to 10-15. The common ground of all the mentioned occurrences, no matter if they have positive or negative reflections in the development of the society as a whole, is that

they require and impose a deep and thorough change in the way people think and live.

As it is well known younger generation is more adaptive than elder one. From one side adaptation is a basic characteristic of every youth generation. From the other, the youth normally have not experienced the previous situation which makes them free to get accustomed to the new situation faster and more effective than the elder generation. This difference in the time and quality of adaptation often reflects in miscommunication and misunderstanding between two consecutive generations as parents and children are. Numerous examples of failed communication between parents and children could be seen in the field of everyday life. They are actually normal and still not enough to conclude that there is a generation gap.

In the common case, on micro level, the miscommunication as well as misunderstanding appears when the children begin to see themselves as having opinions that are different from those of their parents but no less valid just because they are younger. Actually, this is happening in the moment when the younger people stop accepting everything the older tells them and starts believing their own opinions, perspectives and attitudes have validity equal to those of their elders. This change in the behavior model of the child usually happens in the child's teen age. From that point of view, we could conclude that the generation gap appears as a kind of expression of an endless struggle of parents to prevent their children from what they consider harmful and offensive, to socialize them and to facilitate their social integration. The conflict explodes just at the moment when the children start to prove to their parents that they are equipped to take control of their lives. The both sides are right in their own premise and this is the ground when the generation gap appears.

Following that logical line, we could conclude that the reasons for generation gap on a macro level are derived from the refusal of the younger generation to follow the rules set down by the older generation. In other words: the generational conflict often stems from a particular group's notion that it gets to make the rules and the other group has to follow these rules and as long as the younger generation complies, no gap exists.

Actually the generational conflict which could grow into generation gap has deeper and more complicated roots. Yes, it is caused by the natural difference between the young and the old generations. This difference could be underlined by the objective social development and activated through the struggle between the generations for control, power and responsibility. The difference could be a fruitful soil for numerous everyday miscommunications. But when the everyday misunderstandings grow into a conflict between the radical new, which the youth generation is representing and the conservative old, which the elder generation is representing, when the natural succession between generations is spoiled by the differences between them and when there is an obvious lack of trust and trustworthiness between generations, we could think and talk about generation gap. Considering this we could conclude that generation gap is a result of miscommunication and misunderstanding between two consequent generations fuelled by the common desire for power and control and deeply rooted in the loss of trust between the generations or in broader sense, in the decline of social capital in the society as a whole.

What are the existing forms of solidarity and cooperation between generations in your country.

Which national policy measures are supportive of single generations and/or solidarity and cooperation among them. Could you name in discuss at least three of them (if applicable)

In Bulgaria there are very few participative bodies directly targeting older people. The existing public councils bring together citizens from all areas of society to create a dynamic and positive environment to facilitate their participation in policy-making. These public councils are voluntary and independent and they exist at national, regional, municipal and community level. There are currently around 60 national public councils, 40 regional level councils and over 50 municipal level councils which have been registered. The community level councils implement the widest range of initiatives. These broad civic initiatives also address the problems faced by particular population groups such as older people and they promote the active participation of citizens in the development and implementation of municipal plans, strategies and projects. For instance, a Consultative Council in the Lozents district in Sofia, bringing together representatives from 10 civil organizations,

provides expertise and advice in developing local practices and policies and seeks to encourage civil participation and strengthened dialogue between the administration and citizens. One of the annual events organized by the Council is the European Day of Solidarity between Generations. Another example is the Public Council for Older People established in the Russe municipality (chaired by the mayor) where various organizations working with and for older people jointly discuss possible actions.

*Civil dialogue to promote social inclusion in old age
NGOs network working with and for older people in Bulgaria*

Representatives of more than 20 civil organizations from all over the country, working with and for older people, set up an informal network to strengthen social inclusion in old age. The network is an open forum for reflection and debates around the issue of promotion of quality of life and well-being in old age. It also acts as catalyst for developing and promoting common positions and actions on behalf of older people. An important part of its activities also concerns the promotion of older people's participation in the process of policy development. The network is open to every senior organization that is interested in sharing information and cooperating with peer organizations across the country. The aim is to strengthen civil dialogue on social inclusion in old age and to stimulate an effective and regular process of consultation with older people and their organizations. The network mutually empowers its members to participate actively in lobbying policymakers i.e. promoting their positions and lobbying national and local authorities and institutions on these.

The Law for Employment Promotion in Bulgaria provides opportunities to support unemployed people over 50 years within the financial support of the state budget in the frame of the National Action Plan, which is an operational document for implementation of the National Employment Strategy until 2015.

Within the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" 2007-2013, which is the main tool for implementing of the European Social Fund, a number of schemes are performed, with the aim of providing quality care for older people, inclusive adults with disabilities, severely ill elderly and lonely elderly people. Data show, that in the period 2007-2010, one in ten (10%) persons involved in the measures

under the program /aimed at promoting the social economy and social inclusion of vulnerable groups/ was aged between 55 and 64 years. Older people, or so called "older workers" between 55 and 64 are among the target groups of all schemes under OP "Human Resources Development" 2007-2013, aimed also at integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market and at increasing the adaptability and productivity of employees. Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" 2007-2013 is also tool for implementing measures specifically designed to promote employment of older people and to prolong their working life. Such an operation was called "Social Innovation in enterprises "with a budget of 37.9 million BGN. It was approved in December 2010 and aims to create suitable conditions to improve the social climate in businesses.

Although the measures and documents adopted, the actual results are not satisfactory. As an example - the National Demographic Concept, developed within the Interdepartmental Working Group for promoting the active aging, is still in draft with pending approval by the end of 2012. Actually operational guidelines for identifying opportunities to promote active aging aren't yet available.

Implemented measures to develop the policy of 'active aging', led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as well as by the Employment Agency are as follows until now:

- National measure: Encouraging employers to hire unemployed persons 50+, funded by the State Budget for 2011 - 900,525 BGN, and provided employment to 500 persons.
- Scheme OP "HRD" "Providing conditions for active working life for people 50+ and long-term unemployed people" ESF - 152,624 Employment - 100 persons.
- Scheme OP "HRD" "Social innovation in enterprises" ESF - 3,788,054 BGN- no data on the number of persons employed under this program.

So far in Bulgaria no one public authority does work on eliminating negative stereotypes and creating a positive public image of older people, on creating of special educational methods for people aged 50+;

intergenerational educational services for this target group are not offered and available on this market, there is lack of employer's culture in this regard, as well as lack of special measures for an intergenerational dialogue in the work environment. The only real activities in the field of "active aging" could be found in the frame of projects carried out under programs funded by the EU, but they are relatively few, scattered and the results are not that sustainable.

*The information given above is part of the National Work Program and concerns the Bulgarian participation in the European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity – 2012.

(2.) Intergenerational education ,training and learning opportunities in partner country

Intergenerational learning is not just anything.

In your opinion what makes intergenerational education/ training and learning intergenerational ? What conditions must be fulfilled for them to be intergenerational?

Tradition of intergenerational education/training/learning in your country – what can be learned from the past for the present situation?

Intergenerational learning is often understood as the transfer of information or experience related learning from the older people involved in the activities. Although this highly valuable it does however restrict the scope and impact of the Intergenerational learning activities.

Usually as project results trainings provided found out that computer trainings or language trainings help older people to overcome their loneliness; that the elderly have a need to use modern computer technology.

On the whole, this intergenerational learning environment on one hand allowed the young trainers to share their knowledge and skills acquired, and on the other hand helped the retired elderly trainees to acquire some competence and skills to communicate with the young, as well as to build positive attitude to new technology and innovations, and to continuously improve their knowledge and skills.

The greatest benefit of the contest was achieved through engagement of the target groups into the intergenerational learning process not only by teaching and learning the subject, but also by transmission of values from one generation to another and recognition of those values as significant and important. The initiative resulted in the increased interest in intergenerational issues and greater confidence in the teaching competences of youth. Young people and older people are all stimulated by their common activities.

There is also a positive impact on the local community, as both the young people and the elderly through this have more people to simply greet in the streets. It has also positive effects on mental health, as the children experience mastering, well-being and improved social skills. Research shows that poor social skills are an important factor in relation to substance abuse and crime.

The older people likewise get important contact with young people, and say that the project helps them remember their skills and keep them young. They also get the opportunity to go places they would not go on their own, so they too experience new things.

Young people have the opportunity to develop communicative skills and practice them with the senior beneficiaries but also with young people in the project countries. Senior beneficiaries are offered socializing opportunities and their stories are valorized. Kits and tool are also being often developed to support the story collecting and its processing and its further use by third beneficiaries. Intergenerational learning has taken place in various environments such as at work, in the family, at events, rituals, etc.

The situation of intergenerational learning/ training and learning opportunities. Why and where are intergenerational education/training/learning opportunities needed in your country and I why are they needed in different settings (formal education/informal education /local community, urban and rural environment, at work/ in neighbourhood, etc.)

The political changes that have taken place since 1989, the transition to market economy and the restructuring of the Bulgarian economy alongside with the economic crisis have led to a big migration in the

Bulgarian society. Many, mostly young people moved to bigger cities looking for work, and almost 10 per cent of the population left the country to live, work or study abroad. This process has led to a breakdown in the communication between generations and the growing need of the elderly people to be able to communicate with their children and relatives who live and/or work or study away in the country or abroad. The poor economic status of the elderly has identified the need for some cheaper or free options to stay in touch with their children and grandchildren using new technology and tools.

Are there any specialised premises in your country hosting intergenerational education/training and learning opportunities? What formats and methods are predominately being used for intergenerational education/training in your country (if applicable)

Yet, there is no widespread awareness about the role of elders as professionals who are able to transfer their experience and specific knowledge to newly recruited staff members. At the same time, there is a lack of awareness about the importance of the process of intergenerational transfer of know-how – specific skills, accumulated by seniors through their individual working development are not valued as a resource that has to be retained and transferred to younger or newly recruited employees. Thus, there are rarely formalized mentoring programs within companies, perceived as tools. Many companies are willing to employ retired people between 55 – 60 years of age as they are not that “particular” about the legal relations with their employers. Generally this is a very useful instrument for companies to invest in additional knowledge, while the accumulated knowledge is not pushed out of the market.

(3) Practice of intergenerational education/training events and learning opportunities

Knowledge loss has been recognized as a serious problem in a large number of the companies. They cite loss of specific knowledge after retirement of senior employees and the recurrent necessity to establish and strengthen industry-specific skills within newly recruited and younger employees through training. However, these concerns have been expressed mostly by small companies while not many large

companies have defined the lack of transfer of specific knowledge between generations of employees as a serious problem. More than 80% of the large companies and all medium-sized companies have either assessed the importance of knowledge keeping as minimal, have stated explicitly that there is no knowledge loss or have not provided a definitive answer. It is clear, therefore, that knowledge keeping is perceived as important mostly within small companies and to a much lesser extent in large companies. Also, large companies believe that they can compensate an eventual loss of knowledge through available resources for training.

Who are current providers of intergenerational education /training events and learning opportunities?

Most companies manage the intergenerational knowledge transfer through equal use of tutoring between elder and younger employees and organizing training initiatives. e-Learning and mentoring have been recognized as crucial means for transfer of know-how, but have had modest application within companies. On the other hand all companies that have not used such methods are interested in implementing them to prevent knowledge loss and streamline the existing transfer processes.

Although the implementation of mentoring programmes is not a part of national programme or strategy, it appears to be a common practice among the Bulgarian companies as a part of their HR strategy. Yet it is important to stress that there is no common understanding on the definition of mentoring. Mentoring programmes are implemented usually when hiring new employees and at the overall company activities, or in the frame of international projects implemented. The Bulgarian companies usually include their senior employees when conducting mentoring programmes – it is a rare practice to hire specialists for such trainings. All of the companies which implemented mentoring programmes stated good results in terms of improved qualification of the newly recruited employees. Only less than 10% of the companies state that their managing authorities are not interested in implementing such programmes. Yet there is significant interest for implementing mentoring among the companies, who have not applied such programmes. The companies' senior employees as a whole are interested in participating in mentoring programmes.

e-Learning programmes could be of great use when implementing mentoring programmes. As with the mentoring programmes, implementation of e-Learning programmes is part of the companies HR strategies and proved to be efficient for the new and young employees. Small companies recommend leadership as the most important competence of a mentor and regard internal client orientation as the less important one. Flexibility and innovation and communication are the top answers for the medium companies and networking is set at the bottom. According to the large companies, the successful mentor is first of all competent in communication and least – in networking. Yet the common picture of the mentor looks like this: first – communication, then leadership, organization and planning, motivation and development pursuing, decision making, flexibility and Innovation, tasks allocation, analysis, internal client orientation and last – networking. In addition, the good mentor needs to be authoritative, willing and able to learn, willing to spend more times with colleagues.

Considering the means of intergenerational knowledge transfer that companies consider interesting for eventual implementation the message is quite clear - eLearning and mentoring are the two instruments that are most important and necessary for facilitating, consolidating and streamlining the existing intergenerational transfer processes.

Please name and describe four outstanding national initiatives in the field of intergenerational education / training or learning opportunities.

In post-communist countries such as Bulgaria, intergenerational learning and active ageing have gained visibility through projects implemented with the help of funding granted under the Lifelong programme. In Bulgaria the concept of intergenerational learning has been so far often being used concomitantly with Family Learning which has a long tradition in the Bulgarian society. At present, there is no national network for intergenerational learning in Bulgaria and there is no framework for validation of the skills acquired through intergenerational learning. Providing an intergenerational learning environment where generations can exchange knowledge, skills and competences for their mutual benefit has not been seen as a priority at national level and the

benefits have been underestimated, especially by the formal learning institutions. However, intergenerational learning target groups are aware of the need for and benefits of the intergenerational learning and if offered, they are willing to join it.

There is no officially agreed intergenerational learning concept, it can be safely said that many intergenerational learning initiatives at family, community and national level are currently being developed and implemented through various volunteering activities taking place in schools and community organizations. Intergenerational learning takes place in educational institutions through various forms of interaction: older people assist with classroom activities, sports events or fundraising and transfer their life-skills (such as cooking, sewing or gardening) to younger people.

Learning Campaigns work to build motivation, create opportunities and provide support for learning in families. Key elements of their work in this area are national learning festivals, policy and advocacy, publications, events, projects and research. Intergenerational educational activities take place in public spaces such as museums, computer clubhouses, and community centres. An interesting aspect that is still to be exploited in the intergenerational learning initiatives is that in Bulgaria, there is solidarity between generations mostly within the closely-knit environment of the family and small community.

(4) Partner organisation(s) as a provider of intergenerational education

What is your organisation's experience in the field of Intergenerational projects ? Please, describe them (if applicable),

Experts of Association GENERATIONS and EMC /a partners organization we work with/ have developed a modular program "Intergenerational management". The program consists of 3 modules. It was presented at a regular annual informative demo-seminar, where representatives of various companies shown interest.

Content of the Modules:

"Management teams with a diverse age structure "

Biographical chart the development and experiences: Development opportunities and limits - what potential is available in the individual team? What's the difference between younger than older employees? What is the potential of experienced employees age 50+?

Management of "older" employees: What management style is consistent with the extent of development? How does look the older to younger employees and vice versa?

Approach to emergencies: How can the differences be converted into useful business? What could be create a climate of mutual respect of values with different potential?

Promoting dialogue: How can and should communicate together to utilize the potential of working together? What prevents the joint development of the potential?

Vision and strategies: These practical guidelines have meaning for us.

"Prevention of Burnout - Management for the prevention of the condition of Burnout"

What is the phenomenon of "Burnout" and what are the features which recognized the development of such a state?

What people belonging to risk group prone to Burnout?

In what phases a person goes in the process of exhaustion? At what point in the evolution people stand alone with the problem?

Which way of thinking and behavior can be defined as a risk factor?

Which internal and external resources which may prevent the occurrence of the syndrome of Burnout? What can each individual do in

order to protect him/her selves?

What are the specific opportunities for prevention of Burnout among staff and within the company?

"Communication between the generations "

Generations - young and older: a different experience of generations and consequently impact of examples of the economy and culture, awareness of the radical changes in the forms of communication, ways and means of communication;

Cultural similarities and differences: Various models of interaction between age, changes in the culture of expression: new English words, abbreviations, youth slang, new attitudes and values, communication in virtual reality; dynamics of organizational change and working conditions in the company;

Change-deficit values - values of model: advantages and disadvantages of younger and older people in society, conscious experience of the various competencies; perception of differences in values and changes in behavior;

Conscious and effective communication between adults and younger: prerequisites for conscious communication, opportunities for perception and interpretation, behavioral alternatives depending on the context, understanding the techniques for promoting communication through dialogue.

What permanent intergenerational activities does your organisation conduct? Please, describe them(if applicable).

1. "Fusion of Energies – Solidarity between Generations".

Representatives of GENERATIONS Association participate at events, became part of the European Active Ageing Coalition and share their ideas about initiatives in support of Active Ageing measures: promoting working longer, creating opportunities for learning, training and

retraining, development of long term care services and promotion of voluntary activity.

On the 9th of October 2012 in Sofia Association GENERATIONS organized an event “Fusion of Energies – Solidarity between Generations”. This forum was supported by the EMIL Network in the frame of EMIL’s EY2012 Programme (<http://emil-network.eu>). More than 40 participants, representatives of educational establishments and organizations working in the field of learning, personal growth, active leisure, volunteering, returning to the labour market, VET centres and colleges, service companies with products and services for the elderly, health organizations, social work centres, organizations for care and services, public institutions and professional bodies, universities, business chambers, media, volunteers etc. took part in the event. The programme was focused on:

- educational programme (presentations, discussions, debates)
- companies presentations
- stands with company products, leaflets and information materials
- cultural programme

The aim of the event was to present some analysis about the active ageing of the people over 50 years old in Bulgaria. Different analyses and practices were presented, followed by active discussions - basic key factors for better life of the elder people – independent life, participation in the society and active participation at the labour market.

The Bulgarian elder people were identified as economically profitable for the society – they support their children’s households by nurturing their grand children and save them expenses for kindergartens and nannies, as well as the need to use sick leave in case the child is ill.

Interesting analysis was presented regarding the usage of Internet – 10 % of the active people in Internet in Bulgaria are over 65. They use it mainly for Skype connections, for games, for news reading and entertainment.

It was the first issue for us, gathered an unexpected big interest and become the meeting point and networking place for takers and providers of information, ideas, products and services for the older generation. The complexities of all the useful innovations in this field

need professionals who know how to incorporate, install, service, and use those devices. Dedicated to active ageing, betterment of older persons' quality of lives and generating intergenerational solidarity, it could offer to the visitors and participants the opportunity to connect, exchange ideas and create. We would like to develop our idea further on and held this event each year.

2. ECIL – The Development of a European Certificate in Intergenerational Learning

On the 31st of January 2013 in Sofia Association GENERATIONS organized an information seminar, where the ECIL project were presented / this project is financed by the European Commission, program Leonardo da Vinci, Transfer of innovations, Nr 2012-1-GB2-LEO05-08174/. Experts of Association GENERATIONS and 10 trainers, who will be trained in the frame of the pilots undertaken as one of the project activities, have discussed together known intergenerational life-long learning training approaches, but as well as those, developed already in the UK, which are objects of our transfer of innovations project. The growing recognition of the need for intergenerational approaches to vocational learning that explore the skill sets, attitudes and competences of different cohorts of learners has been highlighted.

Conclusion

Intergenerational learning in Bulgaria is still driven by single objectives and is not fully understood in the complexity of its potential.

Younger people are still not perceived as potential facilitators and a source of relevant knowledge or experience to be transmitted to other groups of beneficiaries. Authorities and decision makers still look at the way they can support the young generation as a passive or semi-active learner and leave little room for casting this category in the role of the “expert”.

Based on the analysis a few recommendations and suggestions for further work can be made, focusing on transferability of initiatives,

multiplication by public institutions, opening schools to volunteers and encouraging parental involvement, a practical approach to intergenerational learning, with the added value of volunteering to create an inclusive model in relation to the roles of beneficiaries.

Young people should be offered the opportunity to be “experts”, to increase their self-esteem and enable them to share, as well as receive knowledge and experience, so that they can move from being students to become facilitators and organizers. Even if traditions in Europe at this moment focus more on the elderly as transfer point, gradual activities will illustrate the relevance and importance of young people’s input.

This however needs to be implemented in a gradual developmental way to allow national adaptation and flexibility on the part of both beneficiaries and policy makers.

Intergenerational learning has the advantage of a non-formal approach, i.e. is applicable in almost every context, lowering boundaries and eliminating rigidity. These features however do not limit the possibilities of acquiring a very wide range of skills.

The perspective of the beneficiaries - last but not least, the learning and sharing experience had a positive impact and the joy of giving and helping others at least matched (if not overcome) the satisfaction of gaining new skills.

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