

# BEST FRIENDS Against Ageism

Intergenerational workshops between elderly people and children to break the isolation of the elderly and promote their social inclusion.



*Best Friends*

## Intergenerational Learning Training Program

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## 1. Learning at different ages

### 1.1 Introduction and objectives

Learning is a natural process that accompanies a person throughout one's life. As a result of learning, we expand our understanding, gain new knowledge, skills, values and patterns of behaviour. Stereotypically, we have created the need to link learning directly with childhood and adolescence, when we become adults, many things enter life that “crowd out” learning - work, household responsibilities, family formation, etc. Science also mistakenly believed that brain plasticity was a priority of the days of human youth. However, research over the last three decades has shown that the brain retains its plasticity and thus its ability to learn throughout life (OECD. 2007).

Lifelong learning is important for a number of reasons. The learning process has a positive impact on a person's life expectancy, social integration, reduction of isolation, suitability for the labour market, the possibility to maintain independence and self-sufficiency for a longer period of time, quality of life, physical and mental health (Ates, H., Alsal, H. 2012).

This aspect is important in the context of the gradual aging of the population in the European Union (EU). Therefore, the project “BEST FRIENDS” wants to create a positive intergenerational learning experience, focusing specifically on the issues of senior isolation. One of the goals of the project is to reduce the social isolation and exclusion of seniors that occurs in today's society. We will do this by developing innovative approaches and bringing together different methods that will promote intergenerational communication and learning.

This chapter "Learning at Different Ages":

- Delves into the learning approach and specifics at two radically different age groups: children aged 4-5 and old age (65+);
- Shares examples of good practice in learning at each age;
- Offers specific non-formal learning activities to promote learning at each age.

### 1.2 Childhood learning (4-5 years)

As a child, we are like sponges that quickly and eagerly capture every knowledge, new information, acquiring fundamental skills and abilities with a little effort. At this age, learning takes place through games and playing, peer collaboration and practical cognition.

When analysing learning at an early age, one should first look at the context of physical and psycho-emotional development at a particular age. Psychologist and philosopher Jean Piaget in Cognitive Development Theory reveals that 4-5 years of age mark an individual's transition from a pre-conceptual stage to an intuitive stage. This means that children in their perception and thinking gradually move away from the belief that all moving images and objects of fantasies, dreams come to life, begin to use words, symbols and concepts to describe the environment, as well as become aware of the world not only from their own, but also other viewpoints (Mārtinsone K. and Miltuze A., 2015).

Psychologist Erik Erikson in the Theory of Psychosocial Development offers a view of this age from a different angle. Erikson associates the 4-5 age group with the third or Locomotor stage. This stage is a playtime. The child at this age is characterized by physical activity and aggression. With energetic movements one takes up space, can physically attack, is loud and intrusive in speaking. Erikson explains such behaviour as a child's intrusion into the world, wanting to explore it. The innovations at this stage are positive - initiative - and negative - constant feeling of guilt. During this time, the child learns the skills to communicate with people. It is therefore necessary to help the child by creating opportunities to talk, to encourage, to help overcome shyness, fear and feeling of guilt (Mārtinsone K. and Miltuze A., 2015).

In early childhood there are acquired such skills as:

- Mastering self-regulation;
- Learning to control aggression and emotions;
- Acquisition of social skills;
- Formation of comprehension of self and others;
- Joining the family system as a full member.

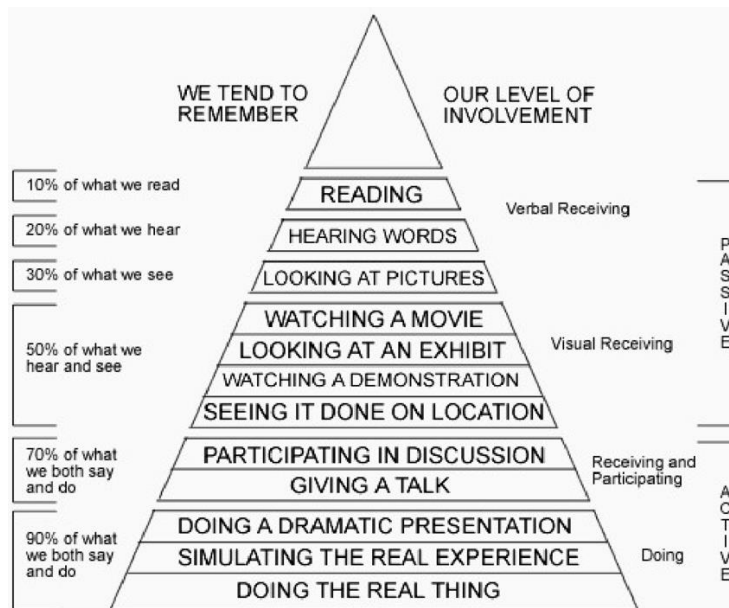
These aspects of development must be taken into account when planning a full-fledged learning process, which envisages the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes in each of these areas of development. We also can't forget one of the most important roles of the pre-school educational institution - to prepare the child for school, which means to provide the young person with the first academic knowledge (mother tongue, mathematics, natural sciences) and self-care skills. All this creates a complex system in which, on one hand, there is a child with his own mobility, enviable flexibility of mind, unenviable development of concentration, desire to play, and on the other - society and education system with learnable individual, academic and social knowledge and skills.

In this situation, it is important to choose a learning approach that meets the needs of the age group and also presents the best learning outcomes. One of the most effective methods of education is experiential learning, defined by David Kolb (Kolb, 1984) in his Theory of Experiential Learning. It describes learning as a cyclical process (experience, reflection, generalisation and analysis, application) that helps to evaluate and analyse experience in order to understand it and find its practical application.

Kolb's theory is correlated with John Dewey's (1938) research into the evaluation of learning effectiveness, recognizing that the most effective type of learning is 'learning by doing' or experiential learning (Ord, J. 2012).

The Pyramid of Experience (1969), developed by Edgar Dale, clearly shows how participatory methods contribute to learning effectiveness. A person is able to remember at least 70% of the study content, actively participating in its creation or actively learning (writing and verbalising). However, the highest efficiency is in learning by doing (90%). Additional

motivation is the voluntary principle of participation, which makes one take responsibility for one's chosen path of education.



The main activity for a preschool child is play, so the pedagogical process must be organised in such a way that children learn by playing. Toys, games, poems, songs and puzzles delight and activate the child. Teaching through play gives better learning outcomes than using workbooks or worksheets. It is desirable to encourage the child to act for pleasure, not to emphasise the concepts of 'right', 'wrong', to support and value children's attempts, daring and risk-taking. A preschool child starts many things, but few of them finish. The child is proud of how much has been done but does not pay attention to quality. It is important to give the child encouragement to stimulate the desire to overcome difficulties. For the most part, children are very sensitive and can be deeply hurt by serious criticism. When praising or celebrating an effort, it is desirable to name the child, thus developing the child's pride and emphasising his or her social role (I am good, successful!).

When organising intergenerational learning activities, it is important to take into account what the child knows and has acquired by the age of 5 in different areas:

#### Movement development:

Jumps and rolls

Can swing and crawl

Can stand on one leg for at least 10 seconds

#### Hand and finger dexterity:

Draws triangles and other geometric shapes

Can draw people

Can write some letters

Able to dress and undress independently

Eat using a spoon, fork and sometimes a knife

Has mastered toilet skills

Language:

Able to say a sentence of more than 5 words

Use the future form

Can tell about family

Can tell a short story

Perception and thinking:

Can count to 5

At least 4 colours can be named correctly

Understands concepts: bigger, smaller, more, less

Understands everyday things (such as money, food, appliances)

Social development:

Wants to please friends

Wants to emulate friends (be like them)

Likes singing, dancing and acting

Shows more independence (for example, can visit neighbours)

Emotional development:

Able to distinguish reality from fantasy

Sometimes demanding, sometimes willing to cooperate

### 1.3 Learning at older age (65+)

As a person ages, the body's physical, sensory and cognitive abilities decrease, which can lead to functional limitations. With the weakening of the body's abilities, the risk of health disorders increases, which significantly affects a person's ability to work and one's social well-



being. With signs of old age appearing in later life it also affects both a person's physical and psycho-emotional state. Changes in functional status also cause certain limitations on activities and that in turn interferes with daily activities (Kaupužs, A. 2009).

A study compiled by Maija Jankovska on the life of seniors in Latvia concludes that seniors are worried about the limiting body, because various things that could have been done in the past can no longer be done or their completion requires longer time or more effort (Jankovska, M. 2019).

Healthy ageing is not just about prolonging life, but rather ensuring that we age in good health for as long as possible. Many of the illnesses in later life are preventable, and research shows that there exists a significant link between education and health. Learning is a major means in maintaining mental activity, enabling older people to cope better with daily life, to stay independent and to participate in society. As we live longer mental illnesses, such as Alzheimer's disease and therefore dementia are widely acknowledged to be one of the most pressing problems facing health and social care systems. Dementia affects people in all countries and the number is expected to double by 2030 (65.7 million) and more than triple by 2050 (115.4 million). Therefore, one of the greatest challenges of our time is how society cares for persons with dementia, how they can and want to keep their independence and stay active (European Association for the Education of Adults).

Latest studies suggest that although motor performance tends to decline in old age, learning capabilities remain intact, and older adults are able to achieve considerable performance gains. While most studies revealed that performance gains in fine motor tasks are diminished in older adults, results for gross-motor-skill learning are more contradictory. Additionally, there is considerable agreement on the finding that age-related learning differences are statistically more robust in complex tasks, whereas in low-complexity tasks, the learning of younger and older adults is very similar.

In general, diminished motor-skill-learning gains are interpreted as a substantial age-related performance loss in older adults and a reduction in cognitive or motor plasticity, respectively. Causes of the performance decreases in older age are hypothesised to be neuro-physiological and physiological changes. Mechanisms discussed in this context are, for example—on a central level—reduced nerve conduction speed and, in turn, reduced reaction speed, increased lateralization, and diminished inhibition processes, or—on a peripheral level—diminished tactile sensitivity. Age-related neurodegenerative and neurochemical changes are thought to underlie the decline in motor and cognitive performance, but compensatory processes in cortical and subcortical functions may allow maintenance of performance (and probably learning) level in older adults (Voelcker-Rehage, S.)

Individual differences in motor plasticity in old age might be strongly associated with sensory (hearing and vision) and cognitive functioning (memory, speed, fluency, knowledge). It is shown in cognitive studies that participants who had a greater loss in perceptual speed showed a lower maximum performance level and less learning gains. Results suggest that ageing-induced biological factors are a prominent source of individual differences in cognitive and, in turn, motor plasticity. Motor and cognitive plasticity cannot be stated as being

independent from each other. In particular, the early learning phase has been proven to be mainly influenced by cognitive processes to understand the task and prepare strategies.

While providing learning opportunity for elderly people, we have to consider such characteristics that affects learning at the older age:

- **SPEED OF PROCESSING:** Numerous studies have found that older adults, generally defined as mid-60s or older, are slower at processing information. Older adults take longer to recall information and complete tasks. This affects their ability to locate figures in a chart, make comparisons among rows or columns, and otherwise carry out tasks that require visual perception.
- **COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY:** Older adults show less ability to change their judgments when they are given additional information that might otherwise alter their opinion. Moreover, older adults are less able to engage in “divergent thinking,” which is the ability to generate alternative explanations or solutions to a problem.
- **CAPACITY TO DRAW INFERENCES:** Age also affects the capacity of older adults to draw conclusions by reasoning from evidence. The older you get, the more difficult it is to read between the lines and come to a conclusion based on the information at hand.
- **WORKING MEMORY:** Research shows that older adults have less “working memory” than younger adults. Simply put, working memory is the capacity of the mind at any given moment to manipulate different types of information. Practically speaking, this means that older adults can hear a telephone number and write it down correctly. But they have more difficulty accomplishing this while also remembering their relationship to the person they are calling and constructing their remarks on why they are making the call. This is because they have fewer resources to deal with several tasks simultaneously.
- **ABILITY TO FOCUS:** Increased age often means increased difficulty in focusing on specific information and eliminating distractions. Some researchers theorise that it is this inability to rule out irrelevant details that clutters the working memory, described above, and lessens one’s capacity to process information (Centre for Medicare Education).

#### 1.4 Example of good practice: Learning at different ages

Examples of good practice of Gulbene 3rd preschool educational institution “Auseklītis” in promoting children's learning at the age of 4-5, which is based on the approach - learning by doing:

Until the first six years, the child's value orientation develops. When thinking about the development of civil society, responsibility and respect for the environment, it is important to involve children in shaping and maintaining their surroundings. Our kindergarten has a large outdoor area with a garden and a greenhouse. Children are actively involved in gardening, promoting cooperation skills, sense of responsibility, connection with nature, and environmental education. Outdoor activities improve physical fitness, promote cooperation skills, take on responsibility, increase knowledge of science, agriculture and nature.



*In the picture - blackcurrant harvesting*

Life does not start or end in kindergarten, so it is important for us to take care of our urban environment and especially its green area. Children are instinctively interested in nature and its processes, so it is easy to be fascinated by activities in nature, which also make the greatest contribution. We learn the best when we are interested. Going outside the kindergarten is an event, and an even bigger event is when there is an interesting goal - feeding ducks in the pond, installing bird cages in the park trees, physical activities, themed expeditions, etc. With great interest, children go on adventure expeditions with special equipment purchased for this activity - binoculars, camera, magnifiers. Within the framework of expeditions, nature is explored in the territory of the park, the found natural materials are collected and studied, promoting knowledge about natural processes and biology.

We have been hosting both local and foreign volunteers for more than five years. Young European volunteers are an invaluable reflection in children's learning. By engaging in activities organised by volunteers, children learn communication in different languages (or communication without the use of language), engage in the learning process with greater interest, because the presence of a foreign young person is intriguing and attention-grabbing, it encourages tolerance of different cultures, intercultural knowledge and broadens vision.

Young volunteers supplement their daily learning with innovative ideas, enriching the teaching methodology.

*In the picture - a study of the countries of the world together with the volunteer Aleksandr Veličkovič from Serbia, within the framework of the European Solidarity Program project*

Examples of good practice of **social care centre “Jaungulbenes Alejas”** in promoting learning for seniors:



Ageing is a reflection of life, a time to analyse everything that has happened to a person and how they have taken care of themselves over the years. If childhood and youth have been active in various fields, when there is not much time left to think about their health, it will take some restart to enjoy old age in the right quality. A person goes through many stages in their life, from childhood to old age. No matter how a person tries to prolong their youth, there are various changes in the body, both psychological and social. In old age, various senses, skills, functions also decrease that are essential to re-learn or continue to improve existing skills.

There are activities that are suitable for both generations to learn together. They promote cognitive functions that are essential for both the child and the senior, it promotes language skills, concentration, mobility. To maintain cognitive abilities, board games are played 3 times a week in the care centre "Jaungulbenes Alejas". These are various mind games, such as "Find a Neighbour", "Colour Differences", "Find a Similar", and puzzles. Film afternoons are organised to remember youth, adventures, and experiences. People in care often feel lonely, but not because they are alone. They think about their loved ones, about the moments spent together, no matter what those moments have been. That is why every year we create annual holidays, adapting to the recommendations of seniors. Trying to create the desired feelings for these people. It is also interesting for employees to be guided by their memories, experiences, or feelings.

Work skills that need to be acquired as a child but are still needed in old age - training to maintain various functions. The care centre provides practical activities, such as peeling vegetables, cutting, composing, which may seem easy to others and the basics of which are taught in childhood, but also need to be further developed, as it is a bit more difficult for seniors due to loss of cognitive skills.

*In the picture - rhubarb work*



Social skills are also important, because in life it is important to learn to make different decisions, to take responsibility, to learn to work in a team, to learn to give feedback. In order to promote social skills in the care centre, cultural events, excursions and thematic afternoons are organised, giving seniors the opportunity to socialise with each other. While maintaining intergenerational cooperation, young volunteers are involved in organising events to share

knowledge, exchange experiences and learn from each other something new or long forgotten. In "Jaungulbenes Alejas", a charming intergenerational event "Creating an Apple Garden" took place, which allowed us to achieve the desired result by communicating with each other: our own garden, which is also cherished by the newest residents of the house. Every thematic afternoon was remembered because each of them has its own charm and memorable event. Baking pastries and pies brings joy not only to the seniors themselves, but also to the employees, exchanging information and skills that seniors have acquired from their ancestors.



In each age category it is also important to feel loved, protected, important. The seniors of "Jaungulbenes Aleja" have a feeling of home every day, which allows seniors to feel confident about their abilities and needs. There is also a cat Tomiņš in "Jaungulbenes Alejas", caring for him has become a daily routine for many seniors. Seniors have the opportunity to give their undivided love for the animal, enjoy its company and feel good.

### 1.5 Learning activity

<b>ACTIVITY OR EXERCISE NAME</b>	Intergenerational Learning Inspires!
<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	40-55 minutes
<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	Representatives of one organisation - social workers, up to 20 people
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discover the importance of intergenerational learning and different experiences</li> <li>● Update or reveal personal and professional goals and challenges</li> <li>● To promote the development of the organisation on the way to intergenerational learning</li> </ul>
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Possibility to play video - projector, computer, place to project. Flip-chart board (or wall), pens/pencils, post-it leaflets, room with chairs
<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<p>The activity is led by a non-formal education trainer.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sitting in a circle, the trainer introduces the topic and starts a discussion about intergenerational learning. It is offered to watch a video about inspiring people's experiences in the field of intergenerational cooperation and learning. Examples of some videos here (moderators can also choose their own videos):  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pt58fu-TjWc">www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pt58fu-TjWc</a>  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xb0fzZJuOoU">www.youtube.com/watch?v=xb0fzZJuOoU</a>            (20 min)</li> <li>2. After watching the video, the participants individually write on post-it, which is his/her personal motivation and the biggest intergenerational benefit when working with the elderly generation, stick it on the wall or flip-chart board. The trainer reads what is written and creates a summary. (10 min)</li> <li>3. The second task is to write on post-it one idea/way to develop intergenerational learning in the organisation, thinking of the motivation/benefit written earlier, as well as the local target group that would be involved - kindergartens, youth centres, etc. The participants stick the written note on another flip-chart sheet or wall, the trainer reads it, compiles it, summarises. If specific ideas are successfully developed, the participants can be divided into groups of 4-5 people and each group has the task to develop a detailed plan for one activity by answering the questions: When will it take place? Where? What will be the learning objectives? Which organisations are involved? What resources are needed to implement the</li> </ol>

	activity? Responsible for the activity, etc. The groups present their idea, agree on the implementation date, and the trainer concludes the activity. (10-25 min)
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### 1.6 Evaluation

1. What are the main differences between learning in early childhood and learning in old age?
2. What is the best way to learn according to Edgar Dale's Cone of Learning?
3. How can learning in old age benefit a person?
4. How do you rate an opportunity of learning that your institution offers to elderly people?

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## 2. Ageism and stereotyping

### 2.1 Introduction and objectives

This module aims to provide information on the concepts of ageism and stereotypes and how these affect people across various aspects of their lives. In particular, through this module, participants will become acquainted with the following topics:

- What is ageism and how it manifests across people's lives.
- The impact and determinants of ageism.  
How individuals can contribute to the fight against ageism and stereotypes in their everyday lives.

### 2.2 What is ageism?

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021b) defines ageism as “the stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination directed towards others or oneself based on age” (p. 163). According to the same source:

- **Stereotypes** relate to thoughts or beliefs and expectations regarding the characteristics of individuals belonging in particular social groups that tend to guide our behaviour.
- **Prejudice** represents the feelings, the emotional reactions – which can be either positive or negative – towards an individual based on our perceptions for the group they are a member of.
- **Discrimination** refers to the actions or behaviours, as well as practices and policies, applied to people on the basis of their group membership. Discrimination can have both positive and negative connotations, imposing some form of advantage or disadvantage to individuals based on their perceived social group membership.

Two of the main characteristics of ageism evident in the above definition is that it constitutes a phenomenon that is frequently covert and may be well-intentioned (Gendron et al., 2016). As a result, ageism is frequently overlooked and hard to identify (Gendron et al., 2016), while it remains a phenomenon that can affect people of all ages (WHO, 2021c). Similarly, ageism can also take various forms and exist in our institutions, our relationships, and ourselves, referred to as institutional, interpersonal, and internalised ageism, respectively (WHO, 2021a).

#### Institutional ageism

A manifestation of ageism that people may fail to recognize is its existence across various institutions and industries where ageism may be rooted in long-standing rules, norms, and practices (WHO, 2021c). The recent Global Report on Ageism produced by the WHO (2021b), presents a detailed overview of research performed across the world that reflects the extent

of ageism across health and social care, workplaces, the media, but also the legal system and various other settings. Key aspects with relation to the various forms of institutional ageism are presented in the sections below (for a detailed review of the relevant studies see WHO, 2021b).

### **Ageism in health and social care settings**

- Health care rationing by age is extensive, including forms such as deciding on the performance of medical procedures or treatments based on an individual's age.
- Older adults are often excluded from health studies and clinical trials. Thus, the relevant results and treatments may not necessarily reflect their needs, even though they represent the largest share of health services users.
- Although further research is needed, preliminary indications show that health and social care workers tend to hold ageist attitudes towards older patients.
- Mental health professionals have limited specialised training and clinical skills needed to diagnose and work with older adults. They also tend to hold negative attitudes towards older adults and be less willing to work with them.
- Preliminary research shows manifestations of ageism in long-term care, such as the language used when interacting with older people.
- The COVID-19 pandemic also revealed the high prevalence of ageism in health and social care, including discriminatory practices in access to health services, as well as age limits in the physical isolation measures.

### **Ageism in the workplace**

- During recruitment: hiring practices are often affected by ageism, with employers being more likely to hire younger applicants compared to older applicants.
- During employment: older employees may have less access to training opportunities and career advancements.
- During retirement: ageism in the workplace may also contribute to older employees retiring early.

### **Ageism in the media**

- Although the way older people are portrayed in the media varies across the world, ageism in the media is in fact rather common (e.g. underrepresentation, stereotypical representation).
- Media and social media representations of older people affect the way that we perceive, interact with, and relate to older people, but also the way we view ourselves growing older.
- The phenomenon of ageist language in social media, regularly promoting stereotypes, has also been receiving increased attention in recent years.

### **Ageism in the legal system**

- The enforcement of arbitrary age limits in legislation reveals the ageism in the legal system.

- Differences on how older people are treated in court proceedings and their outcomes have also been observed.

#### Other institutional settings:

- In **housing** discrimination is observed in the terms and conditions applied to older tenants, the way they are required to leave, the screening of tenants based on their age, as well as in areas of accessibility and safety.
- The digital divide could also, at least partially, be related to ageism, with some older people often thinking – due to relevant stereotypes – that they cannot learn how to use **technology** so they may not even try. Similarly, the development of new technologies rarely assesses and takes into account the needs and preferences of older people.
- Many **financial institutions** repeatedly discriminate against older people in credit card and loan schemes, especially in lower- and middle-income countries.
- **Natural disasters and emergencies related to conflicts** disproportionately affect older people, who are systematically neglected in such situations.
- Older people are frequently neglected or not represented in the way **statistics and data** are collected and compiled.
- Ageism in **education** has received increasing attention in recent years, including phenomena of negative attitudes against older people by staff and other students, as well as negative attitudes of older people themselves about returning to study at a later age.

#### Interpersonal ageism and ageism in everyday life

Older people also experience ageism in their everyday lives, during their interpersonal interactions but also through their exposure to ageist messages (Malani et al., 2020). Interpersonal experiences of ageism vary significantly, and may even include insults, abuse, or denial of services due to a person's age (WHO, 2021b). Common examples of ageism in everyday interactions include assuming that someone has difficulties hearing or seeing things, remembering or understanding things, or using cell phones and computers because of their age (Malani et al., 2020). Other similar examples of interpersonal ageism involve insisting to help someone with things they don't need help with, or even presuppositions such as older people having nothing important or valuable to do (Malani et al., 2020). Likewise, exposure to ageist messages may take various forms, such as hearing and reading jokes about old age and older people or messages suggesting that older people and ageing are unattractive or undesirable (Malani et al., 2020).

#### Internalised or self-directed ageism

Internalized ageism describes “a form of ingroup discrimination in which older adults marginalize and discriminate against other older people” (Gendron et al., 2016, p. 998). Internalised ageism can take various forms, often expressed towards others. An illustrative example is an older person that does not wish to be associated with “old people” (Gendron et

al., 2016). But it can also be directed towards oneself (i.e. self-directed ageism). A person believing that feeling lonely is a normal part of getting older is a common expression of self-directed ageism (Malani et al., 2020). An older person thinking that they cannot learn new things, such as how to use new digital technologies, as they are “too old for that”, is another similar expression of internalised ageism.

The continuous exposure to ageist stereotypes throughout our lives eventually results in these stereotypes being beyond our awareness and directed inwards (Levy, 2001). The impact of internalised ageism has been extensively documented, with research evidence showing that it can affect both the physical and mental health of people in various forms. For example, negative ageing stereotypes have been associated with higher feelings of loneliness and increased frequency in asking help from others (Coudin & Alexopoulos, 2010). Similarly, such stereotypes have been found to result in lower levels of taking risks and subjective health (Coudin & Alexopoulos, 2010). But have also been associated with adverse health outcomes in older persons (Levy et al., 2000) and lower life expectancy (Levy et al., 2002).

### 2.3 The impact and determinants of ageism

The impact of ageism is pervasive, with effects across various aspects of an individual’s health, physical and mental, but also with adverse economic consequences on individual and societal level. The table below summarises some of the main consequences of ageism across our lives and societies.

<b>Health impact</b>	
<i>Physical health</i>	
	Reduced life expectancy
	Poorer physical health and increased difficulties in recovering from disability
	Increased risky health behaviours (e.g., neglect of necessary medication, drinking, smoking, unhealthy diet)
	Poorer sexual and reproductive health and increased rates of sexually transmitted diseases
	Inappropriate medication use, including inappropriate prescribing of medication
<i>Mental health</i>	
	Increased associations with mental health disorders and psychiatric conditions (e.g., early onset depression or persistent depressive symptoms/ lifetime depression)
	Acceleration of cognitive impairment (e.g., cognitive processing speed, cognitive ability and memory decrease)

<i>Social well-being</i>	
	Increased social isolation
	Impact on older people's sexuality
	Greater fear of crime (i.e., older people are perceived as more vulnerable)
	Increased risk for experiencing violence and abuse
	Overall negative impact on quality of life
<b>Economic impact</b>	
	In risk for loss of financial security and, thus, increased risk of poverty
	Economic burden on society (e.g., disengagement due to age discrimination, increased health issues due to ageism lead to higher health care costs)

Note: Retrieved from WHO, 2021b

### The determinants of ageism

The table below presents a number of factors that have been found to be predominantly associated with ageism. The table draws on the recent work of Marques and colleagues (2020) that reviewed 199 papers published over the last approximately forty years in order to establish the determinants of ageism on (a) societal or institutional level, (b) within groups or individuals, as well as (c) individual related factors that affect ageism towards both oneself and others.

<b>Determinants of ageism</b>	
<i>On institutional/ cultural level</i>	
	Available economic resources
	Number of older people in the country
<i>On interpersonal or intergroup level</i>	
	Positive and negative presentation of older people
	Quality of interpersonal contact with older people in general and with personal contacts (e.g., grandparents or relatives)
	Target age (i.e. being older)
<i>On intrapersonal level</i>	
	Fear of death
	Ageing Anxiety

	Health status
	Personality characteristics (e.g., consciousness, agreeableness, extraversion)
	Having a collectivistic orientation

Note: Adapted from Marques et al., 2020.

## 2.4 Combating ageism and stereotypes

### Combating ageism

Despite the pervasiveness of the phenomenon, ageism can be reduced or even eliminated if proper steps are taken towards that end. The three main strategies and can be used to combat ageism include (WHO, 2021c):

- (a) the enactment of laws and policies to address age discrimination and inequality, while safeguarding the human rights of everyone;
- (b) the implementation of educational activities than can generate knowledge and skills and cultivate empathy;
- (c) the realisation of intergenerational interventions that bring together people of all generations encouraging better cross-generational understanding.

In addition to the above core strategies, steps toward reducing ageism can be taken by all people on a daily basis. The next sections focus on two such aspects, the language we use and efforts that can be made to address the internalised ageism of older people in various professional settings.

### The language of ageism

Ageism in language is both a complex and diverse phenomenon, frequently rather difficult to identify. Ageist language can range from communicating a belief with explicit positive intentions, to verbal cues that – intentionally or unintentionally – communicate hostility or insults (Gendron et al., 2016). Ageist sentiments may be rather subtle and could even appear as a compliment (Gendron et al., 2016). For example, phrases such as “young at heart” may in fact unconsciously perpetuate the notion that being “old” is something negative. Importantly, the person that communicates the message and the one receiving it are usually unaware of the language bias (Gendron et al., 2016). Since these patterns are normalised and internalised, they are regularly used automatically and unconsciously, as a matter of habit or convenience (Gendron et al., 2016).

Studies show that ageism in language is quite prevalent in long-term care with older residents often perceiving communication with caregivers as ageist (see also WHO, 2021b). Controlling language, infantile and patronising communication are a few of the patterns that have been observed and which eventually have a negative impact on the perceived quality of life of older people living in care facilities (Lagacé et al., 2012). In practice, some of the words or phrases used, although well intentioned, could eventually propagate negative attitudes, stereotypes,

and assumptions about older people (Gendron et al., 2016). Considering the importance of language in conveying deeper meanings, thoughts, ideas, and emotions (Gendron et al., 2016), the use of words and expressions that are free of bias is crucial in diminishing existing stereotypes. The table below presents a few examples of words and expressions that could be used towards that end in our everyday interactions.

Instead of...	Try...
Elderly, seniors, ageing population, ageing dependents, old person, grandma or grandpa.	Using older people, older adults, older person, or age specific terms, if relevant, e.g. "60 years and older".
Our older people, our older generations.	Removing possessive pronouns.
They or them, as if older people are a different group and not part of our society.	Using we or us.
Accumulated youth, young at heart, young lady.	Using direct affirmation of being old, e.g., "I'm old and that's ok".
Poor old woman, physically challenged old man, struggling with or battling dementia.	Using an older woman that is poor, an older man with a disability, a person experiencing a cognitive decline.

*Note:* Adapted from AGE platform Europe, n.d.; FrameWorks Institute, 2017; WHO, 2021d.

### Interventions against internalised ageism

As previously noted, research shows that increased internalised ageism is associated with a number of negative outcomes for older adults. At the same time, social workers, other professionals and volunteers working with older adults are in fact uniquely able to respond to the needs of older individuals. As such, efforts to reduce internalised ageism, and thus promote the wellbeing of older adults, constitute a key priority in such practices. Although systematic work is needed towards that end, several factors that could be addressed on a day to day basis have been found to contribute towards that end (Steward, 2021).

Based on the presupposition that ageism includes (a) age discrimination, (b) negative age stereotypes, and (c) negative self-perceptions of aging (Levy, 2009), Steward (2021) recently proposed a conceptual model that can be implemented in practice to reduce internalized ageism and promote the over health and well-being of older adults. In brief, the model proposed by Stewart involves three interconnected levels. The first includes policy changes, education, and intergenerational contact as the main strategies to combat ageism. In the second level, day to day interventions, such as narrative reframing, physical, social and cognitive engagement, and stress management, are included. These interventions are then expected to result in higher

self-efficacy, increased physical activity, and better stress biomarkers, respectively. As a result, these are eventually expected to enhance the overall health of older individuals. The table below, briefly outlines the relevant concepts.

Main strategies:
Policy changes Education Intergenerational contact
Interventions:
Narrative reframing interventions to assist in shifting thinking and stereotypes regarding healthy lifestyle (e.g., attitudes and/or efficacy toward ageing, implicit age bias, systemic ageing supports, etc.), thus leading to behaviour change Physical, social, and cognitive engagement (e.g., exercise, volunteering, and technology use) Stress management interventions to unsettle the negative impacts of ageism on health (e.g., mindfulness, meditation, yoga, etc.)
Intermediate outcomes:
Higher self-efficacy Increased physical activity Better stress biomarkers
Long-term health outcomes:

Physical and or mental health, functional ability, cognition, less hospitalizations, recovery from disability, less cardiovascular events, and longer life expectancy

*Note:* Adapted from Steward, 2021.

## 2.5 Example of good practice: The power of images



Often one picture is worth a thousand words. Therefore, initiatives seeking to combat ageism and stereotypes reliably employ the power of images to increase awareness and sensitise people of all ages about ageism and its impact.

For instance, a recent workshop organized by AGE Platform Europe and Equinet (2019) started the seminar with a session aiming to come up with a common working definition of ageism and age discrimination. Participants were shown various images in an effort to stimulate a discussion regarding the way older people are usually portrayed, and by extension treated, in our societies. The discussion that followed revolved around questions such as if the participants felt represented by these images; how they or older people could feel or relate to these images; what kind of narratives do the images infer about older people; and which could be the consequences of such narratives. The images managed to generate a rather insightful discussion on how ageing is still considered as something negative, while older people are frequently perceived as vulnerable, incapable, passive and frail. The lack of diversity in the representation of older people in the pictures was also among the topics that came up.

The social media and infographic package<sup>1</sup> produced by the WHO in the context of the 2021 Global report on ageism includes a series of pictures and graphics that could be used for stimulating relevant discussions. Likewise, the series of positive, intergenerational, and realistic images produced by the Centre for Ageing Better<sup>2</sup> can be used to draw relevant comparisons. Finally, a similar approach can be found in the “ImAGES” intervention program of Marques and colleagues (2015) that aims to prevent ageism in children and adolescents using an approach based on the use of pictures.

## 2.6 Learning activities

<b>1.ACTIVITY OR EXERCISE NAME</b>	Q&A – Is this ageist? <sup>3</sup>
<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	10-20 minutes
<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	Group exercise implemented in small (e.g. 2-5 participants) or larger (e.g. 5-10 participants) groups of participants
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stimulate dialogue about ageism and stereotypes.</li> <li>● Enhance participants’ identification of stereotypes in everyday life.</li> </ul>
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Pen and paper or white board (optional)
<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stimulate a conversation by asking participants to think of examples from their everyday lives that they believe could represent ageist stereotypes, and especially examples of which they are not entirely sure.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> WHO social media and infographic package, available at: <https://who.canto.global/b/TMB6H>

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Ageing Better resources, available at: <https://ageingbetter.resourcespace.com/pages/search.php>

<sup>3</sup> Inspired by the “Yo, Is This Ageist?” page, available at: <https://yoisthisageist.com/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can ask participants to take a few minutes to think about relevant examples and/or write them down on a piece of paper or a white board.</li> <li>In case participants have difficulties coming up with relevant examples, you may use some of the following examples to encourage the discussion:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing an older woman as “young lady”?</li> <li>Telling someone that they look younger than their age/ they cannot be that old/ they cannot be more than a specific age.</li> <li>Referring to “age-friendly”, “age appropriate”, or “anti-aging” products or activities etc.</li> <li>Expressions such as “I am too old for that”?</li> <li>Adjusting the way you talk to people based on their age?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Ask participants to share their thoughts on why, or why not, these examples represent age stereotypes.</li> <li>Steer the conversation towards the various forms of ageism in language and everyday life, as well as internalized ageism.</li> <li>Conclude the activity with a discussion about potential alternative approaches or wording to the examples given by the participants that are free of biases.</li> </ul>
<b>2.ACTIVITY OR EXERCISE NAME</b>	Role play – Did their age have anything to do with it? <sup>4</sup>
<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	15-30 minutes
<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	Group activity with at least 3 participants and an unlimited number of audience members
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote reflection and critical thinking about ageist stereotypes.</li> <li>Increase awareness and draw attention to the feelings and experiences of older people.</li> <li>Cultivate empathy for other people’s experiences.</li> </ul>
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Print outs/handouts with the scenarios and character descriptions
<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<p><i>[If role play is not feasible/preferable, a modified version of this exercise would be to use the scenarios and character descriptions to generate a relevant discussion among the group around the topics of conversation listed below]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In case of larger groups, split participants into smaller groups of 3-4 individuals. Alternatively, you can repeat the activity in front of the entire group, with different participants playing the characters and/or different scenarios.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Inspired by the training guide developed by HelpAge International (2016).

- Ask the group for three volunteers to play the three characters in each scenario (i.e., the older person, the primary person interacting with them, and the bystander).
- Give the corresponding character description to each participant playing the characters and ask them to read it through and think for a few minutes how they would react in each situation.
- Allow the participants to play their roles for a few minutes (5-10 minutes).
- Stimulate an open discussion with the entire group around the following topics of conversation:
  - How did each character feel while playing their roles?
  - How did the audience feel watching the role-play?
  - Would they like to change something in what the characters were saying/doing?
  - What could each character have done differently?
  - Did the age of character 1 have any influence in what happened? If so, in what sense?
  - Do you recognize any common stereotypes or misconceptions in these situations?

#### Scenario 1 – Using a smartphone

##### Character 1 (older person)

You are an older person living in a care home. Your children recently gave you a new smartphone as a gift. You are generally pretty good with digital devices, but a new app on your phone keeps crashing. You kindly ask an employee if they could perhaps help you and show you how to operate the app. The employee, without talking to you, takes the phone from your hands, changes a few settings, and gives it back. You thank them and ask how they fixed it so that you know for the next time. But they respond that they are too busy right now.

##### Character 2 (care worker)

One of the residents in the care home you work asks for you to show them how to use a new app on their phone. You are too busy at that time. So, you just fix the app yourself, thinking that it would take too much time to show them and they wouldn't understand anyway.

##### Character 3 (care worker – bystander)

You see an older resident in the care home you work asking one of your colleagues to show them how to use an app on their phone. Instead, your co-worker just configures the app themselves and hands the phone back to the older person without showing anything more to them. You feel the urge to step in and show them instead, but you don't in fear of offending your co-worker.

#### Scenario 2 – Doctor appointment

	<p><u>Character 1</u> (older person)</p> <p>You are an older person visiting the same doctor for the second time about a persistent back pain. The pain has been progressively worsening and has started significantly affecting your ability to carry out tasks like sitting and standing up. During the previous appointment the doctor had prescribed some mild pain medication, telling you that the pain should go away soon.</p> <p><u>Character 2</u> (primary doctor)</p> <p>You are seeing an older patient with back pain for the second time. You had previously prescribed some mild pain medication, but their pain seems to get worse over time. You think that their pain is mostly likely due to their age. The chances of other causes are insignificant and you don't have enough time for a thorough examination. You have several other appointments and you are running late. You tell them that their pain is probably due to their age and it is natural as time passes for their back to experience more issues. You encourage them to come to terms with the fact that they will most likely be in pain over the next years and to explore ways to manage it.</p> <p><u>Character 3</u> (trainee doctor – bystander)</p> <p>You are a new doctor in training, observing your first appointment with an older person that presents with a consistent back pain. Based on the patient's description, your first impression is that they need extensive imaging to determine the cause of the pain. The primary doctor, however, believes that it is due to "old age" and offers palliative care. You disagree but don't mention anything due to fear of contradicting your superior.</p> <p>Scenario 3 – Create your own</p> <p>Encourage participants to create their own scenarios and characters based on their personal experiences.</p>
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## 2.7 Evaluation

Knowledge/skills-based evaluation questions:

- What is ageism and how does it affect people of various ages?
- How does ageism manifest in everyday life?
- How common is internalised ageism?
- How can each individual contribute to the combating of ageism and common stereotypes associated with age?

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### 3. The concept of Intergenerational Learning

#### 3.1 Introduction and objectives

In European society, the percentage of elderly people is constantly increasing as a direct consequence of an ever longer life expectancy. The quality of life in the third age can be significantly improved in a process of active ageing which should include a consistent training and learning offer for elderly people.

Intergenerational learning can be of great help since over the past decade, European social policies have emphasised the need for the development of a community model based on solidarity between generations and of the person throughout the lifespan. The European Parliament and Council have placed the implementation of comprehensive lifelong learning strategies and the promotion of active citizenship among the main objectives of the European education systems, with the intent to counter the progressive isolation of disadvantaged categories.

Intergenerational practice must therefore be considered in its fundamental social value: it is necessary to promote a new cultural paradigm that encourages openness towards the other, authentic dialogue and acceptance of diversity.

Intergenerational Learning is the place where people of all ages can learn together and from each other, a process that classically occurs spontaneously within families where knowledge is shared from generation to generation (Ceccherelli, 2021).

However, recently it has been observed how this process is facilitated by larger social groups, outside the family circle. Research suggests that the current model of intergenerational learning contributes to youth socialisation and that intergenerational relationships are tools for developing and sustaining a sense of trust and belonging within the society members (Kaplan, Sanchez & Hoffman, 2017).

In this module an overview on International Learning will be presented, from its definitions, its differences from other forms of learning and its importance (Unit 1) to its beneficial effects on elderly, youngsters and children (Unit 2).

To deepen the topic, an example of good practice and a case study will be presented in order to know what some of the applications of Intergenerational Learning in real life are.

The learning objectives of this module are:

- To know how to define the concept of Intergenerational Learning, its importance and use.
- To learn about the benefits of Intergenerational Learning for the people involved
- To enrich the knowledge on the Intergenerational Learning practice between young children and elderly

### 3.2 What is Intergenerational Learning?

#### How Intergenerational Learning is defined

Intergenerational Learning is one of **the oldest methods of learning**. It is **multi-generational** and usually involves learning that takes place naturally as part of day-to-day social life.

Intergenerational Learning is defined as a **process**, through which individuals of all ages acquire skills and knowledge, but also attitudes and values, from daily experience, from all available resources and from all influences in their own life (EAGLE, 2008). It can be defined as a method that aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities, promoting at the same time empathy and respect between generations.

The concept is that people of different generations learn from each other - not only the younger from the older, but also the older from the younger, a reciprocal process that can be structured and organised but in certain cases is natural: for example, babies learn soon how to influence their parents' behaviour complaining or crying; parents need to anticipate the needs of their children and learn how to behave.

Intergenerational Learning is defined as a **way** for people of all ages **to learn** together and from each other, an important **part of lifelong learning**, where generations work together to acquire skills, values and knowledge.

From the European Network of Intergenerational Learning it is defined as an **educational pact** based on reciprocity and mutuality that involves people of different ages in which generations work together to acquire new competencies and knowledge.

It is an important means to address the significant demographic change in today's society enhancing intergenerational solidarity through intergenerational practice.

For an activity to be identified as an Intergenerational Learning practice, it has to (ENIL, 2013):

- involve of more than one generation
- result in a mutually beneficial learning for the participants and in community cohesion
- create relevant learning opportunities
- provide a nonthreatening and reassuring learning environment

### **How Intergenerational Learning differs from other forms of learning?**

In addition to knowledge transfer, Intergenerational Learning promotes mutual learning relationships between different generations and helps develop social capital and cohesion in today's ageing societies.

It is necessary to discuss the way in which Intergenerational Learning relates with other kinds of education such as formal, informal and non-formal learning. **Formal learning** is a kind of learning that takes place in an organised and structured context such as in a school or training institution; it is explicitly conceived and designed based on a well-established curriculum and it leads to some form of recognized certification. **Non-formal learning** is connected to planned activities not explicitly designed as learning that are not provided by an educational institution and do not normally lead to certification. It is characterised by a higher degree of flexibility with regards to the objectives of the learning activities. It can include different systems other than face-to-face classes. **Informal learning** includes the multiple forms of experience learning



resulting from the activities of daily life related to work, family and leisure. It is not organised or structured, but it can very well complete a formal or non-formal educational scheme (Colardyn and Bjornavold, 2014).

Considering the previous definitions, Intergenerational Learning can be considered as a kind of learning which can happen both in non-formal and informal manners (ENIL, 2013).

Intergenerational Learning works best with alternative learning activities than traditional classroom or group-based teaching (DG Education and Culture, 2012). For this reason, the learning environment is very important for its success. It is useful holding learning activities in a familiar context for at least one of the participant groups and ensures that everyone feels safe and comfortable.

Another kind of learning with which Intergenerational Learning is related, is **Family Learning**, that is the learning that family members engage in over their lifetimes (Dierking, 2018). This process includes social interaction, collaboration and sharing of knowledge among members, incorporating into the family narrative a set of shared meanings among and between family members. Although this type of learning also stimulates the skills of young and elderly because it implies an intergenerational component, it differs from the proper Intergenerational Learning because does not necessarily involve reciprocity, moreover, Intergenerational Learning can happen in different contexts and not necessarily within the family context.

### **Why is Intergenerational Learning important?**

Intergenerational Learning can strengthen communities to make them more elderly friendly, breaking down the age barriers and stereotypes about ageing, promoting mutual understanding, respect and trust, and sharing ideas, skills, knowledge and experiences. It is a practice that has the capacity to counteract the increasing lack of contact between generations and the lack of social cohesion between vulnerable groups and/or culturally diverse communities (Toy-Plus Project, 2017).

The demographic change European populations are facing, is leading to an ageing society in which the economic and welfare patterns are changing. The economic disparities are increasing and the access to social services can be difficult, especially for elderly people. The traditional family structure is weakening, leading to an individualised society where the isolation of the vulnerable subjects is a big risk (EAGLE, 2008).

In fact, historically, Intergenerational Learning took place within the family but nowadays the decline of the extended family, the greater mobility of workers and their families, the increase in age segregated activities (for example youth organisations or clubs for elderly) and the increased use of online systems for social interactions can contribute to the distrust between generations and to the lack of equity and social cohesion (DG EDUCATION AND CULTURE, 2012).

In this scenario, Intergenerational Learning can bring several benefits to the society from the rapprochement between distant generations and the awareness raised on active citizenship and social participation, to the support to Lifelong Learning and the maintenance of human

and social relations. It offers a means for skills, values and knowledge to be passed between generations, and for societal challenges to be addressed (discrimination reduction, social inclusion increase, active citizenship rise...).

Intergenerational Learning can take place in a variety of social contexts and through different programs or projects that help strengthen social capital and bonds by creating social cohesion in the communities. It is important to combat ageing stereotypes and it can help to address demographic changes and bring solidarity throughout the life cycle, breaking down barriers and pushing to work for an intergenerational world. Negative stereotypes and lack of contact between different generational groups have or may lead to a deterioration of social cohesion in the societies (Ceccherelli, 2021). Both youngsters and elderly people have valid resources that can be shared through Intergenerational Learning, and this can be helpful to contribute in solving some of the main issues in modern society: the lack of active and safe communities, the inequality levels in accessing services, the increasing social isolation and loneliness, the loss of relationships, the deteriorated health and psychological well-being.

Intergenerational learning can be found in a wide variety of settings: workplaces, schools, pre-schools, higher education institutes, and vocational education settings, but there are also different types of non-classroom based intergenerational learning activities - for example, bringing elderly and young/children together to work towards common goals to solve community problems.

Clearly there are difficulties that can arise from the community and educational context related to current learning systems and policies. Some challenges can arise from social policy constraints, rigid institutional structures and conventions, lack of knowledge of the sector, lack of organisational capacity, lack of training and limited funding and resources, but the growing use and spread of Intergenerational Learning underlines the added value it brings to lifelong learning and also to intergenerational communication and collaboration.

Research shows how young and older participants to intergenerational activities enjoy the activities developing friendship in several cases. This particularly occurred when the activities enabled significant one-to-one interaction with a young person working with an older person (Martin, Springate, Atkinson, 2010) allowing a better understanding of the other age group.

In brief, the main issues addressed by Intergenerational Learning reflect the challenges of today's European society: the digital gap between young and elderly, the worrying school dropout rates, literacy problems and the risk of social exclusion for vulnerable groups. Indeed, a wide range of skills are valued when they are developed in an intergenerational context of study, teaching and learning. Language, alphabetic and maths skills can all be developed within an Intergenerational Learning model, as well as communicative, social and relational skills or team building competencies, leading to a stronger personal development, overall wellbeing, and active citizenship level (ENIL, 2013).

### 3.3 Benefits of Intergenerational Learning

#### Benefits for elderly people

For seniors, learning and training are more than just fun or a pastime, because continuous learning favours psychophysical well-being, social integration and participation in community activities. It also provides a new image of the elderly person, raising awareness on this particularly delicate life stage and having a positive impact on civic engagement, letting them contribute to the development of society. In fact, participation and learning help break the isolation also in a long-term perspective. For example, if an elderly person knows how to use a smartphone, he or she will be less at risk of isolation than a person who is not still able to do it.

Intergenerational learning reduces the isolation of elderly people, a phenomenon that in modern society is strongly increased, especially after the recent Covid – 19 pandemic that has led to the dispersion of social relations. Mutual knowledge allows to overcome stereotypes and prejudices existing between generations, moreover new methods of problem solving can be developed and assimilated, allowing to preserve human capital in today's society, where the average age is always higher (EPALE, 2017).

In order to learn from each other, it is necessary to establish good communication, get to know, understand and accept each other. It is therefore necessary to create opportunities for both formal and informal learning occasions. The interaction between different generations must never be conflictual, but an opportunity to ensure greater cohesion, effective mutual learning and the development of solidarity.

Through Intergenerational Learning, elderly people can learn new skills and feel valued as they transmit their knowledge and experience to younger generations. In fact, older people are found to be motivated to participate in intergenerational learning for altruistic reasons that are passing on their skills and knowledge to the younger generation. To explain this, the concept of generativity can be used. The term Generativity indicates a system of creation and release of concepts from older generations to posterity. It means to generate a new system of sources of meaning and value, training and learning from which users can mature their own ability to invent, produce and implement new contents without further support or inputs. The term was coined in 1950 by the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson to indicate the older generations responsibility in initiating the new generations, it really indicates a guide for the next generation (Minello, 2020). Usually generativity is developed in late adulthood, when for example a work of life experience can be seen as an opportunity to teach and share skills.

### **Benefits for younger generations**

The interaction between different generations is an opportunity to ensure greater cohesion, effective mutual learning and the development of the feeling of solidarity and empathy. Children and youngsters can not only gain knowledge about different themes handed down by adults who have experience, but also have the possibility to understand the value of intergenerational diversity and its potential.

It has already been said that Intergenerational Learning reduces the isolation of young and old people, and that mutual knowledge allows to overcome stereotypes and prejudices existing between generations thus preserving human capital in today's society.

If it is true that there are a lot of negative stereotypes about ageing, similar negative stereotypes exist about young people too, who are presented as unreliable, inexperienced and selfish. This is not properly true, considering the huge contribution that both young and older people bring to society and how influential they are in promoting social change through their activities. Several learning activities promote intergenerational solidarity and cooperation either as an objective or by naturally bringing different age groups together. When different generations work together and share the same goal, this leads to a better understanding between generations and a more constructive coexistence. Through their involvement in intergenerational learning activities, young people can get very useful hands-on experience, develop their interpersonal skills, develop their communication skills and cultivate empathy and respect. All this learning and sharing contribute to the valorisation of our human capital and directly benefit the whole society.

For example, Intergenerational Learning in the workplace provides training for younger workers, but it can also support young people who are struggling to begin their careers to gain knowledge and skills and provide new competences.

It can be used to meet older people's needs to keep in touch with the constant societal changes (DG Education and Culture, 2012) and at the same time younger people or children appreciate the opportunity to share knowledge and to make a difference into the elderly lives contributing to the development of community cohesion. It can also be a possibility for them to demonstrate new skills and build confidence.

Creating multi-generational public housing and communities implies a form of intergenerational learning too. Usually, this type of community initiative focuses on giving disadvantaged young people the opportunity to interact with older people as positive role models and mentors. Younger people can benefit from a stable and supportive community environment and elderly are expected to benefit from their social involvement in local communities.

Through Intergenerational Learning youngsters and children can acquire knowledge and experience transmitted by the elderly and at the same time they can improve their social skills as they come into contact with a target generally unknown to them.

### **Intergenerational Learning between older people and young children**

Nowadays, young children and older people are spending more time than before in age-segregated settings such as early childhood education and care centres and social and health centres for elderly. There is also more migration separating grandparents from grandchildren that make it difficult to maintain the 'traditional' form of learning between generations. In this view, Intergenerational Learning can be considered an important part of Lifelong Learning capable of building reciprocal learning relationships between different generations as well as help to develop social capital and cohesion (Toy-Plus Project, 2018).

Scientific research conducted by ICDI – International Child Development –in 2013, has identified the objectives that characterise the activities that jointly involve people aged 65+ and young preschool children beyond the improvement of social cohesion and the strength of

the bonds between different generations (TOY Project Consortium, 2013). Clearly the interaction between grandparents and children can enrich interpersonal relationships and counter the negative stereotypes and isolation of elderly people. One of the best ways to build relationships with younger children is by organising activities to spend time together, such as singing, making art, cooking and playing together. This can be very useful to recognize the role that grandparents have both in the family and in the societies as listeners, narrators, custodians of collective memory and family history. Preserving and transmitting historical and cultural heritage in fact, is fundamental in a knowledge society like the contemporary one. Elderly people are a vital link with our past and they can manage to help little children to build a sense of identity and historical perspective. Some examples can be the storytelling on the events of the past, to the narration of local legends or the replication of traditional games and not very common among children today.

Introducing children to Intergenerational Learning from a very young age is also beneficial in order to educate them to respect diversity, as children help grandparents to remain rooted in the contemporary world, rather than take refuge in memories and vice versa, grandparents offer young ones the opportunity for knowledge accumulated throughout their lives.

There is no doubt that these activities can improve the quality of life of both children and elderly: because children are a rush of enthusiasm capable of keeping the mind of the elderly in training, while on the other hand, children learn how to manage and moderate themselves by adapting to the elderly. Young children bring joy and energy to the lives of elderly people, especially if they live alone or in social care institutions, while children's awareness of empathy and tolerance is very important for the development of emotional intelligence at such a young age.

Young children can learn about traditions, history, develop new skills, build significant relationships, experience calm, receive more attention, learn citizenship values and norms and become aware of the ageing process. Studies found that children who participated in an intergenerational program were more willing to share, help and cooperate with elderly persons, acquiring social awareness for communicating with older people, having positive attitudes toward ageing and the elderly, learning social skills in a nurturing environment and having someone to play with (Dellmann-Jenkins, Lambert, and Fruit, 1991).

On the other hand, elderly people can feel valued and useful for society, enhance their wellbeing and self-esteem, learn new skills, have fun and be active.

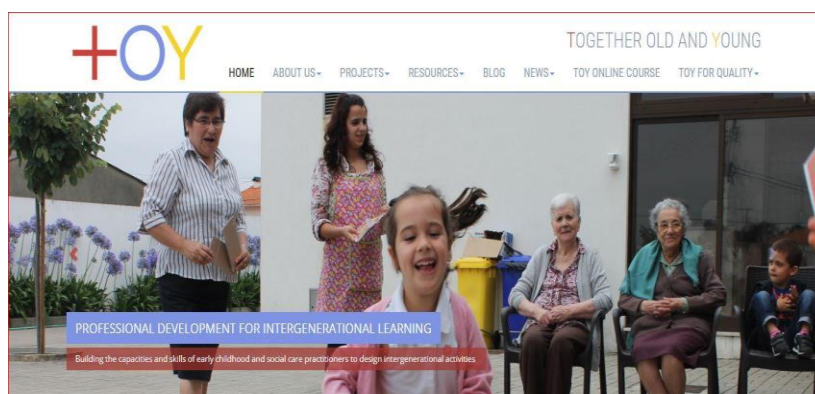
In this perspective, it would be good to encourage and promote activities between grandparents and children, overcoming the cultural and social barriers that still exist.

### **3.4 Example of good practice: TOY – together Old and Young**

In recent years the number of intergenerational projects and initiatives has grown in Europe and this is the sign of a greater awareness on the subject. An example of how to spread intergenerational culture is the Project Toy - Together Old and Young, A global movement to promote young children and older adults learning together (TOY project - Together Old &

Young: intergenerational learning). The aim of the project is to promote intergenerational learning and create new possibilities for older adults and young children to learn together and benefit from each other's company.

Toy wants to contribute to the creation of a more united society, respecting each other's identities and under the banner of dialogue showing that Europe is focused on current social problems promoting innovation in the field and the replication of the good practices.



The project was co-funded by the European Commission under the Grundtvig Lifelong Learning Program and promoted by the International Child Development Initiative. Between 2012 and 2014, nine partner organisations from seven European countries (Italy, Ireland, Poland, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Slovenia) involved several children between 0 and 8 and adults aged 55+ in initiatives that took place in libraries, arts and cultural centres, community gardens, pre-schools and schools in order to share experiences, have fun, learn from each other and develop meaningful relationships.

The TOY Project demonstrated clear benefits for young children, older adults and communities, from mutual understanding, improved wellbeing, decreased loneliness, satisfaction from sharing knowledge and experience with children and enhanced social cohesion. The aim is also to extend these benefits to more beneficiaries by advocating the need to enhance the interaction between young children and older adults when developing policies for lifelong learning, developing tools and training and providing information and resources about Intergenerational Learning.

### 3.5 Learning activity

<b>ACTIVITY or EXERCISE NAME</b>	CASE STUDY BASED ACTIVITY
<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	60 minutes

<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	Group activity or in pairs
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>Participants will use a real-life case as a teaching resource to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● have a conception of intergenerational learning applied to real life</li> <li>● focus on real experiences that illustrate the theoretical contents of the module</li> <li>● deepen the concept of Intergenerational Learning</li> <li>● Enrich the knowledge about the benefits of Intergenerational Learning</li> <li>● Enrich the knowledge on the tools used to promote Intergenerational Learning practice</li> <li>● development of analytical skills</li> <li>● development of problem-solving skills</li> </ul>
<b>MATERIALS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Case material and information. Materials should be functional to the context presented (videos, images, data...)</li> <li>● Papers and pen/pencil</li> <li>● Open space with chair for discussion</li> </ul>
<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<p>Divide the participants into groups or in pairs.</p> <p>Step 1 (10min) A case study describing a real-life context where intergenerational learning activities are successfully implemented between elderly and children is described. The same case can be presented to all the participants or different cases can be used for different groups. The activities themselves and how they take place must be described.</p> <p>Step 2 (20 minutes) The groups should describe the purpose of every intergenerational learning activity reflecting on the needs from which they arise and the positive effects they can have. Participants are asked to draw up a list of benefits that elderly and children would have. Participants should mention benefits such as skills, knowledge and competencies acquired but also motivational benefits (new experiences, new contacts, satisfaction) on the bases of the case study data and results.</p> <p>It is useful to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● which are the needs of the elderly</li> <li>● which are the needs of the children</li> <li>● what a social care institution should provide elderly</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● available tools and resources to implement activities</li><li>● how the process take place</li><li>● steps to be taken</li></ul> <p>Step 3 (20 minutes)</p> <p>Each group or couple will share their opinions with other participants asking for feedback and discussing. Useful questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What are the good elements of intergenerational activities?</li><li>● What are the negative aspects if any?</li><li>● What are the weaknesses or difficulties?</li><li>● What are the benefits for people involved?</li></ul> <p>Step 4 (10 minutes)</p> <p>Debriefing on the activity. Questions could be used to stimulate discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Did you like the activity? Why?</li><li>● Do you think working on real cases can be useful? Why?</li><li>● What did you learn?</li><li>● What was the easiest / more difficult part?</li><li>● Would you do it again? Why?</li><li>● rate the activity from 1 to 10</li></ul> <p>TIPS:</p> <p>This activity must be adapted according to the level of knowledge of the participants in terms of Intergenerational Learning. If the participants already experienced valid actions based on Intergenerational Learning, it can be possible for them to work to improve them or support other participants.</p>
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### 3.6 Evaluation

1-- How Intergenerational learning can be defined?

- A) the place where people of all ages can learn together and from each other
- B) a kind of learning that takes place in an organised and structured context
- C) the learning that family members engage in over their lifetimes
- D) all answers are wrong

Correct answer: A



2-- Where Intergenerational Learning can take place?

- A) Workplace
- B) School
- C) Non-classroom setting
- D) All answers are correct

Correct answer: D

3-- Tick the wrong sentence

- A) International Learning is useful to combat ageing stereotypes
- B) International Learning is useful only for elderly
- C) International Learning can foster solidarity throughout the life cycle
- D) International Learning serve to address demographic changes

Correct answer: B

4-- Write three benefits of Intergenerational Learning for old people

5-- Write three benefits of Intergenerational Learning for young people

6-- Write three benefits of Intergenerational Learning activities between children and elderly

Rate from 1 to 10:

- Knowledge acquired on the concept of Intergenerational Learning
- Knowledge on the importance and use of Intergenerational Learning
- Knowledge on the benefits of Intergenerational Learning for the people involved
- Knowledge on the Intergenerational Learning practice between young children and elderly
- Overall satisfaction on the module

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## 4. Intergenerational practice within contexts and settings

### 4.1 Introduction and objectives

Not only socio-demographic changes, but also political and economic factors have led to increasing age segregation in our contemporary Western societies. According to a report about England and Wales (Generations-Apart, 2016), the number of neighbourhoods in which half the population is aged over 50 rose sevenfold in the last 20 years. Every neighbourhood where half the population is under 30 is now urban. There is a growing divergence between the median age of urban areas – especially the city centres – where it is falling, and rural and coastal areas where it has gone up by as much as 15 years. This trend is the same across Europe, faster in the north, slower in the south, but steady.

At the same time, intergenerational relationships represent opportunities for learning, investment in the lives of others and community cohesion.

Can we rely on the traditional family concept to counterbalance the potentially negative consequences of age segregation? What alternative concepts exist to enable us to live the benefits of intergenerational learning and cooperation? This module addresses these questions, particularly the “Community for All Ages” approach and the so-called Third Places concept.

You will learn about

- strategies to strengthen intergenerational bonds in community settings.
- The creation of opportunities for intergenerational learning and cooperation.

## 4.2 Social policy and intergenerational solidarity

### Socio-demographic challenges

Sociologists have gathered a lot of data to analyse socio-demographic change and its effects on intergenerational relations. The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) is the largest pan-European social science panel study providing internationally comparable longitudinal micro data which allow insights in the fields of public health and socio-economic living conditions of European individuals.

The dissolution and reconstitution of families is often accompanied by the geographical separation of family members and requires a restructuring of living arrangements, as does urbanisation and international migration. Migration of younger generations is an important factor challenging traditional family models based on intergenerational solidarity and cohabitation. There exists though a difference between Northern Europe and Southern countries: generally speaking, in the North, there is a tendency for the generations to be isolated, each building their own living conditions, with the state helping the elderly to prolong their independence and limit interdependence. In the South, generations coexist under the same roof and there are likely to be many more intergenerational links than in the North.

In EU countries like Germany and France, where the state has the legal responsibility to protect the family as a fundamental social institution, social policy is giving much attention to support the so-called “sandwich generation”, especially single women, who manage child

and/or elderly care. Intergenerational relationships are often portrayed primarily in favour of the elderly and not always as a reciprocal arrangement. Analysis suggests that caring for older people can have a negative impact on the mental and physical health and life satisfaction of carers. Increasing individualism and persistent age segregation both contribute to social isolation, reinforce stereotypes, and perpetuate ageism. As children are born later and older family members generally live longer, the age gap between generations is also widening. Elderly people feel and are felt to become a burden for their family members when losing their independence, even though there are many facilities that can be put in place to help elderly people to stay at home.

The phenomenon of dependency is not new, but it is becoming increasingly worrying for the public authorities insofar as - because of longer life expectancy - the period of dependency to be cared for is becoming longer. Similarly, the ageing of the population is leading to an increase in the number of cases of dependency that need to be cared for.

### **Intergenerational solidarity**

Most social policy discussions focus only on the economic dimension, as future imbalances in the labour force strain the financial sustainability of public welfare systems. Behind this is the concern about the "burden" that older people are expected to place on the economy and on the labour force. The concept of "intergenerational solidarity" in this context focuses primarily on the younger generation paying taxes to support the pension benefits and health care costs of older people. Although it is of course important to adapt economically to the demographic development of an ageing society, a one-dimensional interpretation of intergenerational solidarity contradicts the original meaning of the term: cohesion between generations.

Solidarity is in fact defined as an *“awareness of shared interests, objectives, standards, and sympathies creating a psychological sense of unity (...). It refers to the ties in a society that bind people together as one.”*

Intergenerational solidarity that is based upon reciprocal relationships between different generations enables an interactive exchange of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, i.e. a true approach to lifelong learning. It recognises that learning is a process that takes place throughout the life course and that people may have different needs and interests at different stages of life. A reciprocal relationship in the situation of support or learning should be such that there is no helper and no cared-for person, but two people who mutually and equally enrich each other through the presence of the other. In the absence of intergenerational exchange, individuals and society are losing the potential knowledge transfer between generations (5th World Conference on Educational Sciences 2013).

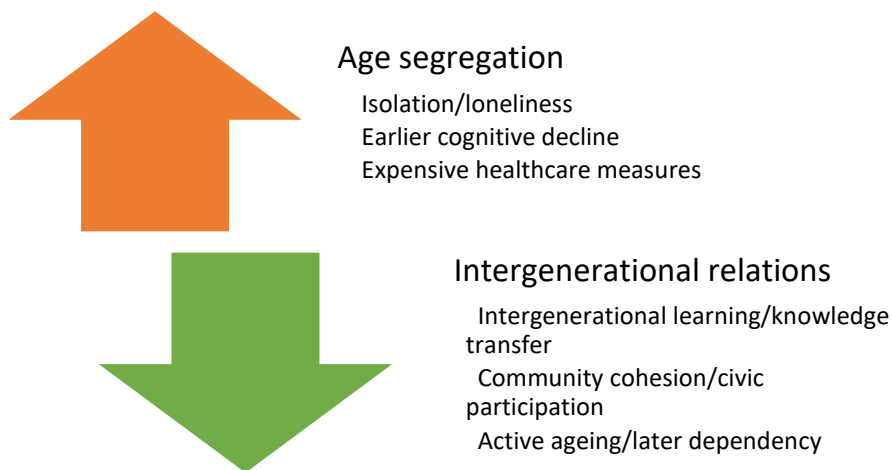
Furthermore, research studies undertaken within the SHARE survey (Silvana Miceli, Laura Maniscalco and Domenica Matranga, 2018) have shown that a social active and participatory life seems to play a crucial role in maintaining cognitive functions in elderly persons while isolation and loneliness leads to early cognitive decline. The studies speak for social policy approaches which promote the participation of older people in a wide range of

activities, especially those who seem to be more socially isolated. Intergenerational relations and activities help keep cognitive abilities and therefore limit healthcare expenditure.

Although this is coherent with the debate of the need to promote social cohesion, most policy makers continue to neglect a clear intergenerational approach in public policy and keep creating environments and conditions that separate and isolate the generations.

It should also be noted that private elderly care homes are a business sector with extremely high profit rates. Private groups, who manage some hundreds of retirement homes, are among the most profitable investments on the stock market (nouvelobs, 2019).

Figure 1 summarises the main disadvantages of age segregation and the potential advantages of an intergenerational approach:



### 4.3 Intergenerational approaches in community cohesion

#### From individual to community benefits

Research on the outcomes of intergenerational practices describes how individual benefits for older and younger people subsequently flow into their communities (5th World Conference on Educational Sciences 2013). However, as this process is not automatic, but dependent on the context, i.e., if there exist opportunities, and if resources are available, the benefits for the community are to be referred to as "potentials".

#### Benefits at individual level:

For older people:

- Increased activity and improved mobility,
- new self-esteem,
- making friends with young people,

- a sense of reduced isolation
- lifelong learning

For children and young people:

- enhanced sense of social responsibility,
- increased self-esteem.
- better school results,
- access to adults at difficult times,
- less involvement in offending and drug use,
- improved school attendance and greater personal resilience

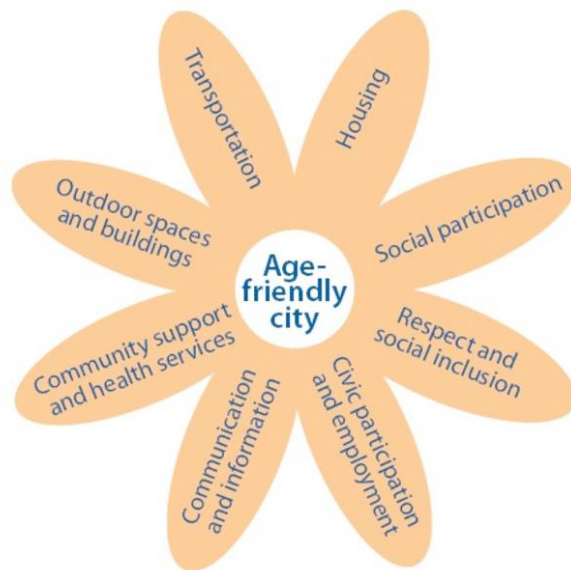
#### **Potentials at community level:**

- The capacity to address community-based policy from a multi-generational perspective.
- Volunteering with the potential for both generations to contribute positively to their community.
- Education and learning activities built on the skills of all ages.

#### **Age-friendly communities and Communities for All Ages**

Children and older people have some things in common when it comes to the reality of their lives in the community. In general, both age groups spend more time in their neighbourhoods than 18–64-year-olds but are paradoxically less involved in decision-making processes about the shaping of their environment. When it comes to neighbourhood transformation measures, older people are often mentioned only as "beneficiaries" of services or as people to be "taken care of" and not as "active contributors". Similarly, 'youth' are often portrayed only in problematic ways in community safety and urban regeneration policies. This kind of institutional ageism can be a significant barrier to the participation of all community members in neighbourhood renewal strategies (5th World Conference on Educational Sciences 2013).

The concept of "age-friendly" communities is based on the idea that a community that is senior-friendly is also beneficial for all other age groups. According to the World Health Organisation 8 interconnected domains can help to identify and address barriers to the well-being and participation of older people.



[Source: WHO 2007b]

The “Communities for All Ages” approach differs from models like “age-friendly,” “child/youth friendly”, and “family friendly” communities which focus primarily on the needs and interests of one targeted age group. The “Communities for All Ages” approach addresses common themes that emerge across all these models, including civic engagement, education/learning, quality health and social services social/family support, and public safety and how these issues impact community residents at all stages of life (Intergenerational Community Building Resource Guide 2012).

Basically, the core element of this approach is the collective and cross-generational action for more sustainable impacts with the aim to improve in the long-term the well-being of all community members: children, young people, older people, and families. Public policy should meet the needs and interests of all generations, which makes it indispensable to also include those in the decision-making process who have not had a say so far, and to support a common agenda.

#### **Features of a Community for All Ages might include:**

- Policies, facilities, and public spaces that foster interaction across generations.
- Opportunities for lifelong civic engagement and learning.
- Diverse and affordable housing and transportation options that address changing needs.
- A physical environment that promotes healthy living and the wise use of natural resources.
- An integrated system of accessible health and social services that supports individuals and families across the life course.

#### **Strategies to strengthen intergenerational cooperation**



Intergenerational community activities should be organised through formal and informal settings, practices and understandings that enable generations to work together in a cooperative way to create mutual benefits. There must be real opportunities for the development of relationships between generations and means of organisational support, for example for NGO's who foster these opportunities. Intergenerational activities should be accessible and inclusive.

Key strategies to strengthen intergenerational community cooperation are:

➤ **Developing alliances across diverse organisations and systems**

This can start, for example, by building an inclusive cross-sectoral team of existing organisations and residents who lead the planning and implementation of actions in the community. This team should

- Analyse the needs and establish shared goals,
- Explore options for bringing diverse groups together,
- Engage diverse stakeholders,
- Create opportunities for reflection through writing and discussion,
- Create a range of roles for team members,
- Identify competencies needed for the team,
- Organise Teambuilding activities,
- .....

➤ **Engaging community residents of all ages in leadership roles**

Empowering residents of all ages to take on leadership roles will build trust and connections between generations and increase their level of civic participation in their community. The residents should feel confident to share their knowledge and opinion and eventually benefit from intergenerational leadership training.

➤ **Creating places, practices, and policies that promote interaction across ages**

Once planning and moving into action, opportunities should be explored to

- Create or transform existing places in shared sites for young and old.
- Create opportunities for civic participation, volunteering, exchange of services, ...
- Create opportunities for intergenerational learning (old from young/young from old)
- Provide training/orientation for different age groups.

➤ **Addressing issues from a life span perspective**

Addressing issues from a life perspective in this context means considering outcomes equally important for all age groups, e.g. when it comes to issues such as safety, health and well-being, immigrant integration or education and lifelong learning.

### Third Places

The term originates from the North American urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg who wrote about the importance of informal public gathering places. A “third place” is defined as social surroundings separate from the two usual social environments of home (“first place”) and the workplace (“second place”). In his book “The Great Good Place” (1991), Oldenburg demonstrated how and why these places are essential to community and public life.

He described third places as places where people can come together, relax after work, put aside their differences, their professional and private worries and simply enjoy good company and lively conversation. According to Oldenburg, they are the heart of the social vitality of any community and the basis of democracy. For these places to function, they need to facilitate a culture of social inclusion, multiculturalism, ethnic diversity, and a balanced social mix, rather than becoming highly segregated, monocultural areas (Oldenburg, 1991).

By its definition, many initiatives that are existing today can be categorised as third places without the need to claim to be one: Community/urban gardens, Repair cafés, Disco Soupe (combating food waste), Makerspace (digital fabrication workshop), cultural centres, ...

At the same time, new self-defined third places combining coworking, digital technology, culture and crafts are growing rapidly, and respond to the desire for social ties reinforced by the crisis caused by Covid-19.

Third places with intergenerational practice can be a possible and viable basis for:

- 1) foster a sense of connection between people (of different age, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs)
- 2) create temporary and permanent venues where a vibrant exchange of ideas can take place
- 3) encourage those ideas to lead to real efforts that bring progress to the community
- 4) Provide a pleasant and lasting social environment for both young people and the elderly, and for all age groups (Haas, 2020).

#### **4.4 Example of good practice: Intergenerational residences**

In France and elsewhere, intergenerational housing projects are taking shape, such as the residences designed by the French company Cocoon'Ages. In cooperation with developers more than 1300 age mixed housing units have been built in France since 2018.



(Source : <https://www.habitat-intergenerationnel-cocoonages.fr/> © Thierry Lavernos)

The concept of Cocoon'Ages is not limited to the façade but accompanies the residents to encourage active neighbourhood life. In each residence, a facilitator is the leader of the cohabitation for a period of two years. He or she promotes social bonding, watches over the weak, organises exchanges, solidarity and encourages saving through the sharing of goods and services (lending of items, services provided). Cocoon'Ages residences have a third place to share a coffee or a meal, to meet, party, cook, craft or learn, and also often a shared garden, either on a terrace or on the ground floor, which encourages the production of local products and animates the community and the neighbourhood through gardening workshops for all ages. The dynamic created by the animator enables the residents to become involved in their living environment, with the aim that the residents will continue to do so after he or she leaves.

His or her tasks are precisely:

- To encourage and support residents' projects.  
Initially a source of proposals, then a facilitator, he or she supports residents' initiatives to create clubs and activities
- To encourage meetings and the creation of social links.  
The facilitator participates in the organisation of regular meetings, shared meals, etc. which create links between residents.
- To encourage savings on expenses: the facilitator supports responsible energy consumption practices, promotes mutualisation and solidarity, and organises voluntary participation by residents in the maintenance of their residence.
- To look after elderly and/or isolated residents.



(Source : <https://www.habitat-intergenerationnel-coconages.fr/> © Thierry Lavernos)

#### 4.5 Learning activity

<b>ACTIVITY or EXERCISE NAME</b>	Mind map of a “Community of tomorrow”
<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	60 minutes
<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	Group activity
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>The participants will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● reflect about strategies on how to develop intergenerational learning and cooperation within a community setting.</li> <li>● Develop an action plan with possible opportunities for civic participation and exchange.</li> <li>● Discuss possible barriers and how to address them.</li> </ul>
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Paperboard, pens
<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<p>Inspired by the WHO 8 interconnected domains of liveability the participants will choose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- civic participation</li> <li>- housing, outdoor spaces and buildings</li> <li>- intergenerational learning</li> </ul>

as starting points of a large-size mind map. Participants will reflect in 3 smaller groups for each area on strategies and an action plan to develop an intergenerational dimension for a "community of tomorrow" for the well-being of all age groups. Depending on the overall size of the group, the activity can take place in alternating rounds, or each group of participants can focus on one of the areas for the duration of the activity. Participants in each group should represent the interests and needs of the different age groups, or together they put themselves in the shoes of each age. To make the activity more challenging 3 scenarios can be presented:

### SCENARIO 1

- o Rural area/small town
- o High percentage of people 60 years +
- o Families but few young people 18-25 years
- o Working population commutes
- o Many shops and all pubs closed

### SCENARIO 2

- o Suburb/Social housing area
- o People from all ages
- o Multi-ethnic
- o High unemployment rate
- o Safety problems
- o School dropouts

### SCENARIO 3

- o Neighbourhood area/City
- o More and more young people (20-35 years)
- o Residents changing often
- o Flats rented by Airbnb/gentrification
- o Impoverishment of the elderly residents
- o Noise disturbance (pubs, parties...)

### Debriefing:

Participants present the strategies and the action plan they have designed for each area on the mind map and discuss them with the rest of the group.

	<p>The facilitator could ask the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ What are the benefits for each age group?</li><li>➤ How easily could these strategies be implemented?</li><li>➤ What are the possible barriers to their implementation?</li><li>➤ In which community situations do you think it is easiest/difficult to implement intergenerational practices and why?</li></ul> <p><b>Adaptation:</b> This learning activity can be adapted as intergenerational activity with participants of different ages who imagine together a “community of tomorrow”.</p>
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#### 4.6 Evaluation

- To what extent did this module address your professional or personal situation?
- What specifically did you learn that you did not know or were not aware of?
- Which of these will you be able to apply or implement in practice and how?

#### 4.7 References

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## 5. How to plan and implement an Intergenerational Learning activity?

### 5.1 Introduction and objectives

The aim of this module is to provide a guide to the process of developing, implementing and evaluating an intergenerational learning activity.

During this module you will learn the following:

- Planning and development
- Implementation
- Monitoring, evaluation and sustainability.

Intergenerational activities across all learning settings should be purposefully planned to include learning outcomes which will have a direct impact or benefit to all those involved.

### 5.2 Planning and development

#### Designing your project

The first step involves creating your project, and in doing so, you will need to consider the following:

Project goals: What is it you want to get out of the activity? It is ok to be honest with yourself. For some it might be “to improve the lives of others”, for others it might be “to make money and attract more residents”.

Following this you should also decide what you will need physically for the activity:

- Premises (Access, location, transport etc)
- Staffing capacity (Do you have the financial capacity to run the activity? Do you have the staff capacity? Do you have any volunteers that could help?)
- Time (What would be a suitable time or day for the activity?)
- Activity Participants (Who will be your participants? What will be their age?). It is important to consider this carefully in order to design the activity to suit both the physical and cognitive abilities of all involved.

The needs and capabilities of individuals in both groups should be carefully considered to ensure everyone is fully able to participate, without risk to health or well-being

You should now have decided on the question of “why to carry out an intergenerational activity”, “who will be involved” and possibly “where will it take place”. The next step will be



to link this together by writing down “what is it that your project sets out to do and how will you do it”. We will look more into this in the evaluation section.

## Forming Partnerships

Now you have decided why you want to create this project/activity and how you can accomplish it, you may need to form a partnership with another service provider.

Choosing an organisation that shares the same values as your organisation is essential in a successful project/activity. Different ways of doing things can lead to possible conflict and tension, however if you can establish a trusting relationship, you are much more likely to work cohesively. It is essential that the partnership is mutually beneficial.

When forming a partnership, it is important to consider the following:

- Type of service they offer (Pre-school / kindergarten, school, retirement living, residential care home etc)
- Type of organisation (charity, not for profit, for profit, community etc)
- Capacity (number of staff, residents, children, services provided)
- Proximity / travel
- Physical environment (size of venue, car park, outdoor space etc)

## Funding your project

It is important to make sure appropriate funding is available and to be realistic about what can be achieved. Effective strategic planning, the involvement of partners and the mainstreaming of intergenerational activity can be critical for sustainability

There are always difficult decisions to be made about funding, and specific programmes bringing together people of different ages may well be beyond the current capacities of many organisations.

There may be grants or funding available to help with developing, planning and implementing your Intergenerational activity. If not, look at ways of carrying it out on a “budget”. Can you use a venue which is free? Can the school bring the children with their teachers? Can the activity involve free resources? Is there a community bus or volunteers to help with travel?

## 5.3 Implementation

### Selecting and recruiting participants

Selecting and recruiting participants to take part in an Intergenerational activity is one of the most important steps. Always remember the purpose of the activity and how they will benefit from it. In general, the ratio of young people to older people is a key factor for achieving a successful intergenerational activity.

The selection (especially of older people) is important of course depending on the activity. Understanding the needs of the participants is crucial for a positive outcome.

Many people do not identify with being disabled or old and are put off by advertising that focuses on disability. When recruiting new participants, consider the language you use and the materials you distribute. It's important to reinforce clear messages and remember accessibility.

How will you access and select your participants? For example, for the children it may be parents or school / pre-school. For the older people it may be the older person themselves or their carer or care home staff.

You will also need to decide who will be recruiting your participants: your organisation's manager or general staff? What would they say or how will they contact participants / organisations in order to attract their interest?

Once you have developed your recruitment process, you need to think about what marketing materials you may need in order to "sell" your activity to potential participants.

These may include a poster, flyer, emails, information sessions etc.

If you are producing and using marketing materials. Think about where you place your posters, advertising and what calls to action you have for the participants.

Things to consider: Many older people use traditional communication channels to find out about activities e.g. printed newspapers, radio and television. You should also look at ways to maximise word of mouth and some social media sites (Facebook in particular), posters and adverts. Key influencers may be health professionals, family and/or friends.

### **Participant information session and data collection procedures**

It is critical that once you have recruited your participants, they are all fully aware of the program's purpose and what it entails.

It is recommended that each of the participant groups receive information or orientation sessions.

These are a great way to meet your participants and start building a rapport with them so that they feel at ease and excited to participate in the activity.

The information sessions may be held at their existing service, or preferably at the location where the program will take place, which will allow the participants to familiarise themselves with the space so that they feel comfortable on the first day of the program.

It's a good idea to put together a welcome packet for the participants so they have something to refer to (especially for the older participants).

As children under the age of 18 are unable to offer consent, they must obtain permission to participate in the activity from a legal guardian or parent.

It's also crucial to remember that the child has the right to choose whether or not to participate. While we ask the parents for permission, we frequently forget to ask the child if they want to participate.

Always remember to ask the child if they want to join in so that they may always opt out if they don't feel comfortable.

Older adults could also be considered a vulnerable group, and those suffering from cognitive impairment or decline may be unable to give consent. Prior to beginning the activity, approval from a designated guardian must be sought.

A Participant Information and Consent Form is used to get written informed consent. This form should include a statement of the activity's aim and what the participants are expected to do. It should also identify any potential risks or benefits to the participants. The forms should be in non-technical, plain language for ease of understanding.

The following stage is to figure out how you'll gather your data. This includes information such as the data source, participant groups, and date the data was collected.

There are various methods of collecting data such as:

- Surveys (Pre and post)
- Videos
- Participant mood scales (pre and post)
- Costings and budgets

### **Delivery of Intergenerational Learning activity**

This is the most enjoyable part. Prior to each activity/session, team members should gather to create a session goal that benefits both older adults and children, as well as design activities to accomplish the intended learning outcome.

Below are some factors to think about:

Programme design and preparation:

- Use groups of equal numbers of people of different ages
- Locate the project in a neutral environment (wherever possible)
- Provide frequent contact between participants

Content/activity design:

- Choose an activity that requires cooperation between age groups and reduces competition
- Sharing goals between the two groups is one way of encouraging cooperation
- Design activities that encourage sharing of personal information (if applicable for age groups)

- Allow or encourage the groups to learn about each other as individuals (again if applicable for age groups)

Points to consider:

- Stereotypes (images and assumptions about a group) are often widely recognised across society and may be harder and slower to change than individuals' personal attitudes about older people and age.

Features to avoid:

- Patronising communication towards any participant
- Communication from older adults that is overtly personal
- Unequal groups (either size, or status)
- Situations where individuals can avoid contact altogether
- Situations where one group is dominant over the other
- Environments unfamiliar to, or uncomfortable for, either group
- Situations or tasks that confirm negative stereotypes of either group
- Observers or onlookers who are not participating in the programme

At the end of each session, the team should reflect on the activity/session. Ask yourselves:

- How did it go?
- Was the session goal achieved? If so, to what extent? If not, why not?
- What could have been done differently?
- Did you need to adapt the intended plan in any way to deal with any unexpected issues etc?

## 5.4 Monitoring, evaluation and sustainability

### Selecting methods and measures for your evaluation

Think about sustainability from the start and think about the effect or consequences that will result from the activity finishing.

Evaluation:

- When possible, evaluate the programme
- Identify the outcomes the programme aims to achieve
- Find or create measures to gauge the outcomes

Always remember to treat participant feedback confidentially.

Evaluation is something we do all the time when we look back on activities and does not have to be an ongoing time-consuming process. We tend to do it, in particular, when something goes wrong, but we also need to do it when activities go well.

It is vitally important to think about the difference that the activity has made to the participants and not just the activity itself.

You will need to check in at predetermined intervals to assess how things are going, whether the activity's/objectives sessions are being accomplished, and whether the participants are being exposed to any additional risk as a result of participation in the activity/session.

Some issues that could arise and may need dealing with are:

- Travel arrangements
- Participants missing sessions
- Staff capacity
- Resources – lack of materials and equipment
- Room / location
- Activity facilitation – not being able to engage the participants

It is critical to keep track of the activities and sessions. This can be accomplished in a fun way by creating a project notebook or scrapbook with session ideas, images, and other materials.

If creating a programme consisting of many activities/ sessions over a period of time, it is important to do something special on the last day. This could be a small party or celebration. You could even present each participant with a book of photos taken during the programme.

There are many methods and measures that can be used to evaluate your activity/session, depending on the participants. Such methods as: Surveys, mood scales and general questions can help you to assess if it has been successful.

Through support and commitment of partners it allows intergenerational coordinators to draw on their expertise and can help ensure sustainability.

### **Disseminating results**

It is important to share your activity/session experience and learnings in order to transfer information and continue to increase understanding of intergenerational programmes and improve practice.

There are many ways to disseminate your experience and learnings, but you should always remember to gain permission before sharing photos / videos etc.

Inviting members of your local council to visit an activity could be a good way for them to see the benefits first hand and may inspire them to look at ways they can support further intergenerational programmes and initiatives.

For the broader community you could use newsletters, social media or the media in general.

- Newsletters: A newsletter is a good way to get the word out about what you're doing. They can keep the general public up to date on project progress and demonstrate the value of intergenerational activities.
- Social media: Social media platforms can be effective tools for disseminating information about the activity/session and its results. A good social media presence can help people be more aware of your work.
- General Media: Media such as newspapers, radio, television, and the internet are all excellent avenues to raise awareness about your intergenerational programme. You might start with local media in your area, but you could even go national. Journalists may frequently ask for an interview and may even come to shoot photographs. This may seem frightening at first but spreading the word about your work is essential.

Working with children and older people, “it is important to be aware of child protection and safeguarding issues when taking photos of or filming children and young people. The potential for misuse of images can be reduced if organisations are aware of the potential dangers and put appropriate measures in place.

You should also consider the data protection implications of making, using and storing images of children and young people for your organisation’s use” (Ref 1: NSPCC Learning). A disclaimer should always be used and signed by either participant (older person) or legal guardian/parent (child) when taking photos or videos. The disclaimer form should also inform the participant if the images are to be used on social media / general media etc. Legally, all participants should be able to choose whether or not they are happy for their images to be used for dissemination purposes.

### 5.5 Example of good practice: Crafting with nature

Intergenerational activities can be varied and the participants can vary also. “Intergenerational” can be defined as involving persons of different generations. Most people think of intergenerational as involving young children and old people. However, it could be young adults and old people.

An example of this is an activity where young adults with varying disabilities took part in an activity with older people.

Through close collaboration with 2 organisations, it was agreed to hold the activity at the day care centre where the disabled young people frequented. A minibus was arranged to take the older people to the venue for the day’s activity. Through planning and development of the activity it was decided to carry out the activity at a table, whereby all participants could take part. The activity was a craft activity and involved the participants moving around the garden to collect flowers and leaves. The flowers and leaves were then placed between 2 pieces of muslin cloth and hit with a stone or something heavy for a few minutes. Following this once piece of muslin was removed along with the flowers/leaves, leaving a piece of muslin with colourful prints on it. This was then displayed in a frame.

This activity was cheap to carry out, accessible for all, fun to take part in and involved much discussion and interaction throughout the group. The participants all had a souvenir to take home also.

For this activity to be successful both organisations had to work closely together to carry out risk assessments, think about venue and transport along with deciding on what evaluation and dissemination tools to use.

Evaluation took place in the form of mood scales. The participants were shown faces on a sheet of paper with differing moods. They each pointed to which one they were feeling before the activity took place. After the activity the process was repeated.

Dissemination took place in the form of a newsletter and social media (following signed consent forms from the participants).

Following the activity, the 2 organisations met a week later to discuss the day and reflect on how it went. It was agreed that it was a success and something they wished to continue.



## 5.6 Learning activities

<b>1. ACTIVITY or EXERCISE NAME</b>	Dancing in the Mirror
<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	5 minutes
<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	Pairs activity.
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The participants will improve: strength, balance and flexibility. Especially the older people but also the younger participants.</li> <li>• The participants will also develop trust and have a responsibility to keep each other safe.</li> <li>• The participants will improve their focus</li> <li>• Build rapport between young people and older adults.</li> </ul>
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Open space
<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Create intergenerational teams, each with a young person and an older adult</li> <li>2) Ask one member to volunteers to be “the leader”</li> <li>3) The partners stand or sit close together, facing one another</li> <li>4) The leader starts a slow movement of hands, shoulders, head etc, while the other group member mirrors the leader`s movements</li> <li>5) After a time, the other member of the team becomes the leader and the process is repeated.</li> <li>6) The result is a synchronised dance of movement that can be effective in lightening tension and fostering concentration and enjoyment.</li> </ol>
<b>2.ACTIVITY or EXERCISE NAME</b>	Did you ever?
<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	As long as you want it to take, no restrictions
<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	Can be a pairs activity, but works better in a group
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the participants it is a great way to remember and share memories</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stimulate the brain</li> </ul>
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Various cards with topics written on them.
<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Each person in a pair or group tells a true story about a topic.</li> <li>2) These stories should be in as much detail as possible.</li> <li>3) Topic ideas could be:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you ever.....</li> <li>● See a lion</li> <li>● Go swimming</li> <li>● Go on a boat</li> <li>● Go to the beach</li> <li>● See a circus</li> <li>● Win a prize</li> <li>● Have a pet</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>Considerations: Both adults and children are likely to have memories on some of the topics, however, if they don't encourage them to make a story up. As you go around each person in the group or each pair takes turns be aware that some participants may not be as open or confident to take part.</p>

### 5.7 Evaluation

- Have you planned and implemented an activity previously in your professional capacity?
- Would you feel confident now in planning and implementing an intergenerational learning activity? If so, how and why?
- What do you feel is the most important aspect when it comes to planning and implementing an intergenerational learning activity?
- What have you learned that you were not aware of, or didn't know before?

### 5.8 References

[Photography and sharing images guidance | NSPCC Learning](#)

[5252d276ca45a-GWT brochure FINAL.pdf \(generationsworkingtogether.org\)](#)

## 6. How to facilitate Intergenerational Learning activities?

### 6.1 Introduction and objectives

When creating a positive learning environment, or implementing any kind of learning activity, it is of paramount importance to pay close attention to the target demographic. Anything from cultural, social, and financial background to previous life experiences may influence the successful creation and implementation of your activity. One of the most common yet crucial criteria for a target demographic is their age. Age influences the complexity, terminology, aesthetic, and methodology of implementing a learning activity and must be taken into consideration. While this is true of environments that have a specific age bracket, it is doubly true of learning environments where there is a much larger age range, which we would call intergenerational learning. For the purpose of this chapter, we will be taking a deeper look into both addressing the needs of an intergenerational target demographic, but also the obstacles they may present, as well as the tools to overcome them.

### 6.2 Identifying and overcoming generational barriers

#### What is the demographic?

First and foremost, let's begin by identifying the target demographic of this handbook. On one side, we have an elderly target group that is of retirement age and upwards, while on the other side we have preschool-age children.

Let's begin by discussing the elderly target group, there is a lifetime of experiences to take into consideration, both in terms of emotional requirements but also physicality. For example, activities that involve physical movement may prove difficult, though this should not be assumed, while activities that do not provide enough mental stimulation may seem condescending.

At the other end of the age spectrum, we have the preschool target group. For children of this age, language, reasoning, and fine motor skills are still being developed meaning that overly intricate or complex games will prove first and foremost frustrating rather than entertaining.

#### Intergenerational differences: a closer look

Let's break down more closely the intergenerational differences that are likely to arise in a mixed age group.

Firstly, there is the physical aspect. Physical differences between a young child and an elderly adult will be the most outwardly apparent, while children are still developing physically, elderly people are likely to be facing physical deterioration and the problems that brings. The

way that this presents itself as an obstacle varies from person to person, but as an example: children may benefit from a more energetic vigour, but for younger children especially, their fine motor skills are still developing. The reverse of this may be found in elderly people who feel lethargic when it comes to full-body physical movement but have a lifetime of development for things like hand-eye coordination or dexterous hand movements. In reality, these are generalisations, and it may not always be so apparent what the generational differences are, for example with Elderly people that suffer from arthritis, dexterity may prove incredibly challenging or even impossible.

Another strong difference between the young and elderly is their mental development. It goes without saying that children are at a very crucial stage of their mental development where they face constant mental stimulation from new environments and experiences. This can without proper care create frustration through over-exposure: where a child may be keen to learn a new activity, they require time, patience, and incremental steps otherwise the experience may push them away. For the elderly, while they have a lifetime of educational experiences, care homes can create an environment that enables mental stagnation if preventative steps are not taken. In some scenarios, the elderly may struggle to find motivation for more mentally stimulating activities because to them it may seem condescending.

This brings us neatly to the final major intergenerational difference that often presents itself which is emotional development.

### **Active remedies for Intergenerational difficulties**

Now that we have identified the typical intergenerational differences that may appear in the target group, let's look at some ways we can counteract this.

Firstly, when faced with a group of mixed abilities, the easiest way you can ensure that an activity is accessible is to have a variable difficulty level. This may be done through the use of easier vocabulary or fewer crucial steps, before slowly adding more parameters to create a greater challenge. For example, if playing a memory-based game, you could begin with only a few items that the player must remember, increasing the number to match their success. The same can be done with team games, either by adjusting the game itself or even by creating balanced teams so that no one team has a greater advantage.

Another way to combat these intergenerational barriers is to ensure that the learning environment is accessible and accommodating to the needs of the target group. This means that when conducting activities, things such as physical or mental disabilities should always be considered. For example, this can be done by ensuring that games requiring physical activity can also be played by people in a wheelchair, or that an activity requiring mental acuity has considerations for players with ADHD.

Finally, the design of activities themselves should be considered when tackling intergenerational activities. This could be done by something like the choice of colours to allow for players with colour blindness, or the use of braille on vocabulary cards or larger game pieces to allow for players with poor hand-eye coordination.

## **6.3 Generating effective social interaction**

## The importance of introduction

In order to topple intergenerational boundaries, while we will be able to influence this process, in the end, the act itself must come from the target group themselves. Both the elderly and young children must engage in meaningful social contact in order to break these barriers, our job is simply to facilitate this interaction.

The natural response amongst strangers in a new environment is one of introversion. In order to light the spark of social interaction, it's important to focus on an introductory stage. When done correctly, the use of an "ice breaker" activity can quickly create a relaxed atmosphere which will, in turn, lead to more natural interactions and further the enjoyment of more activities.

Introductory activities are often simple in their nature, non-competitive, and will quickly allow both parties (in this case the elderly and young children) to create a sense of each other's personality and therefore feel more relaxed.

## Creating a safe learning environment

When dealing with an intergenerational group, it's important to create a secure environment for the group. If you create an environment where the participants feel comfortable both physically and emotionally, they will be able to commit themselves to the activity and therefore reap the biggest reward.

Creating this environment is not as easy as it may first appear. First of all, let's address an emotionally safe and welcoming environment. This begins with the care worker themselves, with a kind disposition and expressive personality, the first person in the environment that the participants will look to is the carer. This is doubly true for children as at such a young age, children require a strong adult figure to whom they can trust. Beyond this, in terms of the physical environment, it should be well lit, spacious, and warm, without unnecessary clutter.

## 6.4 Promoting diversity, inclusion and equity

### Identifying diverse needs

Now that we've discussed at length the common intergenerational, social, and environmental barriers that may stand between a positive experience for the target group, let's take a deeper dive into the external barriers that may present themselves.

Outside of age, the biggest variation between each of the participants in the target group is their background. Everything from cultural background, economic and social standing, education, living conditions, all have a diverse and complicated effect on the needs and expectations of the participant. For the younger children within the target group, while they may seem too young for some of these aspects to affect their needs, the background of their parents will have a strong effect on their development and their needs.

Something else to consider when conducting activities within a safe learning environment is any potential disabilities that the target group may have. We have discussed this briefly already but addressing the needs of any disabled participants is of paramount importance. As previously stated, creating activities with disabilities in mind will allow for an inclusive environment that will ensure that no participant in the target group is left out of an activity.

By creating and directing an activity that takes stock of the needs of disabled participants, you inherently create an inclusive environment.

In terms of social differences that may appear when conducting activities, obstacles such as native language, social norms, traditions, religious beliefs and gender will affect what the participants consider to be acceptable behaviour and perhaps more importantly, what they may find offensive or unacceptable. In order to confront this, it is best when creating and conducting an activity to consider the implications of the vocabulary used, as well as things like imagery and aesthetics in order to prevent any participant from being insulted or creating any friction amongst the focus group.

### **Tearing down walls**

Now that we've identified the barriers that may present themselves when creating and leading activities for the target group, how can we act as a positive force to tear down these barriers?

Firstly, as the care worker, it is pertinent that you act as a strong leading example for the target group. By acting with compassion and acceptance when leading the activities and engaging with the participants, you simultaneously create expectations for the target group to meet but also set the example that they will follow to meet those expectations. By meeting the needs of the target group, you also communicate to them your needs in terms of leading a positive social engagement for those involved.

Finally, the best tool at your disposal when it comes to leading an inclusive and welcoming social experience is in how you create and lead the activities that the target group will be engaging with. As we've already discussed, the best way to create an inclusive experience is to tailor your activities to the needs and expectations of your target group, the following section will enable you to do just that.

### **6.5 Example of good practice: Creating games with variable difficulty level**

Let's discuss how Intergenerational activities target two specific generational groups: The elderly (65+) and young children (4-5 years old). In order to adapt the games according to these two specific social categories, we must consider their physical and mental conditions, so that we can create games with several difficulty levels and adaptable games which suit their conditions.

If we want to create Intergenerational activities, it might be important to take in consideration the problems that have to face elderly people, such as the loss of memory, as well as physical problems due to their age (incapacity of moving, illness, ...). It is also necessary to adapt the activities according to the children, so both generations, elderly people and children, can enjoy the games and time that they spend together.

Considering the children, a close attention must be paid on creating games suitable to their degree of attention and concentration. Indeed, children can have different levels of concentration, depending on several variables. In this perspective, games with different difficulty levels can help to adapt this element, by lowering and increasing the level according to the situation and the condition of the children.

Considering those elements, one question should be on the centre of our attention: what do you do to the game to give them variable difficulty levels?

First of all, as we previously said, creating games with variable difficulty levels is fundamental in order to give the most inclusive side of this moment. To do so, we can use as an example the “Memory” game: Indeed, this game with multiple pairs which must be found can present several difficulty levels. You might start with ten pairs, then increase the level by adding ten more cards, so twenty cards in total, ... . Different difficulty levels can also exist for the game “Fishes”. The participants must follow the sequence of colours and the direction of the arrows on the paper, in order to place the fishes on one line. This logical game uses generally four colours in one line, but if we want to include several difficulty levels to this game we can first start by a lower number of colours and arrows (two colours and two arrows), as well as the number of lines (one or two line to begin), instead of usually four lines, intending to increase these elements if the level can be higher.

Variable difficulty levels do not always mean that the level of each game must be the same for young children and older people. Indeed, some games can be easier for older people than for children, as it can be easier for young people than older adults. Considering this element, a game such as “I spy with my little eye”, which is an observation game, can include different levels based on the age of the participants who must guess the object or the person to find: the purpose of this game is to find the object or the person that a participant describes in the room. To create fairness in the execution of this activity, the children can choose a more difficult object to be guessed by the elderly people while the older people choose an easier object for the children. The opposite can also be taken into consideration for more physical activities. As the children could have more possibilities of moving than the elderly people, we must take into account the importance of adapting and facilitating the level of the activity for old people while the level for the children remains the same as the original level of the game or can even be higher if it is possible.

However, it is important to keep in mind that any games can be adapted with variable difficulty levels, this fact does not refer only to the examples we just gave, and care workers should always look for new difficulty levels.

As we now know how we can possibly add variable difficulty levels to the games, we can ask ourselves what comes out of this method. What is the benefit of creating various difficulty levels?

To permit the participants to spend a moment together in a safe place, a place where they feel comfortable enough to blossom, this approach is a good way to bring fun and inclusive moments for both generations. It is also a simple way of facilitating intergenerational learning by adapting levels according to the participants. We must indeed take into account their different and personal backgrounds, their personal needs as well as their personal conditions.

It is extremely important to consider how elderly people and children feel during the activities. Are they comfortable? After evaluating this variable, the option of increasing the level of the games can be chosen and something more difficult can be made. Therefore, it is fundamental to keep in mind that the activities are not necessarily about level, but also about creating a safe and enjoyable environment for both old people and young children.

### 6.6 Learning activity

<b>ACTIVITY OR EXERCISE NAME</b>	<b>World Café</b>
<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	20-30 minutes
<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	Max. 5 participants at a table
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>This activity is a good exercise to stimulate old people and children and to permit them to have conversations over one or several topics.</p> <p>By the end of the activity, the participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Introduce themselves</li> <li>-Create familiarity with other participants</li> <li>-Create an emotional bond</li> <li>-Express personal opinions in a safe environment</li> </ul>
<b>MATERIALS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Table</li> <li>-Something to eat (fruits, cake, ...)</li> <li>-Maybe a person to lead the discussion</li> </ul>
<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<p>Elderly people and young children can sit around a table, in order to discuss a topic. For the activity to be relevant, it must be better to avoid large groups at the same table and prefer to divide the participants in a small group of maximum 5 participants (2 children, 3 elderly people or the opposite, 3 children and 2 older people).</p> <p>This topic can be chosen by the participants. The topic can be different each time this activity is made and must create a link between children and old people: therefore, is it essential to implement an easy topic, which can be discussed by both generations all together. Questions about their private opinions can be asked, such as: What is your favourite game? Which are your hobbies? It is also possible that the children and older people talk about their day or their week or what comes to their mind at the moment, leading them to an open question:</p>

How was your week so far? What did you do?

The aim of this activity is for elderly people and children to share a moment all together, in order to get to know each other and create boundaries in a safe environment. Thereby, we must keep in mind that the topic does not have to be too specific or too difficult, what is important is to succeed in making the participants talk all together about anything and create an emotional bond all together. It could be interesting to let a “leader” (for example a care worker) implement and lead the conversation. The leader can also make sure that everyone is taking part of the discussion, but without putting pressure on a child or an old person, by asking directly to a participant a question or trying to catch his attention. But as this exercise is a way to create a comfortable environment for the participants, it is highly important to not insist if a participant is not willing to take part of it and just make sure that the child or the elderly person does not focus too much on something else and continues to participate in an indirect way, by listening the others.

At the end of the activity or during the activity, a cake or any kind of food can be eaten by the participants to create a comfortable environment for both generations. Hot beverages or juice can also be served to the participants.

## 6.7 Evaluation

- Have you experienced difficulties when working with intergenerational groups?
- How would you identify the different needs of both an individual participant and an intergenerational group as a whole?
- What challenges could arise when implementing an activity with variable difficulty levels and how could you work to overcome them?

## 6.8 References

The concept of the World Café. <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>