

Evaluation report of intergenerational workshops

Important aspect of the project was to use the exhibition as an impetus to organize various activities that would engage direct beneficiaries. Therefore, the organizations committed themselves to organize and implement activities that contribute to promotion of active aging and positive image of aging and elderly people. Since the emphasis of the project is on lifelong learning as an important aspect of active aging, workshops that promote and include intergenerational learning were indispensable part of the project. **Intergenerational Learning (IL)** is a way that people of all ages can learn together and from each other. IL is an important part of Lifelong Learning, where the generations work together to gain skills, values and knowledge. Beyond the transfer of knowledge, IL fosters reciprocal learning relationships between different generations and helps to develop social capital and social cohesion in our ageing societies. IL is one way of addressing some of the significant demographic changes and is as a way of enhancing intergenerational solidarity through intergenerational practice (IP). The main issues addressed by Intergenerational Learning (IGL) approaches throughout Europe reflect the challenges of today's European society: the digital divide between the young and the old, drop-out rates that are still worryingly high in some countries and literacy problems, risk of social exclusion for vulnerable groups such as senior citizens, migrants and young people at risk. Figures from Eurostat shown that currently EU27 has 141 millions of inhabitants aged between 50 and 70 years old, but only 6,5 millions participates in education or training activities (Pinto, 2010). The Europe 2020 Strategy – COM (2010) 2020, exhort us to become more green and more clever. An intelligent society will be able to harness the potential of all people, regardless of age. The intergenerational perspective represents a crucial add value to specific EU initiatives, such the **Agenda for new skills and jobs**: Intergenerational skills have the potential to create **a new professional profile** beside to **improve the quality of the services provided**, constitutes a contribute “to bridge the skills gap for the jobs of the future (...) new academic specializations need to be promoted”; also contribute to **foster a new entrepreneurial culture**, namely trough the "recognition of initiatives to help young and old people who wish to create an intergenerational business together" and improve “knowledge sharing in the workplace to enable different generations to develop new skills and understanding of the whole workforce”(Ibid: 3). There is evidence that intergenerational learning provides a non-threatening first step to further learning for those who perceive learning to be irrelevant or who have had humiliating experiences in the past.

The workshops took place during the exhibition and the photos were used to provoke young people to question their stereotypes related to old age and to involve in intergenerational activities. The workshops took place in Novi Sad, Užice, Leskovac, Bor and Belgrade and they were organized in

cooperation with primary schools and volunteer centers. The main topics were related to stereotypes and prejudices on aging and old age (*Intergenerational workshop on active aging*), creative workshops where elderly and young people worked together were organized (for instance *Intergenerational musical workshop*, *Creative intergenerational workshop on textile*, *Intergenerational workshop on the occasion of the Day of the Book*, *Intergenerational workshop on cooking, gastronomy and nutrition*), ICT training and workshop related to carrier counseling where elderly were discussed with young people about their carrier choices and paths. According to evaluation workshop proved to be very valuable to both young and old generation. Although creative workshops were focused on manual work and skills, they promoted values of active aging. Young people perceive elderly as persons with great experience and knowledge, willing to teach but also to be taught. It is also significant for young people to feel heard and appreciated.

Evaluation results

The answers of workshop participants are given. Their responses were coded and distributed in categories. The frequency of each category is presented in pie chart. Answerers of young people and elderly people are given separately.

1. Reasons for attending the workshop

Young people

Better communication with elderly

To engage in resolving problems of elderly people

Interest in volunteering work

To hear experience of elderly

To learn something new

Elderly people

To transfer experience to younger generation

To learn something new

Teachers' invitation

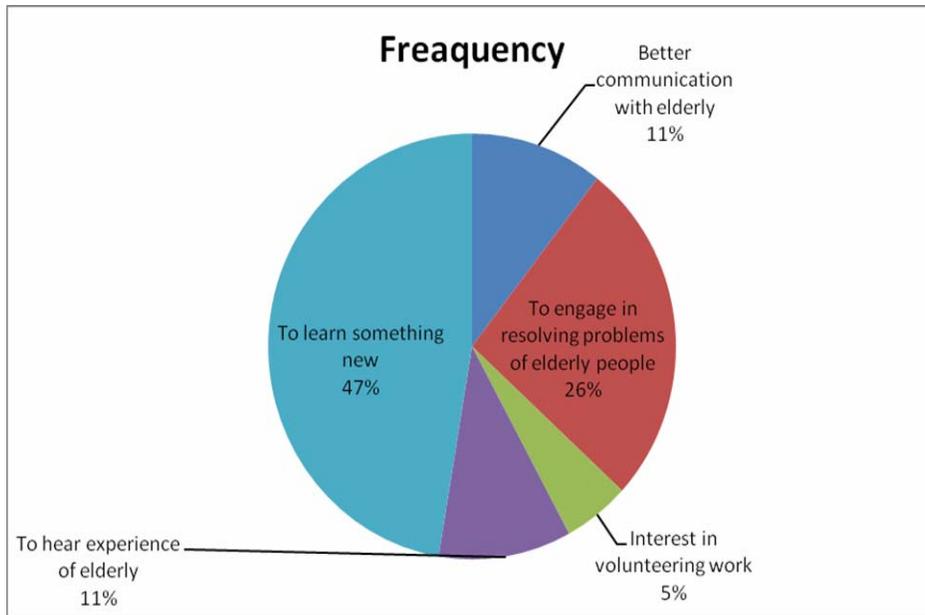


Chart 1: Reasons for attendance – young people

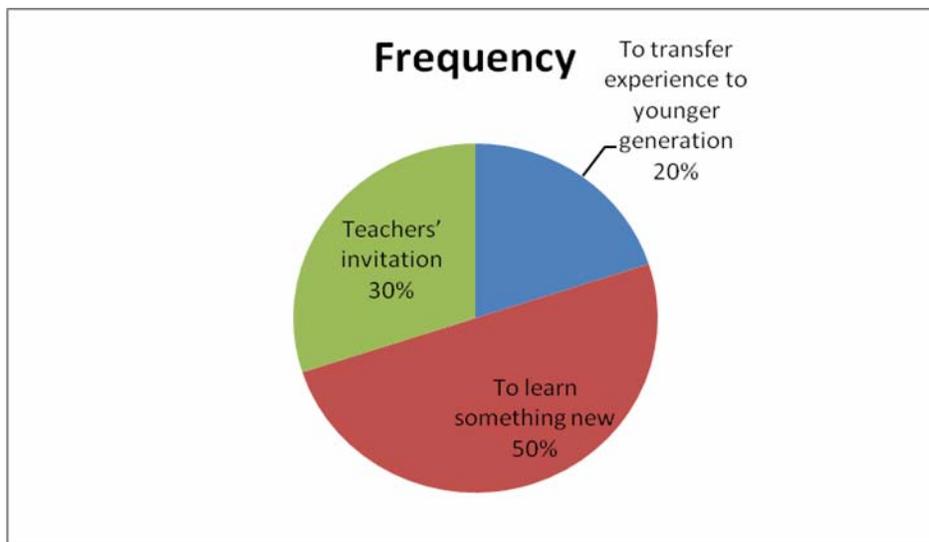


Chart 2: Reasons for attendance – elderly people

2. Fulfillment of expectations (out of 5)

4, 61

Comments:

These are first steps

It is good idea to engage elderly people

I loved the event

We heard youngsters, elderly and we understood what could be permanent message

Very interesting messages

Children were very cooperative

I have heard interesting stories about life and work

It was interesting and nice to listen to advice of elderly people

It helped me

New information, aliveness of elderly, clever advices. I loved it.

3. Participants were aware of elderly discrimination before the workshop

3,6

Comments:

Not this way

I meet elderly people every day and I know about their discrimination

I did not know about that

As much as we could notice

We did not feel discriminated

I did not know anything about that

I do not feel old, it is luxury for me

I do not like word discrimination

4. The workshop helped participants to understand their stereotypes

4,39

Comments:

It made me think more

Young people have many stereotypes about elderly

It helped me to understand the situation of elderly people

I understood that we can learn a lot from them

5. The participants better understand their responsibility in overcoming negative image about elderly

4,44

Comments:

Now we know how we can help elderly people

After workshop I will be more interested in problems of elderly people

I do not think that anybody has negative image about elderly people

We can learn a lot from elderly

Elderly people are source of knowledge and I will always listen to their advice

It depends on us how young people will think about elderly people

6. Participants are motivated to engage in activity that would contribute to overcoming negative image about elderly

4,34

Comments:

Trough student parliament

To organize different activities, but I don't know how

To pay more attention to elderly people

To organize various events

I understood that elderly had a good life and therefore I respect them

This workshop inspired me to think about possibilities

7. The biggest impression from the workshop

Discussion about the problem

Giving suggestions about future actions

Students' presentations

The messages that we wrote to elderly

Elderly experience

Presence of young people

Children's interests in our life experience

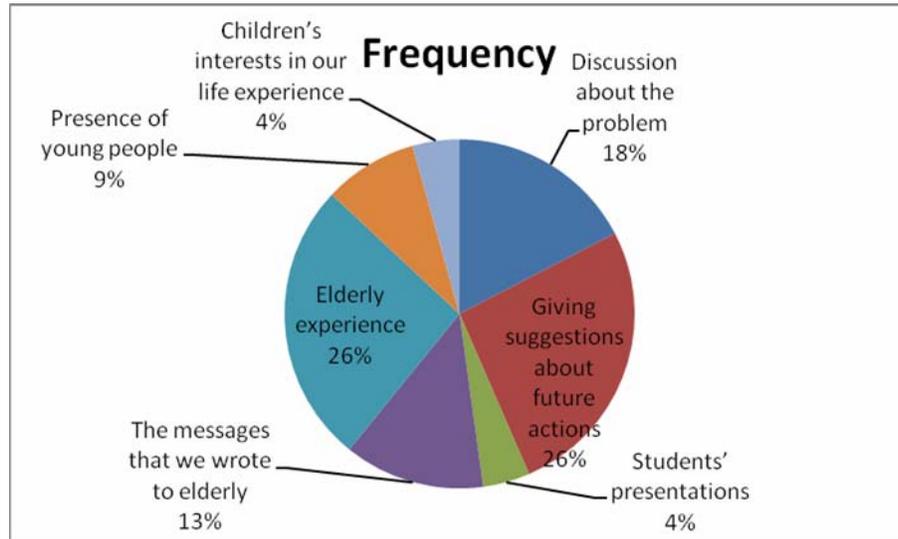


Chart 3: The biggest impression from the workshop

8. What should be improved

To have more participants 2

To have more intergenerational workshops 8

Financing

To inform people about situation of elderly people 2

Communication with elderly 4

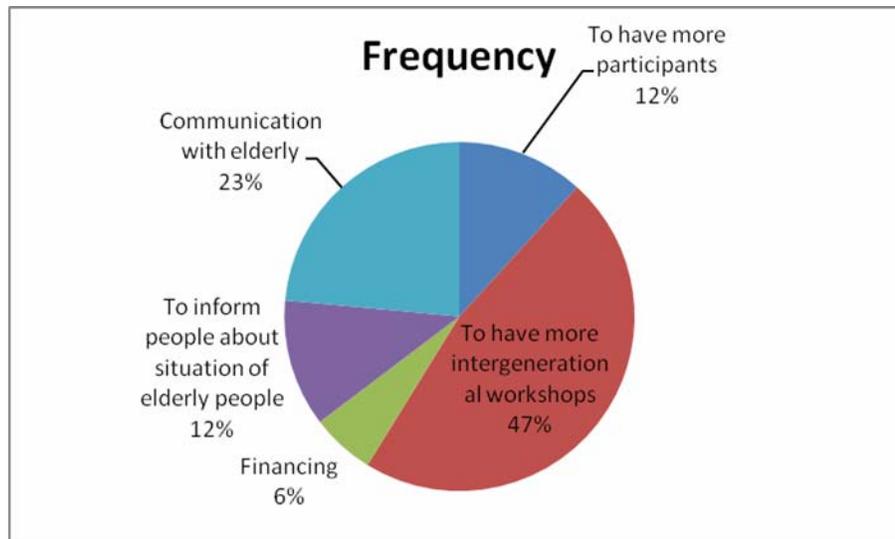


Chart 4: Suggestions for improvement

Evaluation conclusion

According to the answer of young participants, they are motivated to join intergenerational workshops mostly for two reasons: to engage in resolving problems that elderly people deal with and to learn something new. Young people at the workshop were mostly students from primary schools and some of them are high school students. Overall, it can be concluded that young generation is open to engage in volunteering work, as some of them have said, and also to learn something new. They are obviously open to elderly and to their experience, particularly children. Therefore, we need to be aware that when we organize intergenerational workshop, we usually involve children or teenagers but we leave out middle generation (25 – 65). Although it is important to create space for young and elderly to exchange experience, it is also crucial to connect middle generation with old generation if we want to contribute to promotion of positive image.

The reasons which brought elderly people to the workshop mostly concerns learning something new. They are open to engage in various activities and they are open to learn. Some of them mentioned that they came because they had been invites, so it is important to keep that in mind. We need to support organization in various activities, and also to support the willingness of young people to engage in different activities. Around 20% of elderly claimed that the reason for coming was to transfer experience to younger generation. Although one might expect that this would be the most represented reason, 50% stated that they came because they want to learn something new.

It is interesting to look at the answers concerning third question, about awareness of discrimination before the workshop. Young people were not familiar with ageism, at least they did not think about that. It is very significant result of the evaluation and it shows that the issue of discrimination should be discussed openly. Perhaps the topic should be part of civic education in primary schools so many more children could be included. It is also important to overcome somewhat romantic image of grandparents whose duty are to take care for grandchildren, but to see them in different light as a different persons who have their own interests and needs.

It seems that ageism is even more invisible between elderly themselves. They stated that they did not feel discriminated. One possible reason for that is that only elderly people who are active actually came to the workshops. Another reason is related to *vicious circle of discrimination*. People do not perceive the consequences of discrimination, but they think about them as causes. Elderly people identify with already existing image and they refuse to think about that as discrimination. Probably, it is safer to understand that as their choice; otherwise it would treat their confidence.

The answers related to the questions 4, 5 and 6 show that participants were moved participants to think about elderly discrimination and motivated them to think about possibilities to engage in order to overcome it. The first step was to understand responsibility and to be proactive.

The biggest impressions from the workshops are: generated solutions and actions (26%) and elderly experience (26%). The evaluation shows that the workshops was a space where people discussed about issues (18%) and that they serve as a start to connect with each other and think about possibilities and future actions. Although they might not have immediate consequences they are important aspect in fighting discrimination and promotion of positive image. According to answers to previous questions, the workshops motivated people to think about their responsibility which is the first step for action. Since elderly experience is also one of the biggest impressions, the workshop is a space where young people start to think about elderly as a significant source of learning and knowledge which is crucial for intergenerational learning.

What should be improved is mainly related to the number of these type events. There are not many intergenerational workshops in local communities, and they should be not aim itself, but when we think about lifelong learning we should keep in mind possibilities for intergenerational exchange.

Conclusions and recommendation

Include *middle generation* in intergenerational workshop

Think about *invisibility* of ageism and discuss openly about it in different settings

Intergenerational workshops are important as *impetuses for future activities*

It is essential to organize workshop *follow up*

Use intergenerational learning *as a model* for various topics and events