

arQus

European University Alliance

Guidelines for Senior Universities

August 2022

Task force AL2.8 « Seniors' University »

| |
|---|
| 1. Introduction |
| Transforming ageing societies in Europe through seniors' universities |
| The Impact of Demographic Change in Europe |
| 2. What is 'the state of the art' with this regard in the ARQUS Alliance partner universities? |
| University of Bergen |
| University of Granada |
| University of Graz |
| University of Padua |
| University of Vilnius |
| 3. Arqus AL2.8 "Seniors' University" |
| 4. Quality level : teaching and learning activities in seniors' universities |
| Transversal pillars |
| 5. Reflections |
| 6. References |

1. INTRODUCTION

Never before have people lived so long. The flagship publication, published by the World Health Organisation (WHO), reveals how life expectancy in Europe continues rising (cf. OECD, 2021).

TRANSFORMING AGEING SOCIETIES IN EUROPE THROUGH SENIORS' UNIVERSITIES

Some countries such as Spain and Italy have a life expectancy of 83 years, according to data collected in 2018 (Raleigh, 2019), although in the last decade the process has slowed, particularly with the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. Overall, people are active for much more time, participating in social accomplishments even after they have stopped working. This is a new reality that the society has never had to face before. This underlines the importance of giving voice to older people at various levels (European Commission, 2021).

According to the World Health Organisation, active ageing is a process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security to improve middle-aged and old people's quality of life. The EU Member States have a high adult learning participation rate. Ageing in an ageing society entails various challenges, both at an individual and societal level, one of which regards long life learning and higher education. The issue has many facets. Sociological and social psychological concerns go hand in hand with other perspectives and suggest recommendations to policy makers (cf. also Phillipson, 2013). Some of the highest rates of adult learning participation are Sweden (29.2%), Finland (28.5%) and Denmark (23.5%), as the Eurostat stated in 2019. The demand from seniors is expected to grow. In addition, the offer of learning opportunities for seniors provides older people who have not been able to access quality education in the past with the possibility to participate in these training sessions now (European Commission, 2020). In the field of education for seniors, various academic studies have been carried out for the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, which resulted in criteria for good practice in senior education and also included corresponding evaluations of educational projects (Kolland/Wanka/Heinrich 2014). Taking into account the demographic revolution we are facing in Europe, with increased numbers of elderly accompanied by diminished numbers of newborns, the issue of **how to generate active, successful, positive, healthy models of ageing and of solidarity**

between generations is now crucial. There is a need for investment in **new co-education projects** involving adults and young people, university students and those who attend university because they have an interest in learning along their life (lifelong) and from life circumstances (lifewide). Already more than ten years ago, in the US Laura Cartensen, a psychologist, raised the point with some brilliant lines, which we would like to re-launch: *Ageing as a social and cultural issue*.

‘The large increase in the numbers of people making it into their 80s and beyond is generating a profound mismatch between the cultural norms that guide us through life and the length of our lives. Humans are creatures of cultures. We look to culture to tell us when to get an education, marry, start families, work and retire. Because life expectancy has increased so quickly, we are still immersed in cultures designed for lives half as long as the ones we are living’ (Carstensen & Fried Submission to US Senate Commission on Ageing 2011).

‘Population ageing will transform the global community. The question is whether such changes will better societies or extract net tolls. Either is possible. If we continue to view the life course as our ancestors did and simply tack added years on the end we face calamity. If instead we begin to modify the life course and build infrastructures that support long life, societies can begin to utilise the strengths of older people and support the real vulnerabilities of advanced old age (Carstensen & Fried 2011).

Not only will this benefit the elderly, it could be of help for society at large.

THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN EUROPE

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF AGEING (WHO): LIVING LONGER IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH LIVING BETTER

- Increased risk of some form of disability
- Increased risk of poverty (challenge for the sustainability of social rights)
- Increased risk of social exclusion and isolation
- Increased risk of dependency and vulnerability

UNITED NATIONS WARNS THAT THE ONGOING DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION REQUIRES ADAPTATION OF SOCIETY, INSTITUTIONS

AND THE URGENCY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE

(<https://www.un.org/es/global-issues/ageing>):

- Avoiding age discrimination
- Addressing the personal and economic risks they face
- Promote active, healthy and participatory ageing
- Promoting the inclusion and visibility of older people
- Enhancing the value of older people's capabilities
- Promoting intergenerational solidarity and understanding
- Safeguarding the dignity of older people

FACTORS FAVOURING AGE DISCRIMINATION

- Prejudice
- Disvaluing people with lesser abilities, in a competitive society
- Disvaluing of ageing, in increasingly competitive societies and image-cult societies/generations.
- Idealisation of youth versus invisibilisation of older people.
- Socio-economic factors
- Loneliness, isolation of older people
- Declining purchasing power
- Loss of cognitive, sensory, physical capacities
- Cultural and digital divides

2. WHAT IS 'THE STATE OF THE ART' WITH THIS REGARD IN THE ARQUS ALLIANCE PARTNER UNIVERSITIES?

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

Other Universities in the Alliance are less able to trace the presence and activities of senior students, either for legal norms concerning privacy that make it difficult to register students' dates of birth or for traditions oriented to students in their youth. This does not mean that there are not events or opportunities involving people of different age.

For instance, in June 2021 the University of Bergen held an event called "Last Chapter: A Late Life Festival", which even involved some senior students from Graz. "Last Chapter" is a two-day cultural festival running Friday 18th June, at the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, and Saturday 19th June 2021, at the Bergen Museum of Natural History and its botanical garden. The festival is a celebration of later life which aims to challenge stereotypical perceptions of old age and contribute to a less age-segregated society. Bringing together Norwegian and international art, music, dance and interdisciplinary scholarship, the festival offers an exciting range of events, lectures, debates and encounters with artists, writers, researchers, health care professionals and policy makers. Admission is free and open to the public."

All details of the Festival can be found here: [Last Chapter: A Late Life Festival - June 18th and 19th, 2021 | Historicizing the ageing self: Literature, medicine, psychology, law | UiB](#)

UNIVERSITY OF GRANADA

Aula Permanente de Formación Abierta (APFA)

The Permanent Open Training Classroom is an initiative of the University of Granada launched in 1994 with the aim of meeting the educational demand of people over 50 years of age, who are admitted to the University without any other prior requirement beyond having reached that age.

This university program for the elderly aims to contribute to the improvement of the situation and the personal and social abilities of its students, with a double intention, training and supportive social care. To carry out this task, the University of Granada has the support of the Ministry for Equality and Social Welfare of the Junta de Andalucía, through the General Directorate for the Elderly. In the Provincial Headquarters (Baza, Motril and Guadix) the respective City Councils also collaborate and in the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla the Departments of Culture of their respective autonomous administrations.

UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ

Vita Activa

The educational programme Vita activa – bridging generations through learning - was initiated in 2005 by the University of Graz/Center for Continuing Education (ZfW) in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs and the Austrian Ministry of Science; the conceptual and organisational development was supported by start-up funding from both Ministries. Since then, the programme has been continuously developed conceptually and organisationally in consultation with geragogical and andragogical researchers, external cooperation partners, the participants and on the basis of the reception of academic literature (e.g. Kolland/Ludescher/Waxenegger 2016; Ludescher 2016; Ludescher/Waxenegger 2019). The University of Graz sees itself as an educational partner for all generations. Vita activa links research-based general education with "education and learning in later life". The programme has been conceived as an open learning opportunity especially for women and men in the second half of life who actively seek their own learning, want to lead their lives in a self-determined way and want to exchange their knowledge and experience with subsequent generations. This objective has also been made binding in the development plans and performance agreements of the University of Graz. The University of Graz thus takes up the objective formulated at national and international level to promote the social participation of older people through university education, especially from the perspective of intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational learning, and makes its contribution to its implementation.

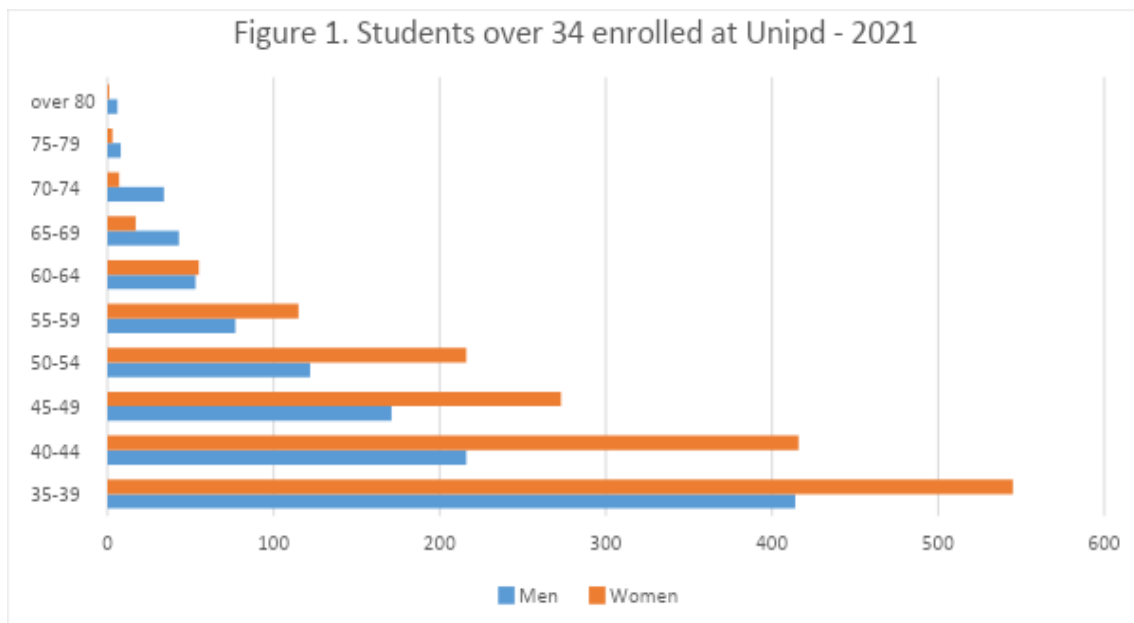
UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA

Progetto Formazione Continua (PFC)

As regards the University of Padova, concern with the issue of an ageing society brought to the institution, in 1987, of a training experience for adults or of the third age. On the initiative of a professor of sociology at the Faculty of Political Sciences, prof. Renzo Scortegagna, a cultural association entitled Progetto Formazione Continua (PFC) was born. The Association was independent, yet highly related with the University itself. A formal agreement between PFC, University and Municipality helped to sort out facilities, devices and competences. The present President of PFC, prof. Enzo Pace, is keen to strengthen this organic link with academic knowledge and invites us to consider our challenge to foster not just a lifelong learning but also a lifewide one. This means learning from the various individual life experiences, socializing them and drawing from them a concrete knowledge that integrates the abstract one, beyond the areas and places where formal learning occurs.

Senior students at Unipd

Enrollments at the University regard students of various age, beyond the more canonical ones, as reported in Figure 1.



From qualitative studies of ours, conducted with students over 55, these students appear quite satisfied by their experience, in a wide range of disciplinary areas.

They enjoy and search for the challenges provided by studying side-by-side with younger fellows and, although not always, contribute to dismantling the pervading ageist perspective which tends to reduce possibilities and outcomes for older people (Romainoli & Contarello, 2021).

Many participants point out that universities or services dedicated solely to the older people may have the effect of stigmatizing the elderly, preventing them from gaining positive viewpoints with respect to themselves and aging more generally. Intergenerational contexts and life-long learning, on the other hand, appear to be enriching experiences that can foster the deconstruction of ageist views not only among senior students, but also among younger people (Romainoli & Contarello, 2019b). Ageism among youth and adults is structured as self-sabotage in pursuing a career in work, school or university, creating phenomena such as NEET (not employed in education or training). Moreover, an ageist view produces negative prophecies and correlates with lower personal satisfaction and resourcefulness over a lifetime.

Many scholars suggest expanding contexts that can enable individuals to challenge the representation of aging as decline, and make salient the stories of older people who differ both from the stereotype of the lonely and weak person, and from the one who merely imitates an eternal youthfulness. In some of our studies (Contarello & Romainoli, 2019a), we have collected stories of elders capable of reshaping values and lifestyles in culturally enriching ways that deserve greater exploration and dissemination. These perspectives can serve individuals to mature critical thinking about what we tend to take for granted – such as the organization of life by age groups – creating the opportunity for reframing ways of being in relationship at the university and in everyday life in more sustainable ways.

Explicitly asked for actions that could facilitate their permanence at the University, senior students mentioned broad ones, transversal to people of any age, such as improved infrastructures, friendly timetables, and better communication of possibilities and events. Very many actions could be undertaken, just to name some, our seniors appreciated the availability of ‘free courses’ at Unipd: single courses in which individuals can fully enroll without (usually before) entering a whole course of degree. Another observation regarded fees that in our university are modulated according to the enroller’s income. Most of our interviewees, ex professionals, were quite pleased with their personal situation, but as some of them commented, the scissor in the tax system could be further widened.

Master, Centre, Society

The second-level short specialisation degree in Psychology of Ageing and Longevity (under the direction of Prof. Erika Borella, Unipd) – <https://www.unipd.it/corsi-master/psicologia-invecchiamento-longevita> – prepares professionals to operate in the main areas of the Psychology of Ageing by teaching evidence-based knowledge and specific skills. During the short specialisation course, students have the opportunity to acquire notions, procedures and useful tools for promoting active ageing by intervening from a prevention perspective and promoting lifelong learning; and conducting multidimensional assessments to identify the type of intervention (for promoting cognitive, meta-cognitive or emotional enhancement) likely to be the most effective, or to develop tailored/personalised interventions. They will also acquire skills for managing anamnestic and psychodiagnostic interviews with elderly people, tools for neuropsychological assessments, and for conducting evidence-based psychosocial interventions for people with Mild Cognitive Impairment and dementia. They will receive specific training on how to propose support and overload-prevention interventions for caregivers, be they family members or healthcare operators. Ample space will also be given to developing intervention design skills, underscoring the importance of working in multidisciplinary teams, and promoting interventions in emergency situations.

The Psychology of Aging and Longevity Operational Unit (University Center of Psychological Clinical Services) (Referent Prof. Erika Borella, Unipd) – <https://www.scup.unipd.it/i-servizi/servizi-ad-adlta-specificit%C3%A0/unit%C3%A0-operativa-di-psicologia-dellinvecchiamento-e-della-0> – has both clinical and applied aims and a strong research and applied focus on the needs of older adults, their families, and professionals who work with them.

The Italian Society of Psychology of Ageing (SIPI) – www.sipinvecchiamento.it – (President, Prof. Rossana De Beni, Unipd) brings together experts and professionals (clinicians), mainly psychologists, who operate in the field of the psychology of aging at national and international level. Each year the SIPI has a congress with international invited speakers, symposia, round tables, oral and poster presentations.

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

At Vilnius University everyone interested and willing is invited to join activities offered by the comprehensive Lifelong learning center. The range of programmes, activities and initiatives of the lifelong learning meet the

professional and personal development needs of different age groups, educational backgrounds, professions and interests. The activities are organised in accordance with the Concept of Lifelong Learning of Vilnius University (in Lithuanian - [Mokymasis visą gyvenimą](#)).

During the pandemic, most of the courses and refresher seminars were successfully delivered remotely, and new initiatives have emerged which have been successfully implemented in an online format. In order to ensure the accessibility of lifelong learning activities not only to people living in other regions of Lithuania, but also to foreign nationals or Lithuanians living abroad, the experience gained in organising training and other activities via distance or hybrid mode will be successfully applied in the future.

Currently the Lifelong Learning Concept is being updated and the aim of lifelong learning is to provide education for society by enabling different groups of society to acquire relevant qualifications and/or to develop existing competences. The coordination of lifelong learning activities is currently centralised in VU Business School. This change is likely to further expand the range of lifelong learning tools and make them more accessible ([VILNIUS UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2021–2025](#)).

3. ARQUS AL2.8 “SENIORS’ UNIVERSITY”

The **Arqus European University Alliance** brings together the universities of Bergen, Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon, Padua and Vilnius. The main ambition of the Alliance is to act jointly as a laboratory for institutional learning from which to move forward in the design, testing and implementation of an innovative model for deep inter-university cooperation.

The Arqus Alliance aims to centre its efforts on **enabling people**: enabling a widely diverse student body and enhancing their learning experience; enabling a similarly diverse staff community and promoting their individual and collective professional development; enabling society at large. It also aims to promote widening access for diverse student and staff population, facilitating inclusive admission and recruitment policies, and attracting talent from less represented groups. Additionally, the Alliance aims to develop **shared policies for inclusion and diversity for all members of the university community**. One of Arqus core values is the commitment to ensuring and promoting equity and inclusion, and to eliminating barriers of all kinds to access higher education, and hence to knowledge and to the opportunities it creates.

Although these values and objectives are cross-cutting and engage all members of the Alliance community, one of the seven Action Lines specifically focuses on inclusion: **Action Line 2, “Widening access, inclusion and diversity”**, chaired by the University of Padua.

Action Line 2 includes 13 activities:

1. Preventive Early Career Education
2. Children’s Universities
3. Women to STEM
4. Support networks for inclusion
5. Recognition of prior learning
6. Enabling strategies
7. Re-thinking college
- 8. Seniors’ University**
9. Inclusive peer tutoring

10. Staff development for the diverse and inclusive classroom
11. Fast tracks for gifted students
12. Job market transition for inclusive universities
13. Common Charters for gender equality, inclusion and SDGs

All together, the above-mentioned activities have the objective of creating a more inclusive Alliance and of paving the way for future developments in this direction.

Activity 2.8, “Seniors’ University”, had a three-fold objective: to collect **best practices** from the Arqus partner universities in activities targeting senior students; to establish **shared guidelines**; and to explore opportunities for **joint programmes**, both on- and off-line. The most challenging expected output – considering in particular the outburst of the Covid-19 pandemic only a few months after the official start of the activities in October 2019- was the organisation of an **annual short-term mobility** involving senior students from all Arqus partner universities.

As to these joint mobility experiences, the theme had to be linked to the them chosen for the AL7.1 challenge-based programme on European identity (AL7 “Engaged European Citizens”, chaired by the University of Bergen, included among its activities 7.1 “Arqus collaboratory challenge-based learning programme”, with a winter school as its starting point).

As a response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, two main decisions were taken by the AL2.8 task force - the working group set up across the Alliance to carry out this activity: one was to move all activities **online** until the restrictions on travels were lifted, and the other was to take an **intergenerational approach**, through the involvement of young students in the 2.8 initiatives, in order to benefit both senior and junior students.

As a start, a small group of senior students from all Arqus partner universities were involved as **auditors** in the first edition of the AL7.1 challenge-based programme. The **Winter School “Re-thinking climate risk”**, organised in February 2021 by the University of Bergen (<https://argus-alliance.eu/news/argus-winter-school-2021/>), hosted some senior students via zoom during selected open sessions.

Another crucial pillar has been the development of the series of **BIBA (Building Intergenerational Bridges in ARQUS) Forums**. They consisted of free and open monthly discussions about issues and ideas confronting us, in the world today, from an international and intergenerational point of view. Five sessions of the BIBA Forum have been carried out:

- 10 May 2021 [Education and its digitalization in pandemic times. An intergenerational approach](#)
- 07 June 2021 [Culture as a way towards mutual understanding: an intercultural experience](#)
- 21 February 2022 [Diversity in Sustainable Development: First session of the 2022 Edition of the BIBA Forum](#)
- 29 March 2022 [Biodiversity and Geodiversity: Second session of the 2022 edition of the BIBA Forum](#)
- 31 May 2022 [Knowledge diversity](#)

After each of the three sessions held in 2022, a **call for short stories** was published. All related information can be found at the links below:

- Call for short stories after the February 21 session:
<https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/biba-forum-alumni-2022-call-short-stories/>
- Call for short stories after the March 29 session:
<https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/second-call-short-stories-biba-forum-2022-session2/>
- Call for short stories after the 31 May session:
<https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/the-new-call-for-short-stories-of-the-biba-forum-on-knowledge-diversity-is-now-open/>
- The narratives of 8 senior students of the first micro-story contest of the BIBA Forum Alumni 2022 on diversity in sustainable development have been selected for publication:
<https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/stories-8-senior-students-biba-forum-alumni-2022-01/>
- The stories of the second contest of the Biba Forum 2022 have been selected for publication:
<https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/short-stories-biodiversity-geodiversity/>.

On June 29 and 30, 2021, a **Short Virtual Mobility** (replacing a short-term physical mobility) was organised by the University of Padua. The event, called “Rethinking ageing in intergenerational and international perspectives. Sharing good practices and enhancing the role of culture” (<https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/virtual-mobility-rethinking-ageing/>), involved a mixed group of

senior and junior students from the universities of Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Padua and Vilnius. The sessions included in the programme were presented by different lecturers from Arqus partner universities.

The participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the event.

Towards the very end of the three years, thanks to the lifting of the restrictions linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, it became finally possible to organise the first short-term physical experience for senior and junior students. The **Arqus Senior School** was hosted by the University of Granada on September 19, 20 and 21, 2022. The theme of the School was cultural, geographical and coastal diversity. All details and the full programme are available at the following link:

[\(https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/event/participate-first-arqus-senior-school-granada/\)](https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/event/participate-first-arqus-senior-school-granada/).

4. QUALITY CRITERIA FOR UNIVERSITY CONTINUING EDUCATION IN THE POST-EMPLOYMENT PHASE OF LIFE

According to Ludescher & Waxenegger (2016, 2021), there are several principles and quality criteria developed over the years and tested in practice that should guide the continuing education (cf. Table): academic general education must be based on current research, open access must be made possible, low-threshold access must be ensured, the programme must be developed in a research-led manner, the didactic model must be committed to the quality standards of university teaching and learning, issues of "age(ing)" and intergenerational relations must form an integral part of the programme, the programme must establish a link between the educational requirements of the university and the interests of the participants and include them in the programme development, a self-directed, temporally flexible development of learning over a longer period of time must be possible, there must be a sufficient provision of accompanying information and counselling, the personal income situation must not exclude participation, and the ability to participate in shaping society must be promoted.

| Advertising; access and admission | Content and competences | Didactics and course delivery | Quality level; university | Quality level; learning and society |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| <p><i>An approach that recognizes differentiated perceptions of age and ageing.</i></p> <p>Advertising materials should not use sweeping definitions of older people (seniors, 55+, etc.), but should – as far as possible – be written in terms of relevant themes that address shared interests and aspects of life. This takes account of varying experiences of age and ageing.</p> | <p><i>Centred on the interests of participants.</i></p> <p>The programme design and choice of topics are principally centred on the interests of participants and enable them to make connections with their everyday lives.</p> | <p><i>Educational objectives</i></p> <p>Learning contents can be selected by the participants in consultation with the teaching staff.</p> <p>Teachers and learners see themselves as partners, even during this negotiation process.</p> | <p><i>Part of the university's strategic plan</i></p> <p>In central university documents such as development plans and performance agreements, as well as mission statements on university continuing education/lifelong learning, older people are explicitly mentioned as a target group, and educational provision for and with senior citizens is designed with long-term implementation in mind.</p> | <p><i>Exploration of post-employment fields of activity</i></p> <p>The courses include topics on possible fields of activity for post-employment engagement with society (e.g. voluntary work). Participants are encouraged to make use of their newly acquired, university-level knowledge and newly learned skills to be constructively active in society. This also helps to change the perception of age(ing) in society in a positive way.</p> |
| <p><i>Open access/options for formal admission</i></p> <p>Some of the educational</p> | <p><i>Participants are involved in developing the programme</i></p> | <p><i>Teaching and learning</i></p> <p>In the academic context, as elsewhere, it is</p> | <p><i>The university takes responsibility for quality</i></p> | <p><i>Participation in educational programmes</i></p> |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| <p>opportunities provided by a university are “open” and accessible to all; no specific prior knowledge is required. This may also take the form of a separate education programme within the university. Senior citizens also include groups of people with no previous academic learning, for whom possibilities for participation in society may then open up through research-based general education. Where there are formal admission requirements, there is also an option to have professional experience and expertise recognised, to a certain extent. This allows scope for the admission particularly of older people who cannot meet the formal requirements.</p> | <p>Representatives of the target audience are involved in developing the programme (canvassing views on preferred topics and formats through various channels: e.g. focus groups, advisory committee).</p> | <p>important that the didactic method is appropriate to the needs and learning styles of participants (planned breaks, pace etc.); themes and lines of enquiry are designed (e.g. through case examples) to enable participants to make a connection with their lives and circumstances, without the issues being diminished in complexity. Self-organised learning and informal learning activities are encouraged – as far as possible (e.g. “open” study groups/workgroups). The senior citizens’ knowledge and skills are incorporated into the teaching and learning process and are considered a valuable contribution. Participants are also encouraged – where they have relevant expertise – to take on a teaching role (giving short presentations, leading and (co-) moderating discussions, etc.). Self-reflection and reflection by</p> | <p>The development of the educational programme for and with older people is research-oriented, in accordance with the quality standards for universities, and is based on the latest research findings in adult and senior education (andragogy and geragogy). There are training opportunities for university teaching staff who are involved in educational programmes for older people.</p> | <p>There are possibilities for participants to help (on a voluntary basis) with implementing and promoting the educational programme (information/advice, campus tours etc.).</p> |
|--|--|--|---|---|

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | <p>others on age and ageing – personally and in others – is encouraged.</p> | | |
| <p>Support for participants</p> <p>Support is provided, for example in the area of study skills or advice (about the courses and learning resources available at the university). This support helps in principle to demystify the university as a “place of learning” and to ensure the demands of academic learning are understood and made accessible. This kind of support also helps people to return to learning and to define their own learning objectives. We believe this is a key requirement for enabling educationally disadvantaged people to</p> | <p>“Age(ing)” and generations as topics</p> <p>Age-specific and/or generation-specific dimensions (perspectives and living conditions of different age groups) of a topic are included and reflected on where the context permits and where relevant (e.g. in discussion, group work). There are also specific courses where aspects of ageing and the topic area of “age(ing) – generations – society” are explored from an academic standpoint.</p> | <p>Intergenerational learning settings</p> <p>In addition to courses where the participants are all of a similar age group (for certain topics) there are also mixed-age settings to facilitate dialogue between members of different generations and to explore forms of intergenerational learning.</p> | | <p>Self-organised networks</p> <p>Networking amongst participants (multipliers, “graduate” networking) is actively encouraged as far as practically possible (e.g. availability of space).</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| participate in research-based general education. | | | | |
| | <p>Participation in the research process</p> <p>There are opportunities to participate in the research process (e.g. through forms of “learning through research” or in the area of “citizen science”).</p> | | | |

Source: “Quality criteria for university continuing education in the post-employment phase of life. A guide” (2016). Ludescher, M./Waxenegger, A. (2016): Qualitätskriterien wissenschaftlicher Weiterbildung in der nachberuflichen Lebensphase. Eine Handreichung. Unter Konsultation von Benischke, C., Brünner, A., Simon, G. Graz: Universität Graz [English translation of the printed German version for Arqus: Quality criteria for university continuing education in the post-employment phase of life. A guide. In consultation with Christine Benischke, Anita Brünner, Gertrud Simon, Graz]. Available here https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/Weiterbildung/fqwvbae_handr_lang_web_2016.p

TRANSVERSAL PILLARS

The three transversal pillars are internationalisation, intergenerational approach and investigation,

- Internationalisation is very important. Participation in large international projects and putting into practice social and language skills have only positive consequences in senior students as well as junior (European Commission, 2021).
- Programmes and activities related to intergenerational meetings and friendships have been shown to improve the physical, cognitive and social activity of the senior and to improve their health (European Commission, 2021) while adding different perspectives to the junior. This intergenerational approach should be implemented across the board: in all activities and programmes and not as a separate activity.
- A senior and/or an intergenerational Living Lab can be formed as part of the investigation. The European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) is the international federation of the best Living Labs in Europe and the world. Founded in November 2006 under the European Presidency of Finland, this network has been growing and expanding in different "waves" up to the present day.

5. REFLECTIONS

Taking into account the demographic revolution we are facing in Europe, the issue of **how to generate active, successful, positive, healthy models of ageing and of solidarity between generations is now crucial**: an experience such as the one described above constitutes an example (Pace, 2021).

There is a need for investment in **new co-education projects** involving adults and young people, university students and those who attend university because they have an interest in learning along their life (lifelong) and from life circumstances (lifewide).

Experiences as the above mentioned ones already constitute a social capital from which the Arqus Alliance could get various ideas and projects, some more specific and practical, some others on a wider span.

We could think of a sort of **civil service for young university students** who dedicate a number of hours (small at will!) to follow training courses attended by adults, sharing with them moments of learning, co-training and tutorial help in some cases.

Informal or less formal meeting spaces could be expanded, where international, interdisciplinary, intergenerational meetings could be carried out. The **Arqus Café** (an activity organised by Arqus Action Line 4 “Multilingual and Multicultural University”, consisting of a virtual space for Arqus students to learn languages in an informal way - more info here: <https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/ArqusCafe-Leipzig102020/>) provided an interesting arena in which to propose and discuss different topics, facilitating and making encounters between different people, on various grounds, more usual. But also more formal enterprises, involving structured and less structured activities, would be of great help, for example **Summer or Winter Schools** as the one organized in September 2022 in Granada. Although not necessarily nor compulsory, forms of credits/acknowledgments of these activities could be devised, perhaps rendering them more appealing for younger and senior students.

The **interconnection between Universities and Municipalities** should be further deepened. Several initiatives have been encountered in our Universities, particularly at the University of Padua, this year, for the celebration of its 800 years of life. Increasing chances of exchange, enhancing cultural offers, opening the doors of our institutions to forms of **lifelong and life wide cultural exchanges** helps to involve people of different age and generation, in

intersection with other variables, perhaps inviting them to more structured activities. In this, we could also try to take up and relaunch the challenge launched by the WHO with the for Age Friendly Cities and Societies (2014) agenda’.

Another proposal collected from the senior students’ feedback on their mobility experience at the Arqus Senior School in Granada is to design blended initiatives combining online activities and short in-person mobilities, similarly to the Blended Intensive Programmes promoted by the latest Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027. **Blended Intensive Programmes** (BIPs) are short, intensive programmes that use innovative ways of learning and teaching, including the use of online cooperation. During these blended intensive programmes, groups of learners undertake a short-term physical mobility abroad combined with a compulsory virtual component facilitating collaborative online learning exchange and teamwork. By enabling new and more flexible mobility formats that combine physical mobility with a virtual part, blended intensive programmes aim at reaching all types of students from all backgrounds, study fields and cycles.

Considering the needs, challenges and constraints seniors students face especially when it comes to mobilities, in particular as they are usually working and often have family commitments, this form of educational programme combining online activities and a short physical mobility may be one possible way of making these programmes more accessible.

But, most of all, what is needed is a change of perspective regarding what it means to get older, a critical assessment of a life course strictly designed in phases with distinctive needs and obligations. New forms of solidarity are needed across different age and social groups, and higher education can have a great part in devising them. Our Universities could play a pivotal role in this enterprise, for senior students in particular, but also for society in its whole.

6. REFERENCES

Delgado-Márquez, B. y García-Garnica, M. (2021). European Universities and their possible role in fostering age inclusion: Empowering senior students with lifelong learning opportunities. Presentation delivered at Arqus 2.8 Short Virtual Mobility “Rethinking ageing in intergenerational and international perspectives. Sharing good practices and enhancing the role of culture”. June 29, 2021.

European Commission. (2022). Empowering European Seniors with Lifelong Learning Opportunities: Universities of the Third Age - Renew Europe webinar - Retrieved 14 March 2022, from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/suica/announcements/empowering-european-seniors-lifelong-learning-opportunities-universities-third-age-renew-europe_en

European Commission. (2022). Empowering seniors with lifelong learning opportunities: The role of Universities of the 3rd Age - EPALE - Retrieved 14 March 2022, from <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/content/empowering-seniors-lifelong-learning-opportunities-role-universities-3rd-age>

Filho W.L., Mifsud M., Pace P. (Eds.) (2018). *Handbook in lifelong learning for sustainable development*, London: Palgrave McMillan.

Green Paper - European Commission (2021) Retrieved 14 March 2022, from, <https://www.efos>

ec.europa.eu/fileadmin/efos/downloads/EC_Green_Paper_Ageing.pdf f. (2022). [SrP1]

Kolland, Franz/Wanka, Anna/Heinrich, Marlene (2014): Good Practice in der SeniorInnenbildung. Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz. Vienna.

Ludescher, M. (2016). Something for older people? Research-based general education and university lifelong learning. In: Field, J./Schmidt-Hertha, B./Waxenegger, A. (Eds.): *Universities and engagement. International perspectives on higher education and lifelong learning*. London-New York: Routledge, p. 179-191.

Ludescher, M./Waxenegger, A. (2016): *Qualitätskriterien wissenschaftlicher Weiterbildung in der nachberuflichen Lebensphase. Eine Handreichung*. Unter Konsultation von Benischke, C., Brünner, A., Simon, G. Graz: Universität Graz

[English translation of the printed German version for Arqus: *Quality criteria for university continuing education in the post-employment phase of life. A guide*. In consultation with Christine Benischke, Anita Brünner, Gertrud Simon, Graz]. ISBN: 978-3-9502601-8-2

OECD (2021). Trends in life expectancy. In *Health at a glance 2021: OECD indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Pace, E. (2021). LifeLong Learning Project: A bridge between University and City. Presentation delivered at Arqus 2.8 Short Virtual Mobility “Rethinking ageing in intergenerational and international perspectives. Sharing good practices and enhancing the role of culture”. June 29, 2021.

Phillipson, C. (2013). *Ageing*. Malden: Polity Press.

Romaioli, D., & Contarello, A. (2019a). Redefining agency in late life: the concept of ‘disponibility’. *Ageing & Society*, 39(1), 194-216.

Romaioli, D., Contarello, A. (2019b). “I’m too Old for...” Looking into a self-Sabotage rhetoric and its counter- narratives in an Italian setting. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 48, 25-32.

Romaioli D. & Contarello, A. (2021). Resisting ageism through life long learning mature students’ counter-narratives to the construction of ageing as decline. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 57, Epub 100934.

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.