



# EFOS

European Federation of Older Students at the Universities  
Europäische Vereinigung älterer Studierender an den Universitäten  
Fédération Européenne des Etudiants Agés aux Universités



# EFOS NEWS

# 1

# 2008



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## European Federation of Older Students

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## From the editor:

The present EFOS News start with the president's report for the year 2008. It gives an insight in the work of EFOS during the past year.

The year 2008 was dominated by our VECU project (Virtual European Cultural Centre) which is being financed by the 'Grundtvig Learning Partnerships' programme of the EU. The article of our scientific adviser Dr. Daniel Meynen describes the background of the project.

Herta and Wolfgang Spitaler wrote a short article about a presentation on the introduction of the euro in Slovakia which they gave in Bratislava on invitation of the UTA.

Dr. Rosemarie Kurz gives us an overview of the further education for the 40+ generation as seen from Graz.

Prof. Vavrin from Brno sent us a summary on the state of the education for older people in the Czech Republic.

Finally a reflection of the Dutch national association HOVO Nederland about the objectives of international contacts for older students.

December 2008

Peter Hug

## EFOS News

Publication of the  
European Federation of Older  
Students at Universities

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## Annual report 2008 of the EFOS president

*PhDr. Nadezda Hrapková, PhD. Bratislava, Slovakia*



In the year 2007, the members of EFOS met twice officially, at the meetings in Groningen and in Wrocław. In that year also 40 seniors participated in the summer course organised by the UTA at the Comenius University in Bratislava. The EFOS News were published 2 times and presented the results of the systematic research made during the "EFOSEC" project. The year 2007 showed that the senior students are able to participate in the management of study activities and even give lectures, prepare own presentations and run projects in cooperation with other partners. The summer course was one of the splendid opportunities to make friends on an international level and learn about the differing cultures and habits of our countries. Non-formal learning, next to informal forms, offered education to the seniors in friendly meetings and social activities, also arranged by themselves. This way, we can extend seniors' activities and enrich their learning in later life.



*Folk music group of Seniors in Uppsala*

A couple of years ago, when the University in Uppsala and its UTA decided to become a member of EFOS we were glad that

Scandinavia was also represented in our European federation. With them EFOS has got a new dimension, wider contacts and information.

The 2008 spring meeting at the University in Uppsala was the first EFOS meeting in Sweden and in Scandinavia too. The participants acquired valuable knowledge about the history of the university, study possibilities and other activities arranged for and by seniors. Meetings with senior students gave us possibilities to learn more about the projects of seniors, their lifestyle and habits of their country. Folk music presented by seniors showed us cultural activities and skills, which can be presented by elderly in our new Grundtvig project "VECU". Discussion of the results from the previous project "EFOSEC", the EFOS homepage, articles in the EFOS News and new EFOS project "VECU" were main points of the agenda for our meeting.



*Meeting in Uppsala*

Our project Virtual European Cultural Centre (abbreviated as VECU) which we have started in August this year is going to be conducted with financial support for Grundtvig projects granted by the Lifelong Learning programmes of the European Union. Since our partial realization of EFOS' first project Ideal European Library for seniors, 8 years ago, I have always had a feeling that we should continue. The project for seniors about collecting proverbs, realized by the university of Namur, demonstrated that seniors are interested in literature and the culture of daily life. The VECU project offers a lot of

possibilities to seniors for using their knowledge and abilities. We started to discuss the idea of Dr. Daniel Meynen as early as September 2007, during the meeting in Wrocław. A very fruitful cooperation with Peter Hug and discussions with all EFOS members resulted in a project proposal of high quality. The application has been accepted by all national agencies that were approached and almost every university that applied has gained support for the project. From my position as the EFOS president, I would like to express a great gratitude for the contribution of all of you. Many of us know what it means to get a project. It is not only an amount of money, but a lot of work too. It is an obligation, which we have to fulfill.



*The president addressing the mayor of Kiel*

EFOS is a federation which has a lot of experience. During its existence we had to deal with several problems and we learned well from them. We are a very good team and I know that the project of the EFOS and its results can be valuable, visible and of high quality. The VECU project will last for 2 years and I believe that we could combine the last meeting with a conference celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of EFOS.

During the year 2008:

- we decided, taking into account the EFOS financial situation, to establish the rules for covering travel expenses of EFOS members and invited guests,
- we established and adopted the rules for the membership of EFOS,
- we continued updating the EFOS homepage and we again started to use

the EFOS Forum for a flexible discussion via internet,

- we started working on the EFOS history, which can also be a part of the project VECU.

During the EFOS meeting in Kiel, which was the first VECU project meeting too, we had to discuss the guidelines for the cooperation in the VECU project. Also, we had to become more familiar with the terminology of everyday culture and cultural heritage. We formed groups of 'triplet'-partners and agreed on the structure of the Virtual European Cultural Centre.. The formal requirements for Grundtvig projects were already presented last year in Groningen and in Modra in connection with the EFOSEC project - it is the active inclusion of the seniors in the project, and also publicity for the project and its final outcomes. The active participation of seniors, a new homepage, intergenerational contacts and discussions on the themes of the project VECU will be the main requirements during the first part of our new project.



*Ingrid Dummer with the mayor of Kiel*

The second project meeting is going to be in Graz in April 2009, where I'd like to see the first results of the VECU project. I'm sure, that the partners will present not only the start-up but also the first progress in the project tasks. The idea of the project is great. Always, when I think about its tasks, I find new possibilities and ways for fulfilling the goals of the Virtual European Cultural Centre.

Bratislava, December 1, 2008





*Participants in Uppsala*



*Participants in Kiel with the Mayor*



## The VECU-Project of the EFOS

**Towards an understanding between young and old regarding their cultural heritage in seven European countries.**

*Dr. Daniel Meynen, Sulzburg, Germany*



In contrast to earlier times the fact that people can continue to learn right up until the end of their lives is today no longer in any doubt. Their readiness to learn new things can no longer be questioned either, considering the high number of older people in lecture theatres, seminar rooms and museums. And least of all the personal benefits of learning for older learners and students are challenged. The focus of public attention has recently shifted much more to the question of the meaning which this eagerness among older people to carry on learning has for the rest of the population. Wherein lies the intellectual potential of the older generations? What kind of opportunities could this open up for the rest of the society? Does the view that those who have left the working life have nothing to contribute to public life still has to be disproved? Are the pensioners and senior citizens conscious of their importance for culture, scholarship and political cohabitation? And are those of us who are still in the midst of their working life conscious of the potential for the rest of society which those who have left the working life still possess?

There is a great deal of uncertainty across the societies of Europe regarding the social role that pensioners and senior citizens, who still have 20 or 25 years of life left before them, play or should play in public life. And still nobody seems to have a clear idea of the

possibilities and opportunities which can be realised in these two or three decades which have been added to the life expectancy of the average European in the last 100 years.

While society changed long ago demographically from a three to a four and in some places even a five generation society, in which four or five generations are alive simultaneously, the institutions and arrangements of our society are still marked by the age pattern of the three generation societies of the past, in which leaving the workplace was soon followed by death. As long as the social institutions of our society are primarily oriented to a view of old age as a predominantly deficient state which is equated with being ill, weak, poor, dependent and needing of care and assistance, society is prevented from utilising the potential contributions of older people for innovation, wealth creation and civil society. It has been shown many times that many older people are more hindered than assisted by the actual social order to grasp new opportunities.

With this background the VECU project draws attention to a particular section of the possible contribution of older people to the further development of European society.

The focus of the project is the role which older people can play in the sphere of cultural exchange; the role they can play themselves, not what can be done for them. The case is the social role which older people can assume with regard to the dissemination of cultural heritage.

In the VECU project the following assumptions are made:

1. **Wherever people live together, they are interested in the experiences of**



**their neighbours.** That was just as true in the distant past when new hunting methods appeared in the savannah as it is today regarding successful online research or knowledge of business conventions or behaviour in situations of contact with foreign cultures.

2. **The experiences which are recognised as meaningful by many are retained in all societies and the retained behaviour is conveyed from generation to generation.** In this respect the younger generations in a society are not only interested in patterns of behaviour which help them to establish themselves in the society into which they were born or migrated but also those which enable them to alter the received patterns according to their views, experiences and wishes, or to totally discard them. On the other hand the older generations want to see that values they have received or created should be perpetuated. The project thus assumes that young people are just as interested in adopting forms of behaviour as they are in creating their own cultural environment and that older people want to pass on the cultural forms of behaviour which they have developed or adopted themselves to the younger generations. But at the same time (at least in an ideal world) the older generations are willing to allow the younger generations the freedom to pursue further developments and new beginnings.
3. Even though, as with every kind of heritage, there is the choice to accept or reject cultural traditions, **a society is for its survival nevertheless necessarily reliant on the inter-generational transmission of cultural patterns of behaviour and factual knowledge.** Culture is not a short term matter, nor is it limited to a single generation.
4. **The conveying of cultural patterns includes elements of offering as well as elements of release for alteration or rejection of the pattern.**
5. **The objective cultural products do not possess value in themselves. They receive their value from their**

**combination with the subjective views and patterns of behaviour.** Culture is primarily a cultivation of behaviour and secondarily a collection of cultural products. And therefore:

6. **the conveying of culture is also primarily a conveying of behavioural forms and only secondarily a conveying of products.** First and foremost social manners are conveyed, that is manners of everyday life or forms of interaction with, for example, works of literature, architecture or music. Only in the context of this interaction are the works themselves relevant. The act of conveying is therefore not a mere transfer of products but is always connected with a judgement of whether it is worthwhile to convey them. Those who convey cultural products must be willing to answer the questions: why is a cultural product of value and why should it be retained for future generations, how should one interact with it and what is the meaning of that interaction.
7. **The act of conveying is therefore not a one-way process, but rather amounts to a reciprocal form of dialogue and communication.**
8. **A further assumption is that the transfer of culture is not limited to a small group of people, but is rather always performed by a large number of "conveyors": from parents, teachers, clubs, the media etc.** The purpose of the project can therefore not be to entrust the entire task of conveying culture to the older generations, but rather to establish the specific segment which they can perform within the general task. The question is, in what way can older people participate in the conveying of culture and to what extent does this participation constitute a facet of the social role of older people.
9. The necessity of inter-generational cultural transfer is shared by all European societies. They differ however in the structuring of the transfer and in the content and form of the cultural patterns. In this respect **the shared features of the inter-**

**generational cultural transfer offer an excellent basis for intercultural exchange on the differences and similarities of the European cultures.**

- 10. A dialogue on the differences and similarities of national cultures in Europe encourages greater understanding between young and old.**

### **The participants in the project**

Nine institutions of higher education from seven European countries are involved in the project. They have all come together in the European Federation of Older Students (EFOS). The participants are the Universities of the Third Age in Bratislava (SK), Brunn (CZ), Dresden(D), Groningen and Drenthe(NL), Kiel(D), Magdeburg(D), Uppsala(S), Vienna(A) and Wroclaw(PL).

### **The Procedure**

Each participating institution forms one or more inter-generational dialogue groups. Using examples of patterns of behaviour members of these groups exchange ideas on the values of the cultural heritage.

Each institution chooses at least one of the following experimental fields: everyday culture, literary culture, musical culture.

Each institution looks for one or two partners with a different native language among the participating institutions, with whom they carry out the intercultural exchange on inter-generational experiences. These partners make up tandem or triplet groups.

### **The tasks of the partner institutions (tandem/triplet groups)**

The Dialogue groups develop and try out procedures through which old and young can reach an understanding regarding cultural heritage and traditions. In other words, they investigate:

1. the interest of the young for objects or patterns of behaviour in the three cultural spheres mentioned above and
2. they develop an awareness of what they themselves believe to be worth conveying, even if these things do not meet with any interest among the younger generations.

3. They develop and try out communicational procedures for the intercultural exchange on these subjects with their tandem/triplet partners.

4. They develop suggestions for a communicational procedure with which the results of the intercultural and inter-generational dialogues can be made available for those not directly involved in the project. Use is made of the new media.

### **The methods of working**

The groups are free to choose their own methods.

### **Reporting**

Throughout the duration of the project each group keeps a project diary, in which the phases of the exchange, its results and the main arguments and counterarguments are recorded.

The project reports should give information on,

- how, through what means and to what extent conveying culture should or can belong to the older generations' perception of their social role,
- how inter-generational cultural transfer can be organised,
- how the transfer can be organised interculturally and how the common European heritage can be fostered,
- what the conveying of culture can contribute to relations between the peoples of Europe and to an understanding of Europe itself.
- the value of the facilities of new media for the conveyance of culture.

### **Cooperation and communication**

The tandem or triplet groups organise their meetings autonomously.

Twice yearly the representatives of the participating organisations come together to report on the progress of the projects and to clear up any open questions which are relevant for all the participants.

For the periods between these meetings the participants communicate using an internet forum especially set up for this purpose.

### **Project dates**

The concept for the project was adopted at a conference in Wroclaw in October 2007 and the project forum was installed in late autumn 2007.

The project proposal was submitted in early 2008 and the remaining procedures were

agreed upon during a conference in Uppsala in April.

In July 2008 six of the seven applications were accepted as a Grundtvig-Partnership-Project.

The start-up conference took place in Kiel in October 2008.



*Meeting in Kiel*

## Lecture at the Comenius University in Bratislava regarding the introduction of the EURO in Slovakia

*Mag. Herta and Dipl. Ing. Wolfgang Spitaler, Vienna, Austria*



On the 10th April, 2008 a lecture took place at the Comenius University in Bratislava given by Ms. Zuzana Kolacanová, project manager of the Slovak National Bank regarding the introduction of the Euro. As from 1st January, 2009 the Euro shall be introduced in Slovakia. Many senior students of the University of the 3rd Age were present since many persons are worried about the forthcoming introduction of the Euro and they were eager to get more information.

Herta and Wolfgang Spitaler from Vienna were present as representatives of EFOS. They had been asked to talk about their experience with the introduction of the Euro in Austria. One of the main objectives of EFOS is to establish international contact between senior students and exchange reciprocal information about topics of mutual interest. Therefore it was a matter of honour for us to follow the invitation of Dr. Nadia Hrapková to participate in this lecture.

In Austria there is a saying "Der Euro ist ein Teuro" (The Euro is expensive), which means that people say that after the introduction of the Euro everything became more expensive. This is correct for some products but not for everything since there were also products that became cheaper. In the current year 2008 the prices for almost all foodstuffs have increased, which is especially hard for pensioners but has nothing to do with the introduction of the Euro. In our opinion with the Euro you are tempted to spend your money more easily since the amounts seem to be much smaller than the original ones in Schillings. Especially for tips and small purchases you spend more than before. This rise in prices depends on you - you only need to do a bit of mental arithmetic. Now - 6 years after the introduction of the Euro in Austria (it was introduced on 1st

January, 2002) - there are still older people who calculate in Schillings, younger people often don't remember the Schilling and/or they were already born into the Euro.

But the Euro has also advantages - especially when travelling abroad or when sending money to other Euro countries. In this case you save the charges for the currency exchange.

Wolfgang Spitaler spoke about the rate of inflation before and after the introduction of the Euro.



He could show that after the introduction of the Euro the inflation rate did not rise but fall. The inflation rate is regularly calculated according to the development of the prices of the so called "basket of goods" i.e. from a statistically established selection of products which corresponds to the habits of the Austrian in the purchase of goods for their everyday needs. Since the individual "basket of goods" in many cases does not correspond to the one statistically calculated, it is understandable that the personal impression of increasing prices differs from the official inflation rate. When the prices of flights and telephone charges decrease only those persons who can afford them take notice. However, the rising prices for food will be felt first of all by persons with lower income.

With regard to Slovakia the difference between pensions of the two neighbour countries Austria and Slovakia is still very high (the minimum pension of the Slovaks is about 1/3 of the minimum pension in Austria). But some items in Austria are much more expensive than in Slovakia e.g. housing, others like gasoline currently cost in Slovakia as much as in Austria.

## Scientific education for the 40+ generation

*Dr. Rosemarie Kurz, Graz, Austria*



**EFOS - European Federation of Older Students at Universities** was founded in Brixen Italy in 1990 and constituted in Brussels in 1992 to support the Pan European idea. The late Leopold Auinger († 2002) realized herewith his vision of a peaceful Europe. This historical event is still in my vivid remembrance. Right from the beginning there was a fruitful cooperation with the UN - Committee on Ageing in order to force world wide questions concerning ageing. At the same time older people were to be encouraged to participate in all aspects of age and ageing.

EFOS is one of the oldest trans-European cooperations of institutions for senior students. Representatives from Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Sweden, Slovakia and Czech Republic meet regularly for the exchange of best practices and to develop projects. Older students are thus enabled to find new ways of scientific studies.

One of the main tasks of EFOS is the social engagement for the realisation of higher education for older students, also in case of missing qualifications, by admitting them to supplementary exams. In this context the cooperation with other transnational organisations with similar objectives are of great value. A few examples:

**U3A – Universities of the Third Age** – are organisations in close contact with institutions for higher education, offering scientific studies for older people.

**LiLL\_** – Learning in Later Life concentrates on e-Learning in Later Life (eLiLL). This transnational project seeks to strengthen the

digital competences of older people in Europe, especially for their application for learning in later life. <http://www.uni-ulm.de/uni/fak/zawiw/elill>

**AUITA** – Association Internationale des Universités du Troisième Age is a worldwide organisation based in France supporting exchange of information between students and organisers of U3As.

**BAG WIWA** - Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung für ältere Menschen in Deutschland. BAG WIWA is an association of 52 universities supporting scientific studies of older students. <http://www.seniorenstudium.uni-dortmund.de/bagwiwa.htm>

**GINA** - Geneva International Network on Ageing is part of the WHO - World Health Organisation dealing worldwide with issues of ageing. <http://www.who.int/ageing/gina/en>

**EURAG** – European Federation of Older People: EURAG works on the improvement of the quality of the social and political standards of living of older people. EURAG sets up working groups and committees on topics concerning the older generation and launches proposals and motions to all international institutions. It is also a member of the Platform of European Social NGOs in Brussels. <http://www.eurageurope.org/>

Before EFOS had been founded, the late Leopold Auinger initiated in Austria various representations at the students union for older students. The first of these „Senioren-referate“ was founded in 1986 at the university of Graz. Ten years later in 1996 the students union transformed it into the “Generationenreferat”. This change promoted the concerns of young and old students to be dealt with in an inter-generative way (e.g. the project “Habitation for help”, the university bus line or the lecture series “Montagsakademie” for all ages).



**Austria** has a speciality concerning senior students. Persons of any age who do not have a high school degree can acquire an entrance degree ("Studienberechtigungsprüfung") through special courses and examinations at the universities.

One of the main future tasks of the universities will be to design special senior academies.

There are some best practice examples:

**Innsbrucker Akademie** - [http://www.innsbrucker-akademie.at/angebote\\_h.htm](http://www.innsbrucker-akademie.at/angebote_h.htm)

Learning offers seek to strengthen the creative and constructive potentials of older people who want to use their knowledge gained through life time. There are weekly evening lectures on certain topics in a semester series. The project is funded by the county government and the city of Innsbruck

**Seniorstudium Liberale (SL)** [www.uni-klu.ac.at](http://www.uni-klu.ac.at) is an open study for interested people.

It was started in 2007 with a pilot project at the Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt. It is a cooperation of various educational organisations such as Pädagogische Hochschule, Fachhochschule Kärnten, Kärntner Landeskonservatorium, Kärntner Verwaltungsakademie and Katholische Pädagogische Hochschuleinrichtung Kärnten.

The „Seniorstudium Liberale“ is a special offer for older and active people. No special qualifications are required.

#### Four levels:

- Selected lectures offered by the cooperating organisations: history, philosophy, ethnology, psychology, education, mathematics etc.
- Discussion groups: a lecture by a well known personality about his/her expertise followed by an open discussion.
- "Jour fixe" once a month offers students the possibility to put forward ideas, exchange experiences and criticise.
- The "Club" offers an open place for discussions to extend scientific knowledge

#### **Studium Generale** - <http://www.zig-owl.de>

of the European Centre for studies at universities in Ostwestfalen-Lippe offers possibilities to older people to gain additional knowledge in their later life. The aim is a broad understanding of political and scientific issues. Older people may learn how to solve problems and how to successfully communicate on different scientific issues such as: Political science, religion, health, medicine, history, economics, social sciences, philosophy, literature, art, mathematics etc.

The study comprises 6 trimesters in 2 years. The most recent cycle started in August 2008. Fees are € 400 per trimester. No other entrance qualifications than practical professional experience are required.

## From the life of U3A Education for senior citizens – a public issue

*prof. Ing. PETR VAVŘÍN, DrSc.  
Chairman of the Association of U3A of the Czech Republic*

*That was the title of an international conference held 11 – 13 June in the building of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering at the Czech Technical University in Prague by the Association of Universities of the Third Age of the Czech Republic (AU3A) along with the Czech Technical University and the University of Economics. The Chairman of the Association prof. Ing. Petr Vavřín, DrSc. was asked about the current standards of senior education in this country, its future, and the mission of the association.*



Senior education at Czech universities is now of an extremely high standard. You might say that so far as the EU is concerned we are at a standard comparable to that seen at the best universities in Finland, Germany, Spain and Great Britain. The development project aimed at building infrastructure and improving the standard and scope of the courses offered at U3A, prepared for the Ministry of Education by the Association of Universities of the Third Age (AU3A) annually since 2004, has a part to play in this.

The AU3A, established in 1993, affiliates persons and institutions engaged in education for seniors at the university level. Its principal tasks include the preparation of informational and statistical materials for the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the organisation of specialist seminars and conferences, coordination of the activities of the individual U3As at public universities in the Czech Republic, and the mediation of contacts with foreign partners.

Demographic prognoses indicate that we can expect a considerable increase in the numbers

of people interested in U3A courses in the years to come, for which reason the AU3A is supporting increased access to educational activities outside the university towns. The principal motives at the beginnings of senior education were the interest shown by applicants in selected interesting topics and the fulfilment of the life goals they had been unable to achieve during their working lives.

In the modern age, characterised by the rapid practical application of the results produced by science and technology, it is becoming practically essential to keep up with the latest developments. One must be able to use modern technology in one's everyday life and to keep one's bearings within complex social and economic relations. The greatest interest shown by applicants in U3A study programmes is seen in information and communication technology, and new systems in economics, banking and trade. Traditional branches such as medicine, gerontology, biology, food science, philosophy and psychology are not, however, lagging far behind. The AU3A is striving for the establishment of special multi-semester study programmes that, although they do not lead towards an academic title, enable students to understand and grasp the essence of a given field. The fields concerned here include both technical (power engineering and the environment) and social sciences (sociology, architecture and art).



## Vision of HOVO-Nederland on international contacts

*Dipl. Ing. Peter Hug, secretary of HOVO-Nederland*



HOVO-Nederland welcomes all initiatives that lead to direct encounters of staff and students of Dutch and foreign senior universities. International contacts are an important programme point in our 5 year action plan and we have reserved financial means for them.

We stimulate our member organisations, senior universities and the “Vrienden” (students organisations) in the Netherlands, to establish and maintain these contacts. Until recently the Senioren Academie Groningen was the sole pioneer with its longterm cooperation with the Seniorenuniversität Oldenburg and various meetings with seniore universities in Germany and Slovakia. This year however HOVO Utrecht too has established contacts with the Seniorenuniversität Leipzig. We try particularly to stimulate our senior universities in the border region to follow the example of Groningen and to seek a cooperation with similar organisations across the border in Germany and Belgium and offer our (financial) support.

*Why do we, as a national association for further education for older people, put so much emphasis on international contacts?*

1. We are convinced that the knowledge of organisation and range of the further

education for older people in other countries can stimulate new ideas within our Dutch institutions. A glance across the fence is always useful. And a direct contact is often more effective than reading publications.

2. The direct contacts of our senior students with their colleagues from other countries gives them the opportunity for an insight in each others culture and style of living which widens their horizon. We consider this as a valuable addition to our range of courses. We are convinced that with this we make a, maybe small, contribution to the creation of a European identity, considering that our senior students don't keep these experiences to themselves but share them with the younger generation.
  3. For HOVO-Nederland it is important to demonstrate to the Parliament and the government that higher education for older people is not just a hobby of a few Dutch intellectuals but that it is part of a thriving international development. We have to make it plausible that the demand of the older generation for further education is a global phenomenon. This is the only way to gain the support which we will dearly need for the expected growth, driven by the demographic changes.
- For these reasons HOVO-Nederland has joined the worldwide organisation of senior universities AIUTA and the European Federation of Older Students EFOS.