



EFOS

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



EFOS NEWS

1

2011



EFOS 20 years



English edition

European Federation of Older Students

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From the editor:

The present edition of the EFOS news is dedicated to our two major events of the year 2010: the 20th anniversary of our organisation and the conclusion of our VECU project that has kept us busy since 2008.

On occasion of the anniversary EFOS has described its first 20 years in a book titled: „Aufgaben und Initiativen der EFOS. 20 Jahre – Geschichte und Gegenwart“ (available only in German). Prof. Joost Hauer and Dr. Wolfgang Schmidl reviewed this publication critically. As an introduction Peter Hug sketches the past activities of EFOS in short. Our president mrs. Dr. Nadežda Hrapková is represented with her lecture „The European senior in the transformation of education“.

Dr. Daniel Meynen, in his contribution to the conclusion of the VECU project, poses the question „What does it mean for seniors to be Europeans?“. The articles of workgroup members in Wroclaw, Vienna, Groningen, Magdeburg, Bratislava, Brno and Dresden give us an impression of their contributions to the themes every day culture, proverbs, literature, music and living culture of our VECU project. A full description of the project and its results you can find on <http://www.vecu.efos-europa.eu>.

A new element in these EFOS News is the chapter News in Short which is intended to indicate interesting activities and publications of EFOS and other organisations for senior education.

March 2011

Peter Hug

EFOS News

Publication of the
European Federation of Older
Students at Universities

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Yearly report of the EFOS president

The year 2010 with its many events was significant for EFOS.

We finished the project activities of the VECU Grundtvig project that had been approved for the senior academies and universities of Groningen, Dresden, Brno, Bratislava, Vienna and Wroclaw. To fulfill the project tasks, we held this year two project meetings in conjunction with regular EFOS meetings, as well as tandem and triple meetings of partners. A combined meeting was held in Brno, whereas at a special conference in Wroclaw the VECU partners presented the results of their project groups for the specific areas on which they had focused on. Poster presentations and project outputs on the VECU website showed us concrete results from each partner.

Another important area of EFOS activities in the year 2010 were national and international conferences in which EFOS was involved. The first conference was held in March at the University of Hamburg, where members of EFOS participated in three workshops and presented aims, activities and results of EFOS. The conference at the University of Wroclaw, which was held in June 2010, was aimed on the one hand at the education of seniors in Poland and on the other hand on the presentation of the VECU project and its results. The third conference where EFOS played an important role was the international conference held on 7 October 2010 at the Comenius University in Bratislava. This conference was organized on occasion of the 20th anniversary of EFOS and was combined with a regular EFOS meeting.

Important activities in 2010 were also the discussions about the future of the education for elderly and of EFOS. The discussions started in April 2009 in Graz on the basis of a paper of the „Goslar Group” of emeriti and

were attended by emeriti of the university of Graz. The next meeting in Groningen didn't lead to the envisaged agreement. During the meeting in Brno in April 2010 the subject was shortly discussed. However the VECU project in its final stage took so much of the available time that an extended discussion wasn't possible. So we decided that the members should write down their ideas about future innovations and changes in EFOS and about the manifesto that was designed by Dr. Daniel Meynen. The manifesto and the papers of the members formed the basis for a thorough discussion of during a whole day in October 2010 in Bratislava. This discussion clarified the needs of the seniors and the organisations for senior education and resulted in a new description of the aims and tasks of EFOS. The participants decided to prepare a shorter version of the manifesto and to finish off the proposal in Dresden.

The book about the history of EFOS that was published on the occasion of the 20th anniversary, will serve us as promotion and information material. In addition to all the information that is available on the website, it is useful to have a printed publication that can be offered as a present when visiting e.g. a university or the governors of a city. A CD with the same content will be published shortly.

On 1 October 2010 the EFOS president attended a UNO event on invitation of Dipl. Ing. Monika Anna Klenovec, the chairwoman of the Committee on Ageing. The information workshop was enriching. It highlighted the global activities of the UNO and its committees.

Bratislava, 8 October 2010
PhDr. Nadežda Hrapková, PhD.
EFOS President

EFOS 20 years

At the meeting in Bratislava in October 2010 EFOS celebrated its 20th anniversary.

The first initiative back in 1990 was taken by a professor and a senior student of the university of Innsbruck who both thought that the senior students should engage themselves more intensely with the education for older people and that, for this purpose, they should be brought together on a European level. The senior student, Leopold Auinger, created within two years a network of like-minded people in Belgium and Switzerland and together they established a European organisation. Since then the members (institutions, senior students and emeriti) meet every half year in various cities, exchange experiences and discuss common projects.

EFOS considers the following as her major tasks: fostering of academic studies of older people together with younger students or at special academies/universities for older people; fostering of joint projects for older students throughout Europe and fostering and securing the access of older people to academic education also without formal qualifications. It was soon obvious that from country to country the education for older people differs a lot in form and content. That's why it isn't attempted to propagate a generally applicable model. The special requirements and possibilities in each country are taken into consideration. This results in a fascinating multitude of educational possibilities and we can continually learn from each other.

During the last ten years EFOS has gone through a prosperous period:

- New members from Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Great Britain joined EFOS. With them the centre of gravity moved to North- and Middle-Europe. At the moment eight countries are represented in EFOS.
- Projects and actions were carried out to improve the European cooperation for the education of older people. The half yearly meetings also lead to bilateral encounters of senior students from various countries.

- Conferences and symposia were organised with presentations about the education of older people and its expected development.
- The website was modernised and brought up to date and the tradition of the EFOS News was revitalised after a pause of a few years, now in digital form. The EFOS News are published at least once an year and contain articles about the education for older people and about projects of EFOS.
- On the occasion of the 20th anniversary EFOS published a book about its history. It will soon be available on CD too.

With the EFOSEC project the various forms of education for older people was documented in a well arranged format. A survey among 841 senior students in 8 countries brought out the commonalities and differences in their motivation and wishes.

The VECU project offered opportunities to senior students at 8 universities in 6 countries to reflect on aspects of their national culture and to present them to the project partners. The result was a diverse series of articles that can be viewed on the VECU internet site.

After the completion of the VECU project EFOS, at its recent autumn meeting in Bratislava, started with a thorough discussion about its future objectives and tasks. The objectives were newly formulated focussing on fostering various forms of education for older people, stimulating common projects and cooperating with other organisations. An action was started to get into contact with senior universities and senior students in countries that are not yet represented in EFOS. The continuation of the discussion and the clarification of our tasks will be the major issues at our next meetings. We are convinced that this will provide us with a solid basis for the 3rd decennium of our organisation.

Peter Hug
Vicepresident EFOS



EFOS

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Nadežda Hrapková (Hrsg.)

AUFGABEN UND INITIATIVEN DER EFOS

20 Jahre

Geschichte und Gegenwart



Comenius Universität Bratislava

Goals and activities of EFOS – present and past.

Edited by Dr. Nadežda Hrapková,
on occasion of the 20th anniversary of the European Federation of Older Students
Univerzita Komenského Bratislava, 2010

Dr. Wolfgang Schmidl, Vienna (Austria)



The publication is composed of eight contributions of different authors varying considerably in length.

After a presentation of the executive committee of EFOS, the organization's goals and member countries ("I." *General Considerations*", 5-7) follow "*The activities of the past 20 years of EFOS* (II., 7-69). This section contains personal reminiscences and ten reports on different perspectives of the formation of older people within the European context, presented on seminars and conferences organized at the universities of Bratislava, Wrocław and Hamburg in 1998, 2002, 2006 and 2010.

Part III. "*EFOS-News*" (69f.) gives a short account of this "main medium of communication with the general public".

Part IV. consists of "*basic theoretical considerations*" concerning the future of the studies of the elderly and the relationship between formation and democracy (70-89).

In Chapter V. (89-114) there are summaries of two "*investigations of members of EFOS*" (the Project "EFOSEC", a survey on the "Motivation and Feelings of Older Students", and an inquiry into older students at the universities of Warsaw, Linz and Bratislava, based on the "Scale of Geriatric Depression".

Part "VI. *Projects of EFOS*" (115-118) informs about activities of transnational groups of older students ("tandems") around topics of common interest.

A short resumé (VII, 119f) and an appendix (VII, 121-125) complete the booklet.

The present publication contains quite heterogeneous elements:

- documentation of the corner-stones of the development of self-concept, organizational structures and media presence of EFOS,

- lists of regional and European meetings, seminars and conferences,
- reproductions of basic reflections and texts of conferences
- the presentation of two empirical/psychological investigations into characteristics of the learning of older persons,
- short accounts of topical studies of interculturally mixed groups of older students (EFOSEC, VECU)
- the installation of an EFOS-website.

These finally mentioned short accounts seem to reflect present-day EFOS at its best, yet the "reproductive texts" dominate the booklet quantitatively. This disproportion seems inadequate to the aspiration of the book, besides it taints its internal consistence.

Apart from this, the booklet stimulates the interest of the reader to ask for more information on this European confederation, as for comparative studies on differences and shared characteristics of studies of older students ("SOS"), specific universitarian problems within SOS caused by the Bologna Process, alternatives of dealing with the consequences of Bologna, visions for the future of SOS, for single countries and for the European Union.

Defining the precise meaning of the term "older students (at universities)" is an issue of growing importance that should be kept in mind.

In the wake of the Bologna Process the foremost goals of European universities have been employability of students, convergence of study programs and accreditation procedures, minimum duration of studies, minimum burden to the national budgets, the primacy of extramurally financed research, etc.

So the gap between the specific academic needs of older students and the "offers" to this clientele is far from being closed. The equation "higher education for the elderly" = "participation in regular university courses"

has to be omitted, also in view of declared EFOS-goals as quoted in the publication.

Managing to experience a new “sense” in their present and future lives will provide the older students to accept the new challenges of re-defining established ascribed and internalized roles. To regain or acquire competences for establishing a new scope for autonomous and gratifying action – like readiness to cooperate, alternative modes of explanations, historical knowledge, tactical know-how – will be the

basis for a more humane society as intended by our European classical critical idea of education (“Bildungsidee”).

With this the development and step-by-step implementation of dramatically different forms of institutionalized “scientific education of older students”, focussing on their own inspiration of meaning and thus their definition of problems, will be recognised as exigency for the near future.



Nadežda Hrapkova (Hrsg.): Aufgaben und Initiativen der EFOS. 20 Jahre – Geschichte und Gegenwart.

Univerzita Komenského Bratislava, 2010, 178p.

Prof. Joost Hauer, Groningen (Netherlands)



Recently EFOS, the European Federation of Older Students, celebrated its 20th anniversary. On this occasion an overview of activities from these years was presented in a small book. In six chapters, complemented with a summary and appendices, various subjects are presented. The names of the board members of EFOS and a list of countries represented in the membership are given in chapter 1 (pp.7-9). It attracts attention, that only 8 European countries are represented. Then the president of EFOS, Dr. N. Hrapková gives a list of goals of EFOS, the most central being: standing up for the interests of senior students at European universities.

The longest chapter (pp. 10-88) contains reports on activities which took place within the twenty years of EFOS-history. Regular meetings of members and exchanges of older students are shortly described and alternated with personal memories. Here we also find ten contributions on various aspects of education for elderly people as these were presented by EFOS-members at congresses. It is interesting to read these texts, although sometimes they are quite out of date.

After a short chapter of one and a half page in length about EFOS-News and the website, we find two essays under the heading 'basic texts'. The authors, Daniel Meynen and Alexander Andreeff are well known experts in the field of academic teaching for elderly. Meynen writes about recent developments and the role universities could and should play. Andreeff focuses on the relation between 'Bildung' and democracy; he refers to a Chinese proverb which says that investing in teaching is the guarantee for a future.

In chapter 5 (pp.115-145) the results of research projects of EFOS-members are presented in a summarized way. In the so called Efosec-project senior students are

interviewed about their motivation and feelings. The results are presented here in simple cross tables and a list of remarks made by the respondents. Any reflection or interpretation is absent and the statistical relevance of the tables is questionable. The results of a project with a 'geriatric depression scale' among senior students in Warsaw, Linz and Bratislava conclude this chapter. The absolute figures in the tables are too small to seriously take any definitive conclusions.

In the last chapter (pp.146-150) three EFOS-projects are mentioned: the website, Efosec and Vecu. The information given is so condensed that the reader may become curious and look for more on the EFOS-website.

Furthermore the book contains appendices: a letter to the European Commission written in 2006, a list of members, some tables from the Efosec-project and a small fotogallery.

The book gives an overview of activities launched by EFOS. Quite some initiatives have been successfully undertaken by the small group of members and some supporters. It shows how cooperation between institutions offering academic learning programmes in the context of life long learning and seniorstudents may result in meaningful exchanges of experiences and interesting projects. The results are made available via the website and the EFOS-News. In this way EFOS in a modest way contributes to the development of academic education for senior students: through reflection, in publications by members and by promoting contacts between senior students from some European countries. These activities are compatible with the goals of EFOS as formulated in the first chapter of this book.

Nevertheless in connection with this jubilee book the question arises why EFOS has not taken the opportunity to reflect about past experiences. This publication contains many texts which were published earlier or were presented at congresses. A reflection on the past that connects it with the future is

obviously missing. Many obvious questions are not asked: What have these 20 years learned us? Where could EFOS improve? Which developments in senior education were striking and important in these years? What impact has the Bologna-process? Why is the European dimension essential? Which organizational models for senior academic education may be distinguished within Europe? Could any general guidelines to be formulated from a comparison of these models? It may be clear that such questions can not be thoroughly discussed within a book like this. But here was a huge chance to create some distance from the factual history and formulate a view that brings the experiences of 20 years on to a higher level. The main goal: 'standing up for the interests of senior students at European universities', could have been the

leading principle of this book. Now this was only indirectly visible.

These considerations are relevant because senior education can not be taken for granted anymore. The budgets for culture are shrinking and at the universities priorities are changing rapidly. Also the significance of 'Bildung' is becoming more questionable. The elder generation can still contribute to the preservation of European culture. EFOS potentially has the possibilities to be one of the institutions taking the lead. But then some necessary conditions have to be fulfilled: EFOS should formulate a clear and fundamental vision on this matter, cooperation with the universities should become more mutually profitable and membership should be extended to more countries.



The European senior in the transformation of education.

PhDr. Nadežda Hrapková, PhD., Bratislava (Slovakia)



The demographic revolution that has brought us an extension of life and a greater number of older people in society forces us to reflect on the accompanying realities. On the one hand, it brings us a new name for the next stage of life of older people and the terminology gives us the opportunity to talk about fourth age. Today it is normal that in senior education programs we face two generations of listeners, the **older adults in the third age and senior citizens in the fourth age**. On the other hand, demographic changes have affected the possibilities for studying at some universities, where an increase in the number of prospective students means that it is necessary to wait for the study. With the increase in the number of young students it is not possible to accomodate all seniors.

When Pierre Vellas in 1973 had the idea to fund the first University of the Third Age, he was certain that it would be useful for the seniors and enrich their life after their retirement from work. His first intentions to educate elderly people mainly in health related subjects and social care developed further under various influences into several new fields and areas. **The main impulses for these changes** were developments in the lifestyle, increase in living standards and development of science as well as the fast introduction of the information and communication technologies that brought changes to the personality of the elderly. Along with the study subjects focused on care, health and healing subjects of the elderly, the seniors, due to broader travelling options, also started to focus on history, art and learning of foreign languages. Development of the computer possibilities and the every day need of the internet communication opened the world of the PC technologies to seniors also. The use of the

internet offers them unlimited possibilities of extension of their contacts within their families and communities of seniors at home and abroad.

What role has EFOS played in the area of education of elderly?

The main objectives of EFOS arise from the people's right of education, which is mirrored in education possibilities offered to the elderly in various countries of the European Union. The regular meetings of EFOS members deal with the needs of the member universities and senior's academies and create a platform for the exchange of information and the development of cooperation.

Cooperation among universities and their students within EFOS, on the national and European level, is based on:

- the exchange of the life experiences of seniors in their universities, communities and own families
- the exchanging of information about the study organization and about the possibilities for continuing education in their own city and country
- the support and care of study programs for the elderly.

Currently EFOS focuses on:

- the way forward for senior education in Europe,
- how to ensure the educational needs of the elderly in different European countries,
- how to create opportunities and provide necessary conditions for the education of seniors,
- how to use the knowledge potential of seniors and their life experiences for our environment and society,
- how to pass knowledge and cultural values to younger generations.

Conditions for adult education and senior education systems in Europe are diverse. This diversity gives us the opportunity to search for applicable methods and compare the work forms, which are usually the common themes of European meetings. An example was the meeting of seniors at a workshop about the

introduction of the Euro, where Austrian seniors did not hold back with their advice and encouragement for the Slovak seniors to have the right attitude toward the new currency.

Tasks and aims of EFOS are focused not only on older students but also on **cooperation with the younger generation**. We have broadened relations with younger generations at schools and within communities not only by direct interactions, but also by participation in common projects under the EU Grundtvig program. They offer us an opportunity to influence the young people and pass our life long experience and knowledge on to them. We had very good results in integrated education in our current project VECU – Virtual European Culture Centre.

The environment in which senior students are situated and educated gives them an opportunity for new contacts that are usually further developed according to their interests. Twenty years ago, the seniors were more oriented on their family, community and the country. Selection of the programs depended on the individual needs of each person. Nowadays students have broader interests and bigger requirements. These requirements of the seniors generated new influences for the creation of study programs and they were extended to subjects such as history, art and philosophy, education in economy, law and IT. Expansion of international contacts of the seniors also increased a need to learn foreign languages and development in the IT initiated classes to improve PC skills.

The current senior students in an education environment are not willing to wait for offers, but they come themselves with suggestions and ideas. An older student is an active individual, useful for his community and family. Just as a young person is shaped by the environment, also the elderly people are influenced by their environment and the social groups they are in according to their interests.

Not only discussions in the EFOS federation, but also our own situation force us to think about expansion possibilities and supplementing the education system for seniors in Slovakia and Europe. **New content of the senior education** should be based on the delaying of the retirement age. In this sense we could consider the education of elderly also as an education for the needs of the labor market, for flexible solutions in work situations and finding opportunities for people above 50.

However, institutions for the education of elderly have not enough capacity. Only a radical intervention in the provisions for learning organizations can create the necessary conditions for the expansion of educational offers.

So what is a senior student like in the current Europe?

With regards to my experience, I dare to say that the personality of a senior in the education process has changed substantially. A senior student:

- is more flexible in the new environment,
- is a person with broad interests and many new contacts,
- is more communicative, enters into a dialogue with a tutor without fears, as an equal partner who asks questions about the education subject,
- is also interested in new issues and, within research tasks, in situation mapping,
- has an interest to describe situations and compare differences by using his own life experiences,
- seeks new contacts and friendships and in this way creates a new social community for an active old age,
- is interested in participation in projects and solving of the tasks arising from them,
- would like to be useful for the community and further use his knowledge.

Where are, however, the reservations in our work with senior students? Not all communities are open to further education of the older people and at some universities, there even is not enough space for education of the elderly. It is necessary to initiate meetings and interviews with members of governments and comities so the situation about active ageing programs development is dealt with. Research and long term practice confirm a great importance and benefits of the further education of seniors not only for them but also for their family and community. Therefore it is our job to support and realize these types of the active ageing programs.

So, how could we go further in the education of the elderly?

It is necessary to convince public officials and government officials about all the society benefits from the educational programs. Study not only stimulates participants for mental and

social activities, but also focuses on the development of their own interests.

Benefits from the participation of seniors in learning are reflected sequentially by addressing health, social and societal issues. An educated person is more flexible, is able to manage tasks and problems more easily, can be better oriented in space and communicate more easily. This contribution, which education gives to us, is taken automatically and community isn't always aware of it. Mentally active people have stronger concerns about what is happening in society and want to be engaged in social decisions.

Education also has positive effects on health and wellbeing of seniors, which are important aspects of the quality of life. Education of seniors also has its macro dimension when the

society gets full-valued people of the old age, less dependence of the seniors on social services and a positive attitude of the citizens towards the seniors (Balogová, B. 2008). These facts should convince the responsible authorities of the importance of education for the personal development of older people and to try to handle the status and development of senior education centrally and overall in Slovakia as well as in Europe.

BALOGOVÁ, B. 2008. Seniori v kontexte edukácie, In: Zborník „*Svet seniora, senior vo svete*“, Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity v Prešove, ISBN 978-80-8068-814-1, s.228.



VECU

The project VECU. - What does it mean for seniors to be Europeans? –

Vortrag anlässlich der Abschlusskonferenz in Wrocław (Polen), 23. – 25. Juni 2010

Dr. Daniel Meynen, Sulzburg (Germany)



My intention for the next half an hour is to present to you the EFOS-Project VECU.

I will explain to you

- Who is involved
- Who has done what
- By which methods
- With which results
- With what insights into the future

The aim of my report is to answer the question: What does it mean for seniors today to be Europeans?

But there are no questions without preliminary questions:

As you know, we are forgetful at our age and it is always helpful for us to know, where I am just now and who I am. Where we are just now and who we are?

As you know: We are in Wrocław. This is a famous city of dramatic art. Here the avantgardists of theatre Henryk Tomaszewski and Jerzy Grotowski worked.

This is a City of science. An incredible ten Nobel prize-winners have lived and done research here. And it is a city of romanticism. August Kopisch was born here in 1799, the discoverer of the grotto azurro of Capri and Joseph Eichendorff, the poet of the blue flower:

Ich suche die blaue Blume
Ich suche und finde sie nie
Mir träumt, dass in der Blume
Mein gutes Glück mir blüh.

And this European capital of modern theatre, science and romanticism was quite a suitable place to start our project VECU and with this meeting to finish it.

And my second preliminary question: who we are?

The answer to this question shall guide us into the centre of our project.

We are seniors, students, members of EFOS and Europeans.

To be senior means today to have been born between 1925 and 1955.

These generations grew up with the dark background of World-War II.

Being a citizen of a state which was perpetrator or victim of political crimes was inscribed into the consciousness of our childhood.

We all know through our own or our friends' experiences what it means to lose father or mother, brothers and sisters by violence.

Many of us know what it means to be hungry and to have nothing to eat, to feel cold and to be without protection.

We know the deep division between Eastern and Western Europe, which split our continent into two inimical ideological systems, armed to the teeth for nearly fifty years.

We didn't know how one really lives on the other side of the frontier.

We got to know how the fascist and communist ideologies distort the perceptions of the others.

But these generations are also witness to the wonder of how human beings are able to transgress such a bloody border by courage, wisdom and solidarity.

To be a member of our generations means to know the highs and lows of European history.

But it is also typical for these generations to be in a post-professional state without defined functions and public roles.

The role of the third generation is new in the demographic evolution of our European societies.

The seniors of this generation look for tasks which give their existence a meaning, which

provide them with personal satisfaction and the society with a public benefit, which they no longer have.

We are senior-students. That means we can freely follow our interests in our studies without any external compulsions. It is not our professional life, nor our careers, nor financial necessity that motivates us to study, but only the aim of gaining knowledge of our personal interest and orientation in the worlds of philosophy, science, literature and also in our political and social life.

We look primarily for meaning, not for profit. Whatever we study: physics, astronomy, biology, languages or philosophy, our interest is “to perceive what holds the world together in its innermost folds,” “was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält”. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

We want to be good partners in our talks with the young; we want to be good companions for the generations of our children and grandchildren. We share the wish to be good supporters of our societies and the feeling of responsibility for it.

We are members of EFOS. What does this mean?

We are senior-students of 9 European countries. We have a great interest in the sources of the cultural richness of Europe and we feel the deep wish to know what happens in the other regions of Europe, what themes, what questions the others are occupied with.

What they think about the themes we are occupied with.

We are a union of elderly Europeans who look for study-friends in other countries, who can give us an idea of the values of their culture.

Twice a year we come together for an exchange of our experiences.

Through the EFOS I have gained friends in Sweden and Poland, in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, in Slovakia and Austria and naturally in Germany, too.

It is wonderful to discover what pleasure it brings to speak with friends about the books they read, the customs they like and the proverbs they use.

And on this platform of the EFOS we can discuss the public role of elderly students within the universities as well as in our societies.

And we are Europeans. That means we are members of our different countries, we are speakers of our different native languages and we have the same common heritage of ancient thinkers, Christian Church Fathers, the philosophers of the Enlightenment, of our European artists Bach, Mozart, Chopin and Dvorak, Roger van der Weyden and van Gogh, and the great humanitarian tradition of Henri Dunant and Mother Teresa.

The long centuries of European conviviality have lead us to the common values of personal liberty, common solidarity, Christian charity, humanity and the principles of the constitutional state.

I wish to express the values of Europe with the words the Polish Premier Donald Tusk used in Aachen last May: He said:

“I wondered many a time how it happened that the Nazis and Communists did not manage to disinherit us from Europe. It would seem that we had so little for our defence: ruined cemeteries, the shadow of the huge Gothic church, the pealing of bells in the town hall tower... We also had something that someone beautifully called: the modest dignity of custom. In my case, these were the Sunday outings with my parents to the sweetshop, undertaken against the drabness and poverty of everyday life.

In my family, this was also the joint music-making accompanying the holidays which – as I later learnt – used to be practised (and is perhaps practised to this day) in Trieste, Munich, and Utrecht.

Such a Europe was there in us, or at the least the faithfulness to the dream about Europe was there in us. Possibly Ortega y Gasset is right to write that the uniqueness of Europe hinges on the profound sense of historicity thanks to which it has organic continuity and identity. Thanks to being a community of cooperation and conflicts, exchange and custom, and not a product of ideologies, it can defy the very ideologies, even those that – like Nazism and communism – grew from the European spirit, yet eventually were not capable of corrupting it.

Nevertheless, such ideologies had to make their mark on European identity. This may concern especially those expanses of the continent that for various historical and geographic reasons are of a borderland character. Beyond any doubt, communism reinforced here a certain type of mixed

feelings: in Europe we feel at the same time like natives and foreigners, to refer to the Polish Nobel Prize winner, Czesław Miłosz.

Yet may it be so that Europe needs such Europeans for whom it is at the same time the homeland and a foreign country; something of one's own and something alien. Possibly, it is from such relations and tensions that an increasingly better and increasingly more human community grows."

That was the spirit, - expressed with the words of this year's Polish award-winner of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, - in which we designed our project VECU here in Wrocław two years ago.

The design of our project

It is a multifaceted European project. We didn't want only an exchange of experiences among the members of EFOS, nor only a conversation between seniors, but we wanted to do something together.

Our common project should fulfill different conditions: It should be meaningful for the participating seniors and bring them a personal benefit.

It should support their studies. It should strengthen the cohesion of EFOS.

It should strengthen the understanding between the regional European cultures.

It should be useful for the younger generations.

So we had the idea to create a virtual centre of regional European cultures. We wanted to initiate an intercultural dialogue between the regional European cultures about the themes which seemed to us important for Europe and the coming generations.

In this field three dimensions seemed important to us:

At first: we wanted to take a look – in the words of Donald Tusk - at the "modest dignity of custom".

How do you eat in Poland or Slovakia, how do you celebrate your festivals, what do you sing in the families, how do you live together in your houses, what customs do you have?

Put concisely: we wanted to know how you live the every-day life here and there. That was the real dimension of our project.

Beside that, the imaginative world of literature and poetry seemed important to us: What are your authors dreaming of and what do you dream of while reading them? What writers do you read with what themes?

And at last we considered the world of public philosophy, which is expressed in the proverbs of our countries. How do you express a common insight with the fewest words?

And the third dimension was the world of music tradition: How do you express your feelings through music, how do the elderly do it? How do the young do it?

Thus we emphasized:

- What every study group would like to transmit as cultural possessions to the younger generations,
- In which way the transmission should proceed,
- And whether the task of culture-transmission should be considered a public task of the elder generations in our societies.

Our procedure

In order to give our intercultural dialog a clear form, we set up tandems and triples between our local study-groups.

The study-groups, bound to a university of the third age, constituted the basis of our project.

They were the places where the decisions were made about a field of themes.

The tandems and triples constituted our intercultural meeting places.

They were the places of giving and receiving.

As a place of coordination for the whole project we used the meetings of EFOS. From there we got the initial idea. From there the tandems were coordinated and guided. Here we put together our results today.

Our method of learning partnership was relatively simple: Every local study-group was to decide what cultural possession it wanted to transmit to the younger generations. It was to travel to the tandem-partners and present to them what it regarded as worth

transmitting to the younger generations. In a second step it was to receive the tandem-partners in its own country and let them present their cultural possessions to it. In a third step both groups were to prepare their contributions for publication on the common project website. The journeys of the tandem-partners were supported generously by the EU-Grundtvig programme Learning-partnerships.

So our project demanded of us at first an exchange and an agreement within the local study-group about what seemed to be worth transmitting to the younger generations. Next, it required each group to find a partner-group with similar thematic interests under the EFOS-members and to make an intercultural exchange with them about these common themes and thirdly it was necessary to find a group of younger people eager to gain knowledge or experience of these customs.

Our results

Our results are as broadly diversified as our whole project. At first our concrete results: Two groups dealt with everyday-culture and essential parts of their popular culture.

The Tandem Bratislava-Wroclaw dealt with eating and with bread-culture, with events in human life like baptism and funeral rites and yearly festivities like Christmas and Easter, with greetings in everyday-life, with the customs in connection with viniculture and sheep-farming.

These themes were connected with the culture of music and popular songs.

A little group tried to discover the musical interests of pupils and students by interviews, which they evaluated.

The Triple Brno, Dresden and Kiel concentrated on housing culture.

Within this field the study-group of Brno emphasized the architecture and the styles of reform, the group in Dresden the culture of conviviality and the technical side of housing and the group in Kiel the customs and traditions which surround the housing.

Two other intercultural groups dealt with literature and popular philosophy.

The Triple Groningen, Magdeburg and Vienna chose the culture of reading as its subject.

At first every study-group had to propose five books and they had long discussions within the local groups which books seemed suitable to all of them. Finally there were fifteen books on the common triple-table which each participant was to read. Out of this number they chose five books which they interpreted thoroughly. The discussions focused on the typical values expressed in the books but also on the selection of books.

The forth intercultural group was *the Triple Bratislava, Vienna, Wroclaw*. They collected proverbs of their native language and compared them among the triple, deciding which were common and which unique to their languages. Proverbs are the atoms of universal cognition, a condensate of popular philosophy. Erasmus of Rotterdam called them Adagia which means instructions for acting. Nietzsche called them "Sprühteufelchen". The evidence that so many proverbs of the European languages have the same meaning is a true indicator of the correspondence among the regional cultures of Europe. Erasmus's collection of proverbs reached 27 editions during his lifetime. We can be curious how many editions we will reach.

All these results you can find on our website. This website is a special work. It represents our virtual centre of European cultures, which has given our project the acronym VECU. It is pleasing to use and you can wander through it as through a new museum. For us it is the place for publishing our findings. We understand this website as a collection of examples which invite you all to accompany us and to enlarge our collection.

Our insights

Because of the broad scope of our themes and our diverse cooperation we learned many things about our own regional culture, about the others and about the younger generations. Let me explain our insights - to you with nine remarks.

1st remark: **Seniors are highly interested** in getting to know and to understand better the

culture in which they live. It is no big problem to persuade older people to occupy themselves with their culture and the transmission of it. But it is difficult to establish study-groups. Elderly persons tend to isolate themselves to a certain degree, and that is unproductive. Study-groups of elderly people need institutions with permanent contact-persons and competent moderators. Elderly persons still make too little use of the new media of communication.

Nor is it a big problem to bring about an intercultural dialogue. There is a double astonishment how much of one's own can be discovered in that of the others, how fascinating the differences are, and how much better one can understand one's own culture when one knows the culture of the others.

The exchange with the younger generations was more difficult to establish because there are few groups of younger people which have a common interest with the elderly. It was easiest for those groups that had contact with schools or teachers, with a university-chair or institutions of education. One study-group, Dresden, has built a really broad spectrum of educational institutions. However, the experiences of our groups show that those in the younger stages of life are more approachable than the older ones, and that only after puberty do the interests grows once more.

2nd remark: Of these three interests: the cultural, the intercultural and the intergenerational **the cultural interest has absolute priority for seniors**. Which means: without cultural interest you can not have an intercultural exchange. And without the consciousness of your own cultural values you are not interested in transmitting your culture to the young.

It is impossible to support the intercultural or intergenerational dialogue, if you do not provide enough time for the local study-groups to come to an agreement on their own cultural interest.

Nevertheless, the strongest impulse and motivation of our project came from the intercultural tandems and triples. Only the task of presenting their own culture to seniors

of another European region awakened their consciousness of their own cultural values.

It was noticeable that after the impetus of EFOS, all study-groups began their project-work by discovering their own cultural interest. No group began with questioning the young: what's your interest, what do you wish to get to know from us. The result was that in all groups the interests were much more intercultural than intergenerational.

3rd remark: Such a project works best if it is supported by **pre-existing study-groups**. If the study-group must still be established much time is lost by seeking suitable persons. For example: In Bratislava there is a university-chair for folklore with study-groups of seniors. They were able to produce many results very quickly. For the literature- and the proverb-group it was much more difficult to establish a new study-group.

None of the participating groups had had connections to a group of younger people before the beginning of our project.

Only the group of Dresden seems to have a continuous contact to youth-groups.

4th remark: **The personal contacts** and the visits to the partners in the other country are of high importance, because the participants found mutual acknowledgement and confidence.

Emails and attachments are helpful, but only when the partners know one another.

5th remark: **The language-problem** plays an important role in the intercultural exchange. The native language supports a regional communication-community, but establishes also a border to the other communication communities.

It supports the developing of cultural properties, but at the same time forms barriers which hinder the intercultural dialogue and need to be surmounted.

Europe thrives on the richness of its regions and languages. Therefore, efforts to learn the language of the others are necessary for the intercultural exchange. In our project it was very helpful for the Tandems to have a language of discussion. Generally, the effort to learn the foreign language needs additional

support, but brings also an additional enrichment.

Translators are helpful, but need time and they can never substitute for one's own understanding.

The ideal could be to learn the language of one neighbor country and a world language.

6th remark: Seniors can only be motivated for projects which promise a personal advantage for them. Therefore it is difficult to speak about literature with seniors who seldom read literature.

And therefore it is also difficult to persuade seniors to participate who prefer the short proverbs to reading thick novels. One discourages seniors living in regions with manifold folklore they like, if they get no chance to speak about it.

The strength of seniors consists in their special knowledge, experiences and interests. A group of seniors is a collection of special talents. It is useless to operate with general norms or standards. The key to a project with elderly persons is the connections and combinations of their particular special abilities. That applies also to regional groups of seniors, because they belong to different groups of varied common experiences. Regional cultures are special cultures, too. Generalizations are useless. In this field nothing is governed by the principle of necessity.

7th remark: Projects with seniors should not be overloaded with tasks. The majority of our participants would have been content with the intercultural exchange.

Some seniors gave up when they realized that an intergenerational exchange was part of the project.

They felt overwhelmed by this. They saw a problem in appropriating the values of their culture and transmitting them to the younger ones in the context of the same project.

The communication within one's own generation has its own value and to many seniors it is of great importance and needs much time.

Our project would have won weight and importance if we could have given more room for the intercultural exchange. But the rules of Grundtvig prevent this. This does not mean

that older students always like to separate themselves. Just the opposite is correct. Many of them were happy about the questions and suggestions coming from the younger generations. But it would have been easier, if the intergenerational exchange had been a separate project.

8th remark: An intergenerational exchange should not have the form of a school-lesson, but follow the principle of supply and demand. It worked well where the knowledge of the seniors met with interest from the young.

Culture works through attractiveness, not obligations or force.

It needs to be playful. This also applies to the exchange between generations.

9th My last remark: For such a project competent moderators are absolutely necessary. All our groups were guided by moderators who held on to the central thread. They took care of the methodic continuity and anchoring.

The competence of moderation is an ability of its own, and not all seniors have it, but it can be acquired.

Therefore, adequate opportunities for acquiring such skills should be part of the programme of senior-universities.

They facilitate the working of the groups. They support their productivity.

What does it mean for senior-students to be European? That is my last question.

It means first to live and to cultivate our native culture, our own literary dreams, our philosophy, but always to be open to giving and taking with the others.

And it means to understand the diversity of European cultures, dreams and philosophies as a strong spring of inspiration for all of us.

It means to look for the encounter with others, to want the dialogue with them and to deliver their richness to the young, if they need and wish it.

Let us establish many Tandems and Triples. They are the workshops of the cultural dialogue between us Europeans. We are free to do so.

Let us study our common and our special heritage.

The experience of our post-war-generation says: We need many such workshops.
The experience of the senior-students of EFOS and our project says:
This is possible and the senior-universities are the true places for those workshops.

My last word is a word of thanks,

first to the six groups, whose energy and wit supported the project,
then to Peter Hug, the director of our virtual Museum of European Culture and the master of our website,
then to the board of EFOS, who promoted our project so intensely,
and to the University of the Third Age of Wrocław, where we planted the blue flower of our project and where we want it to flourish.



The contribution of the University of the 3rd Age in Wrocław to the VECU project

Dr. Anna Gozdowski, Wrocław (Poland)



The University of the 3rd Age in Wrocław (UTW) participated in four topics of the VECU project:

- Culture of everyday life
- Customs and ceremonies
- National dishes
- Proverbs

Our partner in the first three topics was the University of the 3rd Age in Bratislava. On the proverbs we worked together with senior students from Vienna. This cooperation will be described by us together with our partners from Vienna.

We gained information on the importance of the culture of everyday life for adults and young people by applying two research methods:

- questionnaires
- focus method / technique of group interviews

Regarding the first method we formulated six questions referring to the following subjects:

How does the culture of everyday life influence the lives of young people and seniors?

How should the culture of everyday life be transferred from generation to generation?

With the help of a questionnaire young students and seniors were asked about these topics. Both age groups indicated the necessity to pass on the culture of everyday life from generation to generation. In this connection

they stressed the special role of the family for this purpose.

The focus method was also applied to two groups: students of the scientific group “Wariograf” and senior students of the UTW. The group “Wariograf” includes students of the study branches sociology and pedagogy.

The participants in the interviews showed high formal competence. The interviews lasted one hour for each group. Both groups which applied the focus method found out that at present no dividing lines between every day and holiday are visible. We don’t distinguish clearly between “sacrum” and “profanum”. The seniors also referred to values of the culture of everyday life such as moral standards, education and language culture. With regard to the subjects customs, ceremonies and national dishes the seniors of the UTW presented some typical Polish Christmas and Easter customs or customs in connection with baptism and wedding. They also described some Polish dishes such as red soup and pirogi etc.



While working on the project VECU we met in Modra with representatives of the UTA of Bratislava. We talked about our subjects and research methods, we exchanged experiences and we evaluated the results.

In our opinion our mutual cooperation was most advantageous for both our countries.

VECU project, part „Proverbs“

Dipl. Ing. Wolfgang Spitaler, Wien (Österreich)



„The views, values, thinking, habits, in brief : the whole character of a people is demonstrated nowhere else more clearly, more distinctly, more perceptible than in its proverbs“ (Dr. Landsberger 1912, shortened) and „You will recognize a people by its proverbs“ (Old/First Testament):

Seven senior students from three European countries agreed with these statements and established a working group within the VECU project „Culture Transfer“, to look after traces, in which way proverbs have transferred values, ways of thinking across national frontiers and from one generation to the next, and whether they do it even today.

We tried to find out, whether also Europe „is to be recognized by its proverbs“.

This project had been stimulated by Prof. Paul Duchesne (Namur, Belgium), who had already published several books about this matter (1, 11) and by personal documents of the Polish member of our working group, Mrs. Urszula Mierzejewska.

Since august 2009 the following team worked on this project:

Grunwald Katarina, PhDr. (SK), Slovakian.
Hrapková Nadezda, PhDr. (SK), Slovakian.
Leonhard Inge (A), English, Gaelic.
Lutonska Lenka, Dipl.Ing. (SK), Latin.
Marek Elisabeth (A), French.
Mierzejewska Urszula (PL), Polisch, Yiddish.
Spitaler Wolfgang, Dipl.Ing.(A)German, coordination.

There had been given an additional contribution to the collection of English proverbs and the result of a questionnaire about knowledge of proverbs answered by senior students, coordinated by Dr. Fritz Weikert, Magdeburg (D).

The following text is a short version of the study, which can be found in the website www.efos-europe.eu/projects/VECU.

2 The working method of the team.

- Searching and choosing proverbs,
- Defining German reference proverbs,
- Looking for equivalent proverbs in 7 other languages,
- Comparison of the meaning in 8 languages,
- Discussion in the working team of seniors,
- Talks about proverbs and distribution of a questionnaire for checking
- the knowledge of proverbs of the young generation (at schools) and of adults,
- Looking for “modern” proverbs – transmitting up-to-date (new) values,
- website presentation of the study,
- Presentation of the results in workshops and at a conference

3 Table of contents.

- 1 Introduction, presentation of the working team
- 2 Working method.
- 3 The importance of proverbs in education and for national identity.
- 4 The role of Latin for distribution of proverbs.
- 5 Proverbs and religions.
- 6 The special case of Yiddish proverbs.
- 7 Comparison of European proverbs within tables.
- 8 Evaluation of tables.
- 9 Discussions with boy and girl pupils about proverbs, knowledge test of proverbs by questionnaires.
- 10 Modern proverbs
- 11 Final remarks.

4 Short version of the study.

The confrontation of proverbs in different European languages with reference proverbs

permitted to compare proverbs of Germanic, Romance and Slavonic origin.

The evaluation demonstrated a high correspondence of contents, the metaphors being different in many cases. This confirms the result of other studies.

The Gaelic and Yiddish proverbs show less correspondence with the other compared languages; therefore we abstained to compare them with the reference proverbs and replaced it by a confrontation with the proverbs of adjoining countries.

As to the contents many Yiddish proverbs seem to comfort people in critical situations, often witty and intelligent; on the other hand in most European languages educational purpose seems to prevail.

Looking for the reason of the high level of correspondence, we have to take into account the roots in Greek and Roman culture, but also those of Jewish and Christian religion.

Over centuries education had been greatly influenced by international religious authorities, in some countries even after the introduction of compulsory school attendance, until the beginning 20th century.

Also the weekly sermons at church gave opportunity to use proverbs of the Holy Gospel and wisdom of every day speech, like it is known from Martin Luther and Abraham a Sancta Clara in Vienna.

The Latin language, which was the international link between European scientists and intellectuals, was up to the 19th century very useful for distribution of culture, proverbs included.

This result helps to speak of a European culture.

Whether this correspondence can be found in countries outside Europe as well, would be subject of a follow up project. In case this research would have a positive result, the role of every day experience and wisdom for the origin of proverbs must be important.

Proverbs had been proved for centuries as effective method to transfer cultural values; nowadays their importance for education, however, seems to be low, as we learned in our discussions in schools.

The rather good knowledge of proverbs of adult people and elder students is certainly the consequence of the introduction of proverbs into every day speech.

However, we see on posters and in every day TV, that short impressive wordings have a good chance also nowadays, to send messages to the people.

Discussions with friends convinced us, that also in business life new wordings are created and used, which seem to be „modern“ proverbs.

Pedagogues and parents should be conscious of the chance of proverbs even today, in case they transmit experience of life and cultural values in a funny, witty way.

Let's be creative



VECU workgroup Groningen „Literature“

Anneke de Boer-Steenhuis, Groningen (Netherlands)



Where I live, people read a lot, especially groups of women. It all started on a very small scale some 40 years ago. Mothers read the books their children had to read for school. They were shocked and troubled. Is this literature? What kind of books are these with all that sex written about so openly!

They talked to each other and got the idea that for a right judgement they didn't know enough about literature. Via their women's organization they contacted the public library in their province. That was the beginning of a still flowering organization. 250 groups with 2500 members in the smallest province of the Netherlands! Each year they read and discuss 4 literary works, which are reviewed by experts. Enriching for many.

After 7 years of pleasant work in that organization my time was over and others took over. What to do now? Could I find something as interesting, where I could work pleasantly together with others?

Some weeks later I read Anja van Berkum's appeal, looking for people who loved reading and who would like to talk about literature with other Europeans. I asked for some information and joined the small Groningen group.

Together we looked for 5 books by famous Dutch writers: Dutch literary books, which are also worthwhile for our fellow Europeans. In addition there should be something typical Dutch in them. Of course we could not agree at once, but after some discussion we made our choice.

At approximately the same time we went to Magdeburg to meet the groups from Magdeburg and Vienna. They worked on the same project and they had chosen 5 books too. For some days we worked together at the Otto von Guericke university. It was wonderful to hear how the others had worked on the project. I still have good memories of the meeting with the others.



Back in the Netherlands we went on. Finally we had to select one book: We chose "Two Women" by Harry Mulisch. January 2010 we met again in Vienna to exchange our experiences. It was good to see each other again. After that we had to prepare a Power Point Presentation for the website and our final presentation in Wroclaw. Fortunately one of our group member's husband had a lot of experience with Power Point Presentations. So we felt confident to show our final result in Wroclaw.

The project was a special experience: Working together with people from other European countries, meet them in their own environment and talk to them about their and our books. Of course we also read their books with much interest. But there was also time for more personal talk. It was wonderful to participate in this project.

Literature in a national and European context, a Grundtvig learnig partner's model of the universities of Vienna and Magdeburg and the senior university Groningen.

*Dr. Gabriele Czech, Institut für Germanistik
Horst Neubauer, „Studieren ab 50“
Gertraude Müller, „Studieren ab 50“
Irmgard Gebhardt, „Studieren ab 50“
Olaf Freymark, Lehrstuhl für Erwachsenenbildung
Magdeburg (Germany)*

The aims of the project were to qualify older students for the conveyance of culture and to develop a method for older people in their post professional life to pass on the cultural tradition of their country to people of another culture (intercultural) and to the younger generation (intergenerational).

Subject of the meetings was the communication of literary culture. The members of the different countries (the Netherlands, Austria and Germany) had chosen writers and their work, which in their view would give a typical picture of literature in their country.

Magdeburg: Thomas Mann *Die Buddenbrooks*, Christa Wolf *Kassandra*, Christoph Hein *Der fremde Freund - Drachenblut*, Günther Grass *Die Blechtrommel* and Martin Walser „*Ein fliehendes Pferd*“.

Groningen: Ferdinand Bordewijk *Karakter*, Hella S. Haasse *Oeroeg*, W.F. Hermans *Nooit meer slapen*, Harry Mulisch *Twee vrouwen*, Tommy Wieringa *Joe Speedboat*

Vienna: Thomas Bernhard *Preise*, Marleene Streeruwitz *Verführungen*, Anna Mitgutsch *Zwei Leben und ein Tag*, Erich Hackl *Abschied von Sidonie*, Felix Mitterer *Die Piefke Saga*

At the meetings first the authors' biographies were introduced, to show the biographical, social and historical context. After that the members presented a brief content of the work and two or three topics, which could be distilled out of reading.

This method was provided by Dr. Czech, who pointed out, that memory culture is the key word to intercultural, international and also interdisciplinary discussions. Memory and remembrance need the dialogue. She pointed out, that these meetings offer a good opportunity to get to know „other“ literary

works, but also broaden insight and agreement of remembrance by going into dialogue.

At a second meeting in Vienna we tried to draw nearer to our aim by answering the following questions: “What do we mean by European values?” “Are there any common European values?” and last but not least „How can we pass these values on to the next generation?”

During the project the members went on working on their chosen books. For this purpose they developed a questionnaire. Some of the results we will present in this article.

Are there values and common standards in these books you think important? If so, name them and motivate your explanations!

Horst Neubauer describes his results of the novel „Die Buddenbrooks“. The determined way to death is typical for fatalism. Values and standards as entrepreneurship, purposefulness, motivation, energy, courage to take a risk guarantee commercial and personal success. Pressure to perform and dubious education methods have a harmful influence on Hanno Buddenbrooks' growth. The values of marriage and family are shown in Tony Buddenbrooks' various relationships.

Frau Gertraude Müller worked out the following results on the book of Christoph Hein: In this book I can't find any meaningful values and standards. Claudia ignores values as trustfulness, openness, compassion, permissiveness, interest in the problems of others. These values are important for living together with others in general, with friends, in marriage and family. She denies their existence, in order to avoid closeness. In this short novel you will find exactly the opposite of all those things, we think important for

human cooperation. No friendship, no sympathy for others, no interest in marriage, motherhood and family. While reading you come to think that she needs psychological advice and guidance to break out of this vicious circle. Of course she does not see it this way, she claims to be neither happy nor unhappy, but content.

Can you imagine that this book could influence your thoughts and actions? The Austrian writer Fred Wander asked the interesting question, whether literature can change people. It was a different context, a talk between writers and eventually they said no. The only impact I can imagine is, not to act as Claudia does, not to isolate yourself from society. This would reduce your quality of life, as on the other hand for instance a good conversation with others can lead to a richer life.

Mrs. Gebhardt wrote about the „Blechtrommel“: G. Grass undergoes the founding of both German states. He lives in the CDU governed Federal Republic. He shows his biographic-political development in his work „Die Blechtrommel“ by accentuating the following values and standards:

- Respect for family traditions
- Respect for the hard work of people in rural environments (his grandmother)
- Respect for social background
- His ties to his home town Danzig
- Coexistence between Jews, Poles and Germans
- Warning of party members, torchlight processions and political marches is still valid
- Warning of availability of the youth
- Honesty and alertness about yourself

(G. Grass in a conversation with Ralph Giordano: „I don't hate anything more than ideologies which describe the happy human being as their final state.“)

Do you think it's possible to embed the values and standards you described into a European context? Do you know relevant examples?

Horst Neubauer: The novel's framework is international. Connections and business with European partners are normal and require

comparable values and standards. Apart from commercial connections, there are also contacts and relationships with European families. The novel was very successful in Europe and is translated into many languages. At the funeral Carl Zuckmayer said: „At this coffin daily opinions fall silent. A life dedicated to the German language and the continuity of European spirit is fulfilled“.

Gertraude Müller writes about „Drachenblut“: The above called values stand in a European context as they are values of nearly every society. Family is a value in all European countries, but not everywhere in the same degree. Especially in south Europe family is the central aspect of life, whereas familiar solidarity is less strong in Germany for instance. Motherhood, too, is a European value, but here we also see different intensities. In strong economic countries (Germany, France, UK) we see falling birth-rates, because jobs and occupational careers are highly estimated and leave less time for family founding. In rural societies family and motherhood are looked upon more favourably. Values as friendship, love and loyalty you will find in all countries, as they are universal values.

Mrs. Gebhardt about the „Blechtrommel“: The called values and standards are definitely embedded in a European context, but not only German history was of influence.

Current events show examples:

- The militant collapse of former Yugoslavia by awaking nationalism, anti-semitism and discrimination of Sinti and Roma (look at G. Grass' engagement in the Otto-Pankow-Stiftung) in especially southern and eastern Europe
- The integration demands of immigrants (e.g. Switzerland), its dangers and opportunities,
- The challenge of the north-south divide and the increase of illegal immigrants especially from Africa. How does Europe act? How are the mainly concerned countries (Italy, Greece, Spain) assisted?
- The growing gap between poor and rich. The growing percentage of the poor. (Günther Wallraff's film: Christmas and New Tears Eve as a homeless)

- The potential of the dissatisfied brings risks inside societies and between states.

Conclusions and Perspectives

After interpreting the results so far you can ask whether literature can convey values and standards and how this can be done concretely. The members of the Magdeburg group found specific values and standards in all books, which will also stand ground in an actual European context. Values as entrepreneurship, purposefulness, motivation, energy and courage to take risks are found in Thomas Mann's „Buddenbrooks“ and can be related to the economic and social conditions of today. The book accuses expanding business greed which we will find in nowadays' practice as well. On the other hand we find values as the importance of family, the female role and the relevance of an honest and human education system. This book shows deeply felt middle-class values in a civil society and can be seen as a sign against the so often mentioned decay of values.

In G. Grass' „Blechtrommel“ we find decay of values in NS-Germany. The main character Oskar Matzerath analyses intercultural values as tolerance and respect as foundation for a functioning civil society. These are still current in a global world with migration problems. The novel shows the consequences for a society, when honesty and alertness are lost and minorities are violated and excluded.

In Heins book „Der fremde Freund“ („Drachenblut“) the feelings of the modern individual in a micro society are put forward. The main personage with her negative character and actions shows the importance of intact family structures and friendship for a successful and happy life. Economic and social success without empathy in a social context are not enough.

There were long discussions about values in literature and the way of conveying them to the younger generation, but what do we actually

mean by values and standards? In his lecture in Vienna Dr. Freymark put the accent on generally desirable cultural images and principles of religious, cultural, ethical and social basics. These contents are not static, they developed and changed in the past, they are dependent on social fluctuations. They regulate human behaviour and provide a certain stability in society. Conflicts in religious, economic or political sense serve at best for a reflection about current values. Standards are rules of social behaviour derived from values. As values are theoretical, standards give practical directives. The transformation of standards is always a consequence of changing values in society.

Looking at the results of the project you could ask, how an intergenerational communication about values and standards can take place and to what extent a transfer can be guaranteed.

We agreed upon the importance of intergenerational communication. By cooperation and shared experience and activities the older people can demonstrate their values but they can also get to understand the needs and problems of the younger generation and even modify their own system of values. All members of the group believe that beyond conveyance of values by education and profession, literature offers the opportunity to develop and question your own system of values. In this case literature provides a remarkable basis as the expressed problems can be read as central question of human existence. Pleasure in reading and discussing texts offers the opportunity to bring young and old together, talk about values and standards, a benefit for all. If you take in consideration what you can gain from cultural cooperation this throws a different light on education. „Education“ does not mean delegation of educational tasks to professionals but is a shared mandate in social society. This is not only a request for those who have a family but for all participants in a social society. Only in this way the social future is created actively.

VECU Project, part „Music“

Dr. Katarina Grunwald, Bratislava (Slovakia)



„It sounds like music in my ears“ this sentence we have heard many times. The first cry of the baby is the most beautiful music for a mother or other the funeral march at the heartbreaking cortege of a loved person. At all celebrations whether it is a sports victory, a state visit or a doctorate they play the national anthem. It is a hymn of praise for a nation, for the people who live there and for their power. During our whole life music is our devoted companion, it never lets us down, it influences our mood and action. It is present whenever we need it without protesting. Music is omnipresent.

“Without music”, says Ludwig Tieck in his “Fantasies about art”, “the earth is like a desolate and unfinished house without inhabitants.” Therefore the most ancient Greek and biblical history and even the history of each nation begins with music.” It seems that the feeling for music is the first and deepest human instinct.

A small senior group from Bratislava and Vienna decided to work together on the subject Music within the VECU project. Music – a phenomenon which accompanies us wherever we go.

As from 2009 the following persons have been working in this project:

Grundwald Katarina, Dr., Bratislava (SK)

Leonhard Horst, Dipl.Kfm., Vienna (A)

And other participants, teachers

We split up the description of the working form and methods in several points. The working form and the method of the two tandem partners were similar with regard to the procedure and to the results of the questionnaire. From the filled-in questionnaires we could gather how, why and under who's influence the pupils began to dedicate themselves to music, to study it or just to consider it as a hobby. If you want to become a

good musician it is not enough to discover in yourself the love for music. It is necessary to practise many, many hours. According to our questionnaire children and young people prefer to play the guitar, the piano or the pipe.

However, there are children who already at a tender age are showing a high musicality. On the one hand for the children it is an exercise to overcome their fear but on the other hand it is also an honour to be allowed to play in a concert. It is a reward for the long practising. Some young people decide to make music their profession. The job prospects are not particularly good but the dream to one day be part of an orchestra such as the Viennese Philharmonic Orchestra, and of a theatre orchestra or to be a soloist in an artistic ensemble drives them on to believe in a career as a musician.

The classical music leads us to the opera which takes us in another world. The music intoxicates us, the singing, dancing, the costumes and the production make it possible to escape from reality at least for some hours and to immerse in the pleasure of the music. (Perhaps one day a young person interviewed by us will be a celebrated artist). After the music lessons where the students have to dedicate themselves to classic music, everybody if young or old, we too, like to hear another type of music. If Pop, Rnb music, Soul...we are prepared to take long journeys and to pay high admission charges to hear a concert.

From our survey we can draw the conclusion that very few young people want to dedicate themselves to folklore. Nevertheless there are young people whose parents/or one parent acted in a folklore group and who have transmitted their love for this kind of music to their children.

Folklore transmits the traditions of an ethnic group. Very interesting are the public presentations of the minorities in our country such as the gypsies. They all want to present us their country and their traditions through music and dance.

The work with the subject “music” has given us much pleasure in spite of the efforts and has fostered contacts between young and old. We are aware that this is not a scientific piece of work; however, we were able to produce a general conclusion as a result.

Our project was financed by the European Union. The project VECU gave us – the seniors – the possibility to occupy ourselves with different topics of culture of everyday life, like architecture, traditions, literature, proverbs or music. When you compare those subjects you find out that there are many relations and links between the singular topics. It is said that the beautiful word “architecture is frozen music” retains, even in its inversion its so vivid interpretation:

Music is resolved architecture, which means that music is an essentially floating, or more precisely sounding form, in any case something moulded, subject to formative laws“. Or, as Phillip Otto Runge in romantic cross irony in his "DailyTimes" describes: "My four images when developed seriously, become an abstract, picturesque, fantastic-musical poetry with choirs, a composition for all three arts together, for which the architecture should build its very own building."

Or expressed in the words of Arthur Schopenhauer:

"No other art acts on people so directly, as deeply, as the MUSIC, just because no other (art) lets us recognize the true nature of the world so deeply and directly."



Virtual European Cultural Centre (VECU)

- A review from Dresden –

Eveline Rudolph, Dresdner Seniorenakademie, Dresden (Deutschland)



10 members and students of the Dresdner Seniorenakademie participated in this very extensive project VECU. We created together a “virtual European cultural centre” in which Europeans could exchange in this project their habits of everyday life and their experiences with regard to the cultural heritage and the traditions of their countries with other European participants. It was important to show the view of the people and not of the historians.

The participants from Dresden chose for their research under the main topic “Culture of everyday life” the field “home décor and family life”. In this respect we reported mainly about our own experience and about family traditions, episodes were written down and photos and old documents evaluated. The four chosen topics: biographies of housing, technical innovation, playing culture in families and telecommunication offered us many possibilities for research. In the process of the researches the participants found out that it gives great pleasure to write down and make vivid one’s experiences and episodes from the childhood. Some of us couldn’t imagine at the beginning that they had the capacity for such an assignment. By doing this, their self-confidence was strengthened considerably.

Together with seniors from Brno (Czech Rep.) and from Kiel (Germany) we formed a triple. We met in Brno and in Dresden where we presented our mutual results. We found out that we had a great deal in common and parallel development in both countries regarding architecture and home culture. As a result of our work we produced together a poster which shows the procedure, the findings and the experience of the 3 groups. Thus the work of the three groups got a common

structure. The results of the findings are permanently exhibited on the internet.

An important result of our project was the strengthening of our mutual understanding and the respect of each other within the European countries. We saw friendships develop which will continue after the end of our project.

But not everything went according to our ideas. The problem was the intergenerational cooperation. Therefore we created the strategy to confront different age groups between 5 and 30 years with different topics in order to get different opinions. The focal points of our intergenerational project were children, young people and young grown-ups. For instance seniors interchanged their knowledge of playing yesterday and today, they even brought their old games. In discussion groups with students of the Technical University of Dresden we discussed family games in the past and today, the housing conditions of students yesterday and today, the housing situation in the childhood and youth in the past and now and how the development in the computer technique changed the whole family life regarding common games, communication and reading of books.

The findings of the discussion groups left their mark in our project work.

In June 2010 we had finally managed it!

In the course of the final project meeting at the University of Wroclaw all 6 countries participating in the project produced their final results.

The compilation of the final report for the commission of the European Union was difficult for us also since the forms were all written in English.

But as a result of the project we can say today that the participants made new friends, their self-confidence increased and the sense of community beyond the frontiers was fostered. All are willing to participate in new projects.

News in short

Workshop in Dresden

From 07 till 09 April 2011 EFOS organises an international meeting in Dresden.

On 07 April the Dresdner Seniorenakademie, as the host, holds a workshop on the theme:

„The role of education in the democratie of an ageing society“

All interested persons are cordially invited to participate.

A number of lectures of representatives from various European countries about the education for older people and its future are followed by a discussion.



From the NEWSLETTER 11/2010 – „Erfahrung ist Zukunft“ (experience is future)

The one who decides above the age of sixty to swap the couch at home with a wooden chair at the university must have good reasons for it. It could be that the study is the fulfillment of a dream from the youth or the preparation for a new professional career after retirement. Whatever the reason: Prof. Dr. Meyer-Wolters from the university of Cologne is convinced that a study at older age is always worthwhile.

More in: [http://www.erfahrung-ist-](http://www.erfahrung-ist-zukunft.de/Webs/EiZ/Content/DE/Artikel/LebenslangLernen/Seniorenstudium/20101110-seniorenstudium.html)

[zukunft.de/Webs/EiZ/Content/DE/Artikel/LebenslangLernen/Seniorenstudium/20101110-seniorenstudium.html](http://www.erfahrung-ist-zukunft.de/Webs/EiZ/Content/DE/Artikel/LebenslangLernen/Seniorenstudium/20101110-seniorenstudium.html)



Welcome at eTandem:

The aim of these pages is to introduce learners all over the world to the opportunity of learning a foreign language with eTandem and to make it easy to get started. The Ruhr-Uni-Bochum offers free search for eTandem partners for all languages, help for learning, tips for teachers etc.

<http://www.slf.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/etandem/etindex-en.html>



LARA

"Lara, Learning- a Response to Ageing" was a Grundtvig project. <http://www.laraproject.net/>

The main product of the LARA project is its training package. It is aimed at trainers who wish to upskill teachers, either volunteer or paid, in a face to face situation. It is also for individuals with an interest in improving performance through self study.

The LARA Training Package is available in English, German, Slovenian, Portuguese, Czech and French.

<http://www.laraproject.net/outcomes/lara-training/lara-training-package.html>