



EFOS

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



EFOS NEWS

1

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European Federation of Older Students

Board

President of honour:

Dkfm. Horst Leonhard, Vienna, Austria

President:

Dipl. Ing. Peter Hug
Prinses Irenestraat 8, 9401 HH Assen, Netherlands
Tel. (0031)592/33 04 64
e-mail: s.p.hug@planet.nl

Vicepresident:

Dr. Nadezda Hrapková
Univerzita Komenského, Univerzita tretieho veku
Ul. Odbojárov 10/a, 820 05 Bratislava, Slovakia
Tel. 00421/250117722
e-mail: Nadezda.Hrapkova @rec.uniba.sk

Vicepresident:

Olaf Freymark
Otto-von-Guericke Universität Magdeburg
Lehrstuhl Erwachsenenbildung
Zschokkestr. 32, D-39016 Magdeburg, Germany
Tel. (0049)391/67 56 505 Fax (0049)391/67 16 581
e-mail: Olaf.Freymark@ovgu.de

Honorary Secretary:

Dr. Katarina Grunwald
Červeňáková 19
84101 Bratislava, Slovakia
Tel. 004212 643 61655 Mobil 00421904800472
e-mail: k_grunwald@orangemail.sk

Deputy Honorary Secretary:

Mag. Herta Spitaler, Vienna, Austria

Treasurer:

Eveline Rudolph
Alter Dorfrand 58
01454 Radeberg, Germany
Tel. 0049 3528-417871
e-mail: evirudolph@gmx.de

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Ingrid Dummer, Kiel, Germany

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Members from:

Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Ukraine

From the editor:

After the two editions in 2011 and 2012 that were dedicated to specific themes and events this EFOS News is of varied content.

From the conference „Universities of the third age for knowledge society and understanding“ in June 2011 in Wroclaw the EFOS News of 2012 already contained the speeches of our members Dr. Rosemarie Kurz and Dr. Nadezda Hrapkova. In this present edition now the speech of Dr. Daniel Meynen about the wisdom of the elderly. We had planned it as the leading article for a special edition on the occasion of the start of our AVEC project. To our great regret the project could not be carried out, but nonetheless we wanted to publish the article of Daniel Meynen.

Prof. Alexander Andreeff from Dresden sent us an interesting article about the problems of ageing so typical for the new federal states in Germany. Urszula Mierzejewska, an older student from Wroclaw (Poland) and an EFOS member of many years describes in her article the days for seniors in her city in 2012 which were of a remarkable variety.

The activities of our organisation between April and October 2012 are summarised in the president's report, and our participation at the UNECE Ministerial Conference in Vienna is reviewed in an article written by myself.

For this edition I could again rely on the cooperation of Herta Spitaler and Stanley Miller to translate articles from German to English. My sincere thanks to them both.

April 2013

Peter Hug

EFOS News

Publication of the
European Federation of Older
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Editor:

P. Hug
Prinses Irenestraat 8
9401 HH Assen
Netherlands
Tel. +31-592-330464
E-mail: s.p.hug@planet.nl

EFOS Website:

www.efos-europa.eu

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Contents

	Page
President's Report, EFOS meeting October 2012 in Wroclaw, <i>Peter Hug</i>	5
On the wisdom of the elderly, <i>Dr. Daniel Meynen</i>	7
Ageing in Dresden, <i>Prof. Alexander Andreeff</i>	13
UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing, <i>Peter Hug</i>	15
Activities on the occasion of the „senior days“ in Wroclaw in the year of “active ageing”, <i>Urszula Mierzejewska</i>	18
More happiness in life through education and activity in old age, <i>Dr. Rosemarie Kurz</i>	21
News in Short	23

President's Report for the EFOS meeting on 4 and 5 October 2012 in Wrocław

Dipl.Ing. Peter Hug, Groningen (Netherlands)



After our spring meeting in May in Magdeburg, where we had the opportunity to meet students of the local senior university „Studieren ab 50, and to hear about their ‘writers workshop’, we now meet on 4 and 5 October in Wrocław. I am especially pleased to welcome our special guests from Ukraine and hope that they will enjoy this encounter with EFOS and its activities.

The Wrocław meeting was planned to be the start of our AVEC project that was to be carried out by 9 of our member institutions. To our great regret our application didn't succeed in the Grundtvig evaluation process. Since we got good indications about the weak parts in our application, we decided to apply again in 2013 with an improved version. In Wrocław we want to discuss how the partners see their contribution to the project and how we can improve the application.

The ‘Ministerial Conference on Ageing’ of the UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) from 18 to 20 September in Vienna was an excellent opportunity for us to propagate our aims in education policy. The 110 invited NGO's got the chance to submit amendments to the Political Declaration of the Ministers and to formulate their own Declaration concerning the policy of ageing. Besides myself the organisers also invited Ingrid Dummer und Horst Leonhard, our representatives at the UN Committee on Ageing, to the conference. Nadia Hrapkova was representing the Slovak Association of UTA's.

Another possibility to make public relation for EFOS was at the Danube conference „Active Ageing and intergenerational Dialogue“ in Ulm from 8 to 10 July with approx. 200

participants, not only from the Danube region but also from Italy, Great Britain, the Netherlands etc. Besides me the following EFOS members took part: Nadia Hrapkova and Katarina Grunwald from Slovakia, Herta Spitaler and Gerti Zupanich from Austria and Stanley Miller from Great Britain. I had the opportunity to present the work of EFOS and our projects at a workshop and to take part in a panel discussion together with representatives of senior universities and policymakers. In the poster session we had an EFOS poster on display.



Nadia Hrapkova gave a speech about ‘Activating methods in senior education’, Stanley Miller explained the British Model of the Universities of the Third Age and Herta Spitaler and Gerti Zupanich presented the contribution of the Vienna workgroup to the EWA project. The conference was a good opportunity to casually meet active players in senior education from the Danube region (Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania). Especially the contacts with those Southeast-European countries that are not yet represented in EFOS could be interesting for the future. The conference showed that in these countries too the senior education is well developed.



At a seminar accompanying the conference Mrs. Anke Deesbach of the German Grundtvig

agency explained the evaluation procedure for the Gruntvig projects that were submitted in 2012 and Mrs. prof. Dr. Katarina Popovic of the European Association for Adult Education talked about the new EU programme for Lifelong Learning that should start in 2014. Both presentations gave me new insights that could be very useful for EFOS. To mention just one: the new programme from 2014 onwards will possibly offer less opportunities for projects of seniors because they will have to compete directly with projects for the younger generation and for profession-related further education. We should therefore do everything we can to get the AVEC project accepted in 2013.

Our General Secretary Katarina Grunwald represented EFOS at the Festival of the senior education in Olomouc (Czech Republic) on 10 September with a speech about the contribution of education to active ageing in Slovakia. She also grabbed the opportunity to talk about the aims and projects of EFOS. Stanley Miller, another member of EFOS, gave a presentation about the learning activities for older people in Great Britain.



From 26 to 28 September „Studieren ab 50“ in Magdeburg celebrated its 20th anniversary with a symposium about the activities of various working groups of older students, the annual meeting of DENISS (the German association of representatives of older students) and a ceremonial act with greetings from representatives of the university and of EFOS, followed by two scientific lectures. I was pleased to present the congratulations from EFOS and to show our appreciation for the long-term commitment of the senior university of Magdeburg to our organisation.

With the EFOS Manifesto we have created a document that enables us to present the objectives of EFOS in a consistent form. As agreed in Magdeburg Mrs. Dr. Czech, Olaf Freymark und I applied some textual modifications. The manifesto was then sent to all members. Upon some remarks from the members I finally removed some grammatical irregularities. I have already made good use of the manifesto as a basis for my contributions to the Danube conference in Ulm and to the UNECE Ministerial conference in Vienna. We should now think about ways to disseminate the manifesto to a wider public.

Karl Schwarz from Berlin sent us a paper about the „International Association of Elder Professionals. Zusammen in Europa e.V.“ that he, together with Daniel Meynen, Joost Hauer and others, has founded. They want to develop new ideas for a better understanding between European nations and for letting them grow together. Though their association is not directly concerned with senior education, I still think that EFOS should consider ways to develop a prolific cooperation.

To our regret we have received two notices for termination of membership. These are from Mrs. Kuschnig in Klagenfurt who resigns for medical reasons, and from GEFAS in Graz that doesn't state any reason. Our treasurer Eveline Rudolph compiled a list of members who are in default with their annual fees. In Wroclaw we will have to discuss, whether some members that are notoriously in default should be removed from our membership list. Of course we aim at a widespread group of members, but a membership can only be meaningful if there is an actual contact with EFOS.

Finally I would like to thank all the participants at our meeting in Wroclaw for their cooperation. We are also very grateful to Aleksander Kobylarek und Anna Gozdowski for the preparation of the meeting. I am sure that we will make it a success.

On the wisdom of the elderly

Dr. Daniel Meynen, Waldkirch (Germany)



If you wander over onto the little islands in the River Oder, near the old Church of Our Lady on the Sand in Wrocław – the islands that served as a passage over the Oder in days gone by and thus provided the occasion for the city to be founded – you will come across a curious figure: a stocky, bearded man with enormous feet, standing firm on the base of his little plinth, his large right hand slightly outstretched in a contemplative manner, his young, open face turned towards the skies. He seems to be inviting the beholder to do the same. The inscription bears his name: Socrates. Is the statue just on loan, or is it here on a permanent basis? Every time I come to Wrocław, I go there to assure myself that Socrates is still standing steadfast and firm on the base of facts and trying to find his bearings in the sky of ideas. It seems to me that someone like him is aware of the relativity of human existence and the uncertainties of life. His fearlessness obviously does not stem from the alluvial sand on which he is standing. Is it not based rather on the rock-solid certainties that are taking shape in his mind?

If I had the opportunity to come to Wrocław in June 2011 for the jubilee of the University of the Third Age, I would ask the auditorium to accompany me to Sand Island and reflect there on the mental faculties of elderly people, at the feet of the old European sage.

What are the particular strengths of elderly people?

Only rarely do they include physical abilities. Physical strength and dexterity diminish with time. This is a general phenomenon linked to human transience. However, by no means does this mean that certain elderly people are not considerably fitter than many younger people. There are 80-year-olds who go climbing nimbly

up four-thousand-metre-high peaks and younger people who need to exert great effort to get from Zakopane up to the top of Kasprowy Wierch without taking the cable car. As a rule of thumb, however, the majority of younger people can make it to the top of Kasprowy Wierch more easily than the majority of elderly people.

When I speak of the particular strengths of elderly people, I am referring instead to their **mental abilities**. Here too the point applies that by no means is every elderly person superior to every younger person in this respect, but that there are certain mental faculties that are more commonly found in elderly people than in younger people.

One of the positive characteristics that is often attributed to old people, and one which psychologists often refer to when talking about the abilities that come with age, is **wisdom**, and I would like to turn my attention to this. At this point I will stress once again that by no means is every elderly person wise, and even in the case of those generally acknowledged as such, not everything they do is wise. I shall merely say that wisdom is a mental quality that is found more frequently in elderly people than in younger people. There are plausible reasons for this phenomenon. Wisdom is, however, by no means limited to elderly people. It can also be found in young people and even children. However, if you are looking for people with this quality, you are more likely to find it in elderly people than younger people.

How can wisdom be defined?

The gerontologist Paul B. Baltes¹ defines wisdom as an **expert system in the fundamental questions of life**. He is convinced that the term wisdom describes *the* prototype of the intelligence that comes with age. He describes wisdom as "the highest level of knowledge and power of judgement in the

¹ Baltes, P.B., Die zwei Gesichter des Alterns der Intelligenz, in: *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina*, LEOPOLDINA 39. Halle/Saale 1994. p.179

fundamental pragmatics of life". This definition requires explanation.

The German word *Wissen* ['knowledge'] always carries the double meaning of theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills; "Ich weiß etwas" ['I know something/how to do something'] thus means both "I know facts" and "I master an activity". The same duplicity of meaning applies to *Weisheit* ['wisdom'], which carries connotations of both knowledge and ability. It can be said in summary that wisdom consists of an awareness of one's own knowledge and ignorance, and an ability to master one's own abilities and inabilities.

Wisdom thus always requires knowledge and abilities. Someone who knows a lot may well be learned, but not yet wise; similarly, someone who is able to do many things may well be an expert or have a great deal of power, but this does not make them wise.

Someone only becomes wise once they know the limits of their own knowledge and are aware of their ignorance of many matters; when they are familiar with the areas on the borders of human knowledge and ability; when they know their own values and aims in life and are tolerant towards people with other aims and values.

To sum it up succinctly, wisdom can be defined as:

- Understanding how to get to the bottom of an issue, and having explored it in depth, being able to provide certainty and stability. **A wise person is thorough.**
- Being familiar with border zones, understanding how to steer one's ship through shallows like a helmsman, and being able to cross over borders with assurance. **A wise person is familiar with borders and can cross them.**
- Understanding how to hold one's course in rough and difficult terrain and being able to deal with others whose courses are different. **A wise person is an expert in directions and purpose.**

If this rough overview is taken as a basis, the essential criteria that Baltes specifies as

necessary criteria for wisdom can be understood.

He identifies five main areas towards which wisdom is directed: individual human existence as such, the integration of a human existence into its environment, the uncertainties of human existence, and the relativity of human values and aims in life.

Furthermore he identifies **basic and metacriteria for wisdom:**

The basic criteria include:

- **Knowing facts** about the fundamental questions of life and humanity. (General and specific knowledge of the problems of life and the basic situation of man; knowledge of the basic physical, material, mental, social and political conditions of human existence; knowledge of the inevitable dependencies in which humans are implicated.
- **Ability to act:** how to deal with these fundamental questions. A breadth and depth of dealing with problems, coming to decisions, and interpreting and planning life.

Metacriteria of wisdom are, according to Baltes:

- **Knowledge of the circumstances and context of life:**
Having knowledge of the historical and biographical embedding of the problems of life
- Knowing how to **deal with the uncertainties** that life brings.
- Knowing how to deal with the **relativity of conceptions of the world and aims in life** (i.e. tolerance).

The psychologist G. Peck² carried out an investigation on the personality structures of a

² Peck, G., Psychologische Entwicklung in der zweiten Lebenshälfte, in: Thomae, H. und U. Lehr (Hrsg.): *Alter, Probleme und Tatsachen, Akademische Reihe der Akademischen Verlagsgesellschaft*. Frankfurt 1968. p.530-544.

few thousand businessmen in 1968 and came to the conclusion that "a genuine development process takes place in the second half of life"; it is only in the second half of life that most people have gained the necessary experience to develop entirely the quality we refer to as wisdom. Here the term encompasses both the ability to make judgements and also social prudence, i.e. the ability to interpret with foresight the things you have perceived, predict complex consequences and make carefully-considered decisions. Psychologists such as Piaget and Kohlberg also explain why wisdom is more commonly found in later life: because all high-level thought is superior to low-level thought and no one is able to bypass the lower levels of development in order to reach the higher ones.

If you want to address and evaluate problems linked to divorce, for example, you need a certain knowledge of the conditions of modern cohabitation; you need to be able to diagnose an existing situation; you need to be able to take stock of a human development. You must possess a certain resisting power, so as to be able to uphold your judgement on a real-life situation – a judgement which you have arrived at through thorough reflection – even when faced with other opinions on the matter. Moreover you need to be able to accept that other people have other opinions and remain aware of the relativity of your own judgement.

Elderly people find it easier to establish a connection between seemingly unrelated elements, reinterpret their own behaviour or that of others, possibly redefine priorities on their own scale of values and open up new existential questions for exploration. Elderly people have a wider overview and have experienced more changes in their environment, in nature and society alike.

We thus have an overview of modern notions of wise behaviour.

What are the 'wisdom potentialities' of elderly people?

If what psychologists say is true, elderly people have a number of skills at their command that could be of great value to the further development of our society. So far these skills have had little effect on a social level but are

becoming ever more important the less the authorities in our society that were previously responsible for answering questions about significance and the interpretation of meaning – such as priests, experts, teachers and doctors – are being acknowledged as such. In the modern world, everything seems to have become detached and relative and as a result it has become harder for young people to determine which insights and modes of behaviour have a lasting future. What can they use to orient themselves? A need for the guidance of those with experience is thus arising among young people, a need for help with discussion and decision-making. A quality often ascribed to elderly people is that they display a certainty that has developed over a long period of time and has been well-tested, as well as a greater authority in the spheres of reflexive, balanced conduct and the interpretation of reality and life.

What wisdom potentialities in particular do elderly people have at their command? I would like to link each one to specific anthropological constants:

1. The ability to fathom the circumstances and problems of life

Elderly people have usually had more experience with the trials and tribulations of life than younger people. Trials such as the loss of a job, having to stop work, losing a husband, wife or child, unforeseeable accidents or material losses. Tribulations such as depression, addiction, injustice they have committed themselves, injustice they have suffered at the hands of others, deep disappointment or slander. Through these experiences they have had to learn how to comprehend circumstances, problems and human configurations and how to fathom their meaning.

A normal path through life pursues the common goals of learning an occupation, building up a relationship, starting a family, making a career, running a business, occupying a public or honorary post. The river of life ebbs and flows. There are incessantly new demands. However, at one time or another, you begin to feel you have reached the limits of your performance and you are forced – in the best-case scenario through a holiday, in the worst-case scenario through an accident or illness – to take a step

back from day-to-day operations, step away and ask yourself why it had to happen then of all times, and why it had to happen to you and not to someone else.

The ever more frequent ruptures and disappointments of life give people the occasion to search out firmer ground and more solid foundations. We take a step back, pause for thought, tack stock of ourselves and look for something hard and fast on which things can be built up again.

The interruption of the normal course of life obliges us to fathom out our lives, like a helmsman monitoring the draught of his ship: is it sailing evenly enough to pass over a reef without damage? Will we overcome this accident or loss? What caused this event? What is our ship of life carrying?

To get to the bottom of an issue consists of making sure you have firm ground under your feet and looking for cast-iron certainties to which you can attach yourself. There are times when you have to cross scree slopes or expanses of black ice. There are times when you sink into a bog or get into unjust situations. There are times when end up in the mire or get dragged through the mire. What is needed in such situations is the ability to find sure footing and certainty in the turmoil of events, be able to provide this certainty for others, to find internal and external clarity and be able to convey it. Wisdom consists of being able to distinguish between issues with no question marks over them and those that merely give us a false sense of security. Whereas younger people are eager to come out of their shell so as to enhance their own existence, experience new things and discover new worlds, elderly people have this phase of development behind them. They grow weary of the unfathomable length and breadth of the river of experience. When you realise that you can go as far as you like in any direction and never find an end in any of them, you become reluctant in the face of his boundless distance and look for height and depth instead.

Reflection on the meaning of life is encouraged by an awareness that the end is not so far away. The losses that inevitably come with age mean that the ability to say goodbye is required. The activity of life needs to be balanced out by calm, passive contemplation of life. If you

understand how to take a step back from the constant stream of events and the piloting of life, constantly requiring decisions to be made, you get the chance to put the lifestyle of our outwardly-oriented, economic-political meritocracy into perspective and devise alternatives.

People who are skilled at fathoming out life create fundamental structures for themselves; and inasmuch as elderly people have experienced many ruptures and witnessed failures, they are able to become experts on the depths and fundamental structures of human life, i.e. experts on how to cope with these depths.

The skill of wise elderly people thus consists of being able to justify the behaviour required in a given situation so well that their justification leads to certainty and creates trust, and to reveal the consequences of a potential wrongdoing in such a way that the flaws of the action become clear. When this ability is lacking, the advice of elderly people risks becoming idle talk and will come across in a know-it-all tone.

2. The ability to detect various different elements in one overview and understand borderline situations

It is not only the depths and comedowns of life that threaten our mental existence and require us to find sure foundations, but also the variety, the jungle, the chaos, the inscrutability and the complexity of life. Not only landscapes and traffic conditions but also economic relations, social networks and political relations can all become complex. The more different worlds or social networks you have come into contact with in your life, the more clearly you can see how confusing human relationships can be.

What should you do when you lose your overview of a situation? You climb up a tower or a mountain or look for an Archimedean point. For some time now, GPS devices have been used to give an overview of areas in their entirety. Thanks to this detachment, you recognise structures that you had missed while in the midst of events. The distance and higher perspective allow you to make connections between elements and events that you had previously perceived as completely unrelated. You see associations and developments that you had never seen before and you learn to think

synthetically. Likewise, however, you also perceive conflicts that you had missed before. Looking down from a satellite, you can see that two trains moving towards each other on the same platform will inevitably collide, long before the train drivers realise; that a storm coming in from the west will soon reach the lowlands before raging itself out in the mountains. You can talk of a higher vantage point. On the understanding that elderly people have managed to retreat a reasonable distance from the hustle and bustle of daily life while at the same time maintaining an overview of the younger generations, they are able to occupy this vantage point. Their advantage as experts lies in this overview and in synthetical thinking. Elderly people who have come into contact with various unrelated spheres of life are able to make comparisons, and thanks to their experience and knowledge, can more easily obtain an overview of confusing associations and establish connections where those with less experience would fail to notice them.

Someone who only feels at home in a single subject area or occupation only has knowledge of this subject. Someone who has come into contact with a variety of subject areas or occupations develops an eye for borderline areas, areas that go beyond the subject and overlap with others, and structures that are common to different subjects or occupations. The Archimedean point enables a metaknowledge of the various complexities of the individual's knowledge. This is not only the case for scientists but also for all those with knowledge of several fields. In the case of elderly people who are reviewing the various phases of their life and its economic, social and political context, they begin to put together an overall picture of their life.

A certain distance from the ground is required in order to obtain the outlook from the Archimedean point. You can no longer remain rooted to the ground.

3. The ability to act confidently in borderline situations and stride through them

Borderline situations are grey areas, areas of insecurity or times of uncertainty. In such situations, there is a need for precaution on one hand and changes of pace on the other hand.

When a ship sails into shallows, a helmsman is required who knows where the dangerous spots are situated, who is able to hold course even when forced to make a detour, who is able to increase or cut back the ship's speed, and who knows when cargo must be jettisoned in order to gain in ground clearance.

The skill of this helmsman consists of:

- precaution and vigilance, so as to keep an eye on all the important factors and circumstances
- recognising times for action and times to wait
- estimating the right points in time and windows of opportunity
- evaluating the level of difficulty in a given situation: sailing in foggy or stormy conditions, with dangerous cargo or with a damaged engine
- correctly interpreting signs, including those of danger

4. The ability to orientate life towards meaning

The complexity of life leads to the development of yet another important skill in elderly people: being able to give life direction in times of uncertainty and to revise this direction if necessary. If you lose your way in a wood or a town, with no map and no one to ask for help, you try to orientate yourself using noticeable points or landmarks: seafarers by the North Star or a beacon, hikers by the sun or a mountain range, motorists by conspicuous buildings or neon signs. In the context of human life, these orientations are referred to as meaning. Where does the meaning lie in my life?

The meaning of life is the imaginary point where the numerous threads of your life and will converge. It is, so to speak, the North Star you use to orientate yourself; you will never get there admittedly, but it allows you to orientate yourself. It can be a task, the search for a realisation, the hope of an encounter, or being able to give affection to someone. The essential characteristic of the meaning of life is that it focuses all your aspirations on a single point.

Elderly people have more experience than younger people in terms of which meanings of

life prove themselves viable and when, and when to give them up when they lose their power of orientation.

5. The ability to tolerate others with different aims and values

Elderly people have come into contact with very different types of people and attitudes during their lifetime. What is right for one is wrong for another. One man's meat is another man's poison. The question thus arises on each occasion of how to deal with people with values that are different from my own? How to deal with people with different ideologies or religions? Rich and poor people? Powerful and weak people? Respectable people and criminals? Decided and undecided people? People with radical views, people who are indifferent, or a confidential informant? Should I adapt to these people or make myself stand out from them? Should I counter them? Put up resistance against them? Try to convert them to my way of thinking?

Life has taught elderly people that it is impossible to deal with all people in the same way. You can let some of them into your house and others not. As the old German saying goes, *trau schau wem* ['try before you trust']. You will be able to influence some of them, others not. The realisation that some people cannot be changed but that you need to get along with them regardless leads to a certain tolerance in later life. The realisation that people need time to change their ways leads to patience.

Elderly people are more likely to realise that everyone wants to pursue happiness in their own way and that you cannot measure all people by the same yardstick. They find it easier to convince others that one person's values do not necessarily hold true for another and that it is a matter of understanding each person in the context of their own world of values, comparing them to your own values and always paying attention to which values hold true for whom, or not. It also should not be forgotten that different values can hold true alongside each other: values of health, disposition, economics and morality.

My summary of the five wisdom-related skills of elderly people is by no means an exhaustive list. It will have fulfilled its purpose if it has

suggested where the specific abilities of elderly people are to be found. The list could be supplemented, for example, by the skill of being able to retract earlier judgements, admitting to wrong conclusions and a change of mind, and revising one's conduct. It could also be supplemented by the ability and the courage to experiment with life and the self; by openness towards experiences or situations that the person has not explicitly sought out themselves; and many more.

I shall conclude with a comment from Leopold Rosenmayr³: the aging of society - as far as this sociologist of great significance to our theme is concerned - does not necessarily lead to an increase in force of habit. The "aging process rather demands – like ecological issues – a fundamental reflection on brotherliness and sisterliness among the signs of an increase in help and affection. Longevity is a challenge to love. It demands all of the strengths that love is capable of sustaining. If the 'strengths of old age' are to be optimised, what is required is an exchange and an increased, imparting allocation of strengths among people, a new culture of humanity, one which elderly people can help shape."

Translated from German by Tom Low.

³ Rosenmayr, L., Die Späte Freiheit. Altern und Handeln – Eine Reflexion über die Zugänglichkeit von Freiheit im späteren Leben, in: Weymann, A. (Hrsg.): *Handlungsspielräume*. 1989, Stuttgart. p.151-162.

Ageing in Dresden

Prof. Alexander Andreeff, Dresden (Germany)



In the past year the awareness that the average age of the Dresden population is continuously increasing has led to a range of activities in the city of Dresden. Stereotyping of the “ageing population” as “past their prime” is wrong. There is ample scientific evidence that seniors today are becoming biologically and psychologically more youthful. In fact we ought rather to talk about a community which is becoming younger. So a city like Dresden needs to consider how this potential can be used for the benefit of all generations. The image of older people wanting only their pension and a quiet life requires correction. The image of the elderly is created by older people themselves (the way we think creates reality!) and that too requires work. The elderly must recognise their potential value to the community at large.

At the Seniors Conference on the 4th and 5th September 2012 in Dresden on “*Growing old in Dresden*” a constant message came from participating seniors – there were after all some 250 of them – that there is no real disparity between the generations, only that produced by the media. A greater public relations effort is needed to inform about positive interaction between the generations and to make people aware of events, opportunities, projects, etc. In Dresden offerings of events for older citizens are published each month in the city’s official gazette. The supplement “PlusZeit” is regarded very positively by the city’s senior citizens.

On October 15th 2012, during the panel discussion on equal status for all Dresden residents, in which the DSA (*Dresden Seniors Academy of Science and Arts*) took part, it was

made clear that there is no question that Dresden is becoming senile. On the contrary, there is an ever increasing number of physically and intellectually healthy seniors, who should be ensured the kind life which they deserve in our city. Civic engagement begins in one’s immediate community, it must be small scale. Volunteer work has to be supported, it needs a basis, a framework which permits input. At the City of Dresden Seniors Conference referred to above, four principles of voluntary work were highlighted:

- voluntary work must be supported
- it requires community support
- maintenance of skills requires further training
- community recognition is required.

In this connection it must not be forgotten that community participation in a city such as Dresden is not cost free. In addition to the use of cars, the mobility of the elderly depends largely on public transport, which becomes more expensive from year to year. Its increasing costs imposes a considerable burden on the pensioner’s budget. As a result increasing old age poverty is forecast for Dresden, but not only there. Moreover, mobility decreases with advancing age so that a balanced infrastructure in residential areas plays a significant role in the well-being of older citizens. This balanced infrastructure is important not only for older citizens but also for young families with children. Thus it is an issue of concern to all generations. This, however, also means that in the future voluntary activity should be centered more in residential areas. That has consequences! For the Seniors Academy this means offering differentiated and expert training programmes close to residential areas.

It seems to me that the city of Dresden has understood that training is not only a social necessity but also has a preventive function. That’s how I interpret, for example, the fact that the Deputy Mayor in charge of Social Services has been put in charge of the city training office. Training has thus been recognised as a social responsibility. Now it is

up to the appropriate municipal officials to develop a range of options. One of these is a training concept for the city's seniors which is currently being worked on.

Confucius – the great Chinese philosopher – once wrote *“Learning should be available to all. No class distinctions should be permitted.”* This principle should be respected by politicians just as all who offer learning opportunities. Ever since its inception the Dresden Seniors Academy has embraced this principle and must not be diverted from it. But we need to reflect on how we can maintain this high quality offering to the community groups whose mobility is limited or who are otherwise handicapped in ways which limit participation in central training programmes. In other words, there is a need to tackle the problem of internet use as a learning device. It must not be forgotten that the Dresden Seniors Academy of Science and Arts is a volunteer organisation. This also means that recognised objectives

require some time for their completion and also some professional assistance.

“The educated man is one who recognises parallels where others see something completely new” wrote the Swiss painter Anton Graff, who was one of the first to be appointed to the teaching staff of the newly founded Academy of Art. In the same way, learning is more than knowledge; it is a pathway to activity. It is vital that in old age we retain our curiosity. Take to heart the words of the German cultural philosopher Paul Anton de Lagarde: *“Learning is open to anyone who subscribes to the single notion that every evening he must go to bed wiser than when he got up that morning.”*

Therefore: **“Stay curious!”**

Translated from German by S. and L. Miller



EFOS meeting Magdeburg May 2012

United Nations Economic Committee on Europe (UNECE) Ministerial Conference on Ageing

Vienna 18 – 20 September 2012



EFOS participants:

Peter Hug
Ingrid Dummer
Horst Leonhard

For the Slovak association of UTA's: Nadia Hrapkova



The UNECE conference was an excellent opportunity for EFOS to present itself as a stakeholder for the education of older persons in a wide framework of NGO's and political institutions and to influence the policies on ageing. Rather surprisingly the UNECE also includes Canada, the USA and the countries of the former Soviet Union.

The Vienna conference was a checkpoint for the progress of the programme that was issued by the previous ministerial conference in Madrid in 2007.

The conference consisted of three parts:

- NGO Forum on 18 September
- Expert Panels on 19 September

- Ministerial Panels on 20 September

Thanks to our membership of the UN Committee on Ageing and the advisory status at the UN that goes with it, EFOS was entitled to participate at all three parts. But it was unclear for quite a while, how many delegates we could send. Till the end of July we thought it was just one. Then our delegates in the UN Committee on Ageing were invited too.

Preparation

Early this year the NGO's got the opportunity to submit amendments for the draft of the Ministerial Declaration. All these amendments, together with the amendments

from the various governments were reviewed by the editorial commission and partly included in a next draft of the declaration. This draft too was sent to the NGO's for comment.

On behalf of EFOS I made use of both opportunities to submit amendments about the importance of education for the well-being and the health of older persons. But I must admit that I was positively surprised that education for older persons was already mentioned in the first draft, though with, in my opinion, insufficient emphasis on the positive effects on the life of the elderly.

The NGO's were also invited to submit proposals for a political declaration that was to be formulated by the NGO Forum and then presented to the Ministerial conference. I made use of this opportunity too, pointing out that Lifelong Learning is still considered by many Governments to stop with retirement. I also added the appeals to the policymakers of our EFOS Manifesto.

For all my contributions I consulted the board beforehand.



NGO Forum

At the NGO-Forum delegates of national and international organisations from approx. 50 countries discussed the content of the „NGO Political Declaration“ that was to be presented to the Ministerial conference two days later. A draft based on the written contributions of the NGO's formed the starting point of the discussions. This draft already contained a paragraph on Lifelong Learning that corresponded more or less with our ideas. The final version of this paragraph is

UNECE member states are asked to:

(11.f) Guarantee access to lifelong learning across the life course, recognising that access to affordable high-quality education, informal and non-formal learning for people of all ages is necessary for

strengthening older persons' participation in society, increasing social inclusion and reducing discrimination.



It was good to notice that our contribution was supported by other organisations that also consider Lifelong Learning as an important part of active ageing.

Expert Panels und Ministerial Panels

On the second and third day experts and government delegates took the floor. We were pleased to notice that Lifelong Learning was quite often mentioned as an important element of active ageing. At the ministerial panels the University of the Third Age was mentioned several times as a good example. This was also highlighted by the rapporteur.

The NGO Political Declaration was presented to the ministers. The ministers also issued their own declaration that mentions lifelong learning in various paragraphs. As an example a paragraph under the heading *II. Participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons are promoted by*

(d) Ensuring lifelong access to various forms of high quality education and training, including in advanced technologies.



Overall we can be content that education for older persons has drawn so much attention

amongst all the other issues of social security, health, migration, discrimination etc. that of course dominated the major part of the discussions.

24 September 2012
Peter Hug



Activities on the occasion of the „senior days“ in Wrocław during the year of “active ageing”

Urszula Mierzejewska, Wrocław (Poland)



The year 2012 lies behind us. It was dedicated to the seniors as “European Year of active ageing and solidarity between generations”. In Wrocław we had celebrated already for some years first the “senior day” and since 2009 the “senior days”. The past year the city had been placed during 5 days in the care of the seniors. Each year the range of events of all kinds for elder and eldest inhabitants gets larger. And our seniors do not hesitate to take maximum advantage of the wide range of entertainments but also of educational offers. We would like to point out that activities regarding the health of seniors were also very welcome. The police was responsible for the safety of seniors and on this occasion they organized a number of courses under the title “The safe senior”. In October 2012 the end of the 7th edition of this training program for seniors was celebrated in the Oratorium Marianum of the University of Wrocław. Our students who participated in this program got a broad training regarding self-defense in all fields where there might be danger not only for elder people.

Among them there were inter alia:

- Observation of traffic regulations
- Protection from crimes
- First aid in case of accidents
- Alcoholism
- Drug addiction
- Violence and threatening in the family
- Manipulation
- Safety on the water (Kayak) etc.

There were distributed certificates and diplomas. This was celebrated by the seniors under the motto “Senior – sounds proud”.

This motto could also be seen on the banners which were presented by the seniors during their “hat march”. The march of seniors with creative hats around the Ring-street marked the

start of the celebration. The representatives of the considerable number of seniors participating in the march received the keys of the city gates and thus the city came under the rule of the seniors. Many attractions awaited them:

Already on the **first day** there was a fashion show of clothes from the past accompanied by music of Lower Silesia. In the polyclinic the seniors could have tested their health without paying and get medical advice. Another medical center offered hearing tests and other prophylactic tests. Seniors steady on their feet could visit the new stadium together with a city guide. It was built on the occasion of the European Football Championship 2012 and is imposing with its modern sweep. Those who were not interested in this place could listen to a conference about latest cures and medicines in one of the numerous libraries which placed their rooms at the disposal of our seniors. Afterwards they could participate in a virtual walk without payment and traveling costs. They got the opportunity to visit the most famous museums of the world, like the Vatican, the Louvre, or the museum of the Warsaw Revolt and many others. In the afternoon there was organized a literary walk in the Szewska Street under the title “In the footsteps of writers and poets of our town”. In another part of the city, a well-known city guide, Mr. Bronisław Zatycki, paid homage to Wrocław in old photos in a conference with slides. In the evening at 18h we discussed in one of the hospitable libraries about the Polish-Jewish identity. The cultural center “Impart” invited to a piano concert where certificates for “senior friendly places” were handed out. This refers to cultural cites, cafés, pubs etc. where seniors get certain reductions. In the afternoon the seniors could visit the museum of architecture and hear an interesting conference about the Peace Church in Schweidnitz. It is the largest Protestant wooden church in Europe and it was built in the XVII century and is on the UNESCO list as world culture heritage. It is worth while a visit and those who have not yet seen it should go for a visit. Not only

because of the baroque interior exceptional in Protestant churches.

Our prestigious Polish Theatre offered during the celebration days a reduction of 40% for current theatre tickets for owners of the senior card. Also the Modern Theatre reduced the price of 20 tickets to Zloty 10 each for the piece "The Idiot" of Dostojewski.

It was hard for the seniors to choose among so many interesting events already on the first day but each of them could choose those events in the range of his/her interests.

The **second day** was a Saturday a day where normally the whole family visits the supermarkets. One of these markets – Magnolia Park – put its premises at the disposal for the presentation of cultural achievements of the generation of the third age. The seniors organized artistic performances, gymnastic, plays, entertainment, competitions etc. and it was possible to get a medical examination without paying. In the afternoon there was a harvest festival in the Culture House of the railway employees and the fruit and vegetables of the private gardens were exposed. Those who were invited could participate afterwards in a dance with competitions and lottery.

In one of the polyclinics there was established a long desired advice centre where the patients were examined with regard to future, small or medium necessary gratis operations.

In the city museum there was a conference about former customs and traditions illustrated by the lecturer with works of art. In other rooms of the museum there took place in the morning and afternoon occupations for grandparents and grand children, competitions of skill, building of toys from the time of the great-grandparents for example a sailing boat made from a nut shell or a railway made from matchboxes. At the same time they heard about works of art for children from the first half of the 20th century.

The Bank for Food Economy organized an "Open Day" for seniors where only they were allowed to enter.

Other events were organized by libraries, like "My diary in the net", or material in the net, presentation of literature, plays and Patience. Also the seniors who paint were not forgotten, an outdoor atelier was created for them where they could prove their talent. In the afternoon the choir "Gajowice" sang songs from Lwow

to the delight of the people from Lwow who had found a new home in our town. The library of Lower Silesia offered a studio for Haiku "The world painted with words". The Haiku section of the senior academy at the Economic University presented the results in form of Japanese poems full of atmosphere. The German library tried to interest us for the decoration of various subjects with the technique "decoupage" which means "cut out". The second day finished with the representation of the opera with the admission charge of only one Zloty. It presented the opera "The angel in America" by Peter Eotvos.

The **third day** of the senior days was Sunday and after two days of intellectual work the seniors had the chance to show their physical fitness. In the western park of the city and in the suburb of Bartoszowice was organized the "first senior run" of Wroclaw for seniors with walking sticks for Nordic Walking. Afterwards there was organized the first cross-country run by foot or by bike with various open-air games near the Oder river. At the end of the competition there was organized a grill picnic at the landing of the kayaks.

Those who didn't participate in those activities could listen to the senior choirs which presented a varied program in the castle of Lissa from entertainment music to patriotic works.

The museum for post and telecommunication invited to a conference and to an exhibition of type-writers of various production and origin. But this was not yet the end of this eventful Sunday. The center of ophthalmologists offered a prophylactic examination without costs for eye diseases. In the evening the above-mentioned theatres and opera house were filled up with seniors who wanted to take advantage of the reduced entrance tickets. This time the opera "La libertà chiama la libertà" by E.Knapik was performed.

The **forth day** started in the multi-center with a virtual walk through the "World of the impressionists". Afterwards there was shown at the same place a musical performance about "Music which narrates". In the afternoon seniors presented their subjects of interest under the title "My passion – my hobby" in the culture house with conferences, shows and exhibitions.. That evening the music and literature club invited to an evening of poetry.

The 4th day ended with the presentation of the film "Love", a study about the life of an elder couple afflicted by a grave disease. This film shows a problem which often appears in old age.

The fifth day was the last day of the senior festival. It started with painting ateliers under the title "Brush symphony of Wroclaw" as well as the decoration of candles with the Decoupage technique. At the Post museum there had been organized by the European Commission an exhibition "The Decalogue of values" free of entrance charge.

The celebration of the end of the splendid senior days was organized by the Silesian library with the presentation of artists, among others the cabaret of our U3A started with poems and songs about flowers, under the motto "Let's think of our gardens". The writer Krystyna Smigielska presented "Monodram of the swallow".

In the evening the seniors of our town danced in the Hotel Vega at a senior ball which lasted till midnight.

We can say that our third generation took good advantage of the five holidays in Wroclaw with body and soul, with drums drumming and pipes piping and with joy and enthusiasm. If the youth of today will get a more positive picture of us thanks to the various events inspired by "senile seniors" (as they sometimes

think about us)? Will they have in 40 or 50 years the same enthusiasm as our present senior generation? I wish it with all my heart.

P.S. The additional events to the senior days are also worth to be mentioned:

1) The close cooperation of our U3A with various institutions for young people bears fruit in a charitable collection for children and young people from an education center.

2) The Acquapark of Wroclaw has sponsored for two days therapeutic water gymnastics for seniors.

3) A vernissage of a senior lady was organized under the name "Recorded with the camera".

4) In a cosmetic institute there was an atelier for seniors directed by a make up artist with the specialty "Gosh".

5) The library of Lower Silesia put again at the disposal rooms for Bollywood dance.

Since it was expected that a large number of participants would be interested in points 2, 4 and 5 it was necessary to apply previously by telephone.

Our seniors are an important part of the Wroclaw population. This is shown by the manifold offers for further education of seniors as well as by many attractions for them.

We love our town because it takes care of us!

Translated from German by Herta Spitaler

More happiness in life through education and activity in old age

Dr. Rosemarie Kurz, Graz (Austria)



In addition to genetic factors which maximize longevity play especially education, health behavior and medical supplies to ensure a long life, a role. It's no longer enough, that we learn in youth, and draw upon this stock of knowledge the rest of life. When we speak of education in old age, the concept of education, which refers to practically useful knowledge always shows up.

In the past, senior policy was too often reduced to the security of pensions. Behind this was the major concern to guarantee people in old age social and financial security. Senior policy was therefore a policy for senior citizens and not understood as a policy with seniors who express their own.

People who have developed in earlier stages of life skills in some special fields of knowledge have gained more of it through life long learning. It must be ensured that the participation opportunities for older people and their willingness to get active to be exploited and promoted. A central concern of a new policy for the elderly is the consideration of a human right for education.

In relation to a specific retirement age, educational empowerment and competence are significant factors. Empowerment implies self-determination, the ability and freedom to take up responsibility for themselves, to express their own ideas of how to initiate decisions and policy at every level.

Thus higher academic education at Universities and at Universities of the Third Age should be open for older people who want to participate in society.

Justifications of education for older people:

- **POLITICAL AND SOCIAL REASONS:** Critical involvement of all citizens in a vibrant democracy and ensuring a common base-set of values, the elderly from "uneducated" layers exclusion
- **THEORETICAL REASONS FOR EDUCATION:** specific interests, experience and responsibilities of older adults
- **EDUCATION-RELATED REASONS** Lifelong learning, scientific transformation
- **GERONTOLOGICAL REASON:** Activation, social integration, education as an anticipatory regulation, Discrimination in the life cycle of older people
- **ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS:** The man is a learning system with constantly changing requirements in the entire CV
- **SOCIOLOGICAL REASONS:** change in life forms and complex areas of knowledge and a dynamic of modernization in the 20th Century.

Older people as actors and agents of education

Objectives: bringing in professionally acquired skills; committing to the community; contributing to the "common good"; passing on knowledge and ability to the next generations

Forms: Voluntary work in social sector, Senior Consulting in companies; child care by grandparents; intergenerational projects (e.g. oral history projects, theater work...)

Requirements for learning in later life:

Because of the steady numerical growth of the group of older generations in Europe, there is a change in the economic structure of societies. It does highlight existing areas of conflicts like the resources equitably and the understanding between the generations. Subsequent policy has to be done. This involves the establishment of a long-acting education policy for all, which includes all areas of life and the older people have to be involved:

- Forcing future-oriented retirement and education policies with the idea of lifelong learning and creating structures for older people to have equal and unhindered access to higher quality of learning opportunities and learning experience;
- Forcing systematic international comparisons of educational possibilities, activities, educational practices and educational interests in the life course;
- Forcing economical structures for financial security and labor market of all groups of society and integrating policies that allow an access to the benefits of meritocracy in which the older population is neither excluded nor stigmatized;
- Including a social policy that involves the activity and experience of the older generation in the overall social structure forcing and the exchange between generations and the participation of the elderly;
- Strengthening the potential creative design in the areas of education, culture, housing, mobility, infrastructure, leisure, consumption, maintenance and care of children and the aged and gender equality;
- Forcing the human right for education for all age groups with a special input for the needs and interests of senior citizens wanting to acquire knowledge at any national European university:
 - National governments may adapt the education laws that allow financial support for senior studies and adopt the options for a multi-source financing of the educational interests of the elderly
 - National governments may recognize the educational needs of older people and may recognize social contribution that was made by the older people during their active employment time



EFOS Tagung Wroclaw October 2012

News in short

New EFOS members

In 2012 we could welcome the following two new members:

Seniorenkolleg Chemnitz (Germany)



The 'Seniorenkolleg an der Technischen Universität Chemnitz' was founded in 1993 with 150 participants. At present 500 ladies and 500 gentlemen between 50 and 90 years of age make use of the programme for the scientific education of seniors. The aim of the Seniorenkolleg is to contribute to the opening of the university to older people and intergenerational study with younger people (students). During the semester 700 people take part in lectures combined with discussions (90 minutes) on subjects from all aspects of society as e.g. technique, politics, art, culture, sports and sciences of nature, humanities, society and economics. The lecturers are professors of the university, scientists of research institutes, entrepreneurs, artists etc. but also seniors and students. 210 participants take part in language courses (English, Spanish, Czech and Polish) and in 2 photo and video courses. On excursions participants visit

other universities, scientific institutions, enterprises, parliaments, concerts and cultural events in Germany and abroad. The fees are € 22/semester for the series of lectures and € 20 to 30/semester for a course. The organising team is run by seniors and students together.

At an international level three Grundtvig partnerships, sponsored by the European Union, were carried out successfully together with partners from 4 – 5 other countries. The Seniorenkolleg moderates the workgroup 'Lebenslanges Lernen Mittel-deutschland', is a member of the 'Bundesarbeits-gemeinschaft Wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung für Ältere' (BAG WiWA) and of the European Federation of Older Students in Universities (EFOS). The head of the Seniorenkolleg, prof. dr. Roland Schöne, is actively involved in the Association of Universities of the Third Age (AIUTA).

Further information can be found on the homepage

www.tu-chemnitz.de/seniorenkolleg.

University of the 3rd Age of the Ukrainian Kolping Worksorganisation, Lviv, Ukraine

The UTA in Lviv started in 2011 in cooperation with lecturers from the university.

At present there are of about 100 students, who learn mainly foreign languages (English, German and Polish) or attend courses for computers, psychology, psychotherapy and physical culture.



New project about European values

„Values between generations and cultures“ – VAMOS

Eight Universities of the Third Age have submitted an application to the Grundtvig programme of the EU for a 2-year project about European values, to be carried out under the umbrella of EFOS. Work groups of older students will choose a number of specific values. They will discuss these values among themselves and with groups of young people with the aim to establish common views that could contribute to a better understanding between generations and cultures.

More information on <http://www.efos-europa.eu/de/projekte/>.



EFOS manifesto „Third age education – Lifelong Learning“

The EFOS manifesto published in July 2012 gives the view of EFOS on the need for third age education and appeals to the policymakers, the universities and the older people to actively support the its further development.

The manifesto can be found on <http://www.efos-europa.eu/de/efos-manifest/>.