



"community projects for social innovation  
through intergenerational volunteering experience"

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## A **Desk Review** of the Literature on Intergenerational Learning, Social Innovation and Volunteerism involving Old and Young People



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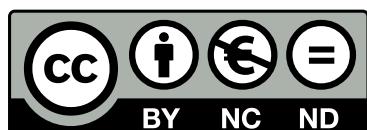
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### project partners



Inspectoratul Școlar Județean  
Iași



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## Introduction

Today's world presents unprecedented challenges to humanity - to the young, the adult and the old. Rapid advances in science and technology are having a major impact on ways of working, organizing, financing, learning, innovating and, in general, living. The Internet has given rise to an entire new economy and this is manifested in new professions, markets, industries, forms of government and so on. At the same time, we are confronted by a series of societal challenges such as an ageing population, climate change and the imperative to respond to the effects of the deep economic crisis and its dramatic impact on jobs and the quality of life more broadly. The world today is characterised not only by new concepts and phenomena such as apps, co-working, crowd-sourcing, crowd-funding, open innovation, rapid prototyping, but also massive youth unemployment, precarious work situations, increasing poverty, NEETs (persons 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training'), active ageing, etc. The ComeON! project takes place in this context. Its central aim is to stimulate exchange of experience with regard to social innovation and intergenerational solidarity.

This ComeON! desk study draws on desk studies elaborated by project partners based in five countries: Hungary, Italy, Romania, Spain and the Netherlands. The purpose of the review is threefold, namely to:

1. Set the context for the ComeON! project: what is the significance of physical, virtual and "phyrtual" intergenerational learning, social innovation and volunteerism in project countries and in Europe in general in 2013;
2. Clarify key definitions, concepts and terminology that will be used in the project;
3. Identify, document and analyse good practices in the field of intergenerational learning involving old (55 years +) and young people (15-19 years), and taking place in secondary schools and community settings.

## Methodology

The national desk studies were elaborated using a common research framework developed by ICDI in cooperation with the lead project partner, Fondazione Mondo Digitale (FDM). Each partner organisation was requested to identify a minimum of three Intergenerational Learning (IGL) initiatives. Partners were provided with a list of key words to guide their search for IGL initiatives, including terms such as peer-to-peer learning, intergenerational volunteering, social innovation, active citizenship, active ageing, young people, secondary school, senior volunteers, 21st century life-skills and education for life. The selection of actual initiatives to be included in the national level studies was guided by a series of selection criteria (see box 1.1).

### *Box 1.1 Criteria for the selection of initiatives*

- Initiatives needed to involve young people between 15 - 19 years of age<sup>1</sup> and older people (55 years +);
- Initiatives needed to include/take place in a secondary school and/or non-formal community environment;
- Initiatives needed to involve either a) physical (face-to-face) contact, b) virtual contact through new technologies (e.g. online platforms, social media, e-mail, online community newspaper), or c) integrate physical with virtual contact;
- Initiatives needed to be documented and, preferably, evaluated;
- Initiatives needed to involve different age groups learning together and/or learning from each other, and lead to change in the community.

<sup>1</sup>While the focus within ComeON! is on young people between the ages of 15-19 years, it was not always possible to single this group out during the analysis of the data. For instance, in the case of the Netherlands, a distinction is made between lower and upper secondary and, in view of the 15-19 age range the analysis was geared toward policies developed for the upper level. In Italy, no distinction is made between lower/upper secondary school and in this case, therefore, it was not possible to 'zoom' into the upper level age group.

A template was provided to structure the analysis of the secondary education policy contexts and the final sample of IGL initiatives in each country. The template specified the particular questions to engage with during the analysis of the secondary education policy and curricula as well as the issues to pay particular attention to when reviewing available documentation on the three (or more) IGL initiatives. National teams were, for example, requested to study the extent to which an IGL initiative contributed to social cohesion and solidarity, the degree to which it might promote 'having fun', the level of participation of the different persons involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of the initiative, and the kinds of skills and knowledge required at various levels (organisation, participants) to reach the aims of the initiative. Finally, national teams were requested to provide a summary on the initiatives in an Excel template.

### ***Report structure***

Part one of the report discusses key concepts related to the field of intergenerational learning (IGL), clarifying the definition used in the ComeON! project and the present report. Parts two and three of the report examine the secondary education context in the five project countries. Specifically, these two sections detail the extent to which secondary education policies and curricula address a) IGL (either through face-to-face interaction, online contact or a combination of the two), and b) social innovation. Part four gives an overview of the various intergenerational learning initiatives that were identified for purposes of the current desk study. Drawing on the national desk studies and research literature on the subject, parts five to seven analyse the benefits of IGL initiatives for young and older people, the skills necessary to design and deliver these, and finally, preconditions for, and possible obstacles to success.

## Contextual and conceptual framework

The ComeON! Project is grounded in a diverse range of interlinked and complimentary notions and approaches. Key concepts within the project include:

- a. Intergenerational learning,
- b. Experiential education for life,
- c. Social innovation,
- d. 21<sup>st</sup> century volunteerism and Phyrtuality,
- e. Intergenerational Solidarity.

The following section examines these ideas in turn, and clarifies the way in which they are applied within the project.

### ***a. Intergenerational learning***

Intergenerational learning involves different age groups learning together or learning from each other in a range of different settings. It is viewed as important in the context of contemporary Europe as it facilitates a form of learning that might otherwise be diminished due to changing family structures, migration, technological changes and growing age segregation.

Interest in intergenerational learning stems from new understandings of the process and participation in education and learning. This includes increasing investment in notions of life-long and life-wide learning as well as recognition of the need to tackle the growing separation of generations and the subsequent distance between old and young. Interest in IGL has also grown as a result of concerns regarding the economic implications of an ageing population in Europe and the subsequent need for greater social and economic solidarity between generations.

Intergenerational teaching-learning is the process whereby knowledge, skills, values and norms are transmitted between generations, typically through the family (Hoff, 2007). Familial intergenerational learning is informal and multigenerational and typically involves learning that takes place naturally as part of day-to-day social activity (Jessel, 2009). A new model of intergenerational learning – the extra-familial intergenerational learning model - facilitates wider social groups outside the family to contribute to the socialisation of the young. Intergenerational learning can be seen as an integral part of life-long learning when the life-wide perspective is taken into consideration (Bostrom, 2003).

The extra-familial intergenerational learning model has been identified as having great potential to create benefits for individuals and society. Central to the idea of IGL is the equal emphasis that is placed on learning together, learning from each other and learning about each other (Preisser, 2011). There is some evidence that intergenerational programmes and practice incorporating formal, non-formal and informal learning and settings create resources that add value to the lives of individuals and create better communities (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011; Butts, 2007; Pinazo et al, 2007 and Martin et al, 2010; TOY Consortium, 2013).

### ***b. Experiential education for life***

Experiential education for life refers to a form of education that combines standardized codified knowledge (i.e., that which predominates in traditional school curricula) with life competences (involving a large element of tacit knowledge) and character formation (involving fundamental values). This type of education constitutes a central topic within important schools of thought and scholarly contributions to the field of education, such as the 1996 Delors Report, the work on transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor et al., 2012), the work on life-long, life-wide and life-deep learning (Banks et al., 2007) and Dragovic, 2011), as well as Gardner (2008)'s five minds approach. Authors such as these have proposed a variety of concepts that converge on the importance of an education that goes well beyond what

educational systems impart today. The emphasis is on the comprehensive development of a person's capacities, as an individual and responsible citizen, during the full course of her/his life, no matter her/his circumstances.

The 1996 Delors report, for instance, argues that no personal talents should be left untapped. The report identifies four types of learning:

- a) Learning to live together (understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values);
- b) Learning to know (sufficiently broad general education with the possibility of in-depth work on a selected number of subjects);
- c) Learning to do (competence enabling people to deal with a variety of situations and to work in teams); and
- d) Learning to be (exercise of greater independence and judgement combined with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals).

Gardner (2008) identifies five different minds, arguing people will need these if they, indeed if we, are 'to thrive in the eras to come' (p. 1). The five minds are:

- a) The discipline mind: relating to expertise in at least one area, be it a specific scholarly discipline, craft, or profession;
- b) The synthesizing mind: referring to the ability to gather information from disparate sources, understanding and evaluating it objectively, and synthesizing it to communicate to others;
- c) The creative mind: the capacity to propose new ideas, new ways of thinking, and to produce unexpected answers, new products and solutions;
- d) The respectful mind: the capacity to distinguish and welcome the differences between individuals and human groups and of working together; and
- e) The ethical mind: the capacity to reflect on the nature of one's own work and on the needs of the society within which one lives.

The minds, abilities, capacities and ways of thinking identified above are conceptualised as 'life-long'. Concepts such as life-long learning, life-wide learning and life-deep learning capture this long-term vision of education and learning. Life-long learning implies a continuing process of learning throughout our lifespan; as Banks et al. (2007: 12) put it: '[L]earning that extends from our childhood into old age includes all the ways we manage interpersonal sociability, reflect our belief systems, and orient to new experiences'. Life-wide learning refers to the existence of multiple simultaneous learning spaces, involving 'a breadth of experiences, guides, and locations and includes core issues such as adversity, comfort, and support in our lives' (Banks et al., 2007: 12). Life-deep learning, finally, is concerned with the essence of human development, including spiritual and religious experiences; embracing 'religious, moral, ethical, and social values that guide what people believe, how they act, and how they judge themselves and others' (Banks et al., 2007: 12)

Clearly, the development of the new types of minds, abilities, capacities, ways of thinking and learning demand a transformative process for individuals and society. Transformation is the key concern within transformative learning, a process that is defined as that 'by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspective, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs, and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action' (Mezirow, 2000: 7-8). In this respect, Kegan (2000) distinguishes between informational and transformational learning. He defines informational learning as increasing knowledge, skills and resources available in relation to an existing frame of reference, while transformational learning is about changes in how we know (i.e., epistemological changes), *reconstructing* the very frame of reference (Kegan, 2000: 49).

The ComeON! project actively draws on the notion of "experiential education for life". It seeks to integrate key ideas with regard to the different types of learning just described, and extending these to include fundamental norms and values. The term "experiential" is central since education for life cannot be the

result of abstract learning alone, but instead must be the result of a variety of learning processes and means. By engaging with notions of social innovation and 21<sup>st</sup> century volunteerism, the ComeON! project seeks to both 'operationalise' and broaden the experiential dimension of the teaching-learning process.

### c. Social innovation

The notion 'social innovation', and its two components, i.e., 'social' and 'innovation', have been defined in various ways. The concept of innovation has a rich and long tradition. One of the founders of the field of innovation, Chris Freeman, defined it as follows: '[a]n invention is an idea, a sketch or model for a new or improved device, product, process or system ... An innovation in the economic sense is accomplished only with the first commercial transaction involving the new product, process, system or device, although the word is used also to describe the whole process' (Freeman and Soete, 199: 6). Innovation has been distilled to a brief formula: Innovation = Creativity + Implementation (von Stamm, 2003).

Clearly, the distinctiveness of social innovation is in the meaning of "social," that is, the fact that the innovation must be motivated by, and focused on, unmet social needs, problems, goals and change. For some authors this means innovation in social relationships, social organisation and governance (Mumford, 2002). For Phills et al., (2008), it means '*a novel solution that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals*' (p.36). A similar definition is found in Wikipedia: 'Social innovation refers to new strategies, concepts, ideas and organisations that meet social needs of all kinds - from working conditions and education to community development and health - that extend and strengthen civil society'. An important element of social innovation is that it can be achieved by people and organisations from any sector of society. The governmental sector, the for-profit sector, the social sector<sup>2</sup>, as well as communities themselves can be originators of social innovation. It is frequently the alliance of organisations from various sectors that is required to face global challenges such as those referred to at the beginning of this paper. Molina (2010) has looked in detail at the importance of this multi-sectoral hybridity.

Clearly, social innovation with its central concern for a better society offers a powerful practical conduit for an "experiential education for life." It can help focus people's attention, motivation and actions in ways that stimulate the practice of knowledge, life competences and fundamental values and positive character traits. In ComeON! this educational effect is further reinforced through the introduction of the concept and practice of 21<sup>st</sup> century volunteerism based on intergenerational solidarity.

In sum, social innovation can be understood as strategies, concepts, ideas and activities which bring positive change in communities, through benefiting and satisfying the needs of all social groups and reinforcing the capacity and resilience of civil society at large. Examples could be: a recycling project organised by seniors and students to improve the respect of environment in the neighbourhood, or, an electronic newsletter jointly produced by seniors and young people to give visibility to activities organised in the community.

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<sup>2</sup>The term 'social sector' is here understood to refer to all organisations that focus primarily on realising 'social goals'. At times, such organisations are referred to as belonging to the Third Sector. This notion tends to be reserved for not-for-profit organisations, however. The 'social sector' can include for-profit organisations, as long as profit is not the primary concern or aim (as it is in the for-profit sector). Where profit is subordinated to the achievement of social goals, such as in the case of social enterprises or social firms, this is understood as part of the social sector.

#### **d. 1st century volunteerism and phyrtuality**

United Nations Volunteers (2011: xxiii-xxiv) describes volunteerism as follows:

... [T]he values inherent in volunteerism endow it with far-reaching potential for human development. This notion of development includes factors such as solidarity, social inclusion, empowerment, life satisfaction and individual and societal well-being. The well-being of individuals is intrinsically linked to their contributions to the lives of others. ... Volunteerism should be recognized as a powerful and universal renewable resource and a vital component of the social capital of every nation. It has a huge potential to make a real difference in responding to many of the most pressing global concerns.

There are millions of volunteers working in scores of organisations around the world. The UNV (2011) report cited above and a report produced by the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) provide figures that illustrate the extent of the phenomenon of volunteerism in the US and Europe. For instance, it is estimated that around 100 million Europeans engage in volunteer activities of one form or another (CEV, 2012) and a Gallup Poll (see UNV, 2011) found that 16% of adults worldwide volunteered their time to an organisation.

Volunteering is characterized by participants' free choice, solidarity and generosity. It represents a profoundly strong base from which to build the kind of education for life that inspires ComeON! project. At the same time, the systematic pursuit of this education for life provides volunteerism with a new dimension, namely a new type of formative volunteerism that systematically develops and pursues social learning and innovation, merging formal education with the development of both life competences and critical norms and values. Compared to common volunteer practices, this substantially raises the formative value of volunteerism with a view to creating systematic and participative processes of personal and social learning through concrete community development projects (Molina, 2012). In addition, this new volunteerism seeks to foster a new life competence, namely *phyrtuality*: the integration of cutting-edge physical and virtual (phyrtual) elements in the effective pursuit of social learning and innovation (see Molina (2011) for the concept and the vision of the Phyrtual.org virtual social innovation environment).

#### **e. Intergenerational Solidarity**

The final critical component of the ComeON! project is intergenerational solidarity, which fits well within the framework of volunteerism and education for life. The societal challenges described earlier require innovative answers that can bring together all possible energies, knowledge, experience and resources available in order to make a real difference at the community level. In this respect, all barriers and divides must give way to relations of solidarity - be they digital, gender-related, cultural or intergenerational. ComeON! builds on partners' experience in the field of intergenerational solidarity and learning. These are concepts that have acquired a great deal of prominence in the European context in recent years, particularly in view of the ageing population and the need for 'active ageing'.

As the TOY Project Consortium (2013) notes, intergenerational learning is the oldest method of learning, involving the transmission of knowledge, skills, values and norms typically in the cultural context of kinship and family. This does not mean, however, that intergenerational solidarity and learning are processes that merely produce uni-directional benefits, i.e., from the older to the younger generation. More specifically, according to DTI *et al.* (2012: 93), '[i]ntergenerational learning involves people of different generations becoming engaged in learning from each other and learning together. Learning is the communication and acquisition of knowledge, skills and values.' This definition points us in the direction of the idea of intergenerational solidarity, which, according to Robertson (2012: 86) 'refers to the mutual support and cooperation between different age groups in order to achieve a society where people of all ages have a role to play in line with their needs and capacities, and can benefit from their community's economic and social progress'.

The benefits of intergenerational solidarity and learning are well known to the ComeON! consortium. These include the digital inclusion of older people, the fall of the intergenerational divide and the acquisition and practice of life skills (21<sup>st</sup> century education) for young people. The ComeON! project intends to take these potential benefits a significant step further by stimulating the creation of intergenerational teams that are challenged to contribute to their communities through social innovation projects. This new dimension is highly challenging but fundamental to raise the level and practice of intergenerational solidarity and learning. In particular, for young people it is likely to offer an important opportunity to generate what Daloz (2000: 110) calls a *constructive engagement with otherness*, that is a 'significant experience at some point during their formative years when they [develop] a strong attachment with someone they previously viewed as "other" than themselves'.

## The place of Intergenerational Learning in educational policy and curriculum

In analyzing the place of Intergenerational Learning in policy and curriculum, attention was paid to exploring the nature of IGL intended in policy and curriculum i.e., was it envisaged as primarily physical (face-to-face) contact; primarily online or a combination or integration of both physical and online. Before addressing the question of how, or indeed 'if' IGL is included in educational policy and practice, it is worth first summarizing the relationship between national policy and what secondary schools are expected to teach in the five focal countries.

In all countries studied there exists a national educational law, which sets out in broad terms the goals of secondary education, and the skills and competencies which secondary school students should develop or attainment targets they should reach. There is variation across the countries regarding the degree to which more specific curricular content, i.e., courses of study or subject areas, are defined nationally by Departments of Education or whether this task is decentralized to regional educational authorities, or even to individual schools. Further parameters which are relevant, in considering the place of IGL in compulsory education is the division of secondary schools in some countries in different types (lyceum/pre-university; general, vocational) evident in the Netherlands, Italy; public or private (Spain) and whether certain curriculum areas are compulsory or 'elective'/optional.

In none of the countries studied is IGL explicitly named either in educational policy or curriculum guidelines for any type of secondary education. Importantly, however, in all countries, with the exception of Romania, the area of social studies is included in secondary school education, incorporating issues and concepts such as citizenship, responsibility for others, human rights, intercultural phenomena. How these topics are addressed, for example, in theory or in the form of experiential learning varies across the countries.

Some examples:

*In the Netherlands* the subject area 'Social Studies' is a compulsory element of the curriculum for all school types incorporating topics such as: citizenship, democracy, the Netherlands as a welfare state, multiculturalism, sex/gender, discrimination, social difference and power. Individual schools have considerable freedom in deciding how these issues are addressed, as long as specified attainment targets are met.

*In Spain*, a subject titled "Education for Citizenship and Human Rights" offers content about rights and obligations of citizens in society including values of solidarity. This subject was compulsory for all secondary school pupils aged 12 to 16 years until the end of 2013. In November 2013, the (new) government passed a law providing a framework for a new, non-compulsory secondary school subject titled 'Ethic Values'.

*In Italy*, there is considerable diversification in secondary school types and orientations. One of the school

types, categorized as a Human Science Lyceum/Liceo requires students to acquire competences necessary to understand social dynamics with a focus on educational processes (formal and non-formal), citizen services, world of work, intercultural phenomena and active citizenship.

In all of these countries and in *Hungary*, there are measures in place which allow schools to engage with organisations and associations outside the institution of the school, which provide students with experiential learning in social studies. This can incorporate IGL elements. This is most clearly evident in the statutory provision in the Netherlands and in Hungary for 'Social Internships' or 'Community Service' which are designed to encourage volunteerism and civic engagement from which local communities can benefit. Typically, the field of activity is either social or environmental protection.

So called social internships (*Maatschappelijk stage*) have been promoted in *the Netherlands* since 1997. Here internships can only be undertaken in the not-for-profit sector, e.g., within an NGO, charitable organisation or a local project or institution such as home for older people or people with disabilities. In school years 2011-2014 all students were required to do 30 hour social internship (during school hours). Interestingly, as of school year 2014/2015 this internship will no longer be statutory. Instead, individual schools will be able to decide whether they incorporate the social internship in their curriculum.

Community Service for secondary school students in *Hungary* is a much more recent phenomenon. Here, a 50 hour community service will be a precondition for students to receive their final secondary school certificate. The community service will become statutory from January 2016, meaning that students sitting their final exam in that year will be the first to have to complete the 50 hour community work. It has been agreed that the 50-hour period can be spread across a three-year period, and most schools are, therefore, already working directly with civil organisations and other institutions to make the student Community Service programme a reality.

Community Service activities should be non-paid, done independently or in a group. To support students, the school coordinator and student mentor in the host institution are required to jointly develop two five-hour sessions to prepare for and round off a student's community service. Any of the areas of activity identified could involve IG contact and joint initiatives. Explicit mention of IG is only made in relation to one of the listed activities, however (see activity g) below). Activities may be done in the following areas:

- a) health,
- b) social and charity,
- c) education,
- d) cultural and community characterized activities,
- e) environmental / nature protection,
- f) disaster recovery,
- g) sport and leisure time activities with children between 3-6, children who have special education needs and older people.

In *Italy* there is also statutory provision for secondary students to engage in experiential learning in field of social studies outside the school building. Under the Educational Proposal Plan (POF) (Scholastic Autonomy Law n.59/1999) schools can propose a range of projects which are both integrated into the curriculum and which promote objectives linked to their community needs. Although schools are responsible for the projects, other associations and private or public bodies may be involved in their implementation. The project titled 'Nonni su internet' initiated in 2002 in response to the problem of the digital divide between young and old is an example of such an initiative. This project was initiated in 20 different secondary schools in Rome. Over the years the project has involved 300 schools in different Italian regions, receiving technical support from FDM and financial support of Municipality of Rome. See the section on IGL initiatives for further details.

In *Spain* and *Romania* volunteering and social oriented experiential learning involving secondary schools students tends to be more on an *ad hoc* and individual project basis. In Spain, initiatives designed to foster IG exchange and learning tend to take place outside of the formal education system and are typically initiated by non-for-profit organisations who may contact schools to develop ideas. Thus while the benefits

of IG exchange in the Spanish context have been articulated (combating digital divide, quick and effective learning, social integration through active ageing), IGL has no place in formal secondary education policy and curricula.

Although in the past *Romania* had a rich tradition in social economy incorporating volunteering and cooperative movements, this was interrupted by the communist period. Currently, educational policy and practice in Romania is primarily focused on preparation for final exams in traditional subject areas such as Romanian language, mathematics or history, and depending on the student profile, foreign language skills, ICT skills and communication. Nevertheless, the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity has been significant in slowly re-introducing notions of volunteering and IG solidarity in the mindset of those involved in secondary school education. So far, the few organized IGL activities evident have been initiated by NGOs under the framework of European Commission Life Long Learning Programme, Grundtvig (see Section on IGL initiatives).

## The place of social innovation in educational policy and curriculum

Clearly, there are many links between the kinds of activities described above within the framework of school based social studies and community service and the concept of social innovation. For the purpose of the ComeON! Project, we define social innovation as 'strategies, concepts, ideas and activities which bring about positive change in communities through benefiting and satisfying the needs of all social groups and reinforcing the capacity of civil society at large'. In this research, it was also of interest to find out more about the place of social innovation in educational policy and curriculum pertaining to formal secondary schools in the five project countries.

Only in the case of *Italy* specific reference is made to social innovation in the education policy. In March 2013, the Ministry of Education and Research (MIUR) launched a public consultation to define the priorities of social context and the specific needs. The following five areas were addressed: public policies, finance for social innovation (impact finance, impact investing), measuring, evaluation and impact, methods and processes, acceleration processes. Whilst the document is not explicitly linked to the secondary school context, it provides guidelines and examples of social innovation which could be implemented in schools, such as the creation of social innovation labs, fab-labs, living labs, innovative enterprise incubators, "social innovation zones", specific spaces based on expert advice for the young worker and fully equipped for the experimentation of new products and services.

In the *Netherlands*, social change as a societal phenomena is addressed primarily at a theoretical level. The syllabus for social studies for the vocational track of secondary school engages with social changes that have taken place in the Netherlands, such as decriminalization of homosexuality, policies with regard to drug use, as well as abortion and euthanasia. Similarly, in *Hungary*, whilst there is no explicit attention paid to social innovation, attention in the curriculum is paid to values and behaviours relating to social inclusion and social cohesion. The National Curriculum framework states that secondary school education should support personal development by experiencing the living circumstances and needs of disadvantaged or disabled people. As stated earlier, the notions of social innovation and social economy are embedded in NGO sector and civil society rather than in policies and practices in the context of formal educational policy.

## Intergenerational initiatives at a glance

In total, we analysed 16 intergenerational initiatives in five countries (Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain) involving young people between 15 and 19 years old and seniors over 55 years old. Given the focus and the objectives of the ComeON! Project, the selection criteria of case studies gave priority to initiatives that involve the use of ICT and social media in the contact between generations. Nonetheless, we also included initiatives that only foresee face-to-face contact, taking into consideration their relevance in terms of learning and social innovation.

In four of the initiatives there was an important international component. These activities were developed within the framework of European Commission's programmes and in relation to the "European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations: 2012", which provided financial support for such projects.

In eight of the case studies the ICT component represents an important aspect and in seven of these an attempt was made to integrate virtual contact with face-to-face interaction. In the vast majority of these initiatives young people (students, volunteers) teach basic ICT skills to seniors. The objectives being to close the digital gap, ensure equal access to information and opportunities and to create a bridge between generations.

For instance, over the last eight years the *Dutch* project "Samen Online" (Together Online) has selected ICT students in vocational colleges to teach computer and internet skills to older people during three weekly sessions over six weeks. In *Italy*, on the other hand, the European project "Intergenerational ICT skills" combined the transfer of ICT skills from young people to seniors with storytelling and interviews of grandparents and other older people. In *Spain*, the project "Apadrina la Sabiduria" (Sponsor Wisdom) reached older people living in a residential nursing home. Students taught them basic ICT skills, played table games and used Facebook to nurture the relationship with older people from home. This project involved both face-to-face and virtual contact to address the special needs of institutionalized seniors who experience severe forms of isolation from families and communities.

Two other case studies also highlight the combination of face-to-face and virtual contact between generations. In *Romania*, the European project V.In.T.Ag.E. "Valorisation of Innovative Technologies for Aging in Europe" involved the development of a special software to promote ICT skills for seniors (65+) as a means to a better quality of life and an improved independence. Another initiative took place in *Spain* and in *Italy*, with the European project "The Knowledge Volunteers", which promoted digital competencies for seniors at risk of exclusion through non-formal education activities. In these cases, young volunteers and seniors could also make use of online social networks as a means of virtual contact and learning.

The other eight initiatives that only involved face-to-face contact are mainly focused on the transmission of local history, values, traditions and professional skills from seniors to young people. Their main objective is also to close the gap between generations, but with a focus on making use of the knowledge of older people, developing a shared sense of belonging and a common vision of the future. The approaches used to facilitate contact and exchange between generations in this case varied from storytelling to theatre, from traditional teaching to playing music or cooking together. This is the case, for instance, in the project "Active Generations" from *Hungary* during which seniors taught young people about traditional professions, folkloric dance and local gastronomy. In the *Netherlands*, the music band "Lab 1870", composed by children and young people younger than 18 years and seniors older than 70 years, was created with the aim to facilitate contact through music (the band exists since 2011 and has a 10-day tour every year).

## Benefits of Intergenerational learning and solidarity

The review of the literature as well as the analysis of the case studies demonstrate that intergenerational learning initiatives benefit both generations involved, as well as their families and communities. Depending on the focus and approaches some benefits are more pronounced or emphasized than others. In some initiatives (especially those promoting ICT skills among seniors) learning outcomes and skills development are emphasized – in others (cultural and artistic projects) social cohesion, solidarity and having fun together are the main goals and benefits.

### **How do seniors benefit?**

Learning basic ICT skills and use of social media represent the main learning outcome for seniors in the 8 initiatives which focus on ICT. In addition, seniors learn about young people's lives and how to communicate with them. The contact with young people positively influences their self-esteem, improves their social and mentoring competences and their general health and wellbeing. Seniors feel valued and feel that their role in society is recognized. Depending on the specific focus of the initiative, seniors can also learn about many different areas, such as nature, cooking, arts, theatre, storytelling and so forth.

### **How do young people benefit?**

Young people benefit from intergenerational activities by improving their social and communication skills and discovering older people's worlds. In several case studies, young people also learn about teaching methods and test their skills in a context which is more similar to a work environment than a school one. They have the opportunity to discover and build on their talents and to learn from seniors about traditional values, professions, techniques and folklore. During the implementation of activities, young people are required to demonstrate punctuality, flexibility and empathy.

### **How do communities benefit?**

Our analysis highlights that in the majority of the case studies an important benefit in terms of social cohesion and solidarity is represented by the fact that both generations overcome stereotypes and prejudices connected to the other age group. Ageism exists in both directions and although the evidence showing that intergenerational activities contribute to deconstruct stereotypes and prejudices based on age is mixed (Montepare and Zebrowitz, 2002), our analysis suggests that contact between generations plays an important role. This interaction helps reshape the social representation of age groups and to critically reflect on the way young and old look at each others' physical appearance, cognitive capacities and role in society.

The *Romanian* project "Punti intre generatii" (Bridges Between Generations) tried to deconstruct stereotypes and value older people's experiences by facilitating national and international activities for both young people and seniors. In *Hungary*, the project "About face! - intergenerational theatre play" positively strengthened children's image of older people. The initiative enabled young and old to get to know about each others' lives and to turn what they had learned into a theatre piece in which both generations performed.

Another important benefit for the community is that both young and old involved in intergenerational activities –whether purely face-to-face or based on an integration of virtual and face-to-face – discover a renewed sense of belonging and improve their commitment as active citizens. Projects that involve volunteering build on the sense of responsibility and ownership of participants. When volunteers are young people as well as seniors, a connection between past, present and future is re-established and both generations share an interest to improve their wellbeing and that of their communities. The *Dutch* project

"Buurtrest De Geest" is an example of this positive outcome: every week, young volunteer (10 to 23 years old) cook a dinner for older people living in their neighbourhood. The menu is based on traditional recipes as well as exotic cuisine. Through this initiative, young people discover, on one hand, how they can support seniors to overcome isolation and, on the other hand, the entire community learns the importance of healthy food and cooking.

It is important to highlight that in several initiatives, especially those taking place in a community setting (*Hungary, Netherlands and Spain*), the development of meaningful and long-term intra-generational as well as intergenerational friendships was reported as factor that positively influences the general social cohesion within communities and families. These friendships go beyond the duration of the activities and contribute to reducing isolation and marginalization of old people as well as young people, who often are concentrated in developing relationships through online social media rather than in their communities.

Additionally, intergenerational activities involving school pupils contribute to enhance and strengthen the connection between schools and neighbourhoods. In our analysis, eight case studies out of 16 describe initiatives that directly involved secondary education institutions and in all of them cooperation between school, local community organisations and institutions is seen as a very important outcome. This is relevant especially in the case studies that focus on pure face-to-face contact. The ability of educators and learners to leave school grounds and engage with local communities as well as with people in 'closed' institutions, such as residential care home for elderly, seems to be a very crucial asset for a society based on cooperation and solidarity rather than isolation and individualism.

Finally, all case studies recognise the importance of fun in the development of intergenerational initiatives. Having fun together – making jokes, discovering new skills in a friendly non judgmental atmosphere, playing music, cooking and eating together, etc. – creates curiosity towards the other and lays the basis for working together for a common goal.

## Necessary Skills to Design and Deliver IGL Initiatives

The review also sought to identify the skills and knowledge required to reach IGL project aims. Three levels are considered: 1) the organisational or institutional level; 2) senior volunteers and 3) young people.

### ***Organisational level***

At the organisational level, strong organisational and coordination skills were emphasized in almost all instances as well as the ability to engage and cooperate with different kinds of organisations -schools, centres for older people, local authorities, churches- and create strong working relationships between them. In this regard, working in partnership and a commitment to common goals were mentioned a number of times. In one initiative, the long and intense preparation of parents and teachers was highlighted as a necessary skill for IGL (also see the section on pre-conditions for success).

Many initiatives also emphasized skills and knowledge relating specifically to working intergenerationally - i.e., knowledge about peer-to-peer education and child and senior psychology, and softer skills such as: capacity to create synergies between generations; creativity, flexibility, interest, motivation and openness.

Depending on the focus of the project - familiarity with specific knowledge domains was also highlighted: e.g., nature and conservation; the ability to direct theatre plays, knowledge of law on student community services. In the case of initiatives which were part of European Commission funded projects, English language and project management skills were also emphasized in addition to knowledge of EU society and cultures.

## **Senior Volunteers**

The most frequently mentioned skills for senior volunteers concerned attitudinal and interpersonal skills. The following were highlighted: openness, in relation to working with youth, as well as ageing; being empathetic and tolerant and having a supportive attitude. Also included were facilitation skills (i.e., being able to ensure smooth interaction between generations and communication skills (e.g., giving a presentation) and being proactive.

## **Young people**

Very similar attitudinal and motivation skills i.e., openness, motivation, and creativity were prioritized for young people involved in IGL initiatives. Given that such initiatives are also viewed as part of the preparation of young people for the world of work and social engagement, it is not surprising that skills and attitudes such as punctuality, being responsible and cooperative and interest in being active in the community were also highlighted for young people. For those young people who are involved in teaching ICT skills to older people, the importance of ICT and teaching skills was also noted.

# **Recommendations; preconditions for success**

Analysis of the IGL initiatives suggests there is a range of preconditions for their success, i.e., their potential to meet the initiative's aims. These may be subdivided into two interrelated categories: preparation and coordination; and partnership, understanding and commitment.

### *Preparation, coordination and communication*

To begin with, as mentioned earlier, it is critical for learners, teachers and seniors to be open to intergenerational activities and learning and to the project idea itself. In addition, careful selection of volunteers using clear pre-defined criteria is important. Careful consideration needs to be given to the teaching skills of seniors and the extent to which these are appropriate given the intergenerational context. Participants need to be well prepared prior to the start of the project and made aware of the project aims, activities and their roles within it.

A suitable location offering appropriate facilities for both generations was also identified as a precondition for success. Adequate consideration needs to be given to the level of comfort of the location and facilities, particularly for the older generation. Good coordination and open communication, as well as availability of sufficient resources and appropriate logistic arrangements are equally vital, as well as an in-built flexibility to address health problems (primarily of senior participants) and other unexpected circumstances. A clear communication plan and effective delivery thereof is critical to the smooth running of IGL initiatives and creating and sustaining interest in, and support for, projects.

### *Partnership*

A solid partnership between the various organisations, institutions and individuals (including young and elderly people) involved is important. Against this backdrop, it is worth noting that the analysis showed that the extent to which Pan-European projects – such as the ComeON! project – are able to meet their objectives was also shaped by the quality of the partnership and the commitment of partners.

Being sure of the various partners' and participants' understanding of, and commitment to, the initiative and to IGL more broadly is equally important. Here it is worth mentioning that the extent to which schools are aware of the educational potential of the IGL project for learners appears to be vital. Furthermore, initiatives whereby elderly people's homes open their doors to schools and learners, and are able to engage young volunteers on a long-term basis seem to stand greater chances of success. A final precondition for success relates to the active involvement of parents.

The skills and preconditions detailed here were identified as critical to the short and long-term success of IGL initiatives. While the desk reviews have not necessarily allowed for a critical and thorough review of challenges and obstacles to success, the information gathered for purposes of this study suggests that where these elements are absent, it is more difficult to guarantee the quality and impact of IGL initiatives.

## Closing

This report has detailed the key concepts underpinning the ComeON! Project and presented a synthesis of IGL initiatives in the five ComeON! countries, i.e., Hungary, Italy, Romania, Spain and the Netherlands. Building on the national level studies, this report discussed benefits for seniors and young people and identified the necessary skills and preconditions for success.

A key objective of the study was to set the context for the project, elucidating the (potential) significance of physical, virtual ('phyrtual') intergenerational learning, social innovation and volunteerism in project countries. While the IGL initiatives presented here all contain a physical component, and a number include a virtual one too, there are none that might be defined as 'phyrtual'. That is, none of the projects identified can be understood to integrate 'cutting-edge physical and virtual elements in the effective pursuit of social learning and innovation'. In addition, 'virtual' components within IGL initiatives – where present – have tended to be limited to provision of ICT lessons by young people to seniors. In one case, social media were used to facilitate contact between generations. In the initiatives discussed here, this has been the extent of the 'virtual', however. It is very likely that additional skills and preconditions need to be in place in order to ensure 'phyrtual' IGL initiatives are a success. Finally, this study also indicates that the notion of social innovation, meaning: strategies, concepts, ideas and activities which bring positive change in communities, is to date weakly embedded in formal secondary school policy and curricula in most of the countries studied.



Spain: The Knowledge Volunteers : A day in the "Colegio Paraiso" in Madrid

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## Appendix: Summary of IGL initiatives in ComeON! project countries

Country	Title of initiative	Short description	Contact
IT	<b>Intergenerational ICT skills</b>	Young people teach ICT skills to older people and collect family stories of grandparents or other seniors.	andrea.bellani@darvoce.org <a href="http://www.intergenerational-ictskills.eu">www.intergenerational-ictskills.eu</a>
IT	<b>Involven</b>	Learners and seniors work together for nature conservation. Youth gather information, stories, legends, historical and natural features of the natural reserves from seniors to develop an online library and a game for mobile devices.	f.ugolini@ibimet.cnr.it
IT	<b>Adults Learning for Intergenerational Creative Experiences (ALICE)</b>	Reinforcing the role of adults (grandparents, parents, volunteers) as educators through intergenerational activities based on art, story-telling and games.	aliceproject@univirtual.it <a href="http://www.alice-llp.eu/blog">www.alice-llp.eu/blog</a>
IT/ES	<b>The Knowledge Volunteers (TKV)</b>	Promoting digital competence among older people at risk of exclusion through intergenerational exchange and relations with young people.	Fondazione Mondo Digitale: Annaleda Mazzucato - Project Manager a.mazzucato@mondodigitale.org  Fundetec: Sylvie Galaup, sgalaup@fundetec.es <a href="http://www.tkv.mondodigitale.org">www.tkv.mondodigitale.org</a>
ES	<b>Conecta Joven (Young Connection)</b>	Social inclusion of young and older people in difficult suburban areas, through experience sharing.	La Rueca: José María regalado josemariaregalado@gmail.com <a href="http://www.joveneslarueca.blogspot.com.es/2013/05/conecta-joven-2013-enhorabuena-todos.html">www.joveneslarueca.blogspot.com.es/2013/05/conecta-joven-2013-enhorabuena-todos.html</a>
ES	<b>Apadrina la Sabiduria (Sponsor Wisdom)</b>	Offering knowledge to older people living in residential care homes.	Karmengo Ama Ikastetxea Amorebieta Etxano, cmtsecretaria@telefonica.net <a href="http://www.karmengoama.net/es/ultimas-noticias.html?start=6">www.karmengoama.net/es/ultimas-noticias.html?start=6</a> <a href="http://www.relacionesintergeneracionales.net/?page_id=294">www.relacionesintergeneracionales.net/?page_id=294</a>
RO	<b>Punti intre generatii (Bridges Between Generations)</b>	Raising awareness on active ageing through the promotion of activities for young and old. Exploring perspectives, experiences, knowledge, values and traditions of both generations through non-formal education.	Iasi, Theoretical High School "Vasile Alecsandri" allaapopei@yahoo.com
RO	<b>Cursul TIC pentru vârstnici (VINTAGE - ICT for elders)</b>	Proposing innovative solutions to make ICT more accessible and attractive for senior citizens and improve their quality of life and independence.	Iasi, School Inspectorate of Iasi county proiecte.isjiasi@yahoo.com <a href="http://www.vintageproject.eu">www.vintageproject.eu</a>
RO	<b>Bunicii mei sunt ..... COOL (My grandparents are ..... COOL)</b>	Bringing together children and grandparents to enhance the role of seniors in child social education (values, traditions, experience, etc.) and recognise the benefits of intergenerational contact for the wellbeing of both generations.	Iași, "Costache Negruzi" College sorohan_v@yahoo.com
NL	<b>Buurtresto De Geest (Community restaurant)</b>	Young volunteer cook a weekly dinner for senior citizens of their neighbourhood, promoting healthy food and fighting social exclusion.	sabine.wenneker@voorwelzijn.nl <a href="http://www.voorwelzijn.nl/index/jongeren0651052774">www.voorwelzijn.nl/index/jongeren0651052774</a>

NL	<b>Samen Online (Together Online)</b>	ICT students teach computer and internet skills to older people.	Kaja van Rhijn (Project Worker) <a href="http://www.samemonlinenederland.nl">www.samemonlinenederland.nl</a> 0624774717
NL	<b>Lab 1870</b>	A band composed by under 18-year olds and over 70-year olds that aims to bridge the gap between generations through music and fun.	<a href="http://www.lab1870.nl">www.lab1870.nl</a>
HU	<b>Granny - student study circle</b>	Young people teach computer and internet skills to seniors.	Fülöp Melinda, Brenner Zsuzsanna <a href="mailto:international@bmkneth.hu">international@bmkneth.hu</a> +36 1 371 2770
HU	<b>Active generations</b>	Young people and seniors jointly discover and explore values, traditions and habits from the past and the present.	Gyula, Csaba <a href="mailto:gyula.csaba2@gmail.com">gyula.csaba2@gmail.com</a> +36 30 207 9822
HU	<b>About face! - intergenerational theatre play</b>	Young and older people discover each other's lives and translate these into theatre performances.	Vegh, Ildikó <a href="mailto:vegh.ildiko@gmail.com">vegh.ildiko@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:edu@katonaszhaz.hu">edu@katonaszhaz.hu</a> +36 20 559 7143

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