

# Sustainable learning in the community:



Raising awareness for older people's skills and experience and creating opportunities for learning and engagement



## What is the SLIC-project?

SLIC - Sustainable Learning in the Community is a European Commission funded project under the GRUNDTVIG programme carried out from December 2007 to January 2010. The SLIC project addressed the issue of increasingly ageing societies and the promotion of active ageing. The aims were to develop new, practical ways to help older adults review their past experience and personal skills and to explore new and potential opportunities for learning and community engagement. This was achieved through developing an innovative workshop model which is set out in the handbook. SLIC was coordinated by the Austrian Red Cross. Nine organisations from six European countries – Austria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and the United Kingdom – participated in the SLIC-project.

*An older learner from the UK explains his ideas about active citizenship: "[...] learning how to stay fit through exercising, and healthy living to keep ourselves fit and healthy to maximise our years and not be isolated or cut off from the community."*

## What are the main parts of a SLIC-workshop?

The main parts of the two-day workshops are -

- **To create an individual skills profile from past experience and learning**
- **To create a personal action plan based on identifying and prioritising areas of new interest**

The workshop format offers a high degree of interactivity in a secure and confidential environment with small group work identified as an ideal way of addressing diverse needs.

## Who can participate in the SLIC-workshops?

The workshops were implemented and tested with 103 older learners participating from 6 countries. It worked well with groups of volunteers coming from established programmes and with other groups of participants identified as potential community champions. Older people not previously engaged in learning or volunteering but who were looking for new activities and older people from local ethnic minority communities all successfully took part



in the workshops. The workshops are particularly useful when inserted in a longer-term programme on training or community engagement for older people. An ideal group size is 10-15 participants.

### How can participants benefit from the SLIC-workshops?

The evaluation of the SLIC-workshops showed that participants experienced several benefits. The skills profile was seen as a very useful tool to raise self-esteem and a good starting point for volunteering. It helped participants to get to know their own strengths and recognise their value. It also enabled them to “step back and see the big picture”. Finally, participants felt that the experience created a feel-good factor since, “It’s good to be told you are doing well through this type of self assessment”.

*“The workshop helped us to reflect on the experiences and skills we had acquired throughout our lives. People who thought in the beginning that they didn’t have any skills discovered during the course of the two-days that they also had skills. The seminar was very interesting and useful and the tools helped us to be more aware of our personal skills and limits.”*  
Maria Grazia – participant in the workshop in Italy

Participants especially valued, individually, “the opportunity to think about my own past experience” (Italian participant) and enjoyed “getting information about possibilities to be active and hearing stories from other participants in a conversational atmosphere.” They also appreciated spending time planning and thinking about dreams and wishes as well as “making concrete plans on what I can and could do in the future” (Finnish participant).

*Hungarian learner about the skills profile:*

*“It is very useful to acknowledge what we know. The training can help us look back, summarise, release negative things and plan our futures.”*

*An older woman from Hungary about the action plan:*

*“It’s good because it will help you to know where to go, who to turn to later. It is just like when the travel agency gives you a questionnaire to fill in and give feedback – this is something people usually like.”*



### What is included in the handbook?

The handbook gives a short overview of the background to the SLIC-project and how the workshops were developed. It also provides details on how to run the SLIC-workshops and highlights tools that can be used. The handbook not only targets professionals working in this field, but it also addresses older champions who would like to run SLIC-workshops themselves. The handbook is available in 5 languages: English, German, Finnish, Hungarian and Italian. The following activities are included in the handbook:

For each activity the objectives are stated, how long they will take, which resources are needed, how to run the activity and which issues to consider.

- **Ice breakers / Introduction sessions**
- **Skills profile**
- **'Homework'**
- **Input on volunteering and learning opportunities**
- **Action plan**
- **Motivating and involving others / Skills market**
- **Follow up activity**
- **Evaluation**

### Which future activities are planned?

As a follow-up to the project it is planned that organisations from different sectors will encourage and support older people in peer learning. This means that older SLIC-workshop participants will be able to run workshops themselves in their local communities using the SLIC-handbook as a guide. This was managed in Italy where two volunteers who participated in the SLIC-workshop in Rome ran their own workshop in Ferrara a few weeks later. Organisations participating in the SLIC-project are exploring opportunities to offer the workshops to interested older people on a regular basis. Also, the tools developed in the SLIC-project are being incorporated in preparatory and follow-up activities of European exchange projects for older volunteers ([www.seven-network.eu](http://www.seven-network.eu)). Finally, partners are looking to contact other organisations, in new regions, new settings and/or countries that would benefit from running such workshops.

### Where can I find more information on SLIC-workshops?

Information on SLIC as well as the handbook for downloading can be found at: [www.slic-project.eu](http://www.slic-project.eu). If you are interested in running SLIC-workshops or using the tools, contact a project partner in your country. The handbook can be ordered in your national language from the partner in your country.

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