

SLICII-Valuing older volunteers skills and experience – Training peer facilitators

Trans-national peer facilitator meeting in Budapest June 17-19, 2012

SUMMARY

Tanti saluti Päivää Jó napot Guten Tag Grüezi Muchos saludos Hello !

Within the SLIC II project a course was developed to train peer facilitators to run SLIC-workshops in their local communities using the SLIC-handbook as a guide. The SLIC-workshop is a two-day workshop for older people who would like to become active in their communities. It consists in reviewing participants' skills and experiences, giving them information on volunteering opportunities in their communities and enabling them to formulate an action plan on how to proceed.

In each of the participating partner countries (Austria, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Scotland) a six-day peer-facilitator training, training more than 60 older people as peer facilitators was run between February and May 2012. The peer facilitators then had the opportunity to practically trial the workshops themselves. 12 trial workshops were carried out in the 5 partner countries with 122 participants in all.

A trans-national peer facilitator meeting served to exchange and disseminate the experiences made. 23 peer facilitators from 5 countries had the possibility to discuss the training and the trial workshops amongst each other and with project partners.



Peer facilitators showed presentations of their training courses and brought greetings from their country teams using pictures, videos and music. Also, certain objects were introduced and their relevance to each peer facilitator training course explained. For example one country introduced a chicken timer that represented how important good time management was in the workshop. Another team introduced a flower that played a significant role for designating a speaker and ensuring good listening in the group.



In a further session several questions were asked concerning the peer facilitator workshops, such as what went well and which difficulties were encountered. Some activities like the tree of dreams – that allows participants to think about activities that they would like to do - the speaking mill (speed dating) and ice breakers as interactive exercises were mentioned by many participants as having **worked particularly well**. Also the *flower competence exercise* – in which participants can collect either their own

competences as a group or collect the ideal competences of a peer facilitator - and the *world café* were very well received. Working in small groups, the coffee breaks with the possibility for networking and meeting people who share the same ideas were also mentioned as important aspects of the work done.

Difficulties that were encountered were forms to fill in that were too complicated, time management and dealing with group dynamics and difficult participants in the trial workshops.

With respect to **lessons learnt**, participants felt, that they have gained more self-confidence and new skills to deliver a workshop. These are communication skills, listening skills, learning how to plan and motivate people. The peer facilitator training contributed to the personal development and enabled participants to realise their own abilities.

In a further **café conversations session** elements of an ideal peer facilitator training, an ideal SLIC-workshop as well as ideas for winning participants and ensuring sustainability were collected. Finally, plans for implementing the SLIC-II activities in the future were collected. Some partners are already planning to run a further peer facilitator training. Others are planning further SLIC-workshops run by the trained peer facilitators. Also, the relevance of further networking on a European level was stressed.



All in all it can be said that:

- *The peer facilitator training had been enjoyed as a very positive experience by trainees and trainers alike.*
- *There was clear evidence that the SLIC Workshop can effectively engage participants from groups that are traditionally hard to reach and training peer facilitators to run them can contribute to their sustainability.*
- *SLICII is not an imposed structure but a flower pot that can grow and develop.*
- *The voice of older people is central to the effective development of the SLICII activities.*

During the meeting it became clear that training peer facilitators has a “double” empowerment effect: On the one hand, the peer facilitators have reported of many effects of the training that have led to their personal empowerment. On the other hand peer facilitators have contributed to the empowerment of their peers by running SLIC-workshops with them. The main challenge within the last few months of the project and after the completion of the project will be to keep up the momentum gained through the peer facilitator training and support peer facilitators in actively using and disseminating the skills and knowledge they have acquired.

Feedback from peer facilitators

