

Sustainable Learning in the Community

*Valuing older people's skills and experience:
Training peer facilitators*



National Report – Hungary

Recommendations for peer facilitator training and SLIC-workshops

**Specific research topic:
Stronger focus on community involvement**

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May 12, 2011



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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This report reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

1 Introduction

The SLIC II project “Valuing older people’s skills and experience: Training peer facilitators” addresses the issue of increasingly ageing societies and the promotion of active ageing. The SLIC II project builds on the previous SLIC I project (Sustainable Learning in the Community) where an innovative workshop model and a handbook on how to run these workshops were developed. More than 103 older learners from 6 countries took part in the workshops which aimed to help older adults to review their past experience and personal skills and to explore new opportunities for learning and volunteering.

The SLIC II-project aims at broadening the SLIC workshops to fit the needs of specific target groups and at training older peer facilitators who can then run SLIC-workshops in their local communities using the SLIC-handbook as a guide. Within the project the future peer facilitators will also have the opportunity to practically trial the workshops. It is a European project funded within the GRUNDTVIG-programme of the European Commission and coordinated by the Austrian Red Cross. The project is being carried out by 8 organisations from 6 countries (Austria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy and the United Kingdom). It has started in January 2011 and will run until December 2012. More information on the SLIC I and II – project can also be found on www.slic-project.eu

This report aims at looking how the sustainability of the SLIC – workshop can be ensured in each country but also in general and addressing planning issues concerning the target group of the SLIC workshops and the peer facilitator training. The second part focuses on the integration of older migrants. Each partner focused on a certain topic e.g. a specific target group or a certain topic like biographical tools or community involvement and explored this in more depth. The last part of the report provides key recommendations, which will give valuable information for the further development of the SLIC-workshops and the peer facilitator training.

2 Planning activities and ensuring sustainability

2.1 Peer facilitator training

The **target group** for peer facilitators training is a wide range of 60+ members of different interest groups and communities. These people have already made some contribution to organized training and voluntary work in the community. They show an interest in developing sustainable learning and willingly participate in training programs and dissemination.

The interviews we made about the specific topic and the PFT (Peer Facilitator Training) gave us the chance to meet active older people who can be possible participants of the PFT.

Possible content:

We made a focus group interview with four older people who act as peer facilitators in the IT area. They help other older people to develop their knowledge / skills in special IT fields (e.g.: e-mailing, power point presentation, uploading pictures using Picasa etc.).

In the interview they said that they would like to know more about how to handle a situation if participants have different knowledge, experiences and learning styles. They also added that communication (and communication style), general information on teaching / working with older people, conflict management / resolution, and how to build self confident could be important topics.

Peer facilitators will go through the SLIC training enriched by a special training day devoted to community involvement. They will acquire skills that make them capable to share their experiences and to be in charge of training new participants with the help of experienced trainers. They will have to learn how to sensitize the issues, how to facilitate training activities and how to pass on the knowledge they have acquired in the course of the training.

It would be helpful to study a previous EU / Grundtvig project called ROLBOP within which partners designed and issued a training manual (Breaking down barriers to learning for older people). This training manual was designed for trainers who work with older people. There might be some useful activities which can be adapted to our PFT.

Activities on following topics can be part of the PFT:

- ice-breakers
- teaching methods
- learning barriers
- skills for trainers: building rapport, active listening, asking open-ended questions, giving positive feedback, seeing how people process information
- how to create an inclusive learning environment
- evaluation methods

It is also recommended that participants should practice the moderation of the workshop with the help of experienced trainers. That means they should work in pairs (experience trainer + peer facilitator) for a while after finishing the PFT to practice the acquired knowledge and have more experience in running a workshop.

Feasible length:

The interviewers were happy with the six day training (4-5 hours / day). They mentioned that 2 days a week might be the best timing. One day following a week interval was also recommended but the one week interval was considered too long.

Regarding the **methods** interviewers suggested some simple forms. Since they are not familiar with different methods it would be necessary to teach them new techniques. They said that they would like to mix the methods of working in pairs (trainer + participant), working in small groups sharing experiences and giving lecture.

They emphasised that the trainers should be “role models” but they want to add their own thoughts / experiences to the training therefore putting the method into practice is strongly recommended.

How will you include the specific themes researched by partners in the SLIC-workshop and in the PFT?

The specific theme of community involvement is being elaborated and will be integrated into the SLIC workshop.

If all partners create training activities based on our research, it will be easy to incorporate the results of the research in the SLIC workshop.

2.2 Peer facilitators

Peer facilitators will be active members of different study groups and communities some of whom are already familiar with the SLIC workshop and are willing to become facilitators themselves.

They have some ideas about how to develop older people’s learning skills, how to deal with older people. They have the ability to successfully communicate with their peers and they have some experience in organizing events and facilitate programs.

They will be recruited from existing learning groups and communities (Silver Net, 60+), after being interviewed.

They will have the opportunity to meet representatives of other groups, express their ideas and concerns about the training. They can decide themselves if they feel interested in taking part in the training programs and becoming facilitators afterwards.

Interviewers said that **peer facilitators** should have good communication skills and adequate personality: A PF should be kind, open-minded, smiling person who can create good atmosphere. It is necessary to control the workshop and the learning process but should not dominate the training. A peer facilitator should be confident, persuasive, patient and tolerant and able to build trust.

According to the interviewers peer facilitators should have the necessary **prerequisites (skills, competences, experiences)**. They have to be well prepared and have to have a broad view on the topic. They have to grab the attention of the participants and keep discipline but they have to encourage participants at the same time.

They should be empathetic, patient and calm. They should have good communication skills and get in touch with participants easily. They have to be thorough and positive thinking people. Those older people are more accepted who have already gone through the same learning process.

They should have some prior learning experiences.

Though the interviewers are not teachers they all have some teaching experiences or experiences on working with people and all have good communication skills.

- voluntary work at public internet access point
- work related experiences (teaching experience during student placement, running a seminar, organising programs for colleagues, cosmeticians, sales representative)

Peer facilitator candidates have to receive **detailed information** about the SLIC projects. It would be necessary to give them the SLIC training manual beforehand and give them the opportunity to ask questions at a group discussion.

This discussion should be used also for assessing their skills. A template with questions should be designed and we have to be prepared to answer such questions: What is going to happen if I go to the training, but I will feel this is not my cup of tea.

2.3 SLIC-workshop

Our aim is to support the learning of older people, to improve the quality of their life as well as foster their active citizenship by encouraging them to take voluntary work.

We aim **to target** recently retired people or pre-retired people.

We plan a workshop serial to people who are going to retire soon. The SLIC workshop would be part of it.

- 1.) Pre-retired course – general information on ageing, active citizenship / voluntary work, financial, law related questions
- 2.) SLIC workshop
- 3.) Course for older volunteers

Thanks to the **dissemination** day (20 January 2010) we managed to disseminate the idea of the SLIC project and we also introduced some sessions from the SLIC workshop to 55 people. both professionals and older learners took part in this meeting. After the meeting some institutions expressed their definite intention to organise the workshop at their venues.

We will continue our dissemination work and try to find funds for organising SLIC workshops.

Participants should receive **more detailed information** on the workshop compared to what we gave during the test phase. Probably an invitation letter is not enough and a meeting is to be held beforehand.

2.4 Framework conditions and sustainability

The BCC has already started a co-operation with the Association for Community Development. As a first step we discussed our specific topic with them and we drew up the pool of training activities regarding community involvement.

We made a focus group interview together with some volunteers of the 60+ program. A few volunteers will probably be involved as possible peer facilitators.

We have developed a complex program for pre-retired and recently retired people. The above mentioned (at point 2.3) three courses are planned to be carried out in co-operation with external experts and organisations that have already had experiences in training older people for voluntary work.

Sustainability will also be ensured by disseminating the results as well as supporting the adaptation of the workshop and co-operating with organisations.

Through the network of cultural centres we can reach more than 100 civil and cultural organisations. As a professional service provider our role is to disseminate new programs and methods. We particularly target those organisations which have some experiences in working with older people. We have already done the first step when we organised a dissemination day in January 2010.

We have got in touch with umbrella organisations such as the Alliance of Retired People.

We plan to inform and involve local governments as the network of cultural centres is (partly) financed by them.

We intend to look for sponsors for our program. We were successful with another program: "Click on, Granny!" which has been sponsored by an internet provider for years.

2.5 Reviewing own training experiences of the SLIC(1)-project

Recruitment / advertising process

We chose our participants mainly from those who had taken part in the interview phase. They were all active older people: members of retired people's clubs or active members of the Silver Net Association.

According to our experience the information letter we sent before the workshop did not contain enough information. A short meeting should have been organised.

3 Community involvement

3.1 Introduction to community involvement (research topic)

Relevance of the research

In this age group voluntary work is not widespread enough.

Most older people are not active socially; the vast majority is not involved in community activities.

The aims of our institution are:

- to make voluntary work more popular in the age group
- to foster older people's engagement in learning or volunteering
- to support their involvement in communities

The aim of the research is to find some **relevant community development tools / methods** and help draw SLIC participants' attention to the advantages of being (active) members of a community and the importance of voluntary work

The second aim of the research is to have a **better understanding of older people's motivation and expectations.**

Target group

The first topic (relevant community development tools /methods) was discussed with the community development experts of the 60+ program (3 people).

The second topic (Older people's motivation and expectations) was discussed with experts and with older people who participated in the 60+ program. (12 people in two groups)

3.2 Description of methods

We chose **community development** for our focus as this topic and the process itself can contribute considerably to community involvement and it also supports the voluntary work of older people.

In the **60+ program** community development experts worked in different parts of the districts to set up the so called "neighbourhood voluntary" program.

A "neighbourhood volunteer" can be anybody in his / her local environment who is willing to work for the local area and the people live there.

We made **two interviews and we organised a group discussion.**

The **group discussion** was attended by experts.

Our intention was to incorporate some relevant community development ideas / training activities in the SLIC workshop which can be used by partners in their settings.

We asked the following questions:

- What tools / methods were used in the 60+ program?
- Which were successful and why?
- How can we adapt this knowledge and incorporate it in the SLIC workshop?

The **two interviews** were attended by older people (10+2) and community development experts (3 people).

Regarding older people's motivation we asked the following questions:

- What have they done within the program? What sort of positive experiences have they had so far?
- How can other older people be involved or motivated to be active?

These interviews were videotaped. The film itself and the results of the interview might be a useful input to all partners regarding the involvement of inactive older people.

3.3 Findings

Community development is a long process. What we can do within the SLIC workshop is to support the community development process by showing some techniques / methods and inform the participants about possible results. With the help of some training activities we can motivate them to start some community development actions or voluntary work in their local area.

60+ community development program:

a) Getting in touch and keeping in touch with older people

There are different techniques which worked well. Personal contact is the most important and successful as it can build trust.

There is a need for open-minded people who organise events and invite older people.

Local newspaper can be an important channel and the homepage of the district, too if we want to reach the age-group.

Disseminating leaflets in public institutions and blocks of flats is a technique which did not work well.

b) Motivation for being a volunteer

Most people said that they are willing to help other people and would like to be a member of a community. They also enjoyed being successful in different activities (e.g.: working as a journalist or an event organiser).

Voluntary work is a useful way of spending free time but it is also good for getting information and inform other older people about public issues.

c) Activities that volunteers do

Social work

Most volunteers do some social work. Some of them accompany older people, they do the shopping for them, use the so called time bank which ensures mutual help or they take care of someone.

Representation of public issues, setting up projects

Some volunteers have already been involved in public issues. They make efforts to create a local public area for older people or lobby for issues of public interest (e.g.: public transport, post office, nursing home). They regularly communicate with public institutions (building and cleaning the pavement etc.). They contribute to crime prevention, not to become victims of fraud.

Learning and socializing (training, clubs and events)

Active volunteers realise the idea of lifelong learning: they learn English, taking and editing digital photo, journalism.

They initiated and took part in the life at clubs and events such as playing cards, organising competitions or lectures, visits to the theatre, excursions, embroidery club. Some of them were actively involved in organising exhibitions.

c) Motivating and involving other older people

During the interviews volunteers brought up some examples which worked well.

Organisations should organise open days where inactive people have the chance to get to know the advantages of being a volunteer.

Organising lectures on different topics which are interesting for the age group.

Organisations have to find a suitable person for a task and not just looking for volunteers in general.

Organisations can make older people engaged by involving them in various activities and later let them take the responsibility at least partly for organising and running programs.

Organisations should inform the age group about possibilities they might not think of.

An elderly woman mentioned that the word “volunteer” can be scary for older people as it has a message of too much responsibility (commitment) and tasks that have to be done.

Recommendations

3.4 Key recommendations for peer facilitator training

Possible content:

- how to handle a situation if participants have different knowledge, experiences and learning styles
- communication (and communication style)
- conflict management / resolution
- how to build self confidence
- ice-breakers
- teaching methods: general information about teaching / working with older people
- learning barriers
- skills for trainers: building rapport, active listening, asking open-ended questions, giving positive feedback, seeing how people process information
- how to create an inclusive learning environment
- evaluation methods

It would be helpful to study a previous EU / Grundtvig project called ROLBOP within which partners designed and issued a training manual (Breaking down barriers to learning for older people).

It is also required that participants should practice the moderation of the workshop with the help of experience trainers.

Feasible length:

The interviewees were happy with the six day training (4-5 hours / day). They mentioned that 2 days a week might be the best timing. One day following a week interval was also recommended but the one week interval was considered too long.

Regarding the **methods** interviewees suggested some simple forms. Since they are not familiar with different methods it would be necessary to teach them new techniques.

Putting the method into practice is strongly recommended and considered as an essential part of the training.

3.5 Key recommendations for peer facilitators

Characteristics of peer facilitators:

Peer facilitators will be active members of different study groups and communities some of whom are already familiar with the SLIC workshop and are willing to become facilitators themselves.

They have some ideas about how to develop older people's learning skills, how to deal with older people. They have the ability to successfully communicate with their peers and they have some experience in organizing events and facilitate programs.

They will be recruited from existing learning groups and communities (Silver Net, 60+), after being interviewed.

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Prerequisites (skills, competences, experiences) that peer facilitators should have:

They have to be well prepared and have to have a broad view on the topic. They have to grab the attention of the participants and keep discipline but they have to encourage participants at the same time.

They should be empathetic, patient and calm. They should have good communication skills and get in touch with participants easily. They have to be thorough and positive thinking people. Those older people are more accepted who have already gone through the same learning process.

They should have some prior learning experiences.

Though the interviewers are not teachers they all have some teaching experiences or experiences on working with people and all have good communication skills.

3.6 Key recommendations for SLIC WS

Participants should receive **more detailed information** on the workshop compared to what we did during the test phase. Probably an invitation letter is not enough, a meeting is required beforehand.

3.7 Key recommendations for framework conditions and sustainability

Building a network involving professional organisations dealing with older people, umbrella organisations of older people and local governments

Finding sponsors or funds (national / EU) is essential as the target group cannot pay for this training.

3.8 Key recommendations concerning research topic

According to the discussions and the interviews we started to create some training activities. The original idea is to create 1 day / half day / 2 hours sessions with different activities which can be used as part of the SLIC workshop.

Possible content can be:

- how to get in touch with inactive older people
- how to keep in touch
- how to motivate older people to be active / be a member of the community
- community development
 - o hot spots
 - o good examples – presented by active volunteers / using the film we recorded

Annex

Group discussion and brain storming with community development experts (6 April 2011)

Gyenes Zsuzsa

Kovács Edit

Péterfi Ferenc

Recorded interviews

Interview with “neighbourhood volunteers” (21 April 2011)

11 older volunteers

Interview with peer facilitators (11 May 2011)

Castelli Józsefné

Iványi Györgyné

Szabó Ferencné

Farkas Dezső