

**Sustainable Learning in the Community**

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

# **Recommendations for peer facilitator training and SLIC-workshops:**

## **Volunteer policy and possibilities of on-going support of older volunteers**

### **Summary report**

#### **Austrian Red Cross**

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This report is based on five National Reports from the SLIC project partners.

### ***Austria***

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Recommendations for peer facilitator training and SLIC-workshops: Volunteer policy and possibilities of on-going support of older volunteers

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### ***Germany***

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Recommendations for peer facilitator training and SLIC workshops  
Integration of older migrants

*Institute for Social Infrastructure: Vivian Guerrero Meneses*

### ***Hungary***

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Recommendations for peer facilitator training and SLIC-workshops  
Stronger focus on community involvement

*Budapest Cultural Centre: Zsuzsanna Brenner, Peter Basel*

### ***Italy***

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Recommendations for peer facilitator training and SLIC-workshops  
Senior Volunteers abroad: experiences and needs in guiding and preparing volunteers for the exchange

*Lunaria: Marcello Mariuzzo*

### ***United Kingdom***

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Recommendations for peer facilitator training and SLIC-workshops  
1. Creating a stronger focus on community involvement through SLIC workshop participants  
2. Networking and co-operating with other organisations and agencies with an interest in older people

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See the full National Reports on [www.slic-project.eu](http://www.slic-project.eu).

# 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. The project is 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). The project 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](http://www.slic-project.eu).

This summary report gives in the first part an overview about the different aspects of peer concepts and focuses on the functions of peers in different fields with a special focus on older people. Specifically, it addresses the tasks of a "peer", the requirements to become a “peer”, the “peers” role and the training process.

The second part of the report focuses on key recommendations concerning the peer facilitator training (PFT), peer facilitators, the SLIC-workshops, framework conditions and sustainability as well as specific research topics from partners looking in detail at 1) Volunteer policy and possibilities of on-going support of older volunteers, 2) Integration of older migrants, 3) Stronger focus on community involvement, 4) Senior Volunteers abroad: experiences and needs in guiding and preparing volunteers for the exchange and 5) Networking and co-operating with other organisations and agencies with an interest in older people.

## 2 Exploring the concept of peer facilitators

### 2.1 Definition and terms

“Peer” is a popular concept that implies an approach which includes a certain way of communicating and a certain philosophy behind it. The original meaning of the term “peer” comes from historical England, where peers were nobleman or aristocrats. The English term “peer” refers to "one that is of equal standing with another; one belonging to the same societal group especially based on age, grade or status". Currently, the term means “fellow or equal”.<sup>1</sup>

There are different concepts that include the term “peer”. The following concepts are examples for the numerous terms that can be found in the broader context of "peer facilitation":

- Peer education
- Peer projects
- Peer support
- Peer assistance
- Peer help
- Peer counselling

One of the differences between peer education, peer counselling and peer projects is that the "peer" works with different target groups. Peer counselling is often used in therapy and advisory service. While peer counselling refers to one individual working with one "peer", in peer education an individual "peer" works with a group and conveys knowledge on a certain topic. In peer, a group of "peers" work with a group.<sup>2</sup>

Peer education is also often used in health promotion, in which community members are encouraged to promote health-enhancing change among their peers in the community. The focus here is that ordinary lay people are in the best position to encourage each other to behave in a healthy way.<sup>3</sup>

The term “peer support” is a system of giving and receiving help founded on key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of which measures can be helpful. This is applied for example in the mental health field. The basic idea behind peer support is the

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<sup>1</sup> UNODC, 2006: Peer Education. Module 1

<sup>2</sup> Peer Education, 2001

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer\\_education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer_education)

understanding of another's life situation empathically through the shared experience of emotional and psychological pain. When people find affiliation with others whom they feel are "like" them, they feel a connection.<sup>4</sup>

### **Areas in which the peer concept is used**

There are various areas, in which working with peers is common and seen as a useful method.

In the work with *people with a disability*, the peer concept plays a central role. It is quite common that people with a disability support each other in different ways. There are some basic requirements for future peers, for example the possible applicants should have a disability themselves or experienced one in the past. They should also have the desire to help other people with a disability. In almost all cases training is offered to future peers. Some programmes want to ensure that the time and effort spent on the training of the participants is well spent. In these cases participants need to commit to a certain number of hours of work as a peer after finishing training. With respect to peer counselling the prerequisites can be quite high, for example some programmes expect peers to have an academic degree in consultancy, psychology or similar areas.<sup>5</sup>

Peer education is also a subject in *youth work*, for example in *AIDS education*. The use of peer education in the area of HIV/AIDS is quite frequently recommended in recent international public health literature. The principle is the peer education is an appropriate way to communicate with respect HIV/AIDS education, because it empowers young people to take action. The concept works very well for young people, because communicating HIV/AIDS-topics with people of the same age or social group creates a perfect learning environment. They feel free to ask questions on taboo subjects, such as sex and are able to discuss these subjects without the fear of being judged and labelled. Communicating issues that are difficult with other young people can help them gain insights through mutual sharing of experiences, knowledge and information.<sup>6</sup>

*Mental health* for example refers to peer support for people with similar life experiences (e.g., people who have lost children, people with alcohol and substance abuse problems, etc.).<sup>7</sup> Peer support in mental health has proven to be tremendously important for people coping

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<sup>4</sup> Miller, J.B.; Stiver, I.P., 1998

<sup>5</sup> <http://bidok.uibk.ac.at/library/contag-empowerment-dipl.html>

<sup>6</sup> UNODC, 2006

<sup>7</sup> Riessman, F., 1989

with difficult situations. In general, peer support has been defined by the fact that people who have similar experiences can relate better with others and can offer authentic empathy and validation. It is also not uncommon for people with similar experiences to provide practical advice and suggestions for strategies that professionals may not offer or even know about.<sup>8</sup>

*In universities*, a range of services led by students are available to provide support to other students. Student peer supporters are available at several colleges and departments (especially in the USA and the UK) to talk and inform freshman about anything that concerns them, e.g. help with seminar papers or other study-related issues. In some cases universities also employ peer tutors to complement regular classes. In most cases peer supporters are carefully selected and trained to take up their role, and receive ongoing support and supervision through the respective University service or professors.<sup>9</sup>

### **Projects working with Senior Peers**

In the field of older people, there are several interesting programmes and projects in which older people support other older people. These can be found in the area of lifelong learning opportunities, volunteering possibilities and social service provision. There are a wide range of tasks that senior peers can carry out. Usually as in the other fields, older peers receive some kind of training.

- *AGE Northern Ireland* runs a project in which peer facilitators organise discussions with older people in local area and report back to AGE. The peer facilitator undergo a 2 days training. The aims of the discussions are to collect the needs and interests of seniors on a local level, so that AGE Northern Ireland can represent them adequately in their advocacy work.<sup>10</sup>
- *Later Life Training*: The aim of the programme, which is based in the United Kingdom, is to train senior peer mentors to motivate, provide support and encourage older people to improve their health by increasing physical activity. Support and encouragement is given to people of this age group to make their own decisions about the enhancement of the quality of their life. The peers participate in a one day workshop before working as a peer mentor.<sup>11</sup>
- *COTA- Seniors Voice*: This project in Australia aims to protect and promote the well-being of older people. The senior peer educators are also trained to train seniors in a

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<sup>8</sup> Roberts, L.; Rappaport, J., 1989

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/peer/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland/get-involved/volunteer/consultative-forum/peer-facilitator/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.laterlifetraining.co.uk/courses/someone-like-me/about-someone-like-me/>

variety of healthy ageing issues. The training sessions for the senior peers varies around 15 or more hours.<sup>12</sup>

- *Senior guides* is a Grundtvig project, which developed and implemented a curriculum for the training of older volunteers to conduct guided tours for senior citizens and inform them about specific offers in their locality (e.g. lifelong learning opportunities, volunteering possibilities and social services provision). The senior guides training run for 5 or 6 months and the curriculum is now available.<sup>13</sup>
- *The EFI* project in Germany had the aim to show, what older people in the role of senior trainers can do for society and other older people. It is focused on older people who wanted to take charge, initiate something new and share their practical knowledge with other older people. The training workshops for these senior trainers lasted for 9 days and they were also accompanied by practical phases. Senior trainers could work in many different fields.<sup>14</sup>
- *SAGE* was funded through the Commission's Leonardo da Vinci programme. It was a project for unemployed people over 50 who were trained to facilitate participation projects for others seniors. This training lasted two days.<sup>15</sup>
- In the German federal state of "Hessen" *Engagement-Lotsen* are trained to help finding new volunteers, participate in various volunteer projects, volunteer network and advise initiatives and associations regarding the collaboration with volunteers. This training is geared to all age groups in the framework of a weekend seminar.<sup>16</sup>
- *Bewegungs-Starthelfer* ("*Exercise/movement coach*") is a project under the sponsorship of the National Sport Federation in Germany. In this project older people, who have experience in sports and can communicate their experience, support other people to participate in sports, find the right type of exercise for them and help them find a good association or provider. The peers participate in a one day workshop before working with others.<sup>17</sup>

To sum up, the main point in most of the senior peer programs is to train older people to support other older people in different areas.

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.seniorsvoice.org.au/asp/peer\\_ed\\_resource\\_centre.aspx](http://www.seniorsvoice.org.au/asp/peer_ed_resource_centre.aspx)

<sup>13</sup> <http://senior-guides.eu/>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.efi-programm.de/mod.php?mod=userpage&menu=28&page\\_id=293](http://www.efi-programm.de/mod.php?mod=userpage&menu=28&page_id=293)

<sup>15</sup> <http://sage.sosumedia-uv.dk/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.gemeinsam-aktiv.de/dynasite.cfm?dsmid=5250>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.kreis-offenbach.de/index.phtml?NavID=1856.288>



## **2.2 The role of peer facilitators**

Over all areas there are some general principles that apply in all work with peers. First of all, in order to be a peer facilitator, it is not necessary to be an expert; the ambition of being a positive role model and the wish to help others are a good start. The role of a peer facilitator consists in helping group members define concerns and seek solutions through sharing experience. She or he should have the capability of listening to others and, at the same time, remaining non-judgemental and open-minded. A peer facilitator is also somebody who refers people to other services and gives them information on certain issues. The potential peer facilitator should be also able to empathize and understand the emotions, thoughts, feelings and the language of the participants. Thus, a good peer facilitator must be trustworthy, a good listener as well as a good communicator. In some areas, strong academic and leadership qualities, the demonstration of interpersonal skills, motivation skills and character are also expected. However, this still does not mean that he or she should be directive or even authoritarian.

The peer facilitator is expected to be 50+ and/or be retired and be willing to attend training to develop her/his skills and knowledge and to pass this knowledge on to other older people. It is important to be interested in developing projects for and with older people. There should also be a strong desire to help and make things better for older people. It is certainly an advantage for a future senior peer facilitator when she or he has professional or volunteer experience in the field at hand.

From the literature at hand it follows that being a peer presents a specific attitude, but certain abilities are also very essential for the work as a peer.

### **Advantages of peer facilitator models for seniors**

First of all a positive and *effective communication* plays a central role in senior peer facilitation. As in other field the communication among seniors might be more effective than between different generations because of a higher level of rapport between people of the same age. We often believe that older people seek information from other older people, just because they are perceived as offering more credible information than other sources. Importantly, they use lay words so that people in the community can understand and can help overcome taboos and misinformation in socially sensitive areas.

Another point is that older volunteers are likely to have similar life experiences to the target group. This makes them more aware of age-specific problems than professionals. They reach socially isolated people more by accessing a wide network of extended family,

community and social gatherings. Culturally appropriate peer mentors could also provide appropriate advice to ethnic groups, and share knowledge about local services for culturally and linguistically diverse groups. Thus, use of peer facilitators can help expand program delivery by *reaching marginalised groups*, which are often most at risk and comprise those who do not respond to usual recruitment practices.

In addition older people, who are selected as peer facilitators, are supposed to be *positive role models* for their peers and thereby increase the acceptance of certain programmes or projects. Positive role models increase patients' self-efficacy or confidence in their ability and serve as a focus for modelling appropriate behaviour.

There are also many *participatory benefits of volunteer peer educator programs* which aim to empower older people to achieve and take control over their lives and assist them, in order to become more productive. There are also benefits to the peer educator. Volunteering helps improving the physical and psychological well-being of older people. Self-esteem, life satisfaction, access to support systems and activity level are maintained that way. Valued services provide an increased sense of well-being and self-worth; the opportunity for continued learning helps to maintain mental acuity, self-esteem and mastery. Peer educators have stressed the value of the knowledge gained and social networking.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.3 Training

As mentioned above the training for the future peer facilitators is very essential and important. After the participants are selected they receive a special training, in order to give them the ability to answer various questions clearly and correctly. To create a good atmosphere in the training courses or workshops, most are restricted to a maximum of 20 participants. It is a main responsibility for those training peers to facilitate and enable maximum participation of the group members in the workshops. Peer facilitators themselves will, at a later stage, be expected to do the same with the participants of their activities. Peer facilitators are trained using various tools, such as small group discussions, games, role-plays and case studies. It is always useful to divide people into small groups, as this action will increase interaction between people and encourage shy people to contribute. Again it can be helpful that peer facilitators are training using methods that they will use at a later stage themselves.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.laterlifetraining.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/PEEL-2010-Peer-programmes.pdf>

Generally it can be said that training courses vary substantially, they can take from 1 day to several weeks or months. Training handbooks are regularly used to support the peer facilitators in the training.

Topics in the training courses are leadership and motivation skills, but also communication techniques. The participants should gain the ability to solve different types of problems concerning older people. They should also learn about team working and networking. In addition they usually receive training on the subject at hand and receive information on support services etc. Peer facilitators also learn to reflect their own values at regular intervals, so they are in the position to lead their groups flexibly at a later stage. Usually, participants also receive some training in time management.

In some cases either as a supplement or a replacement for training regular guidance is provided. That means that peer facilitators, supporters etc. might meet regularly with a professional to discuss issues around their tasks and improve their work as peer facilitators / supporter etc.

## **2.4 Conclusions**

Up to now, there are only few projects dealing with older people as peers. Much more can be found in this respect in the area of young people, people with disabilities or mental health. Nonetheless peer projects with older people starting to become more and more relevant and widespread. It becomes clear that on one hand being a peer involves certain set characteristics (such as age or having a certain condition) and on the other hand a positive and enabling attitude, certain skills and knowledge. In almost all cases a training for any kind of peer activity is recommendation. However, the duration of trainings in this area is very variable.

The approach of the peer concept is basically positive, since it is obvious that the older age groups can deal better and more efficient with appearing problems from older people compared to other, younger age groups. The reason for this might be similar level in life-experience. Furthermore, the concept increases the exchange and reduces tensions.

## 3 Recommendations

### 3.1 Peer facilitator training

*Concerning the training following recommendations were made in the national reports by partners:*

#### **Length of training**

The length should be no longer than two days with eight hours per day with enough breaks in between. To make sure, that the participants can keep focused, the *German* report recommended that the training sessions should take about 6 hours per day, including a one-hour lunch break. The *Hungarian* report stated that a six day training with 4-5 hours /day, 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.

Between the sessions, participants should do small homework exercises, which prepare them for the topic of the next training unit. This way, participants are encouraged to think about the training contents and relate the acquired knowledge to practice. Another idea was that groups should take turns in providing the venue for the training. This has a twofold purpose: on the one hand it helps to connect training and workshops for the groups and on the other hand it gives participants the opportunity to see institutions of other communities.

#### **Content**

The peer facilitator training should include: opportunities to develop skills, competences and knowledge, the possibility to get acquainted with different tools and methods.

Regarding the methods, it was suggested to use some simple forms since future peer facilitators are possibly not familiar with different methods but teaching them also new techniques. Putting the method into practice is strongly recommended and considered as an essential part of the training, that should include the following topics.

- To build on the individual's knowledge and expertise; recognizing this is a pilot activity and a new learning opportunity.
- How to handle a situation if participants have different knowledge, experiences and learning styles
- Communication (and communication style)
- Conflict management / resolution, e.g. how to handle difficult situations in the group
- How to build self confidence
- Ice-breakers
- Teaching methods: general information about teaching / working with older people
- 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, overcoming learning barriers

- Different evaluation methods

Further the following issues were considered as important:

- **Moderation and presentation skills:** A recommendation for the PFT is that the training should involve parts in which peer facilitators learn training, moderation and presentation skills. Further mentoring and teaching techniques were mentioned. It should also be addressed how to deal with “challenging” participants and situations and appropriate/non-violent communication style. Additionally, the PFT should emphasise the importance of self-reflection of the trainer (eg what is my own role and power position) possibly supported by appropriate techniques and tools.
- **Using different tools:** Within the PFT different concepts and tools should be presented and trialled like different forms and possibilities of communication, visualisation, how to use such tools, for example situation cards (*Situationskarten*), world café, etc. or in what way to ask the workshop participants about their expectations and wishes and individual concepts of volunteerism and the anticipated possibilities for volunteering.
- **Project management skills:** In order to organise the participants the PFT has to deal with the basic ideas and instruments of project management. Nevertheless it should be called different not to frighten possible peer facilitators.
- **Recruiting and sustainability:** The PFT should include recruiting strategies in which the peer facilitators learn public relations skills e.g. how to deal with media, local bodies in order to find older volunteers for their workshops as well as how to motivate and activate participants. It is also important to include methods to explore the community environment and methods of sustainability in the community.

It was suggested 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.

### 3.2 Who will participate in the peer facilitator training?

The target group for peer facilitators training is a wide range of 50+ members of different interest groups and communities. In *Hungary*, it will be persons who are active in different study groups and communities and some of them are already familiar with the SLIC WS. The *University in Strathclyde* has already gained interested persons for the PFT from the Greater Glasgow area through the focus group. Since the focus is on older migrants in the *German* project, the peer facilitators should be persons within or very close to the migrant community. ISIS has already been in touch with different community groups where the training will also

take place. In *Austria*, apart from public dissemination, interested persons from previous SLIC-WS will be contacted. Persons from the Red Cross organisation (people who are officially responsible for volunteer training and coordination) and different volunteer organisations will be approached. *Lunaria* will contact volunteers and seniors who have had exchange experiences abroad and/or already joined the SLIC workshop as beneficiaries, or with experiences with other pre-departure trainings.

In general, the following group of persons might be considered as peer facilitators:

1. Active and interested persons
2. Volunteers or voluntary trainers
3. Professionals closely related to the target group (social workers, teachers, responsible persons of parishes, community workers and so on)

Peer facilitators should have a warm and friendly personality and be able to work well with older people. The role of the facilitator is a leadership role, keeping discipline but at the same time motivating participants. They should be well organised and able to motivate others. Peer facilitators should be well prepared and they need to have a broad view on the topic.

Potential peer facilitators should be invited to share a personal exploration to discuss their current interests, activities and volunteering activities; consider their skills and areas of knowledge; explore their interests in and potential use of the training and areas of personal development. The expectations of peer facilitators should be explored with them and time spent on issues raised. Newly trained peer facilitators should have the opportunity in SLIC II to trial their workshop and receive productive feedback.

It is important that 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 the Austrian report also stressed the importance to give information about the benefits they will have by participating in the PFT and handing out a certificate in the end.

### **Characteristics**

In addition to the training and moderation skills peer facilitators should have several personal traits and characteristics:

- **Social skills:** Peer facilitators should have the ability to encourage and motivate older people. They should encourage participation and should spray enthusiasm, thus being an open-minded, smiling person. But in contrast to this peer facilitators should not be

dominant and should not over-rule participants. Hence peer facilitators need to be socially skilled and enjoy communicating but also listening to others. In addition they should have a certain charisma (be able to connect to people), confident, persuasive, patient and tolerant and able to build trust.

- **Communication skills:** Because the role of a peer facilitator needs experience he or she should ideally come from the communication field/area/job in their prior occupation where they have learned to communicate effectively. Sufficient language skills are therefore a prerequisite. Experience in organizing events and facilitate programs is also of advantage.
  - **Interest in facilitating and teaching:** Ability to pass knowledge on to others and skills how to present one's work effectively to an audience or experiences in working with people.
  - **Cultural awareness:** Becoming aware of one's own culture and other cultures will be especially important if older migrants will be addressed.
  - **Experienced volunteers or long term engagement in the community:** Because it is about voluntarism peer facilitators should have a good understanding of what voluntarily means and what the system is like. A deep knowledge about this eases the role of a peer facilitator in this area. For instance experienced volunteers have these requirements because the long-lasting engagement helps to encourage others. Eventually they should come from the area were volunteers are needed and for which they can be a role model.
- The experts consulted recommended people with some experience in long term engagement in the community. However, it should be kept in mind that the criteria should not be too restrictive, in order to recruit a reasonable number of participants.
- Knowledge about the residential area and reliability and will to work continuously in the project and being prepared to explore the area on foot is also an advantage.

### 3.3 Recommendations on the SLIC(1)-workshop

The workshop activities will be based on the content of the SLIC I handbook and each peer facilitator will have a copy for reference. The workshop will incorporate four approaches: the delivery of presentations to provide knowledge and background; the experiential learning of the workshop activities, that is, understanding the Toolbox of Techniques; utilising the content of the SLIC I handbook; and the opportunity to plan and deliver aspects of a SLIC I workshop with peer support. Specific themes researched and identified by SLIC partners will be considered and incorporated into the workshops if considered appropriate.

It was strongly recommended that participants of the trial workshops, that the peer facilitators will be running should receive **detailed information** on the workshop. An invitation letter is probably not enough, a meeting is required beforehand.

### **Timing and length**

- As detailed in the handbook workshops should take about 6 hours per day, including a one hour lunch break
- Each workshop should be held on two consecutive days in the facilities of the groups, in order to incorporate participants' familiar environment.
- The local social workers should support multipliers in recruiting and encouraging workshop participants as good as possible.
- An information meeting should be held in all groups before the meeting, which will introduce us and our project and explain the role of the peer facilitators. At the end of the meetings, we will invite people to participate in the workshops.

### **Following suggestions were made as a possible follow-up to the trial workshops and/or SLIC(1) workchops that are to be run in the future:**

- A follow up meeting should be hold 4 to 6 months after the workshop.
- A person should be responsible for answering questions after the workshop.
- To catch up with older volunteers after 2-3 months and ask if they have become volunteers or not and why.
- Participants should be called after 6 months to chat with them about the current situation
- To invite participants who have become volunteers to a SLIC workshop as experts
- To do annual meetings, welcoming parties or other get together for new volunteers

## **3.4 Framework conditions and sustainability**

**Cooperation with other relevant organisations** in this field was seen as an important factor in order to sustain sustainability. The *BCC* has for example already started a co-operation with the Association for Community Development, carrying out focus group interviews together with some volunteers of the 60+ program. A few volunteers will probably be involved as possible peer facilitators. The *University of Strathclyde* plans to further promote sustainability in three ways: by hosting a SLIC II networking seminar for community organisations; provision of a dissemination report on the University's webpage and lastly, making this available in the Senior Studies archive of European project engagement. The



*Research Institute* in Austria will work together with the volunteer coordinator of the Viennese Red Cross and try to install the workshop as a constant offer. In addition experienced volunteers from the Red Cross will be involved in the peer facilitator training and supported in offering the SLIC workshops in their districts. In *Germany* the SLIC-project is co-funded by the Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and will be disseminated through national channels. Further there is interest to implement the SLIC workshops all over Germany and to use the workshop as a base for mentoring and other voluntary programmes. the Municipality Office for Adult Learning, that coordinate also seniors organizations, contacted *Lunaria* to start the dissemination of the project and to set-up a network of interested organisations. Local community volunteers groups have shown an interest in the exchange of volunteers with European senior associations. We are designing a set of activities for senior volunteers and SLIC will become a standard action.

It was further suggested to:

- Develop a volunteer policy and provide on-going support for volunteers - peer facilitator should for example be initially in the delivery of SLIC I in their communities through follow-up support and guidance if requested
- Feature the project in newsletters
- Using different network channels on national and local level to promote the project outcomes
- Organising an information seminar for local stakeholders, where the project outcomes will be presented.

### **3.5 Reflecting partners' own training experience in the previous SLIC-project**

SLIC I participant evaluations and internal review results of the workshop arrangements, illustrated that the workshop content and activities were both efficient and effective in their design and delivery.

The SLIC WS has brought a lot of benefits also to the Senior Studies Institute at the *University of Strathclyde* and the staff involved gained a lot of expertise and skills and acquisition of new knowledge was developed. Building on this success, it is intended to replicate the majority of the content of SLIC I with appropriate adjustments to accommodate the development focus on peer facilitation. For the University of Strathclyde it was indicated that the issues speaking in public, presentation skills and addressing budget and financial issues were important.

According to the experience of the *BCC* it is important to send participants detailed information before the WS and a short meeting beforehand would have been useful.

In *Austria* it became clear that a shorter time plan (1 evening, 1 whole day) is preferred to a whole day on skills, two older trainers are probably more accepted by the group than younger ones, the necessity to have a solid skills profile (methodologically fit for older people in retirement) and to keep the group size to maximum 15 participants.

The experiences from *Lunaria* showed that volunteers are not keen on spending too much time on abstract activities and that a mix of participants was very important for the group dynamics. One of the most positive aspects of the workshop has been the discussions in small groups of participants. It was very important for them to rationalize and share their past experience and to discover their skills. It is therefore recommended to use a non-formal setting for the workshop and not leaving participants alone for a long time in self evaluation activities and fostering discussion in small groups or in pairs.

It was also stressed that the workshop targeted some sensitive aspects of the participants' lives and it was very important to create a positive and non-formal setting in which a peer exchange was possible.

### 3.6 Results of the partners' specific research topics

Each partner focused on specific issues that have emerged from the previous SLIC project and carried out research on certain aspects with the aim to broaden and enhance the workshop content. This chapter provides a short summary of the research topics – further details can be found in the respective national reports.

#### **Research Institute of the Red Cross: Volunteer policy and possibilities of on-going support of older volunteers**

*Methods:* Four face-to-face interviews were carried out with volunteer coordinators in volunteer organisations in Vienna, and four face-to-face interviews with older volunteers who had participated in previous SLIC workshops were carried out and a desk research about forms of appreciation for older volunteers and forms of on-going support for older volunteers as well as on best practices were part of the research.

Following results were summarised:

- **Volunteer policy:** Organisations have to interactively develop and implement a volunteer policy. A volunteer policy defines a general framework condition and affects everyone involved on an organisational level but also the older volunteer. (role of volunteers in the organisation, fields of applications, and aspects of on-going support for volunteers)
- **On-going support for volunteers:** In addition to the volunteer policy, on-going support for volunteers includes aspects in the direct work or exchange with the older volunteer including following tasks:
  - **Basic tasks:** These are tasks which have to be in place such as the access pathway for older volunteers (eg a routine SLIC workshop), an arrival and orientation process in the organisation, and a continuous feedback structure for older volunteers.
  - **Social aspects:** Appraisal of the older volunteer including a broad range from daily welcome, friendliness/courteousness against him/her, offering benefits (eg vouchers, tickets for the public transport, birthday presents, invitations to parties etc.).
  - **Exchange Structure:** An (official) exchange structure should be in place where older volunteers are asked how they perceive their volunteer work and where they can reflect on their volunteer activity and in which they can give feedback on a regular basis.
  - **Volunteer coordinator:** The volunteer coordinator should have a central role concerning the aspects mentioned above. He or she is the first contact person for every older volunteer. The tasks should be defined in and framed by an agreed volunteer policy and on-going support for volunteers on organisational level.

- **Access provision:** A possibility to access an organisation or to get involved on a voluntary basis should be provided by framework conditions. The SLIC workshop could have such a function. It could help older people to get a clear picture of the volunteer topic and to get an understanding of his or her possibilities which should be matched with the personal skills and competences. Both the organisation and the older individual will profit from this process and will provide individual and organisation sustainability.
- **Frequency:** In addition the frequency of such a process should be fixed. The workshop should be offered on a regular basis, e.g. more often than 2 times per year. Nevertheless the possibilities where and how many older people can get involved as a volunteer must be researched in advance and should be in line with the volunteer policy and on-going support in place.

### **Institute for Social Infrastructure: Integration of older migrants**

*Methods:* The research mainly draws on sources from the internet and literature. Additionally exploratory interviews with stakeholders were carried out and a sample of good practice projects concerning older migrants and active citizenship were analysed.

Following recommendations were made on this basis:

- It was strongly recommended to adapt the training contents to the language skills of the participants and to use activating verbal methods rather than classroom-style teaching since many migrants might have language difficulties.
- It was shown that older migrants usually get involved in social networks and their family networks, rather than political parties or other associations. This however does not mean that they do not wish to get involved. Not all groups, which express interest to participate and network on a local level, are able to realise this, as they often lack the appropriate framework. The SLIC workshops will provide this framework by guaranteeing the visibility and availability of trainers and help for self-help at any time. The framework should be straightforward and easy to understand. It should guide participants but also be flexible, in order to adapt to the needs specific to each target group.
- In order to initialise commitment, 'locatedness' plays a central role. This does not necessarily refer to a physical location; it can also refer to a social space, meaning social ties in a community. The contents of the workshops should account for these specifics to a certain degree and allow adaptations in implementing the tasks.

### **Lunaria: Senior Volunteers abroad: experiences and needs in guiding and preparing volunteers for the exchange**

*Methods:* Lunaria has carried out research on the needs and the experiences of organizations involved in volunteering projects of senior citizens abroad. It focuses on the learning strategies and the tools developed so far. Materials developed by organizations and training were therefore analysed, a questionnaire was delivered to experts and project managers and direct interviews with key persons and senior volunteers were carried out.

Following recommendations were made on this basis:

- There is clear evidence that training, and in particular pre departure training for individuals and organisations, was essential for the success of a senior volunteer exchange project. The feedback from senior volunteers was that the quality of the training they received was directly linked to the success of the exchange
- The results showed that the SLIC workshops represent a new tool to make the skills assessment more active, feasible and aimed at active ageing.
- Most of the asked organisations consider the participation of seniors or beneficiaries in projects abroad as strongly linked to their strategy and mission.
- Lunaria therefore intends to organize presentations of the SLIC approach to institutions that may wish to use SLIC in their work. This could offer a chance to increase the impact of the partners in each local community, building a mutual support between the SLIC partners and the local Institutions.

### **Budapest Cultural Centre: Creating a stronger focus on community involvement by the**

*Methods:* Two interviews and a group discussion were carried out with participants and experts of the 60+ program that set up a “neighbourhood voluntary” program in different parts of the districts. 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.

- Based on the input from these discussions it is recommended to include following topics in the SLIC1 workshops and thus also in the peer facilitator training:
  - 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
    - Hot spots
  - Good examples – presented by active volunteers

- It was further recommended that organisations should organise open days where inactive people have the chance to get to know the advantages of being a volunteer.
- 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 older 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.

**University of Strathclyde: Networking and co-operating with other organisations and agencies and creating a stronger focus on community involvement by t**

*Methods:* A desk research, website research, interviews and meetings with representatives from various organisations, conversations with educators involved in promoting lifelong learning and a focus group recruited from current volunteers were carried out.

Following recommendations were made

- Networking and co-operating with other organisations was recommended as a productive exercise in terms of linking organisations with the wider community.
- Gaining knowledge of volunteering and community groups and their activities; building up co-operation with local government and taking SLIC I and SLIC II to new communities are important activities in order to create a stronger focus on community involvement and to increase the popularity of voluntary work amongst older people.

## 4 Literature

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