# National Report – Italy

# Recommendations for peer facilitator training and SLIC-workshops

# Specific research topic: Senior Volunteers abroad: experiences and needs in guiding and preparing the volunteers for exchanges

**Lunaria**

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# 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](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 potential usefulness of the SLIC workshop and its peer implementation for organizations involved in Senior Volunteers Programme and senior volunteers exchanges. 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 sustainabilty

## 2.1 Peer facilitator training

Lunaria will involve those volunteers and seniors who have had exchange experiences. We will give priority to those who already joined the Slic workshop as beneficiaries, or with experiences with other pre-departure trainings.

The peer facilitators should be able to be clear and understandable when introducing the different activities: this is related to the SLIC aims and objectives. They have also to acquire facilitation skills: easing of group discussion, support and coaching, timekeeping.

They should be able to use non-formal techniques to enable the beneficiaries in gaining the most from the workshop . Experience such techniques during the Peer Facilitators trainings will make the Peer Facilitators  ready to deliver the aims of each session informally and make the SLIC workshop participants comfortable with the new experience.

To sum up: the Peer Facilitators Training should be aimed and be effective in valuing the Peer Facilitators personal competences, and increasing their attitude to be "community leader". The SLIC workshop participants will come probably from the same community of the PFT. Leading skills asks for a diverse set of approaches, and the PFT should strenghten the PF in this.

The Peer Facilitators  should acquire specific skills and competences such as:
- how to efficiently keep notes;
- how to follow the agenda and keep the work group in time;
- readiness to listen and to summarize without imposing his/her point of view.

This  skills / competences, are, in our experience, really the basis to run as facilitators a workshop. We usually stress our trainers and peers in a key ability: observing the group working. To observe the group dynamics and each participant contribute really ease the task, both during the workshop and for debriefing with the participants. The facilitators will be probably asked to support the evaluating phase: again the observation during the workshop represents a key factor in maximising the results and the impact.

A clear picture/explanation of the aims of the workshop should be a key element: they could be able to explain what is SLIC for, and answer questions about it.

Since our Peer Facilitators will be experienced in Slic, we evaluate the needed length to be 9 hrs, divided in 3 sessions.

If some of the applicant won't have experiences the SLIC workshop we plan to implement a new one to make them "experienced", as recommended by the project partnership, during the Wien meeting.

Our previous experiences that showed that:

1. volunteers are not keen to spend too much time in making not concrete activities;
2. especially the seniors are ready to join programmes lasting one month, but they do not find easy to take part to full-day activities before leaving for the projects abroad.

This is why we think that the agenda of the PFT should be feasible for the seniors, therefore structured in three different sessions.

Lunaria has started seniors programmes in 2001. Since then a large group of seniors have approached the organization (100/120). Many of them, circa 25 are still members of the associations, joining the General Assembly, offering their time for volunteering tasks, reporting about their local volunteering engagement. We will recruit our Peer Facilitators from this core-group: many of them tested the SLIC workshop. The Peer Facilitators will lead them to a new challenge, so we will stress their learning approach with non formal education tools we usually use for youngsters. Simulation, open space, snow ball, study cases...Our experienced trainers will set up a tool kit which may fit with the Peer Facilitators Training purposes.

We will take into account partners suggestions and issues in depth by the partners' research trying to merge them with our main issue. Of course this merging will be more relevant if our Slic workshop will be delivered to groups of seniors interested in a wider aim than the exchange programmes, very likely, given the interest to self-assessment processes shown by community associations.

## 2.2 Peer facilitators

As specified above, we will train experienced volunteers aged 50+, working with the group of seniors who took part to Slic, as a follow up of their previous experience – this also to make the SLIC II activities as much structured as possible within our education strategy at long term.

Among this group we will select those who will express their interest in making this step forward and that we evaluate ready to be PF. We can exploit the previous work done with our volunteers core-group

They should be interested and motivated in multiplying their experiences: both the volunteer exchanges and the Slic workshop. They must feel the

responsibility to be PFs since they had benefited a lot from Lunaria, its partners and initiatives.

They could be able to pass the baton, and make the workshop participants aware of the aims of it. They should be easy going and able to communicate with seniors with different backgrounds, which is not a given competence.

Lunaria had the chance to meet the potential Peer Facilitators three times, during our usual meetings. At the first meeting, in February 2011, we reported about the Wien meeting. We use to make them informed about the projects that potentially will involve them, so the meeting was aimed at updating them about the structure and the agenda of the project. During the second meeting, in March 2011 we received many expressions of interest about the involvement in SLIC II activities: this is mainly because there are really good memories of the SLIC workshop. We have to mention that some of the group is asking to be involved in local activities. They wishes to value their volunteers experiences abroad and the participation to diverse trainings. Therefore 4 of them gave their availability to follow SLIC II activities and already asked to join the Peer Facilitators Training. This "internal" recruitment could represent a weak point for the visibilty of the project, since we won't open a public call for Peer Facilitators , as usually we do when we look for volunteers or participants for specific activities. We will balance this weakness publishing the SLIC II advertisement, addressing organizations interested in organizing the SLIC workshops.

They should be informed about our strategy in promoting international volunteering experiences and about non-formal education approach.

In order to involve them in an earlier stage, a pre-training meeting during which we will share previous experiences with our professional trainers. During the meeting, a simple game about fear, expectations and contributions could make the group aware of the path to be followed, and Lunaria staff ready to set the work around the participants needs and skills.

A document that summarize the aims of the project could be given, to raise the sense of ownership and to clarify their role within the workplan in order to clarify Lunaria expectations.

## 2.3  SLIC-workshop

Lunaria is promoting since 2001 senior volunteers exchanges in order to broaden the offer of life long learning processes. Lunaria conceives volunteering as a crucial activity to provide experiences able to engage citizens in community welfare and to raise solidarity and intercultural understanding. These key factors led us to consider volunteers exchange a powerful tool to make participants gaining new competencies and new skills,

as well as make them experience interculture, in real life situation. This background considerations were usually addressed to youth, but we enlarged our targets, trying to involve seniors. In fact those citizens who are retired have time and a long term experience to be shared within volunteering projects. Often, at local level, seniors are the backbone of volunteering groups and institutions. Why not involve them in being volunteers abroad?

SLIC workshop answers to a need of promoting innovative tools for senior groups and make voluntary exchanges abroad as part of a community involvement and active ageing path. The workshops represent a way to design a complete process, as a first step to assess skills and competences and to prepare the future volunteers to specific activities. There is a gap between the expectations and the real capacity to face tasks as the needed availability to adapt to new and different cultural enviroments. The workshop showed us that its structure and contents fits with our policy.

We consider volunteering abroad as an inclusive experience. We do not "select" volunteers, we just guide them to the right project. So our target group is composed by future volunteers and those still thinking at this chance.

We will contact directly senior groups and associations of the suburban area of Rome. We already started the promotion of the project in our home page (visited daily by 1500/4000 people). Already 400 people read and downloaded the info pack of the project. The promotion is at this stage aimed at involving trainers and group leaders.

We will probably organize an introductory session, few days before the workshop, to break the ice and answer to participants questions. We will than provide info about senior exchange programmes and other opportunities to be engaged at European and local level.

According to our specific strategy we will evaluate the introduction of specific session about intercultural dynamics and management of conflicts in intercultural groups. This option was developed during the research and is explained in the recommendations

## 2.4 Framework conditions and sustainability

We will invite organizations based in Rome outskirts to host the workshops and involve their members and beneficiaries. We are already promoting this chance and got positive feed backs: 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, interested at enlarging their horizons to the exchanges of volunteers with European senior

associations. The contacts, as explained above, will be eased thanks to the coordinating role of Municipality Office for Adult Learning.

We will promote the workshops as an useful tool for those interested in strengthening their efforts in favour of active ageing. At organization level we will encourage those who daily contact us to take part to Slic. We are designing a set of activities for senior volunteers (or interested in) and SLIC will become a standard action. The multiplier effect of the PFT will help us in disseminating such methodology and make Lunaria more recognized in this specific framework.

The interest showed by Rome Municipality Office for Adult Learning made us re-new the strategy: if a public body is keen to support the project in order to involve a diverse network of senior groups and also at logistic level, we will count on this help to try to implement a higher number of sessions.

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

Lunaria asked seniors and volunteers known from previous projects or activities to participate. Some of them were already doing some volunteering activities while other were not active anymore. This mixture of participants was very important for the group dynamics. One of the most positive aspects of the workshop have been the discussion rounds made in small groups by the participants. This was very important for them to rationalize and share their past experience and to discover their skills. We would recommend to stress the non formal setting of the workshop and not to leave the participants alone for long time in self evaluation activities these can be hard for seniors who are not used to such activities and could generate a sense of frustration on themselves while discussion in small groups or bilaterals can avoid such problems.

The workshop was targeting some sensible aspects of the life of the participants and to start was very important to create a positive and non formal setting in which a peer exchange was possible among them. In this part was very important for the workshop coordinator to be able to: listen the participants and help them focus on the relevant topics; be able to overcome possible conflicts during the discussions; be positive.

We had two persons involved in the setting up of the workshop one totally new to this kind of activities and another with a long and deep experience in the field of non formal education: the first had the chance to benefit a lot from the project in term of new competencies about active ageing, senior citizenship and non formal learning. It's hard to assess how much of the personal and professional growth in the soft skills of a person can be related to a specific project, but surely this experience played an important role in developing his communication, teamworking and group management skills.

# 3 Research on topic "Senior Volunteers abroad: experiences and needs in guiding and preparing the volunteers for exchanges"

## 3.1 Introduction to the research topic

Lunaria has carried out a research on the needs and the experiences of those organizations that have been promoting in the last decade the involvement of seniors citizens in volunteering projects abroad. The research is focused on the learning strategies and the tools developed so far. SLIC workshop and its potential impact on life long learning in Europe is, seen in this perspective, a possible innovation.

Moreover the peer methodology is new in this framework, so we checked if specific projects or organisations strategies have implemented it on guidance and orientation to those seniors interested in volunteering aborad.

The experience of volunteering in another country can be a challenging one for many older people. Many of the volunteers may not have travelled to another country before and they will be concerned about the travelling, the language, the new culture, the voluntary work itself and how they will cope with being part of a group of volunteers. Of course, such concerns are not exclusive to older volunteers but it is essential that the volunteers are prepared properly for their trip.

The experience of SEVEN, the Seniors European Volunteers Exchange Network coordinated by Lunaria from 2008, demonstrates that this preparation is crucial for a successful exchange. One of the main advantages of such exchanges is the valuable experience of living with people from other countries and having access to a knowledge of their normal working, cultural and social environments, enabling the volunteers to learn about the professional standards and skills of their hosts and their organisations. In the projects, both senior volunteers and host organisations have displayed a high degree of open-mindedness and flexibility and this is essential for a successful transnational exchange. Our experience is that most problems can be avoided by good preparation prior to the exchange and the readiness of both sides to communicate effectively. In a research report, commissioned by SEVEN - "Long-term effects of transnational exchange of senior volunteers on organisations and volunteers" - there was 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. Volunteering abroad is a full non-formal learning experience. Its main dimension is intercultural learning in the broadest sense of this term. In order to assess the

specific structure, aims and approach of the SLIC workshop we think that the self-assessment of seniors may represents a prerequisite, a first step, to make the following process (pre-departure trainings, exchanges, evaluations) more centred to the volunteers' profile designed during the SLIC workshop.

The research aims at gathering opinions and sharing previous experiences from organizations already involved in senior volunteers exchanges. These organizations are often interested in defining structured strategies to make the participants ready to the volunteer experience and to ease the trainers and project manager tasks: preparation, placement, hosting, evaluation. At a first sight the interest is not supported by concrete policies, and tools appears to be more developed, according to the specific target group.

For this reason we investigated the different approaches to the guidance and training and checked if the self-assessment and peer methodologies might be an innovative tools to be embedded in organisations' offers. The aim of the research is mainly to understand if the SLIC workshop, through a focussed dissemination, could be embedded into the organizations' project management and strategies.

The target group of the research is composed by people working or supporting as volunteers in organizations involved in senior volunteers exchanges such as project managers, trainers, policy makers and educational responsible persons.

## 3.2  Description of methods uses

To shape the research according to its aims, we have used several and diverse sources. The logical framework of the research asks for an overview of the last years approach to preparation of volunteers, in the so-called "pre-departure trainings" schemes. In fact we need to understand if some of the SLIC methodologies and aims are already included in existing trainings, and how much, if some of the key-elements of SLIC, could be added or embedded.

After have studied and analysed materials developed by organizations and training agencies, we have delivered a questionnaire to experts and project managers. Than we proceeded with direct interviews to key persons and senior volunteers.

We of course have used our experience in the specific topic, since Lunaria has implemented, since 2001 until now, a number of projects related to senior volunteering and it learning impact, going through the tools to be used to guarantee a full learning experience. Moreover, as coordinating body of the SEVEN network, who

gathers more than 40 NGO's, Universities and Institutions, we have collected in the last years a wide range of materials about the management and the tools used in this peculiar frame.

Since peer methodology, chosen to implement a new way of delivering SLIC workshops in the communities, is an innovation in our focus, we needed to define the peer education and check how much this approach was so far taken into account by previous projects. We had to focus on the so called "pre-departure trainings", because this is the closest learning step to the SLIC workshop usefulness.

The methods used are:
- Direct contacts - questionnaires, chat, phone interviews;
- Search on projects and organisations websites;
- Study on materials, booklet and tool-kits edited on the issue;
- Official documents from European Institutions.

We preferred to consider diverse sources and targets to let the research reach a certain grade of complexity in its results.

## 3.3 Findings

**"Mapping the needs" Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was delivered to 64 European organizations and key persons. The contacts come from the whole SEVEN partners and from the SEVEN database, which is the only tool conceived to ease the partner matching for organizations interested or already involved in senior volunteers exchanges programmes and projects. Unluckily only 11 questionnaires were filled and sent back to Lunaria.

The sample is still useful, since we can evaluate it increasing the reasoning by the feedback from interviews and analysis of materials and products related to the specific issue. The target is mainly composed by Organizations which are in charge of coordinating projects or recruiting volunteers for projects abroad: they are more oriented to international relations. We will see that this profile effects the approach to the research topic.

The questionnaire was filled mainly by organizations which yearly involves between 4 to 13 volunteers in projects abroad, mainly volunteering, but also workshops and training courses. Three organizations have never promoted such kind of seniors' involvement, but are really interested in starting.

Most of the organizations consider the participation of seniors members or beneficiaries in projects abroad as strongly linked to the strategy and mission. We will see that this link not always reflects a real capacity to develop a complete learning process, which is relevant for the research.

The issue related to the organization of pre-departure training is differently handled: the SEVEN network recommended, within its policy-papers and manuals, to run pre-departure trainings as the key factor for the success of the projects.

Nevertheless we observe a weakness: the sustainability of this specific activity is a common concern, in term of time-spending and financial impact. In fact, to a deeper analysis - developed with few conversations with some of those who answered - it is clear that a complete pre-departure training is possible where the promoter organisation, the "sending actor", has received a financial support for the project. In fact trainers' fees and direct costs for the trainings have a significant impact on the organizations' budget. This leads many associations to organize short sessions, mainly about the description of the hosting project and about intercultural dynamics, to let the future volunteers more aware of the risks of cultural shock. Few organizations are able to develop complete pre-departure trainings, thanks to the cooperation with Institutions which offer logistical support or trainers.

*A definition of the Pre-departure training contents is provided in „Grundtvig Senior Volunteering Projects – Tips and Resources for a good project" edited on January 2009 by European Commission Directorate General Education and Culture: Participants' perception, adaptability, expectations, raising cultural awareness, legal issues, safety, information on host project / country, tasks to be performed, readiness for an international experience, identification of skills which could be used, etc.*

The pre-departure training schemes used are often really similar: this is because many organizations of the answering group have a common ground and refers to the same training materials, but also because the pre-departure step has been studied and experienced for a long time by Voluntary Service organizations and the trainers involved in these organizations. These experiences have been shared in the last decades, thanks to the dissemination of manuals, tool-kits and recommendations.

The role of the trainers has been really crucial: European trainers are often linked, they know each other and meet during many events and training for trainers. They are often members of the same pools of trainers, and there is an increasing number of opportunities to share tool-kits and experiences, thanks to the internet and the efforts of programmes such as the SALTO network.

The most frequent sessions are related to intercultural dynamics -for all the 8 organizations who provided a description of their trainings- and are more about how to manage the relationships with the hosting community. These considerations are the reasons that led us to an interesting finding: self-assessment schemes are not

taken into account, are not used. Why? "*Trainers are young. When you grow, you become an expert, you must specialize to one specific topic, loosing the freedom to train people 24/7*" said Mr. Maddonni in his interview. Trainers are young because the ideal target group of a non-formal education experience, as pre-departure trainings are usually considered, is composed by youngsters or young adult. Self-assessment is not that useful for youngsters. An assessment of skills has a stronger impact, logically, for adult and seniors, in term of self-esteem and valorization.

Here a new question arises: if we have to train seniors, do we need senior trainers? And do we have them available? SLIC II will try to find solutions....

Unluckily only one organization who answered have experienced SLIC workshops (Ferrara Municipality). But those who didn't know it before seem to be interested in its approach. We think that this interest finds its reason in the self-assessment sessions, which appears, as described before, to be unknown or not considered as a priority.

**"How to exploit SLIC" Interviews**

We conceived the interview as a completion of the findings coming from the questionnaires, to be supported by experienced experts in its analysis.

The interviews made to experts has been structured to follow a line of reasoning based on their experiences and opinions, to arrive to possible strategy to exploit SLIC workshop and the proposal assumed in the SLIC II project, to organize the workshops chaired by peer facilitators. The interviews were made with the SEVEN network Coordinator, Mr. Davide Di Pietro, with the responsible officer of the Rome Municipality Adult Learning Office, Ms. Pina Di Girolamo, who have already cooperated with Lunaria in LLP projects and Senior volunteering promotion among the beneficiaries of the Office and with Mr. Paolo Maddonni, project manager and expert trainer for Legambiente in the framework of senior volunteering.

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**Interview structure**

1) According to your experience, what are the main reasons why there is an increasing interest towards the volunteering abroad among European senior citizens, civil society organizations and Institutions?

2) SLIC project conceived and tested a workshop to ease a self-esteem and self-evaluation in the perspective of the civic engagement of seniors citizens. What is your opinion about the workshops results, when delivered to potential international senior volunteers?

3) Do the organizations that promote senior volunteering abroad usually prepare their volunteers to the experience? Do you think that SLIC workshop suites with the specific learning needs?

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4) SLIC II will allow peers to chair the workshops.  What do you think should be the profile of the peers, if the participants would be potential international senior volunteers? (e.g: already had a volunteer experience abroad?). Should this approach be useful to make easier for the organizations to adopt SLIC workshop ad a step for their learning strategy towards the seniors?

From the interviews came out that the SVP action, launched by EC, Grundtvig programme, made the volunteers exchanges among European senior citizens recognized and allowed many organisations (not only those already involved in International Voluntary Service) starting to design specific initiatives for this target.

Moreover an ageing and healthy population in Europe is a big social capital:  many seniors have time to be spent in volunteering. In Italy almost 40 % of seniors declare to be active at least for one/two hours per week in volunteering.  The most enterprising ones may consider the "jump" in to a voluntary service abroad, and in our experience the most is disseminated the information of such activities, more requests comes from citizens  and interest is expressed.

The educational value of being volunteers abroad is not perceived before or during the projects. Once back, it's up to the sending organizations and the volunteers to valorize this aspect, which is the most relevant, if we take into account the strategies and aims of those funding and implementing the whole thing: breaking of prejudices, filling digital divide, sharing values and skills...senior volunteering abroad have so many effects on lifelong learning that have been discovered only recently.  A retired European has nowadays a longer life expectancy, and his learning role in the communities has still to be valorized.

When you, as a volunteer, are hosted in a foreign community, you should know, before arriving, what to offer. The volunteers should get in the view that someone is going to ask to perform some task.

This is why the answers to the questions 2 and 3, are convergent: the first part of the workshop really fits with pre-departure needs. The volunteers start the process in the best way, making a clear and honest picture of themselves. The sending organizations have more information about the volunteers' contributions, and can share them with the hosting project.  The standard pre-departure training should be 2 full days, in group, but often is not possible to organize such kind of training. Nevertheless the organizations should be recommended to improve this step, since it really represents a key for successful exchanges.

The second set of sessions (the action plan) should be, according to the answers and to the specific needs of the organizations that ideally will exploit SLIC workshops.

The question 4 asked to share a definition of peer-education, since the peer facilitation is a new concept for the interviewed experts, so they asked to understand SLIC II approach to this methodology.

*Peer education is defined, by a UN Sub-Committee involved in a health programme , as the process whereby well-trained and motivated people undertake informal or organized educational activities with their peers (those similar to themselves in age, background or interests) over a period of time, aimed at developing their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and skills and enabling them to be ready to tackle social challenges, to keep a conscious behaviour or live a new experience with a stronger preparation.*

In the case of running non-formal workshops in order to ease the group dynamics we need facilitators and not trainers. This is why SLIC II aims at designing a Peer Facilitators Training.

Once clarified the project approach we received interesting and encouraging answers.

The peer facilitators should have already took part, as beneficiaries, to a SLIC workshop, and should have already experienced a volunteering abroad: even if the facilitator is not a leader, he/she has to be recognized by the participants as someone who have an aura, in order to foster confidence to them.  The previous experiences will also help the facilitators to understand the expectations and the potential risk, during the workshops.

# 4　Recommendations

*The following recommendations are meant to shape the next project steps following the organisation needs and the research outcomes, considering that Lunaria role may represent a sample of those organisations involved in Senior volunteers exchanges. The research and the consequent recommendations are completed by the outcomes of our latest meetings with the group of seniors that already showed interest to be Peer Facilitators within SLIC II project.*

## 4.1　Key recommendations for peer facilitator training

The training structure and contents should be planned taking into account the participants proposals, suggestions and contributions. This could be done with one meeting with them, or at least with the local partners who will recruit the peer facilitators.

The training should be easy to be attended. The sessions shouldn't last more than 4 hours and the entire training agenda should be scheduled with the trainees.

The topics should include, among other general ones:

- how to involve a group in ice-breakers and group building activities
- how to introduce SLIC workshops to the participants with different tools
- how to facilitate and not to lead – group work management skills
- how to be foster trust, sharing experiences
- how to make the evaluation a space for a real contribute from the participants (techniques)
- how to introduce intercultural issues and make the participants join specific activities (tool-kit)
- listening skills

The training should include an exercise/simulation of at least a session of SLIC-workshop, during which the PFT might be in charge for their first time to facilitate a group, which can be composed by the trainers. This simulation should have planned as a final part of the training, immediately before the evaluation.

## 4.2　Key recommendations for peer facilitators

In our specific focus, the recruitment should be done among the senior volunteers that took part to projects abroad, involving also other sister organizations because Peer Facilitators, when trained to chair SLIC workshops as pre-departure step, should have previously experienced the volunteering abroad and the participation to a SLIC ws for the reasons mentioned in the research.

They should have clearly understood, before the PFT, the needed commitment, and tasks.

For the project aims, at least on PF should have a good command of English.

## 4.3 Key recommendations for SLIC WS

According to the findings and the research outcomes the SLIC workshop could be revised, in its sessions related to the future, in order to make these activities more seized to the specific aims of the focus. This led us to think that SLIC can be enriched with new modules, that could be drafted according to the different target groups and communities.

In the case of our focus, the standard pre-departure trainings sessions related to the hosting projects (how to choose, how to prepare...) should be conceived to be included in to the SLIC workshop "Plan of Action" (Session 9). Since the pre-departure is normally meant to be delivered only once the volunteer has already chosen his/her destination, we recommend to merge these steps to allow SLIC WS to fill the gap of the sending organizations in the preparation: guidance and orientation could be based on the SLIC workshops. This asks to include new activities related to the experience the future volunteers are applying for.

## 4.4 Key recommendations for framework conditions and sustainability

We think that SLIC workshop, as it was developed during the previous project really fits with the needs of Institutional bodies in charge of active ageing and adult learning. Normally these bodies are really interested in innovative tools to involve, motivate and give chances to their target groups. Sometime the senior associations, trade unions and volunteer networks offers their know-how, but usually this is more an informative approach. SLIC workshops represent a new tool to make the skills assessment more active, feasible and aimed at the active ageing.

We recommend, beside our organizations' educational strategies, to organize presentations of the SLIC approach with the Institutional actors that may assume SLIC, proposing to deliver the PFT to allow its follow-up: the organization of new SLIC workshops. This may represent 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.

## 4.5  Key recommendations concerning research topic

As already anticipated, we think that a good strategy, to give SLIC a stronger impact on the considered kind of organizations, is to present is as a first step of the path for those who are interested in being volunteers abroad.

We have recognized a specific weakness: normally the seniors contact the organisations once they have already decided that volunteering abroad is worth to be experienced. This could make appear SLIC workshop as useless. Nevertheless we would recommend to follow the latest Lifelong Learning findings, that showed how volunteering abroad is a unique and empowering educational tool for seniors. This could ensure SLIC its role of "grass-root" action in favour of the "sending community" and improving the organizations' range of activities and educational approaches.

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- Interviews with Davide Di Pietro, Pina di Girolamo and Paolo Maddonni (May 2011)

- Open space feed backs with focus group (former senior volunteers abroad) – June (2011)

- Mapping the needs Questionnaire – see annex (delivered in March 2011, collected in April 2011)

# 6 Annex

**"Mapping the needs" Questionnaire**

The SLIC II project addresses the issue of increasingly ageing societies and the promotion of active ageing. Within the SLIC I project an innovative workshop model and a handbook on how to run them 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 by developing a training programme for older peer facilitators to run SLIC-workshops and by trialling workshops run by older peer facilitators. For this purposes Lunaria is in charge of  implementing a research on mapping the training needs and experiences of organizations involved in Senior Volunteers Exchanges in the last years.

1. How many senior volunteers does your organization involve, yearly, in projects abroad?

1.1 To which extent  this involvement is part of your strategy/mission?

2. Have you ever ran pre-departure trainings for those senior volunteers ready to join projects abroad?

   2.1 Can You share with us contents and methodology?

   2.2 What are the main aims of such trainings? And what are the specific target groups?

3. Have you ever heard of SLIC workshop?

3.1 If Yes, have you ever used its sessions or structure to run pre-departure trainings or skills assessment for your outgoing senior volunteers?

3.2 If No, are you available to get to know it and trial such workshop to be embedded in your organisation training strategy?