

## Citizens on the Go! “Participation models for active citizenship”

### *About the Project*



The organisations involved in this project strive to promote active ageing activities to encourage active citizenship, in particular volunteering. They shared their knowledge and identified new, and often better, ways to support adult and youth programmes by sending designated educators, learners and volunteers to spend time with each European partner – all charities with similar aims.

### *Aims and Objectives*

- To equip educators and learners with appropriate resources allowing them to engage in active ageing through meaningful involvement in society, in particular in volunteering.
- To introduce innovative approaches in teaching methods and to adapt the content of adult education courses offered.
- To provide learners with skills and competences to better serve their local communities.
- To contribute to European integration by collaboration with partners and sharing best practice.

The principal activities of the project consisted of 12 workshops involving organisations from six EU Member States. The UK workshops focused on:

1. Learning opportunities offered by the outdoors: *Citizens on the Go! Participation models for Active Citizenship*
2. Intergenerational learning: *Synergy of Adult Education and Youth Work: Bridging the Intergenerational Gap.*

The first of the two workshops took place at Thornycroft Hall, Cheshire, England in June 2013



## Objectives of the Workshop

1. To improve competences and skills to enable participants to help themselves and others to meet the challenges of economic uncertainties.
2. To equip participants with appropriate resources to engage in active ageing through better and more meaningful involvement in society, including the ability to be physically active and learning from Nature.
3. To introduce innovative approaches and teaching methods to adapt the contents of adult education courses offered and take people out of their comfort zone as regards walking and exercise and living a fuller life.
4. To provide participants with knowledge, experience and ideas for activities for them to better serve the local community and engage others in active citizenship.



## Activities

Active ageing and Citizens on the Go does not merely refer to the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force but refers to continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs. However, this workshop aimed to show that physical activity can stimulate learning, encourage positive attitudes, inspire a healthier lifestyle, create detachment from financial concerns and material goods and focus on well-being. It can build confidence to be active in other dimensions.

1. Anthropological seminar: on modern social issues, economic hardship & the family
2. Explanation on the repercussions of economic crisis and discussion on how to deal with economic hardship
3. Participation and learning about various active ageing pursuits (walks in the Pennines near Dovedale and to Tegg's Nose, cycling, sports etc)
4. Presentation on healthy ageing (by Dolores Maluenda, Spain, PhD in internal medicine)
5. Cultural visits (Chester, Chatsworth House) and activities related to social history (Quarry Bank Mill – old cotton Mill; walk along Manchester Ship canal)
6. Seminar given by Melanie Clark sharing her experiences of the April 2013 Grundtvig workshop in Belgium
7. Seminar from Liz Donnelly (representative of Irish Grundtvig partner) on the introduction of healthy eating and healthy lifestyle in Ireland
8. Talk on walking the Camino to Santiago de Compostella with older people.



## Outcomes

The workshop showed us that we can overcome the loneliness and depression which often accompany ageing, through increasing our physical and mental wellbeing by exercise and a healthier lifestyle. Exercise and companionship are effective in stimulating the mind and creating positive attitudes that encourage others. Volunteering to lead 'activity' groups can create a sense of usefulness which dispels the discouragement prevalent in a climate of economic depression. Further activities can lead on from this, such as fundraising for educational projects, cultural outings or social activities.

The workshop looked at the importance of introducing communication skills – especially the use of internet, websites and social media to encourage older people to access opportunities for volunteering and social engagement in active pursuits.

## Testimonials

The Workshop presented varied topics and fostered good interaction with individuals from other EU countries. I particularly appreciated the insight we received on the use of blogs and websites as instruments for the common good and believe that I now have the skills to transmit good values through these and other media. I also found the physical, social and aesthetic well-being resulting from shared exercise and appreciation of nature a revelation and am determined to plan more walks with others. *Chris, UK*

Each day presented different walks and interesting things to see and I felt tremendously refreshed in mind and body by being more active and among active people. I am convinced that exercise and social contact help me to think more clearly. I learned that with very little money you can enjoy everything you see and can discover beauty wherever you are and help others to do so – even in the rain! *Montse, Spain*

The workshop has been an amazing experience and has given me the incentive to encourage other people to be more active. I believe it is now my responsibility to help others of my age (and older) towards the positive attitudes and physical well-being which exercise and companionship help create. I know many people and I am on a mission! *Consuelo, Spain*

The workshop motivated me to go outside my comfort zone as regards walking which I found physically and mentally stimulating. I was also impressed by the range of topics, including the use of websites and blogs as tools to access opportunities for volunteering with young people. In this way older people could transmit skills and good values. I appreciated the valuable contributions from EU participants. *Ann, UK*

The whole workshop inspired me to embark on a healthier lifestyle. I enjoyed the walks and interacting with others, especially those from EU countries and learning how they approach the topics we discussed – active ageing (living life to the full), volunteering projects with young people and being involved with the local community. *Amelia, UK*

I was struck by the importance of exercise such as walking/hiking in beautiful surroundings in the maintenance of health and vigour – mental and physical. Keeping active in mind and body can encourage intergenerational social engagement whereby young and old help one another to transmit skills (use of IT), values (perseverance, humour) and contact with our past/understanding the present, through volunteering projects. *Elena, UK*

The novelty of focussing on walking with others and appreciating nature as a means to active ageing and social engagement was a revelation to me. The workshop really showed how, being active helped the mind and raised the spirits so that one wanted to encourage others, especially the young, to appreciate the environment and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. We were encouraged to use websites and blogs for opportunities to volunteer in our communities. It was stimulating to learn from our EU companions. *Isabel, UK*

The workshop encouraged us to become more informed about the current social and economic situation and to participate in local and national associations in order to help others. Keeping fit, through exercise such as walking in beautiful countryside, really helped us towards a positive attitude and the desire to become involved in volunteering projects in our community. *Ann, Scotland*

The workshop changed my attitude towards walking (I'd hated it!) because of the beautiful countryside and the company of people from different countries. It is an important social and health activity, encouraging one to bond with a group of friends - an important factor in avoiding depression and having a positive outlook. I would like to volunteer to organise walking groups in my community. *Danielle, UK*

