



**LISA**  
**LEARNING IN SENIOR AGE**  
**LEARNING IN SENIOR AGE**



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# LIFELONG LEARNING IN SENIOR AGE

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**A Project of GEFAS Styria**



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## Editorial

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We live in a society that changes constantly and rapidly. Because of an immense explosion of information and knowledge learning is becoming more and more important.

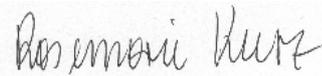
In November 2001 the European Commission adopted a memorandum for the topic "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality". So lifelong learning has become the guiding principle for the development of education and training policy.

The EU definition for Lifelong Learning is "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective"

The breadth of this definition also draws attention to the full range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activity.

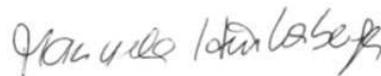
So, LLL means much more than what we think in common of "Learning" and "Education" and – most of all – LLL includes the group of the elderly.

GEFAS Styria had established the "network – learning in senior age". Together with European partners and regional organisations GEFAS Styria wants to point out the topic "learning in senior age".



**Mag. Dr. Rosemarie Kurz**

Responsible for the project



**Mag. Manuela Hinterberger**

Project Management

# Lifelong learning

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The memorandum on Lifelong Learning, written by the European Commission 2001 established Lifelong Learning as a principle of the European Union. It states that Lifelong Learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training, but it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts. All those living in Europe, without exception, should have equal opportunities to adjust to the demands of social and economic change and to participate actively in the shaping of Europe`s future. Besides the memorandum acknowledges that there are three basic categories of purposeful learning activity:

- **formal learning**, which takes place in education and training institutions, leading to recognised diplomas and qualifications
- **non-formal learning**, which takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalised certificates
- **informal learning**, which is a natural accompaniment to everyday life and which is not necessary intentional learning



## Taking action on Lifelong Learning the Memorandum states six key messages:

### 1. New basic skills for all

Guarantee universal and continuing access to learning for gaining and renewing the skills needed for sustained participation in the knowledge society.

### 2. More investment in human resources

Visibly raise levels of investment in human resources in order to place priority on Europe`s most important asset – its people.

### 3. Innovation in teaching and learning

Develop effective teaching and learning methods and contexts for the continuum of lifelong and lifewide learning.

### 4. Valuing learning

Significantly improve the ways in which learning participation and outcomes are understood and ap-

preciated, particularly non-formal and informal learning.

### 5. Rethinking guidance and counselling

Ensure that everyone can easily access good quality information and advice about learning opportunities throughout Europe and throughout their lives.

### 6. Bringing learning closer to home

Provide lifelong learning opportunities as close to learners as possible, in their own communities and supported through ICT-based facilities wherever appropriate.



## The EU-action line R3L

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R3L connects learning regions on a transnational level, thus responding to the memorandum 2001, which established Lifelong Learning as a principle of the European Union. This principle will grant that people of all age groups have access to education, with older people being one of the target groups. The Social Charta of the EU refers to the equality of the sexes, but does not mention the equal chances of the different age groups.

So far Lifelong Learning as the European Union understands it, only applied to professional training. Yet the number of older people is constantly increasing and soon will have exceeded 30% in all European countries.

Therefore it is of paramount importance to offer to this age group the educational programmes of Lifelong Learning, to motivate older people to make the best out of their lives, to encourage them to pass on their experiences and to realize their requests. By means of regional and institutional networking and by establishing a transnational network this goal can be achieved.



# The transnational network

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## Austria

### GEFAS Styria

Association for Promoting Gerontology and the Studies of Senior Citizens at Graz University  
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GEFAS Styria is a non-political and non-profit organisation, which supports older women and men in making more out of their lives. GEFAS Styria was founded in 1991, which means that GEFAS boasts a thirteen-year experience in the field of education in the post professional and empty nest phase. GEFAS intends to encourage older women and men in participating in social life. The institution emerged from a programme which supported senior students at Karl-Franzens-University Graz and since then GEFAS Styria has endeavoured to develop and carry out educational programmes for older women and men ([www.seniorweb.at](http://www.seniorweb.at)). An important issue is the solidarity between generations. GEFAS belongs to the learning region in Styria ([www.eb-stmk.at](http://www.eb-stmk.at)) and is involved in international networks dealing with education and participation in social activities in old age. GEFAS has gained experience in EU- In 2000 GEFAS

was awarded the first prize of the federal state of Styria for innovative adult education.



## Germany

### VHS Hamburg

Municipal Adult Centre for Continuing/Further Education  
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Website: [www.vhs-hamburg.de](http://www.vhs-hamburg.de)  
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The VHS Hamburg is the largest municipal centre for adult education and further education. The main aims of HVHS are, apart from professional further education, to create opportunities for people to go their own way in their particular social environment and to achieve the capability to be self-responsible and to take over social responsibility.

HVHS offers about 7.000 courses per year, mainly language courses, and professional training courses, as well as courses dealing with cultural and political issues. Furthermore HVHS offers health programmes, second chance schools, courses for disabled persons and illiterate persons of German origin. The courses are of different length and are held at different times in order to meet the demands of the participants. Furthermore HVHS offers German language courses for foreign mothers at the request of the Hamburg authorities. At the request of the authorities for social policy and family affairs the integration of migrants is forced by providing training in

sports and language courses. In addition HVHS offers in-company courses. The VHS Hamburg is leading the network "Learning Regions Hamburg" and thus has gained wide experience in networking. Besides, the VHS Hamburg is the project manager of the educational programme "Service Network Education and Learning Culture", which is supported by the government.

In addition, programmes for older people and migrants are offered. Intergenerative initiatives such as exchange of PC-competence, being constantly surveyed by means of questionnaires, are of importance.



## Italy

### SSSA

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EZ-Lab, the Research Centre on Technologies and Services for an Easy, Safe and Healthy Seniority has recently been founded as an inter-disciplinary research centre of SSSA, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna. EZ-Lab mainly focuses on the development of technologies and services which offer people the opportunity of easy, safe and healthy seniority. EZ-Lab also deals with various tasks with regard to the effects of technology on senior citizens. It investigates interdisciplinary problems and the acceptance of technology and analyses to what extent senior citizens can afford technical equipment.

SSSA mainly deals with setting up websites, investigations, and developing and analysing questionnaires. Additionally language programmes for senior citizens and migrants are offered. SSSA is part of the PISA University which monitors educational initiatives for older people and where research is a major aspect of the

work. SSSA is experienced in the field of health programmes and social services for older people. The promoting of language programmes for older people and migrants are of importance as well.



## Portugal

### CIECA

Centro de Investigação de Educação Contínua de Adultos

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CIECA, Centro de Investigação de Educação Contínua de Adultos, is a research centre dealing with the issue of lifelong learning. CIECA is part of COFAC, the Cultural, Training and Animating Co-operative, l. r. c.. The main objectives of COFAC are teaching, research and services for different domains concerning culture, science and technology. Case studies concerning older people are important issues too.

In cooperation with local partners programmes for the elderly are developed. CIECA has a strong educational network in the region including Senior Universities.



## United Kingdom

### NIACE

National Institute for Adult Continuo Education (England & Wales)

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Website : [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

Contact : Jim Soulsby

Email : [jim.soulsby@niace.org.uk](mailto:jim.soulsby@niace.org.uk)

NIACE is a non-governmental organisation working for different adult learner groups. NIACE's formal aim is "to promote the study and general advancement of continuing adult education".

NIACE is a membership organisation, made up of individual members and more than 350 corporate members across the full range of providers, policy makers and users of adult learning opportunities.

NIACE headquarters are in Leicester, England and Cardiff, Wales. NIACE tries to increase the voice of older people in decision making processes. NIACE also has experience in pursuing improved learning opportunities for older people.

NIACE has worked closely with Leicester Adult Education College to administer and evaluate a survey beside attending LISA meetings. The college has become the English partner in the resultant Grundtvig funded transnational project LENA.

NIACE has shared the progress and direction with the college and discussed concerns with the "Older and Bolder Programme Advisory Group".



## Background for the project

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Due to changed living conditions, an increasing number of people live to a ripe old age. Currently 21 % of the EU population is older than 60 years. The gerontological research has identified education as one of the most important factors of stabilising health. Furthermore, learning promotes the understanding between the generations and eases the social generation gap. Currently, Lifelong Learning is mainly applied to professional training. European wide senior citizens are to a large extent excluded from this educational system. However, Lifelong Learning should be available for the elderly as well as for younger people regardless to whether they need it for their careers or not.

Education and labour mean self-realisation which is the basis of a dignified and meaningful old age. The demand for specific educational programmes for older people is a fact. Therefore, all organisations involved in further education for senior citizens helped to raise public awareness by means of networking on a regional and trans-regional level.



# The situation in the participating regions

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## Austria

### Styria / Graz

In Austria more than 21 % of the population is older than 60. In Styria live 1.206.300 people, 250.014 are older than 60. About 30 % of them are members of political organisations for senior citizens. Although a law – the “Bundesseniorengesetz” – recognises the rights for elderly people, Lifelong Learning is still an issue of professional training. Over the past 10 years GEFAS Styria has promoting learning in later life as well as other organisations. Political senior organisations such as the “Pensionistenverband”, the “Seniorenbund” and the “Seniorenring” hold a monopoly for issues dealing with senior citizens. It was not possible to integrate these strong organisations into the learning region.

## Germany

### Hamburg/Osdorf- Lurupe

The “Volkshochschule” of Hamburg has developed the “Service Network Education and Learning Culture”, which was launched by the Ministry of Education and Research within the project “Learning Regions”. Statistics claim that 28.640 people

will live in the district Osdorf/Lurupe in 2005, 15 % of them being older than 60. So far senior citizens have not been able to benefit from Lifelong Learning because funding was only granted for persons who were employed and fit for work.

## Italy

### Tuscany - Valdera

Nearly 30 % of the population in Tuscany is beyond the age of 60, a percentage that is reached nowhere else in Italy. SSSA has provided a close network of social and health services, which is a specific feature of this region. It is necessary to provide means for learning from other regions thus encouraging learning in old age.

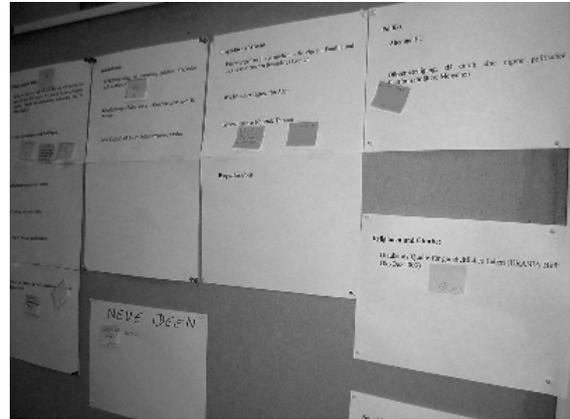


## Portugal

### Lisbon - Almeirim

It is a semi-rural region that covers an area of 222 km<sup>2</sup> with 21.957 inhabitants - 4391 of them being older than 65. In 2001 "COFAC – Cultural, Training and Animating Cooperative" founded USAL – the University for Seniors of Almeirim, thus taking the first steps to establish learning in old age. In cooperation with local organisations, programmes have been developed and offered to senior citizens. The latter, very often had no opportunity so far to get any education at all.

"Older&Bolder" was successfully introduced, promoting the education of older and people of ethnic minorities.



## United Kingdom

### Leicester

In this region a large number of people over fifty are unemployed. Most of them are between the ages of 60 and 65. Unemployment is still higher among ethnic minorities. A survey shows that 20 % of the age group 65 to 74, but only 10 % of the age group beyond 75 use the educational programmes offered. Only 0.4% of the university students are older than fifty. According to NIACE, senior citizens are marginalised because priority is given to supporting younger people and professional training. Therefore, the programme



## What we did in the project

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**Establishing “Learning Regions”** is one of the main aims of the R3L initiative to organise life long learning integrated in every day life.

In this context the transnational project LISA “Learning in Senior Age” is to be seen as an innovation. Making old age the focus of learning regions is unparalleled and has been put into action for the first time ever. The activities of this project, namely bringing together various initiatives in the fields of education and education in old age, have raised public awareness in the countries of the participating organisations.

In each region a distinctive and dynamic model of increase and change has been developed. Each model is unique and distinctive. The learning process resulted from a transnational discussion and from regional opportunities for adaptation. Ageing and being old has turned out a demographic revolution in the countries of the European Union. The number of people who are entitled to lead a meaningful life, even in the post- professional phase, is increasing compared to the number of adolescents and adults who lead a working life.

LISA marks the **beginning of future developments**. By passing on experience and by means of the website ([www.lisa-net.info](http://www.lisa-net.info)) LISA informed and motivated organisations to integrate education and continuing education into the already existing learning regions. LISA encouraged regional organisations to join forces.

Already existing networks in Learning Regions concerning old age were expanded by “LISA – Learning in Senior Age”. They were enlarged by including social institutions focusing on senior citizens, and organisations in the fields of health care, gender, social issues and ICT. At the beginning of the project these organisations were not aware of their responsibility towards older people and what they could offer to this age group.

Regional working groups investigated the actual situation and developed strategies how to make the best use of synergy and resources, thus enabling older people in their post-professional phase and/or empty nest phase to participate in educational programmes. These findings and experiences concerning the “best practice” were exchanged in transnational meetings. These meetings were partly accessible to regional institutions focusing on health care, social networking and ICT. Local,

regional, and national organisations, Stakeholders and public proponents had been invited to these meetings in Germany / Hamburg, Portugal / Lisbon and in Italy/Pontedera.

In addition, a **survey** showed which kind of programmes have been offered to seniors by various organisations. An informal investigation by means of questionnaires stated the demand for educational programmes for the post-professional phase and about the needs and wishes of older people themselves. An internal evaluation collected data for the present and the future concerning issues of learning in later life. A website has been established – [www.lisa-net.info](http://www.lisa-net.info).

It was of great importance for all transnational partner organisations to involve the end-users - older women and men. For this purpose participants in education programmes were investigated.



## Austria

In Styria / Graz a working group with several organisations was formed. It was agreed that some organisations would expand their distinctive education priorities, whereas other organisations would shift the emphasis on other education topics. This would enable the organisations a more clearly structured programme and avoid any unnecessary competition. Thus, educational providers could offer distinctive programmes binding end-users to their organisation.

The summer academy "SiA – Sense in Aging", established by GEFAS Steiermark in the year 2000, has become a tool for future cooperation. In various meetings, priorities were established and discussed with regard to the content. Finally, 13 organisations, which were seriously interested in establishing a learning region with the focal theme of old age, formed the regional network known as "Education in Old Age".

While preparing the Summer Academy for later life learning, the 13 organisations were convinced of the usefulness of networking.

All organisations participating in this network organised an information day in the city of Graz. This served as another tool

for future cooperation. At the same time a brochure was published in which these organisations presented themselves.



## Germany

The project partner VHS Hamburg managed to expand its already existing network for adult education by involving politicians and the administrative authorities. LISA helped to include social organisations and institutions working in the fields of education, health, social services and ICT in the above mentioned network. By adding the topic of learning in senior age to the existing educational programme, VHS Hamburg gave an answer to the demographic development. Besides in Germany remarkable increase in the number of older migrants can be noticed. The German government expects about 1.3 million migrants who will be older than 60 in 2010. That is why Lifelong Learning should be extended to this new target group, as well.

## Italy

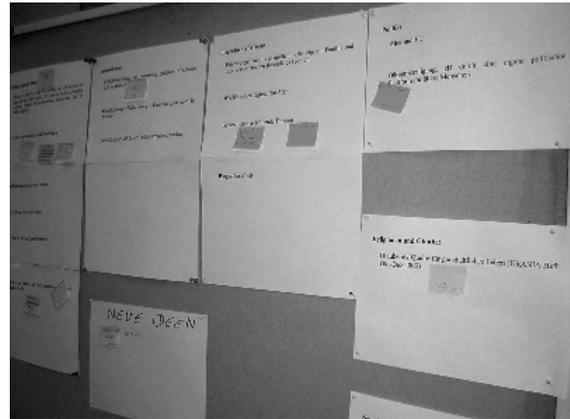
The LISA project activities focused mainly on promoting co-operation among organisations being interested in the topic of Learning in Senior Age. In establishing a link between seniors and current technological changes, by disseminating theoretical and practical knowledge about ICT's it was possible to make aware how the demographic change modifies the society in all its aspects. Involving seniors in research activities on Gerontechnologies was

a main aspect. The realisation of a first pilot course on ICT for seniors, jointly organised by SSSA and the social co-operative "Il Borgo" in Peccioli, a small village in Tuscany, was an important issue such as the early involvement of other local partners: Two Third Age Universities, located in Pontedera and Ponsacco, and one municipality, which was already actively co-operating with SSSA for the innovation in the field of Gerontechnologies and of local socio-economic development.

Further on, four more municipalities have expressed their will to participate in the network. The development of an educational tool (a booklet) about "Ageing and Autonomy at Home" has been started, which was completed and published at the end of the project. Some additional networking activities were implemented with the aim of consolidating the local Learning Region. The aim is to develop coordinated educational plans over the next few years in the local area. That means participation in the "Valdera Integrated Local Social Plan". In this, the learning region set up by LISA will fit in the local government policies.

## Portugal

“Learning in Later Life” could be strengthened in this region. Within a local working group various organisations working in the fields of health care, social welfare and care of the elderly people could be integrated in a network. The main objective was to undergo the Senior Training Needs Diagnosis of the Almeirim Learning Region. Interviews and questionnaires were implemented and were distributed to Senior Citizens and Senior Universities Directors.



## United Kingdom

The project LISA aimed to raise awareness of educational needs of older people and develop a network of providers across the region. A debate among the issues was raised by distributing a questionnaire. A platform has been installed for older people's issues in order to help the regional development agency, the Government office for the region and others to address issues that can be actioned within the region. An advisory group has been formed all of whom have been made aware of the agenda being developed by LISA. It is likely that a sub group to explore later life learning issues will be developed and NIACE will have a key role.



# Outputs of the project

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## Austria

A regional working group has been installed dealing with relevant themes, such as old age, social networks, health, and ICT. This group consists of representatives of local organisations working in the fields of education, senior citizens, social and health care, and ICT. A brochure "Education, Networking, Old Age" was published and distributed. The results of an investigation among the educational providers informed us about concerns, demands and main interests of older people on behalf of education in senior age.

## Germany

The main conference of the LISA project was held in Hamburg, Germany. The contents of the programme dealt with language learning. A panel discussion with the topic "How to reach older Migrants for further Education?" brought an excellent result: Seniors (65 years and older), who receive social welfare and want to join a course at the VHS Hamburg have the possibility for reimbursement of the course fee from the local authority. People of the age of 55 can apply for reimbursement under the condition that the course is ac-

cepted as "in preparation for" their retirement.

Another important result has been the creation of an informal contract for the national network partners.

## Italy

The main project result is the creation of informal relationships and co-operation among local participators. One of the products is a prototype of a vertical portal on Gerontechnologies, which has been used in a very limited dimension during LISA. This will be an important tool for co-operation, networking and community building during the next joint initiatives and projects

(<http://www-arts.sssup.it/Netusalem>).

Besides, a 50-page booklet was published in two languages (1.200 in Italian and 600 in English) about "Safely and Autonomously Aging at Home".

## Portugal

CIECA established the Portuguese Learning Region and worked to characterize the Senior Universities in Portugal. The Senior Training Needs Diagnosis of Almeirim

Learning Region is the main output of the LISA project in Portugal.

The Portuguese Conference “Aging Healthy” had been held. The Conference papers, the characterization of the different types of Portuguese senior universities and the Internal Progress Report were outcomes of the third phase.

## United Kingdom

One of the products is the questionnaire which can be used again. Its main virtue was to raise issues which can be discussion points of new issues emerging. The main product is the network which is led by NIACE.

NIACE has also set up a database of practice to help inform of good and diverse work taking place. The template for this is to be made available on the website [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk) to encourage others to record their experiences. This will provide even more data which can be passed to enquirers. As an example, organisations are currently asking for examples others use of mobile resource units to bring ICT education and training to older people in care settings.

The new regional older people’s platform will include older learners as an area for development. The regional development

agency will consider an event – with the regional programme “Better Government for Older people” - on the learning needs of older people in the region.



## Lessons learned

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LISA offered all participants an opportunity to watch and discuss the different strategies used for establishing a learning region. The LISA team learned how differently countries and regions deal with the topic of further education for older adults. As an example: Austria established a regional network. Portugal established a more straight forward approach by implementing a third age university and Italy connected technology and further education.

But applying good practice from other countries and regions to one's own region cannot be achieved by just copying it. Good practice can only be applied by learning processes of those participating in the network. By watching, discussing and individually selecting important issue stimulates may be transferred. If and how these stimuli are adapted for a European region or national organisation depends on numerous factors. In any case the original "good practice" has changed during the process of adaptation.

Testimonial I:

**"Everything I have seen and experienced has reinforced my view that we must start with the needs of the learners and where they are in their biographies, their life stages and**

**their crises. We have to help them identify and understand their very own needs, identify the organisations that can help satisfy the seniors in terms of information, guidance, auditing, building their life styles etc.**

Testimonial II:

**"I am concerned with processes about changing attitudes, policies and finding strategies to make these processes more relevant and meaningful to other people."**

Testimonial III:

**"Understanding the cultural, gender-specific, social and regional factors which enable us to plan programmes and to show empathy toward the target groups."**

## In the course of the project the following points emerged as “good practice” with regard to forming networks

- A precondition for establishing a network is a realistic and joint aim.
- Each network needs a drive without it cannot work.
- The success of a network depends on the fact that each partner truly benefits from this network. A win win situation is helpful.
- Networks and establishing networks need time.
- A network needs a clear definition and a model.
- An attractive and reachable goal for all network members should be the starting point of a successful network.
- An effective selection of the network members is an essential factor for network building.
- Exchange of experiences is important.

• The network members need a clear definition about the topic.

• Networks live on wine and bread, which means that pleasure is part of the work as well.



## Lessons learned with regard to innovations in the field of later life learning

1. "Go to the people and find out what they want to learn."

2. "At first let older people discover themselves, why they want to learn and then what they want to learn."

3. "Senior citizens display other features beside their age."

4. "Older people are self-willed."

5. "Older persons want to learn in a realistic way."

6. "Older people want to learn with people of the same age."

7. "We underestimate the potential of the older people"

8. "We claim to know about older people and their needs."



## Examples of best practice

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### SiA

The Summer Academy 2004 SiA was planned and implemented in cooperation with the regional network. SiA was an event for the end-users and offered special educational seminars for the older people themselves.

### HarAlt

HarAlt is a project for seniors in Hamburg, which shows that participatory learning is highly important for the empowerment of the older sector.

### Domo Casa

EZ Lab in Pontedera offers totally new perspectives on how older people can manage living independently even if they have to cope with handicaps. The most relevant issue identified during the LISA project is the importance of a solid link between scientific and technological research and innovation, especially when it deals with technology for Quality of Life of the disabled and seniors, and continuing education of final users. Such a link can engender a bi-directional exchange of benefits.

### USAL

The University of Third Age in Almeirim in Portugal is a good example for showing how low-level education programmes can be successfully introduced to the end-users. These Portuguese University for Seniors is structured to respond to seniors' solicitation. The planning of courses and classes is embedded in seniors' needs and availabilities. The courses play an important social role allowing seniors' to enjoy some time together, feel good and discover themselves that they are still very capable of learning. At the same time depression and feelings of loneliness may vanish. As the learning opportunities aren't expensive, seniors' from different social-economic classes are able to participate in these activities. Another aspect is that Universities for Seniors permit the learners to develop their own activities according to their interests, such as Fishing Clubs, Choirs, etc. The trainers and most of the Universities for Seniors are installed in City Hall buildings (libraries, sport pavilions, etc.)

## What is innovative in LISA

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Setting up a transnational network, consisting of regional institutions which focus on learning in senior age, is one innovative aspect as it was the very first attempt on European level to involve seniors in learning regions. Organisations, focusing on old age, health care, social welfare and ICT with regard to older people got into contact with organisations offering educational programmes on a broad basis.



Extending the educational network to institutions which focus on senior citizens – and are accepted by them – but have so far not become aware of their responsibility in the educational field is of great importance.



Last not least, involving older people themselves during the administering the surveys was a most important issue throughout the whole project. Older people were involved in all surveys thus being able to articulate their wishes, and ideas, in addition criticising already existing courses.



# Transversal issues

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## Austria

GEFAS Steiermark brought up the **gender issue**. Older women of today had hardly any possibility to acquire a profound education or to receive solid professional training according to their abilities when they were younger. Taking care of their families and earning some extra income to support the family were mostly their main tasks. But taking care of the family did not only include the responsibility of raising children, but also meant often taking care of aged parents and parents-in-law. Pensions of women are because of this presumption very often rather small, and so these women still have to work in order to earn extra income. Distinctive education agendas of GEFAS Steiermark offer the opportunity (especially for older women) to deal with issues of aging such as information on specific activities by and/or for older women; scientific studies concerning older women, political programmes and measures to improve equal opportunities for older women.

The education project "Changing Track" meets the demands for empowerment of older women. It is a follow up of the 1996 trans national EU project "Changing Track

at Third Age" and is a possibility to strengthen transversal issues.

## Germany

The VHS Hamburg developed up with a project dealing with an educational programme for **older migrants**. The contents promote the understanding of different cultures giving older women and men the opportunity to be familiar with the idea of a united Europe thus helping to reduce fears and prejudices.

## Italy

SSSA explicitly addressed in particular **disabled seniors** as SSSA is one of the outstanding European research institutions in the field of Assistive Technologies for the disabled and the elderly. Future activities in the field of senior education will then benefit from its scientific and technological know-how. Generally speaking, equal access to senior education for all user groups, and especially for disadvantaged people, will be granted by the participation in the network (and the subsequent political responsibility) of local government (Municipalities), responsible for social integration and support services.

## Portugal

The Seniors Training Needs Diagnoses of Almeirim Learning Region permits to understand why more women than men are attending Universities for Seniors. So it is a useful instrument to promote **gender issues**. The training needs diagnosis allows the institutions to develop their learning opportunities according to the seniors' needs and wishes.



## United Kingdom

NIACE has recently renewed the status with the Investors in People Programme (IiP). Its agenda is about equal opportunities, with all staff engaged in equal opportunities and several where it is a key element of their work – **race and ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation and age**. In addition the Older and Bolder Development Officer and the Race Equality Officer are engaged in national debates around the suggested Commission for Human Rights and Equality. Older and Bolder has been commissioned by the national Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to help it pursue the age diversity agenda within its equality and diversity strategy and to provide guidance to local LSCs.



## The European dimension

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As representatives of different European cultures worked together and dealt with such a new topic as education in old age, a transnational exchange of experiences provided new opportunities.

Through LISA the topic "Old Age" is being dealt on a European level. This will help to make the topic an international issue and thus reduce prejudice towards senior citizens who are often referred to as a burden. LISA managed to explain that the large group of men and women in the post professional phase is entitled to education, to personal happiness and to integration into society. The transnational network developed in LISA will be extended through the follow up LENA, which deals with contents of a curriculum for learning in senior age.

This means that older people will have the opportunity to contribute their experiences to the issues of senior education, but it also means that authorities should be made aware that educational offers for seniors is one of the challenges of a modern society.

LISA states that older people should have a voice in the European context and they should raise this voice. Education in old

age pays because longevity results from genetic factors and from education. The latter must not be underestimated because it is responsible for a healthier life. It is very important to inform the EU parliamentarians and the EU Commission about the programme of Lifelong Learning which relates to the constantly increasing number of people beyond the age of sixty.



# Sustainability

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⌘ In LISA a transnational network of organisations dealing with education for seniors has been established. This network is responsible for the items of LENA too.

⌘ In LISA, national networks were founded and cooperate in the fields of education, senior citizens, social policy, health care, women and ICT.

⌘ Seniors were involved in the overall design of LENA and therefore got interested in issues concerning their every day life.

⌘ Based on these national and transnational networks, including the target group of seniors, LENA will develop a curriculum with the topic "Education in Old Age" which had already been granted by the European commission and has started in October 2004.

**LENA – Learning in the post professional phase** – follows up the project LISA – Learning in old age under R3L. During the project LISA educational networks consisting of different organisations in the fields of education, senior citizens, social policy, health care, women and ICT have been established. Based on this national and transnational networks including the target group,

namely the older people, LENA will develop a curriculum with the topic "Education in Old Age".

The curriculum will consist of seven particular modules. This national modules will be developed by the participating organisations, focusing on particular organisational and national target groups.

Together these modules will make up a spectrum of themes and methods so that in future it will be easier to provide and carry out offers for specific target groups.

By working with focus groups, consisting of older people they will participate in the development of the curriculum. When designing the overall curriculum the transnational practicability will be a major aspect.

LENA will also deal with the question how older people with no education and people with different social, cultural or sex-specific needs can be involved in the educational programme. The curriculum will be the final result.

# Concluding remark of the external evaluation

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Establishing (transnational) networks can be seen as an exemplary case of learning. This includes not only planning and acting, but also offering the partner organisations opportunities to observe and to reflect the development of the network. Sometimes this is hardly possible due to the hectic atmosphere surrounding us. Therefore, the evaluation during the transnational meeting in Pisa was judged favourably because it offered an opportunity for reflection.

However, reflection is not only necessary at the end of projects, but even more so during the phase of action. Thus, reflection can help us to recognize the gap between aim and reality, and this gap then will not be experienced as frustration but rather as creative suspense. Reflection will also help to gain recognition.

The network further showed that group dynamics in intercultural teams, the informal level of action, and the planned and result oriented acting play an important role, too. The partners claimed that it is of great importance to pay attention to the different personalities, values, cultures and patterns in order to estimate the learning processes.

Therefore, reflection is necessary and the network itself should be made an issue again and again because only then will it be possible that collective values and norms can emerge, thus forming an awareness of the network. (Dr. Ellen Künzel, Evaluator)



## Remarks

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The main issue was the selection of transnational partners focusing organisations on education and later life learning. Two big organisations could be won over, HVHS - the Hamburg Adult Education Centre with an experts' report on development and quality management, and NIACE – National Institute for Adult Continuing Education with the main emphasis on establishing a learning region. Two smaller institutes added further priorities. SSSA – Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna a research centre for technology added the aspect of living independantly in old age and CIECA – Centro Investigacao em aprendizagam ao longo de vida from Portugal, focusing on research, added to the range.

GEFAS Steiermark – Association for Promoting Gerontolgy and the Studies of Senior Citizens at Graz University – is the parent organisation of this transnational union. GEFAS uses science and experience for the benefit of those concerned, thus proving by means of broad education projects and initiatives that seniors are able and want to set trends in a participatory way.

Each participating organisation contributed its special knowledge. Five transnational face-to-face meetings offered the oppor-

tunity to exchange experiences, ideas and knowledge.

### Testimonials

✚ “We want to point out explicitly that today's seniors in Europe are mostly not cabable of using English, a fact which might cause discrimination and injustice. The project has been very well implemented in every partner country. It has set off a lot of activities which wouldn't have been started without LISA.”

✚ “It is difficult to move seniors to learning opportunities since they often had little opprtunity/interest in learning when younger and therefore they are not used to going to some place just to learn something.”

✚ “Developments of this nature which are about getting the learning needs of socially and educationally excluded groups into mainstream education planning is a labour intensive exercise. Not only do education planners and funders need convincing but equally so do other agencies responsible for enhancing the quality of life of older people and sadly many older people themselves. The transnational experiences are vital, they provide solidarity,

examples of good practice which might be transferable, opportunities to develop appropriate arguments and strategies to develop the agendas, mutual support, and opportunities to influence European thinking, planning and funding, but ultimately to make a difference takes time!”

⌘ “It is important to keep in mind the differences with regard to the beginning of the post-professional phase in the different European countries.”

⌘ “The experiences of partners were extremely invaluable in understanding the political processes, administrative structures, funding mechanisms for learning, relative value of older people in local, regional and national society and the difficulties in network development relevant to each defined region and in securing the voice of older people in educational developments.”

⌘ “What the different experiences revealed was the need to develop educational opportunities relevant to people’s own live, life stages and experiences and in ways, at times and costs accessible to them. Whilst the partners all operated differently the fundamental issues are common to all.”

⌘ “It was interesting, that half of the participating partners who took part in the trans national meetings were between 30 and 40 and older than 60 years. So within the project an intergenerative learning took place.”



# The national networks

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## United Kingdom

During the lifetime of the project NIACE (with LISA) has been involved with individual initiatives in the region as follows:

**Age Concern Northampton and County Lifetime Project** – developing educational opportunities for older people across the county within their own communities; and to explore the educational needs of older people engaged in running groups, committee work, engaging in consultations and to develop and test relevant new curriculum.

**Leicester Adult Education College** to undertake the LISA survey.

**Loughborough College** to support the regional (but nationally significant) Experience Works programme enhancing the employability of older people in the region.

**East Midlands Development Agency** to support Experience Works; to embed LISA in the region and as part of a national survey undertaken by NIACE for the Government on the preparedness of regional development agencies for the forthcoming implementation of the EU Age Directive.

Experience Works and subsequently a **further education college in Lincolnshire** (ongoing) – to explore issues around the

levels of financial literacy and competency of older people and the role of education and guidance agencies in developing appropriate curriculum, provision, information and services to support them.

**Braunstone and South Humberstone Neighbourhood Community Programmes**, Leicester to explore the educational needs of older people engaged in democratic processes, community management, running groups, committee work, engaging in consultations and to develop and test relevant curriculum.

**First Taste**, an arts educational initiative in Derby delivering educational programmes to older people in care settings – monitoring and advising on new educational programmes.

**Experience Corps** - a now redundant national initiative exploring volunteering for older people – leading a workshop at the African Caribbean Centre in Leicester.

**Dementia Care Services**, Leicester National Health service to explore the role of educational activity within dementia services.

Advising a national project developing educational opportunities for older people in sheltered housing which encourages them to re-engage with the wider community, of which one partner is **Asra Midland Housing in Leicester**.

Chairing the **Leicestershire group of employers**, Government employment services and education providers interested in developing the Experience Works programme.