



**European Approaches
to Inter-Generational
Lifelong Learning**

**17 / 70 - Young „Godfathers“
and „Godmothers“
for Senior Citizens**

GERMANY
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

The project '17 / 70 – Young „Godfathers“ and „Godmothers“ for Senior Citizens' (i.e. 17 / 70 – Junge Paten für Senioren) of the 'Volunteering Agency Essen' in Germany is explicitly addressing the demographic change in the Ruhr Area, an urban area in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia consisting of a number of large formerly heavily industrial cities. The structural change in the Ruhr Area resulted – as in other Germany agglomerations – in increasingly dissolving traditional family structures with older citizens often living far away from their family and without adequate wider social networks.

By qualifying young volunteers aged 15 to 25 and by engaging them continuously with older citizens, 17 / 70 aims at i) overcoming the social isolation of older citizens, ii) acquiring and documenting social and subject related (i.e. pedagogy, psychology, social work, care and therapy) skills as well as personal development and professional orientation for young people, iii) promoting a better understanding between generations and iv) fostering active citizenship and quality of life of all generations.

In practice young volunteers are visiting senior citizens in public (i.e. non-profit) hospitals, retirement homes and day care centres and provide numerous support services, which can be e.g. arranging humorous and entertaining events or reading out sessions in the institutions, by accompanying older citizens to shops, public authorities, theatres or simply keeping company with older citizens.

The activities are planned and managed by the young volunteers themselves, but clearly centred on the concrete needs of older citizens and in close cooperation with the volunteering agency and the heads of the nursing and social services of the respective institutions as well as with the medical and social services of the city of Essen. 17 / 70 engages by these means all potentially involved stakeholders and sets up novel and wider social community network for the elderly.

Due to the dedicated qualification at the beginning and constant supervision of young volunteers throughout their intergenerational activities as well as due to the engagement of all stakeholders of the local community '17 / 70 – Young „Godfathers“ and „Godmothers“ for Senior Citizens' is an example of good intergenerational practice, which can be generalised as many cities in Germany face similar structural, demographic and societal changes.



2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

<i>Title</i>	17 / 70 – Young „Godfathers“ and „Godmothers“ for Senior Citizens (i.e. 17 / 70 – Junge Paten für Senioren)
<i>Country</i>	Essen, North Rhine – Westphalia, Germany
<i>Duration</i>	Starting Year: Spring 2006 End Year: ongoing <u>Comments:</u> The conceptual and planning phase commenced already in 2005, the first group of volunteers started in spring 2006; two additional groups started in autumn 2006 and spring 2007; the fourth group of volunteers will start in autumn 2007; in the future it is planned that two groups will start per year.
<i>Status</i>	Running
<i>Managing Institution</i>	Voluntary/social sector/foundations
<i>Contact Details</i>	Last Name: Krüger First Name: Janina Title: Ms. Position/Role: Managing Director Institution: Ehrenamt Agentur Essen Street: Bredeneyer Straße 6b Town: Essen Post Code: 45133 Phone: 0049 201 4513 580 Fax: 0049 201 4513 590 E-Mail: info@ehrenamtessen.de URL: http://www.ehrenamtessen.de
<i>Funding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Private funding ▪ Own contribution and resources <u>Comments:</u> The volunteering agency is a registered non-profit association and is financed through membership fees (e.g. 2/3 from local businesses, 1/3 from private citizens and the rest by a smaller number of other non-profit associations). The project 17 / 70 receives additional project specific funding from local companies and businesses and the Rotary Club of Essen.
<i>Partnership Arrangement/Organisational Form</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bottom-up, grass root initiative <u>Comments:</u> Originally planned to complement the work of the so-called 'Green Ladies' and 'Green Men' (see http://www.ekh-deutschland.de/portrait.html for more information, in German), a volunteer support service of middle aged and older citizens for stationary care in hospitals; an integration of young people in the existing structures was regarded to be problematic for organisational reasons; therefore the 'Volunteering Agency Essen' decided to set up an own project to bring young and old people together.
<i>Scale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community based ▪ Local <u>Comment:</u> The young volunteers are working in local public (i.e. non-profit making) hospitals, retirement homes and day care centres in Essen; but the 'Volunteering Agency Essen' is part of the 'Volunteering Network Ruhr Area' (regional) and member of the national and federal 'Working Committee of Volunteering Agencies' (i.e. BAGFA on national level and LAGFA on federal level; see http://www.bagfa.de).

3 DESCRIPTION OF COLLABORATING GROUPS

<i>Collaborating Group I</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Young people, mainly pupils; ▪ In the vast majority girls as “social engagement in Germany is still predominantly female” (Janina Krüger, Managing Director of ‘Volunteering Agency Essen’); ▪ Mainly from grammar schools (i.e. Gymnasium), but increasingly from intermediate schools (i.e. Realschule) and comprehensive schools (i.e. Gesamtschulen).
<i>Total number of Collaborating Group I</i>	<p>37 up-to-date</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> The first group of 17 volunteers started in spring 2006; two additional groups with 10 young people each started in autumn 2006 and spring 2007; the fourth group of 10 volunteers will start in autumn 2007; in the future it is planned that two groups of 10 volunteers each will start per year.</p>
<i>Age group(s) of Collaborating Group I</i>	<p><u>Minimum Age:</u> 15 <u>Maximum Age:</u> 25</p> <p><u>Age distribution:</u> Mainly girls before leaving grammar school and before entering the labour market or tertiary education.</p>
<i>Collaborating Group II</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Old people in public (i.e. non-profit making) hospitals, retirement homes and day care centres; many patients and inhabitants with high ages and a increasing number suffering from dementia and other age related diseases; ▪ No procurement of volunteers to private (i.e. professional or profit-making) retirement homes as retirement pensions are in general higher as in public facilities; many private retirement homes (or ‘residences’) have support infrastructures of similar kind in place; ▪ In the future the inclusion to private households is planned; this will be done in co-operation with the ‘Department for Senior Citizens’ of the City of Essen, which will verify that single households are in actual need for voluntary support.
<i>Total number of Collaborating Group II</i>	<p>Approx. 80 senior citizens</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> As the interaction between volunteers and elder citizens can vary (i.e. one-to-many, many-to-one, many-to-many, group based) the ratio between young and people is estimated in average 1:2.</p>
<i>Age group(s) of Collaborating Group II:</i>	<p><u>Minimum Age:</u> 75 <u>Maximum Age:</u> 90</p> <p><u>Age distribution:</u> Due to higher life expectancy of older citizens and the work of outpatient day care services, citizens are becoming older and older when coming to retirement homes and day care centres. Therefore the age distribution is increasingly leaning towards the upper age range.</p>

4 DESCRIPTION OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES

Description of Learning Arrangement & Learning Practice

'17 / 70 – Young „Godfathers“ and „Godmothers“ for Senior Citizens' (i.e. 17 / 70 – Junge Paten für Senioren) of the 'Volunteering Agency Essen' in Germany is explicitly addressing the demographic change in city of Essen located the Ruhr Area, an urban area in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia consisting of a number of large formerly heavily industrial cities. The structural change in the Ruhr Area resulted – as in other Germany agglomerations – in increasingly dissolving traditional family structures with older citizens often living far away from their family and without adequate wider social networks.

Volunteers of the project are mainly recruited from grammar schools but increasingly from intermediate schools and comprehensive schools as well. Furthermore the vast majority of volunteers are female. Requirements to participate in 17 / 70 are a certain level of intellectual (in order to follow the qualification phase) and language (in order to interact with the older people) competences. The ability of young volunteers to participate is assessed through an interdisciplinary coordinated by the volunteer agency.

Motivational aspects encouraging young volunteers to join 17 / 70 are first the possibility for private and professional orientation and career planning and second the theoretical and practical acquisition of social, organisational, communicative and subject related (i.e. pedagogy, psychology, social work, care and therapy) skills sets in 'real' world settings. Furthermore volunteers receive a € 100 subsidy, which they can use e.g. when acquiring their driving licence. Finally the informally and non-formally acquired competences of the young volunteers are documented in a portfolio entitled JEEP, which stands for 'Young Adults discover Practice' (i.e. Junge Erwachsene entdecken die Praxis) or 'Young Adults experience Participation' (i.e. Junge Erwachsene erfahren die Partizipation'). In collaboration with the Department of School Administration and the Youth Department of Essen it is planned to integrate JEEP into a wider 'Career Choice Portfolio' (i.e. Berufswahlpass) documenting all skills and competences of young people acquired within and outside formal education and training systems.

The volunteer work itself starts with an in-depth qualification phase for young volunteers lasting in total 11 days over a period of six month. The trainers are psychologists, experts in geriatric medicine, a Protestant priest associated with the public institutions and a memory trainer. The training incorporates psychological aspects such as self-awareness, respect, empathy, acceptance; discussion techniques with a special focus on intergenerational communication; medical ageing processes and effects; religious beliefs and faith of the elderly; as well as so-called 'circus' and 'clown' pedagogies in order to enable the volunteers to organise humoristic and entertaining events. The qualification phase is followed by two sample visits of volunteers in the institutions under close coaching and supervision by the psychologist of the project.

The volunteers are signing an agreement with 'Volunteering Agency Essen', in which they commit themselves to attend the six-month training phase followed by the practical intergenerational work with elderly citizens of at least one year. Volunteers agree to work at least six hours per month with older citizens in the above-mentioned public institutions.

Description of Learning Arrangement & Learning Practice (cont.)	<p>In practice young volunteers are visiting senior citizens in public (i.e. non-profit) hospitals, retirement homes and day care centres and provide numerous support services, which can be e.g. arranging humorous and entertaining events (i.e. circus and clown sessions), reading out and story telling activities in the institutions, by accompanying older citizens to shops, public authorities, theatres or simply keeping company with older citizens.</p> <p>The activities are planned and managed by the young volunteers themselves, but clearly centred on the concrete needs of older citizens and closely mediated by the volunteering agency and the heads of the nursing and social services of the respective institutions as well as with the medical and social services of the city of Essen. Furthermore volunteers receive constant coaching and supervision throughout the entire time of their intergenerational activities.</p> <p>The interactions between the young volunteers and the pedagogical approaches used are manifold and dependent on the concrete needs and wishes of older people and therefore encompass a wide range of possible learning activities e.g. mentoring in the form of intergenerational support, services and consultancy; social inclusion/participation and active citizenship for all generations, employability of young people, health and well-being, artistic activities as well as travel, excursions & leisure time.</p>
Location of the Learning Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal settings i.e. non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), museum and library ▪ Informal settings i.e. community facility/building and other social settings ▪ Others i.e. public hospitals, retirement homes and day care centres for older people; local communities in the city of Essen
Learning Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentoring i.e. intergenerational support, services and consultancy ▪ Social inclusion/participation, active citizenship ▪ Employability ▪ Health ▪ Arts incl. culture, theatre, play, music ▪ Travel, excursions & leisure time
Fields of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual competence development (for private and professional purposes) ▪ Societal/economic exchange and consultancy ▪ Development and continuity of societal values
Knowledge & Learning Exchange/ Flow between the Collaborating Groups	<p>Balanced and/or bi-directional e.g. through shared activities</p>
Interactions between the Collaborating Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ one-to-one ▪ one-to-many ▪ group based ▪ many-to-many ▪ physical/offline interaction

Categories of the Learning Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-formal ▪ Informal <p><u>Comments/Description:</u> The majority of the intergenerational learning is occurring as natural accompaniment of the interactions between the young volunteers and the older generation. The occurring learning processes have a non-formal component as they takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. On the other hand the informally and non-formally acquired competences of the young volunteers are documented in an online and offline portfolio entitled JEEP, which stands for 'Young Adults discover Practice (i.e. Junge Erwachsene entdecken die Praxis) or 'Young Adults experience Participation' (i.e. Junge Erwachsene erfahren die Partizipation'). In collaboration with the Department of School Administration and the Youth Department of Essen it is planned to integrate JEEP into a wider 'Career Choice Portfolio' (i.e. Berufswahlpass) documenting all skills and competences of young people acquired within and outside formal education and training systems.</p>
OECD/ DeSeCo Competences	<p>1 = Competence Category 1: Using Tools Interactively</p> <p>1.1 = The ability to use knowledge and information interactively</p> <p>1.3 = The ability to use technology interactively</p> <p>2 = Competence Category 2: Interacting in Heterogeneous Groups</p> <p>2 = The ability to relate well to others</p> <p>2.2 = The ability to cooperate</p> <p>2.3 = The ability to manage and resolve conflicts</p> <p>3 = Competence Category 3: Acting Autonomously</p> <p>3.1 = The ability to act within the big picture</p> <p>3.2 = The ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects</p>
EC Key Competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning-to-learn ▪ Interpersonal and civic competences
Success Factors and Barriers	<p>The main success of 17 / 70 can be seen in the fact that the project helps to overcome existing social segmentations between generations alongside with getting older people out of their social isolation by qualifying young volunteers aged 15 to 25 and by engaging them continuously with older citizens. This results in a better understanding between the generations in terms of age related problems and needs. Furthermore new and wider social networks for all participants are established i.e. young to old, young to young, young to organisations, which are working in the field. An additional asset of 17 / 70 is the support of processes of personal development and professional orientation by qualifying the volunteers and by documenting their achievements through portfolios.</p> <p>On project level the recruitment of boys and the recruitment of 'hard-to-reach' groups is still difficult. Furthermore it is more likely to engage young people, who are already active in other areas and activities (e.g. community work, sports etc).</p>

Success Factors and Barriers (cont.)

The main reasons for dropping out of 17 / 70 can be found in the lack of time of volunteers, the move of the family to another city and emotional problems when dealing with old and ill people. Critical incidents during the life cycle of 17 / 70 have been one case of sexual harassment of a young female volunteer, the refusal of old people to work with specific volunteers and emotional and psychological problems of volunteers when confronted with the illness of old people. But all those problems were addressed by the constant supervision of volunteers through a psychologist and could be solved. The continuous counselling and supervision activities were contributing to the acceptable drop out rate of only.

In order to raise to improve the operation of 17 / 70, the 'Volunteering Agency Essen' implemented a number of alterations since the start of the project, which included:

- Inclusion of younger volunteers i.e. 15+;
- Inclusion of other school types i.e. intermediate and comprehensive schools;
- Increased promotion in schools to encourage specifically boys and 'hard-to-reach' young people (but still difficult);
- Increase in the interaction between the agency and volunteers (e.g. a blended mix of communication means i.e. yellow post, e-mails, reminders, face-to-face meetings) in order to ensure punctuality of volunteers as well as the periodicity and regularity of intergenerational activities;
- Intensification of interaction with all stakeholders in general e.g. through contracts, clear role profiles and rules, work descriptions etc;
- Embedding of 17 / 70 into the 'Quality Assurance Processes' of the volunteering agency entitled 'Q.' or 'Quality to the Point' (Qualität auf den Punkt gebracht) a quality standard provided by the national 'Working Committee of Volunteering Agencies' (i.e. BAGFA; see <http://www.bagfa.de>) and based on internationally recognised quality standards.

On societal level volunteer work is increasingly replacing public offers, which were formerly guaranteed by the German state. In addition the public debate is centred on the question whether volunteer work is inheriting the risk of replacing regular employment. The 'Volunteering Agency Essen' in cooperation with all involved stakeholders ensures that 17 / 70 is complementary and not replacing existing service offers and/or replacing existing jobs.

Results

The specific outputs of 17 / 70 services and activities can be of different nature:

- Self developed (board) games;
- Arranging humoristic and entertaining events in the institutions (i.e. through circus or clown activities);
- Reading out and story telling sessions in the institutions;
- Accompanying older citizens to shops, public authorities or theatres;
- Keeping company with hospitalised older citizens.

The monitoring of intergenerational activities and the operational maintenance of the project is guaranteed through the embedding of 17 / 70 in the 'Quality Assurance Processes' of the volunteering agency.

Most prominently the continuous coaching and supervision of young volunteers throughout their entire activities contributes to the evaluation of 17 / 70, provides valuable insight in the work flow of the project, ensures commitment and allows corrective measures where necessary.

Finally the documentation of informally and non-formally acquired competences of the young volunteers through portfolios is an integral element of the evaluation of outcomes and impact.

The rather low drop out rates shed further light on the appropriate conceptual and operational approach of 17 / 70 and it may be therefore assumed that original aims of 17 / 70 are largely achieved and participants do benefit from the volunteering work e.g. widening social networks and increasing quality of life for all generations, fostering dialogue between the generations, skills and competence development providing personal development and professional orientation for young people etc.

The evaluation of mid-term outcomes, long-term impact and sustainability of 17 / 70 has just started in collaboration with the 'Institute for Community centred Social Work and Consultancy' (i.e. 'Institut für Stadtteilbezogene Soziale Arbeit und Beratung'; see <http://www.uni-essen.de/issab>) at the University of Duisburg-Essen. The first results will be made available at a later stage of the project and reported in an updated EAGLE Identity Card of 17 / 70.