



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

**The Loom  
Intergenerational Centre**

**ITALY  
Case Study Identity Card  
2007**



Education and Culture

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## EAGLE CASE STUDY

# ITALY

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *Executive Summary*

The Loom Programme is a social project of intergenerational experimentation carried out in Reggio Emilia city. The experimentation phase will last two years (2005-2007) and at the end of this phase the programme will enter a consolidation phase. The project is the results of the joint efforts of local public authorities, enterprises, associations, clubs, parishes and community welfare, both in term of funding and support.

The general aim of the project is to foster social cohesion within the local hamlet of Massenzatico (lying on the Reggio Emilia outskirts) where the recent great immigrants influx deeply modified the local community's social composition / equilibrium based on typical countryside patterns of the Po Valley. These patterns have been subverted by new settlements and inhabitants from all over the world giving rise to discontent and the risk of increasing intercultural and intergenerational conflicts. Specific intervention has been planned in order to prevent conflict escalation and exacerbation by the Reggio Emilia Municipality. The Municipality intermediation has been supported by families of the district that clearly expressed their needs through a questionnaire filled in 2003: the main need resulting from the inquiry was the 'setting up and/or the creation of community services addressed to children'. The Loom is therefore the instrument local authorities, together with the community itself, identified to answer the need of social cohesion of this hamlet.

The Loom is a playroom whose peculiarity is the location: the Loom centre has been set up within the local old people's home where elderly, children and adults have the opportunity to socialize and overcome mistrust and incommunicability affecting the Massenzatico community. Inhibition to intergenerational learning have been overcome by setting up a space/learning experience traditionally devoted to children (playroom) in an old people's home.

In this safe place, children and elderly discuss questions related to food, celebrations, crafts, games and historical events. The seniors encourage the children to respond to their life stories with questions and by producing creative work such as artwork, plays or written text. Due to the children's' response and interest the elderly felt motivated to 'translate' their experiences into a language suitable for children. In return the children helped them to acquire new skills like playing new games. While the adults acquired new skills, more self-confidence and self-esteem, the children enriched their knowledge of the history and the social changes in their community.



## 2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

<b>Title</b>	The Loom – Intergenerational Centre (Il Telaio – Centro Intergenerazionale Ludico-Atelieristico)
<b>Country/ Countries of origin</b>	Italy – Emilia Romagna Region
<b>Duration</b>	Starting Year: December 2005 End Year: July 2007 <b>Comments:</b> The starting year and end year indicated above refer to the experimental phase of the project.
<b>Status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Running</li> </ul> <b>Comments:</b> The project (services offered by the Centre) is expected to enter a <u>consolidation phase</u> in September 2007.
<b>Managing institution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public organisation/Ministry, and voluntary/social sector and foundations are the managing institutions.</li> </ul> <b>Comments:</b> The Loom is actually managed by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia through the Polo Sociale Territoriale - Città educativa <sup>1</sup> , the Seventh Municipality District ( <i>circoscrizione</i> <sup>2</sup> ) responsible for the pedagogic coordination and the atelier activity and by the Social Cooperative <sup>3</sup> 'Solidarity 90' that practically manages the Loom Centre. The RETE (Reggio Emilia Terza Età – Third Age Reggio Emilia ( <a href="http://www.rete.re.it/database/csa/rete.nsf?opendatabase">http://www.rete.re.it/database/csa/rete.nsf?opendatabase</a> ), a Public Care and Charity Institution, put rooms and facilities of the old people's home at project disposal.
<b>Contact details</b>	Last Name: Pavarini First Name: Roberta Title: N.A. Position/Role: President of the Seventh Municipality District of Reggio Emilia Institution: : Il Telaio c/o Casa Protetta 'I Tulipani' Street: Via Beethoven, 61/1 Town: Reggio Emilia Post Code: 42100 Phone: +39 0522 51 68 60 Fax: N.A. E-Mail: <a href="mailto:circoscrizione7@municipio.re.it">circoscrizione7@municipio.re.it</a> URL: N.A.

<sup>1</sup> Municipality sectors directly involved in the Project: Councillorship of Citizenship and Equal Opportunities:

<http://www.comune.re.it/retecivica/urp/retecivi.nsf/PESASSESSORIWEB/Gina+Pedroni?opendocument>  
Polo Sociale Territoriale 3:

<http://www.comune.re.it/retecivica/urp/retecivi.nsf/6778ab5ea9d6e434c125687400578bef/945aef9b7dee84c5c1256e4b003e9410?OpenDocument>

Città Educativa: <http://www.rete.re.it/database/csa/rete.nsf?opendatabase>

<sup>2</sup> *Circoscrizione comunale di decentramento* is an Italian term indicating administrative areas (districts) of cities having at least 30.000 inhabitants. Each district includes several quarters or hamlets.

<sup>3</sup> Italian 'social cooperative' is a particularly successful form of multi-stakeholder cooperative. There are two types of social cooperatives: "type A" social cooperative, which brings together providers and beneficiaries of a social service as members; and "type B", social cooperative that brings together permanent workers and previously unemployed people who wish to integrate into the labour market. The Social Cooperative 'Solidarity 90' belongs to the type A and has a sound experience in playroom management.

<i>Funding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP)</li> </ul> <p><u>Comments:</u> The funding is provided by the Reggio Emilia Municipality, the Seventh Municipality District, New Lat – Giglio s.p.a. (one of the largest milk products company in Italy – sponsor), Banca Agricola Mantovana (local bank – sponsor) and Several territorial associations, clubs and community welfare: among them ARCI clubs<sup>4</sup> 'La Fontana', 'La Querica', 'La Capanna' and the Women Association of Messenzatico and several local parishes.</p>
<i>Partnership arrangement/organizational form</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Top-down programme/project</li> </ul> <p><u>Comments:</u> After detecting pockets of vulnerability and intergenerational and intercultural conflicts, the Reggio Emilia Municipality (specifically the Seventh Municipality District) planned a number of interventions to prevent conflict exacerbation and escalation. These interventions resulted in the Loom Project setting up. So, the Loom programme is strictly linked to local social needs.</p>
<i>Scale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community based</li> </ul> <p><u>Comments:</u> The hamlet of Massenzatico, where a new old people's home was set up in May 2005 (Casa Protetta I Tulipani), benefits of the Project activity.</p>

<sup>4</sup> ARCI: *Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana* – Italian Cultural and Social Association

### 3 DESCRIPTION OF COLLABORATING GROUPS

<i>Collaborating Group I</i>	The collaborating group I is formed by qualified playroom assistants, pedagogists, project coordinators, atelier responsables and voluntary workers. They are mainly female and their socio-economic status is principally medium-high.
<i>Total number of Collaborating Group I</i>	7 <u>Comments:</u> Out of these people there are 2 qualified playroom assistants, 1 pedagogue, 1 project coordinator, 1 atelier responsible, 2 voluntary workers who attended specific training courses supplied by the Reggio Emilia Municipality.
<i>Age group(s) of Collaborating Group I</i>	<u>Minimum Age:</u> 25 <u>Maximum Age:</u> 47 <u>Age distribution:</u> Approx. 80% are between 25 and 35.
<i>Collaborating Group II</i>	Kids, their families and elderly (in general grandmothers of the kids visiting the Loom Centre) both living in the neighbourhood of the <i>I Tulipani</i> old people's home and elderly hosted in the old people's home. As regards families we have to state that frequent visitors are primarily mothers or grandmothers of the kids. External visitors are, moreover, people living in the Massenzatico hamlet (which is the target community of the project). Most of the people living in this hamlet are at risk of social exclusion (among them there are also a number of immigrants).
<i>Total number of Collaborating Group II</i>	Maximum number of seniors participating in the Loom's activity is 60. <u>Comments:</u> As regards the number of elderly, the number of people participating in the activity depends on the number of people able to take part in it and on the number of elderly hosted in the <i>I Tulipani</i> which is floating. Whereas the number of families and children involved in these activities varies according to the period. As regards gender participation, female participation is higher than the male one.
<i>Age group(s) of Collaborating Group II</i>	<u>Minimum Age:</u> 0 year old. Children under the age of 6 must be accompanied by parents <u>Maximum Age:</u> 12 years old <u>Age distribution:</u> Mainly female

## 4 DESCRIPTION OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES

### *Description of Learning Arrangement & Learning Practice*

'The Loom' is a social project of intergenerational experimentation. The Centre is a children's recreation centre whose peculiarity consist in its particular setting, as a matter of fact the recreation centre is located within the old people's house '*I Tulipani*' of Messenzatico, a hamlet of the Reggio Emilia city.

The general aim of the project is to foster social cohesion within the local hamlet of Messenzatico where the recent great immigrants influx deeply modified the local community's social composition / equilibrium based on typical countryside patterns of the Po Valley. These patterns have been subverted by new settlings and inhabitants from all over the world giving rise to discontent and the risk of increasing intercultural and inter-generational conflicts.

The Loom has twofold objectives: the general objective consist in better answering community needs, both explicit and implicit; the specific objective is to foster socialization skills of children, adults (parents, education team and old people's home team) and elderly hosted in the old people's home. This objective is strictly related to the Competency Category 2 (Interacting in heterogeneous groups): as a matter of fact the Messenzatico community has a great need of learning how to manage and resolve conflicts and therefore to deal with both cultural and generational diversities, to cooperate and to relate well to others. These are the cornerstones of the Programme.

The project is split up into three different phases with different timing. Phase 1 and Phase 2 specifically deal with Project experimentation: the first phase, from 5 December 2005 to 29 May 2006 has been devoted to the playroom setting up within the old people's home '*I Tulipani*'; first contact between children and elderly; and the starting off of joint activities. The second phase (9 October 2006 - 1 June 2007) is about the experience consolidation; the official starting off of joint planning between the Loom team and the '*I Tulipani*' staff; the involvement of elderly living outside the old people's home; and the starting off of the service of book and game lending. The third phase (September 2007) will be the consolidation phase of the whole programme.

The safe and creative atmosphere of the playroom encourages children and seniors to feel free to express themselves through a variety of activities, such as drawing, dance and music, storytelling (this is a powerful mean for passing history and language skills to younger generations), theatre (participants sketch scenes of activities involving interaction between different age groups), redecoration of playroom to create a shared place for play and enjoyment, old games – seniors and children become playmates by playing old games unfamiliar to children and vice versa, etc. . .

More in general, children and elderly discuss questions related to food, celebrations, crafts, games and historical events. The seniors encourage the children to respond to their life stories with questions and by producing creative work such as artwork, plays or written text. Due to the children's' response and interest the elderly felt motivated to 'translate' their experiences into a language suitable for children. In return the children helped them to acquire new skills like playing new games. While the adults acquired new skills, more self-confidence and self-esteem, the children enriched their knowledge of the history and the social changes in their community.

Some activities are also grouped in specific *sub-projects*. As an example:

'The Five Senses' subproject. See, Hear, Taste and Smell are important for everyone and children and old people are given the opportunity to increase their awareness by exploring the world through the five senses, stirring up reminiscences or experiencing new



emotions. Each sense has a specific 'activity plan': for example the 'taste activity' is developed through cooking workshops.

The privileged methodology is the playful approach. The sub-project is divided into two phases: (1) Observation phase (from October to December) aimed at observing end users in order to identify their interests and ideas concerning the themes. At the end of this stage users are grouped according to the age and skills in order to enhance each user's ability and competence. The grouping is aimed at avoiding unease circumstances and user's belittlement. (2) Activities carrying out according to the users' needs and peculiarities. Activities may involve one or more senses at the same time.

'The Carnival' subproject. The children together with the elderly create a character and sew fancy-dress costumes for the local Carnival celebrations.

'Puppets' subproject. During the first stage of this sub-project puppets are created using recycled materials, in the second stage seniors and children invent a fairy tale which will be staged in the puppet theatre (third and last stage).

Simulations, role playing are used, if needed. ICT and computer play aren't an important part of the Loom's activities, computer are mainly used for organisational and administrative purposes.

The Loom's activities take place on Monday and Friday from 15:30 to 18:30 and are meant to reach specific programme objectives through participatory and action based activities. Specific objectives are: foster socialization skills, autonomy and creativity of children, old people and adults with different cultural backgrounds, as well as their self-confidence and self-esteem. The constant and deep interaction allows the mutual acquaintance and integration between people of different ages and cultures answering, that way, the needs of the community (general objective: prevent intergenerational and cultural conflicts).

To start and develop the activity the first input usually comes from the two teams responsible for the learning activity (i.e. sub-projects), but participants rapidly take on the responsibility of carrying out personally the planned activity.

Professional instructors (playroom assistants, pedagogist, atelier responsible), elderly hosted by the old people's home and parents are involved in providing/participating in learning activities.

Moreover, the Massenzatico community turned out to be very helpful and active. Inhabitants having specific competences put at The Loom disposal their time and experience (i.e. local carpenter participates in a specific workshop and also provided furniture for the playroom).

<p><i>Location of the learning activity</i></p>	<p>The Loom is a playroom whose peculiarity is the location: the Centre has been set up within the local old people's home / <i>Tulipani</i>.</p>
<p><i>Learning activities (related to policy objectives)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community development</li> <li>▪ Mediation</li> <li>▪ Social inclusion/participation, active citizenship</li> <li>▪ History and reminiscence</li> <li>▪ Grandparents and grandchildren.</li> </ul> <p><u>Comments/Description:</u> The Loom Project is a specific intervention planned to prevent conflict escalation within a local community. The community of Massenzatico as a whole will benefit from the project in terms of inclusion and participation in the community life: the Loom encourages the whole community to adopt a caring approach to its senior citizens thus improving the overall quality of life. It led to a better integration of the elderly disadvantaged who feel more motivated to start again playing a more active role in their community.</p>

<i>Fields of Learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development and continuity of societal values; Productive cultural assimilation.</li> </ul>
<i>Knowledge &amp; Learning Exchange/Flow between the target group(s)</i>	The flow between the target groups is predominantly 'upstream', but there also is a component of bi-directional flow ( e.g. shared activities: theatre, studying together, discussion circles).
<i>Interactions between the target group(s)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ one-to-one</li> <li>▪ one-to-many</li> <li>▪ group based</li> <li>▪ physical/offline interaction</li> </ul>
<i>Categories of the learning activity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Informal</li> </ul> <p><u>Comments/Description:</u> We would indicate the informal category, since most of the skills acquired by children and elderly develop naturally by playing, discussing and having fun.</p>
<i>OECD/DeSeCo Competences addressed by the CS</i>	<p>2 = Competence Category 2: Interacting in Heterogeneous Groups</p> <p>2.1 = 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 assert rights, interests, limits and needs.</p>
<i>EC Key Competences addressed by the CS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interpersonal and civic competences</li> <li>▪ Cultural awareness.</li> </ul>
<i>Success factors and barriers of the CS</i>	<p>Success factors are strictly related to main innovative aspects of the programme. Inhibition to intergenerational learning has been overcome by setting up a space/learning experience traditionally devoted to children (playroom) in an old people's home. Moreover, planning of intergenerational learning activity is not fortuitous but rather structural. Another good practice is represented by the constitution of a macro-team (education staff and old people's home staff) that periodically plan, monitor and evaluate intergenerational projects.</p> <p>During the Project development and implementation some critical incidents have been observed. The difficulty in harmonizing the different needs of the involved categories produced some tensions at the very beginning of the experience: children's need for playing, express themselves and exploring; the need for mother to make other mothers acquaintance; needs of elderly for peace and rest.</p> <p>Moreover, the teams involved in the intergenerational learning activity planning find it difficult to accept the other team's way of working.</p> <p>The most significant changes during the life cycle of the Project are the spontaneous composition of the above-mentioned difficulties.</p> <p>The main barrier can be identified in problems the Massenzatico community is experiencing: the lack of communication and the increasing mistrust among people living in this hamlet. The peculiarity of the programme (playroom in an old people's home located in the hamlet) helped overcome mistrust and incommunicability. The most important 'tools' of this project are children's openness and curiosity that perfectly match with elderly need of overcoming loneliness. They quickly developed an intense and deep</p>

**Results of the CS**

relationship that inspired the two teams (education and elderly care teams) allowing them to better match their different ways of working, easing their joint planning activity and gave a great contribution to adults' socialization process.

Among the specific outputs we can list the sub-projects (The Five Senses etc.) and costumes as well as the set of new fairy tales...

Learners do not receive any qualification they simply carry out their activity because they enjoy it.

Learning outcomes undergo an evaluation process that refers to the project as a whole. Evaluation criteria set by the evaluators are: End users attendance; Active participation of users to the planned activities; Degree of satisfaction of families and elderly with the planned intergenerational learning activities; Participation and involvement of hamlet inhabitants in events organised by the Loom.

The evaluation methodologies refers to: the visitors and users register with data on users' age; the Loom membership card; questionnaire for the users; recurring meetings between the education team, pedagogues and project coordinator aimed at project and sub-project evaluation; recurring meetings between the education team and the old people's home team aimed at project and sub-project evaluation;

The evaluation activity highlighted the impact of the project on the target groups and on the community as a whole: increased social cohesion; active participation in the community life; higher self-esteem; better quality of life; personal fulfilment have been perceived by the target groups and the community (as often indicated in the questionnaires).

The most impressive result is the spontaneous communication between elderly and children: after the initial mutual suspicion they rapidly get closer and the elderly-children relationship became deeper and deeper as the experience progressed. Possible long-term impact: increased social cohesion.

Among other results there are also: the total number of people that regularly go to the Loom is getting higher and higher: among them, there is a significant number of new resident families. The relationships between children, adults and elderly are very good and elderly living outside the old people's home also participate in the recreational activities of the Loom.

Joint planning and development of intergenerational learning activity is another interesting aspect: a macro-team has been set up to plan and develop the Loom programme. The peculiarity of this macro-team is that the education team referring to the Loom forms it and the elderly care staff referring to the old people's home *I Tulipani*.