



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

The Actors' House: UNITER

ROMANIA
Case Study Identity Card
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EAGLE CASE STUDY

ROMANIA

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

All projects developed under 'The Actors' House' programme are aimed at protecting and supporting elderly actors and they have been initiated and supported by the Romanian Theatrical Union (UNITER, www.uniter.ro), a professional organisation of the Romanian actors that functions as an NGO in Bucharest since 1990.

The programme acknowledges the precarious status and the needs of the retired actors and aims to identify means and opportunities to re-vitalise the creativity of the artists and to value their professional experience in order to fight against their marginalisation, social isolation and exclusion. As part of the intergenerational learning practices the retired actors interact with (i) younger actors, (ii) children and youth from different schools and (iii) marginalised and homeless institutionalised children.

The case of intergenerational practice presented here refers to activities in which elderly actors who are retired and who are willing work with children and youth from secondary schools and from social care institutions. An actor or a group of actors works with one class/group of children on a regular basis (weekly/monthly) in order to stage a performance. This practical result focuses the activity of the two age groups and creates the opportunity for a number of practices to be fostered and developed.

Actors tell stories about their profession and life and they stimulate children to respond. Children reflect on their own life experiences, interest, needs and problems while trying to identify a theme for the performance and write a script for it. A number of social, cultural and educational issues are covered as part of the intergenerational learning activities.

Other alternatives to staging plays have been implemented, in which actors and children used as pre-text for their communication and common activities the texts (literature, history, culture) in their textbooks: the actors reflect on the text in the light of their personal and professional experience and the two groups talk about the texts and in doing so children learn new information and new competences.



2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

<i>Title</i>	The Actors' House: UNITER
<i>Country</i>	<p>Bucharest, Romania</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> The projects under the 'The Actors' House' programme are based mainly in and around Bucharest, since the headquarters of the initiating institution – UNITER is located in the capital. However, there are events and activities that are occasionally organised and developed in other regions or cities of Romania (for example, in 2007 Sibiu is the European Capital of Culture and, thus, created the opportunity for a number of social and cultural project to be developed; among these, the project 'The Marginalised Youth and the Art of Performance', developed between 28 May – 1 June 2007, under 'The Actors' House')</p>
<i>Duration</i>	<p>Starting Year: 1995 End Year: n/a</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> UNITER, the institution that has initiated the programmes and the projects based on intergenerational learning involving the elderly and retired actors, has been created in 1990 and it immediately started its programmes and projects; however, the projects developed under 'the Actors' House' have started to take shape in mid 1990s. They are still running every year.</p>
<i>Status</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Running <p><u>Comments:</u> Although the different projects underpinned by intergenerational practices and involving retired actors and young people and children can have different themes or names ('the Pleasure to communicate', 'animating the Textbooks' or 'The Marginalised Youth and the Art of Performance'), they run on a regular basis, usually mirroring the structure of the school year.</p>
<i>Managing institution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Voluntary/social sector/foundations <p><u>Comments:</u> UNITER is a professional organisation of the Romanian actors that functions as an NGO and has acquired the status of 'public utility organisation'; it was created in 1990 and its declared aim is to promote and develop Romanian theatre and the professionals working in the field of theatre and performance arts. It is active through programmes and projects and its activities have creative, socio-cultural, educational and humanitarian dimensions</p>
<i>Contact details</i>	<p>Last Name: SĂSĂRMAN First Name: Mihaela Title: Ms. Position/Role: Project co-ordinator Institution: UNITER – Romanian Theatrical Union Street: Str. G. Enescu nr. 2 – 4, sect 1 Town: Bucharest Post Code: 010305 Phone: 00 40 21 315 36 36 E-Mail: mhlsasarman@gmail.com URL: http://www.uniter.ro</p>
<i>Funding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP) ▪ No funding (own contribution, own resources) <p><u>Comments:</u> UNITER develops the projects under the programme 'The Actors' House' through its own resources and contributions, but, occasionally other private and public (Ministry of Culture) organisations fund different activities.</p>



Partnership arrangement/organisational form

- Bottom-up, grass root initiative

Comments: The yearly projects constructed around intergenerational practice have been initiated by the active members of UNITER and they are co-ordinated by a project manager, also a member of the Union; these members may be the elderly actors themselves, but, in most of the cases other members design these projects in which the elderly actors are activated through interaction with children and youth.

Scale

- Community based

Local

Comments: Generally, the activities are organised in and around Bucharest in small (marginalised) youth and school communities.

3 DESCRIPTION OF COLLABORATING GROUPS

<i>Collaborating Group I</i>	<p>Elderly retired (60+) actors who are faced with difficult life situations (due to age, poverty or health problems) and who need moral (and sometimes financial) support that can offer them a fresh and more optimistic perspective on life.</p> <p>The projects under the 'Actors' House' activation programme acknowledge that actors have a special professional route while active (under public scrutiny, under the pressure of professional excellence manifested in creativity and originality) and that this route leads to a number of consequences for retired actors: tendency to self-exclude themselves socially, isolated and without family in many cases (16% of retired elderly actors and 45% of retired elderly actresses are single, divorced or widowed).</p> <p>Elderly actors are sometimes supported by social care workers and the form teacher who usually teaches the group of children with whom the actors plan to work.</p>
<i>Total number of Collaborating Group I</i>	<p>2 projects, on a regularly yearly basis</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> there is no fixed number of participants, it depends on their openness and physical capacity sometimes and on the openness of the institution where the other collaborating group (youth or children);</p>
<i>Age group(s) of Collaborating Group I</i>	<p><u>Minimum Age:</u> 60+</p> <p><u>Maximum Age:</u> (84)</p> <p><u>Age distribution:</u> The figures published on the UNITER site show that 34% of the group is between 65 and 74 years old and 38% between 75 and 84 years old. There are usually more women (68%) than men (32%) in the group.</p>
<i>Collaborating Group II</i>	<p>Generally, children who are in the lower secondary school (12 – 14/15 years old) and who learn in different secondary schools in Bucharest. Sometimes activities are developed with young people (15 – 18) who are enrolled in higher secondary school. These children are enrolled in formal secondary education having around 30 classes a week in which the balance between theory and practice is sometimes to the detriment of practical activities.</p> <p>Some of the activities in the projects are set in social care institutions that are meant to identify and support homeless and marginalised children; these children come from at-risk families and backgrounds (disorganised families, orphans, poor and/or unemployed parents, etc).</p>
<i>Total number of Collaborating Group II</i>	<p>2 projects, no fixed number of participants</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> Generally, there are 25-30 children in a class, but smaller groups than that sometimes participate in project activities</p>
<i>Age group(s) of Collaborating Group II</i>	<p><u>Minimum Age:</u> 12</p> <p><u>Maximum Age:</u> 14</p>

4 DESCRIPTION OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES

<p><i>Description of Learning Arrangement & Learning Practice</i></p>	<p>'The pleasure to communicate' are series of intergenerational activities that involve elderly retired actors and children aged 12-14; these activities are meant to re-vitalise the creativity of elderly actors and to value their professional experience in order to fight marginalisation, social isolation and exclusion; on the other hand the inter-generational learning activities are meant to help the participating children to capitalise on their life experiences and to write and stage performances based on life stories. Theatre is used as a common means of communication and as a pre-text for exchanging knowledge and information on different issues: culture, societal values and personal development. Actors and children discuss different life issues that are of interest for children or which are suggested by the form teacher or social care worker; these issues are explored through story telling and then shaped into a small play or performance. The value of intergenerational learning is assigned to the product (the play or performance), but mainly to the process: elderly actors can use their experience and their talents and they can contribute to the education and development of children, children learn about themselves and about a number of social and life issues while talking about and staging the performance.</p> <p>'Animating the textbooks' is a different series of intergenerational learning activities in which elderly retired actors participate in counselling and educational classes in different schools and they tell stories or make presentations on issues that children know from their textbooks, but which actors have lived (culture, history, literature, society).</p> <p>The activities are organised on a regular basis over a school year.</p>
<p><i>Location of the learning activity</i></p>	<p>1. Formal settings i.e. educational institute 2. Informal settings i.e. social setting</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> The learning activities are usually organised in different schools and these activities can be part of regular curriculum classes (the</p>
<p><i>Learning activities (related to policy objectives)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social inclusion/participation, active citizenship ▪ History and reminiscence incl. oral history, preserving cultural heritage, work with contemporary witnesses ▪ Arts incl. culture, theatre, play, music <p><u>Comments:</u> In the process of preparing performances or of enlarging on textbook texts and issues, the elderly actors are re-activated as professionals, as educators and they are re-inserted in social life; they initiate youth and children in theatre studies and while doing that the actors contribute with their perceptions and experiences of theatre and cultural life. Children learn and are educated through other means than the formal and traditional ones.</p>
<p><i>Fields of Learning</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual competence development ▪ Development and continuity of societal values;
<p><i>Knowledge & Learning Exchange/Flow between the target group(s)</i></p>	<p>Predominantly 'downstream' i.e. older to younger, but, in some cases, balanced and/or bi-directional e.g. shared activities (theatre, studying together, discussion circles)</p>

<i>Interactions between the target group(s)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ one-to-many; ▪ many-to-many; ▪ physical/offline interaction;
<i>Categories of the learning activity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Informal <p><u>Comments:</u> The learning activities within the project are informal and they are complementary to the formal learning children experience in school most of the time. The Romanian system of education is known to be very thorough and result oriented, but, processes are not always valued in formal education; information and theory are constructed as more valuable than personal experience and learning by doing. The activities in the project add value to the experience of children because they bring together personal and social life with learning and the processes of learning with the products of the process.</p>
<i>OECD/DeSeCo Competences</i>	<p>1 = Competence Category 1: Using Tools Interactively</p> <p>1.1 = The ability to use language, symbols and text interactively</p> <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 form and conduct life plans and personal project</p> <p>3.3 = The ability to assert rights, interests, limits and needs</p>
<i>EC Key Competences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication in the mother tongue ▪ Learning-to-learn ▪ Interpersonal and civic competences ▪ Cultural awareness
<i>Success factors and barriers</i>	<p>The project has been successful due to the fact that the intergenerational learning activities lead to the fulfilment of the needs of both groups involved: elderly actors need to socialise and they need to feel valued and to continue to use their experience and talents; the children are confronted with life questions and issues that cannot be addressed within formal education offered by the school. Theatre becomes a pre-text that creates the opportunity for life stories to be told and 'exploited' in all their dimensions. When actors work with children from disadvantaged backgrounds, two groups at –risk interact and support each other: elderly actors and homeless and institutionalised children, both in the danger of becoming isolated and marginalised.</p> <p>A second success factor is the complementarity of the activities in the project to formal and non-formal education: children are able to acquire and develop knowledge and competences on a number of issues (society, culture, social interaction, etc) in a participative way and based on their personal experience and personal competences. The ability to verbalise experience and to reflect on it are transferable competences that kids can use both inside and outside classroom.</p> <p>The projects developed under 'the Actors' House' programme would need wider and more substantial human and financial resources: the activation means and the logistical support needed in order to involve the elderly actors and the administrative management of the projects of organising intergenerational work in schools implies energy and time from the part of the project manager and sometimes she physically cannot cover everything.</p>



Communication with schools and/or teachers and the agreement on times and dates for the meetings of the two groups are not always easy to achieve.

The projects have evolved every year, new groups of children have been invited and included in the projects (homeless and institutionalised children) and new formats have been identified for the activities (meetings and work as extracurricular activity or as curricular activity). Some of the activities have been taken outside schools and classrooms.

Results

The learning activities contribute towards the social re-insertion of the retired elderly actors, since they have the opportunity to socialise with all the social actors involved in the process (UNITER project co-ordinator, school management, teachers, social care workers and youth) and to act as resources and as facilitators of knowledge.

On the other hand, children become self-confident to talk about themselves, to reflect upon their experiences and to interact with peers and adults in trying to identify their needs and problems. They acquire information on various issues (literature, theatre, historical events, social issues) and their attitudes towards learning becomes more positive. Children can experience the benefits of extracurricular activities and can enhance their classroom learning.

The plays or performances developed through the project and presented publicly, focus the childrens' and the elderly actors' energies, competences and skills.

The activities in the project benefit of the direct feedback of the participants, but they are not formally evaluated by the initiators of the project.