



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

**The Council of Seniors – The
Municipality of Timisoara**

ROMANIA
Case Study Identity Card
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EAGLE CASE STUDY

ROMANIA

Work Package:	WP 2 Scoping & Mapping
Authors:	Mihaela Tilinca (IREA), Romania
Research Coordination:	Thomas Fischer & Walter F. Kugemann (FIM-NewLearning), Germany
Project Officer at the European Commission:	Brian Holmes & Ramunas Kuncaitis
Publisher:	FIM-NewLearning, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Konrad-Zuse-Straße 3, D-91052 Erlangen, Phone: +49 9131 8524735, Fax: +49 9131 8524738, E-Mail: info@fim.uni-erlangen.de, Web: www.fim.uni-erlangen.de

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The EAGLE-Project is co-funded by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture under the SOCRATES GRUNDTVIG Programme.

Grant Agreement Number: 229981 - CP - 1 – 2006 - 1 - GR- GRUNDTVIG – G1

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Design, Logo and Title Photos by Claudia Fuchs & Brigitte Gall, FIM-NewLearning





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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

The Council of Seniors is a project initiated by the Municipality of Timisoara in 2004 in order to support the social inclusion of the elderly citizens of the city into the life of the community through intergenerational practice that would help elderly citizens remain active and that would create opportunities for them to share their knowledge and experience of the cultural and spiritual traditions of the city with the younger generations.

Intergenerational practice has developed in two directions in the Council of Seniors project; firstly, the Council of Seniors interacts with the Local Council, the policy and decision making body of the city, with whom the Council of Seniors exchanges knowledge and information concerning the traditions of the city and the needs and expectations of the elderly people; secondly, the Council of Seniors interacts with groups of younger citizens of the city, pupils and students, to whom the elderly people pass active citizenship values and attitudes.

The flow of knowledge and information is mainly 'downstream' in both cases, but there are a number of instances in which the flow is 'bi-directional'; for example, in the first case, as an interface between the decision makers and the elderly citizens, the Council of Seniors receives information from the Local Council and organises debates with elderly citizens who reflect on the issues; then the council of Seniors goes back to the Local Council with the recommendations and comments of the senior citizens.

The Council of Seniors has been created as a consultative body working closely with the Municipality of Timisoara; its activity has continuously developed since its creation and presently, the Council prepares the documentation to change its legal status to that of an independent NGO. As the activity of the council has become more complex the elderly people consider that they need wider opportunities for funding and partnership that would widen the range of their activities and would increase the impact of their activity both on elderly people and on the younger people with whom they work.

The Council of Seniors is a project in which the learning activities cover a number of directions: community development, including intergenerational living and meeting places, education and learning, mediation problems, active citizenship, history and oral history, preserving cultural heritage and other issues concerning community and personal development.

In the next sections the description of the intergenerational learning will be made with reference to the interaction of the council of Seniors with the younger people who study in secondary and tertiary education in Timisoara. A separate grid would be needed to describe intergenerational practice that occurs in the interaction between the Council of Seniors and the Local Council.

The framework of the Council of Seniors can be transferred to other contexts: such a framework facilitates the concentration of the energy, knowledge and experience of the elderly citizens in a community and the opportunity to channel these towards alternatives means of informal education.



2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Title	The Council of Seniors – The Municipality of Timisoara (Romania)
Country	Timisoara, Romania <u>Comments:</u> The Council of Seniors functions as a consultative association of elderly people active in Timisoara and the Timis county.
Duration	Starting Year: 2004 End Year: n/a <u>Comments:</u> The Council of Seniors has been active through different projects, activities and events since its creation.
Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Running <u>Comments:</u> The Council of Seniors project has started at the initiative of the Mayor and Vice-Mayor of Timisoara; it has started through the creation of a consultative association of elderly people, but the project has become more complex every year. The council of Seniors aims now to become an NGO and to be able to initiate its own projects.
Managing institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public organisation (i.e. Mayor's office) <u>Comments:</u> Within the Municipality of Timisoara, the Direction for Community Social Assistance has a special Department whose activity is entirely dedicated to the social protection of senior citizens. This Department supports the activity of the Council of Seniors. All the activities of the Municipality that support elderly people are managed by one of the two Vice-Mayors.
Contact details	Last Name: ORZA First Name: Adrian Title: Mr Position/Role: Vice Mayor Institution: The Municipality of Timisoara Street: Bd. C.D. Loga no 1 Town: Timisoara Post Code: 300030 Phone: 0040 256 408 300 Fax: 0040 256 490635 E-Mail: orza@primariatm.ro URL: http://www.primaratm.ro
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public (local level, Municipality of Timisoara) ▪ Private <u>Comments:</u> The Mayor's office and the Municipality of Timisoara sustain the activity of the Council of Seniors through their yearly budgets. However, there are cases when other private organisations contribute with funds that enable the elderly people develop some of their activities.
Partnership arrangement/organisational form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bottom-up, grass root initiative <u>Comments:</u> The Mayor and one of the Vice-mayors of Timisoara had the initiative to create initiate the project through which the council of Seniors has been created and developed.
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community based ▪ Local <u>Comments:</u> The Council of Seniors acts locally, mainly in the city of Timisoara, but also in the Timis county. The members of the Council are citizens of Timisoara and they represent the elderly citizens of the city.

3 DESCRIPTION OF COLLABORATING GROUPS

<i>Collaborating Group I</i>	<p>The Council of Seniors: elderly people over 53 years old who are citizens of Timisoara and who want to become members of the Council. Elderly citizens can volunteer themselves in order to become members of the Council, or other elderly people can nominate them. The members of the Council represent the different neighbourhoods and constituencies of the city; they represent a wide range of minorities, ages and professions. The group is extremely varied and thus the knowledge and experience of the group is a valuable asset. The Council is elected for two years.</p>
<i>Total number of Collaborating Group I</i>	<p>60 <u>Comments:</u> The maximum number of members is in the council of Seniors is 60.</p>
<i>Age group(s) of Collaborating Group I</i>	<p><u>Minimum Age:</u> 53 <u>Maximum Age:</u> 96 <u>Comment:</u> The average exist age is now 60 years old, but there are people who opt for an early retirement or who retire earlier because of health problems, that is why 53 is the minimum age for being accepted as a member of the Council. The oldest member of the Council at present is 96 years old. As an 'age dean' he is in the executive board of the Council.</p>
<i>Collaborating Group II</i>	<p>Secondary and VET school pupils, and university students. The Council of Seniors have signed an agreement with the Local School Inspectorate in order to be able to organise events and activities in secondary and Vet schools in Timisoara.</p>
<i>Total number of Collaborating Group II</i>	<p>1,800 pupils and 250 students <u>Comments:</u> Over two years 60 groups/classes of pupils and students in 15 education institutions have participated in intergenerational learning together with the members of the Council of Seniors.</p>
<i>Age group(s) of Collaborating Group II</i>	<p><u>Minimum Age:</u> 6 <u>Maximum Age:</u> 24</p>

4 DESCRIPTION OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES

Description of Learning Arrangement & Learning Practice

The Council of Seniors has developed the 'Applied education' programme that was implemented in a number of 15 schools and universities between 2005 and 2007; a framework agreement between the Council of Seniors and the Local School Inspectorate was signed in order to allow the Seniors to meet pupils and to assure the necessary administrative support for the activities.

The aim of the intergenerational learning programme was to open and strengthen inter-generational dialogue for the benefit of the community. The main objectives of the programme were; (i) to activate elderly citizens of the city and to valorise their creativity and experience, (ii) to offer alternative civic education to the younger generations of citizens of the community and (iii) to organise common events in which the two generations could learn to communicate and to negotiate existing or possible conflicts.

Elderly citizens tend to isolate themselves after their retirement and to lack opportunities that can help them re-integrate in the life of the community taking different roles than those they had while they were active. On the other hand younger citizens lack knowledge and information about their city and its history and people; in school they receive vast amounts of information, but this is usually irrelevant for the very local context. The 'applied education' programme aims to respond to these needs by creating the opportunity for the two age groups to work together towards solving their needs.

The Council of Seniors have designed and administered a questionnaire in schools in order to understand what the pupils' learning needs were. Based on the findings, the seniors have developed a citizenship guide' and they have planned a number of presentations, round tables and debates addressed to the pupils and to the university students. A number of 60 groups of students and pupils (classes) have been visited by teams of seniors (members of the Intergeneration committee of the Council of Seniors) who gave input to the young participants and who brought their life stories and life experience into the debates and discussions on different social and community issues.

The pedagogical approach has been 'traditional', however the two age groups exchanged information and discussed openly their perspectives and opinions.

The seniors were motivated to participate in the programme as it was an opportunity for them to continue participate in the life of the community and to continue to do what they have done before retirement; for the younger generation it was interesting to learn about very relevant social and cultural issues and about their own city from witnesses who could discuss different issues as they have lived or experienced them.

Location of the learning activity

Formal settings i.e. public (town hall) building and schools

Informal settings i.e. community facility/building and social settings

Comments/Description: Most of the activities organised by the Council of Seniors under the programme 'Applied education' has taken place in schools and universities. However, some of the events have been organised in informal settings: museums, outdoor locations, etc.

Learning activities (related to policy objectives)

- Community development, living & safety
- Mediation incl. problem/conflict solving
- Social inclusion/participation, active citizenship
- History and reminiscence

<i>Fields of Learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Societal/economic exchange and consultancy ▪ Development and continuity of societal values
<i>Knowledge & Learning Exchange/Flow between the target group(s)</i>	Predominantly 'downstream' i.e. older to younger, but, in some cases, balanced and/or bi-directional e.g. shared activities (public consultation, public debate, informal validation)
<i>Interactions between the target group(s)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ group based ▪ physical/offline interaction
<i>Categories of the learning activity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Informal <p><u>Comments:</u> The activities are envisaged citizenship education, EU issues, cultural history, traditions, arts and they have been complementary to what pupils and students study through formal education. The knowledge and information acquired by the pupils and students through intergenerational learning referred to issues studied in schools, but the elderly citizens could offer an 'applied' perspective to those issues: elderly citizens have lived history and they have experienced traditions and social events. They speak about these while speaking of their own life histories.</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>1.2 = The ability to use knowledge and information 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 ▪ Interpersonal and civic competences

Success factors and barriers

The success of the intergenerational learning activities developed under the 'Applied Education' programme initiated by the Council of Seniors has been mainly the result of the energy and the commitment of the seniors to contribute to the civic education of the younger citizens of the community; they have developed a set of materials and a 'citizenship guide' to support their activities and the framework they have designed has ensured the coherence of their enterprise.

The learning activities have been successful due to the richness of the documentary resources the seniors used in their presentations and discussions and due to the novelty and complementarity of the approach: in school children usually learn or acquire knowledge and information about national and international contexts, but not about the local context that is relevant to them.

The main barriers that can be identified as undermining the potential and positive impact of the intergenerational learning activities are

- The agreement between the Council of Seniors and the Local School Inspectorate to lead to the feeling of the younger generations that they are a 'captive audience';
- The fact that the senior citizens sometimes had their own agenda set without leaving it open for other issues to be added by other involved actors (young people, their teachers, etc);
- Lack of more opportunities for 'bi-directional' flow of knowledge and information; the 'downstream flow' to be complemented with 'upstream flow';
- The 'traditional approach' that was at the basis of many of the activities and the lack of more active-participative methods.

Results

The seniors who participated in the activities have informally evaluated the intergenerational learning occurring, but no external evaluation of the amount and nature of learning has been made.

The learning activities resulted in a significant number of meetings (and thus communicative events) in which the two age groups have been involved: the seniors have started to learn how to use their life stories and experience in offering complementary civic education to young people; children and young people have learned to praise age and experience in a more open and sympathetic manner.

A guide and a set of materials have been created as a result of Council of Seniors 'applied education' activities and these materials will be revised and completed with more resources.