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## Session Information

**20 SES 10 B, Museum Education and Intercultural competences.**

Paper Session

Time: 2010-08-27  
10:30-12:00

Room: U40 SALI 8

Chair: Tony Cotton

## Contribution

### **The Slovenian Model of Intercultural Competence Training for the Understanding and Introduction of Older Voluntary Cultural Mediators' Practice in Museums**

Museums have the responsibility to develop and implement culturally responsive programmes even though the training experiences of museum professionals may not have involved multi- and intercultural education. The paper focuses on age-related cultural agendas when including older adults in museum learning environment. It is argued that in an ageing society museums need to overcome the thinking of older people in terms of traditional age-related categories which often lead to ageism, but need to take into considerations the cultural context of their generation. Generations differ in cultural values due to objective (socio-historic) experiences and, more importantly, subjective interpretation of those experiences. Each generation has its own *culture* ? a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, knowledge, experiences. When developing educational programmes for older adults in terms of inclusive and intercultural (i.e. intergenerational) learning, museum professionals should consider the specific cultural considerations typical of older generation. In order to create meaningful and transformative learning experiences for older adults in museums, museum (educational) staff need to be interculturally competent: they need to have knowledge, skills and positive attitudes related to old age, the culture of older generation and older adult education. In Slovenia a model of intercultural competence training for engaging older adults as voluntary cultural mediators in museums was developed. The model was conceived and developed by the Slovenian Third Age University (founded in 1986), who with eight museums provided the required training and practice. According to this model, students of the Third Age University receive topic- and purpose-oriented education and training for voluntary museum work, whereas museum staff

educate themselves to understand the value of volunteering for active citizenship of older people and to create new voluntary roles for the elderly in museums. The findings of the empirical research, carried out within the Slovenian-third-age-universities network and the Slovenian museum network, show considerable intercultural incompetency in relation to older learners in museums, resulting mainly from age-related stereotypes. Since older adults' social group is (unjustly) pushed to the margins of society and volunteering is not duly appreciated in Slovenia, the model also includes systematic public campaigning.

## Method

The model was developed by a three-year action research (2007-2009) and supported by literature research, good practice research in the first year (visit to British Museum Volunteers, U3A London etc.), and an empirical research in the second year. National and local museums were chosen for the research to build partnerships with third-age universities across the country. The research started with National Museum of Slovenia (2007), where the pilot training was delivered and the first interviews conducted, followed by Architecture Museum of Ljubljana (2007), ?kofja Loka Museum (2008), and Radovljica Museums (2008). In the last two museums the training programme was improved by including experienced volunteers. At the end of 2008 an empirical research within the third-age-universities network and the museum network was done. In 2009 we further developed the model in Dolenjska Museum Novo mesto, Natural History Museum of Slovenia, Technical Museum of Slovenia, and Slovenian Ethnographic Museum.

## Expected Outcomes

Expected outcomes include: students of the Third Age University being educated and trained for active citizenship in museums, museum staff being educated and trained to engage older volunteers, intergenerational learning between museum staff, volunteers and museum visitors being enhanced, the model of intercultural competence training based on including older generation in museum learning environment being developed, sustainable partnership between third-age universities and museums for inclusive older adult education being built. The model can be repeated and adapted by other cultural/educational organisations (e. g. archives, libraries, heritage sites) and in other European countries, particularly south European and ex-socialist countries as they have a different tradition of active citizenship.

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