

## Sub-group Older Volunteers as Learners

### DISSEMINATION / EXPLOITATION OF SUB - GROUP WORK

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#### I. Initial plans for dissemination and exploitation

In addition to the dissemination and valorisation activities of each sub-group member as a partner in the VALUE project, initial dissemination and exploitation plans of the sub-group according to its specific theme were:

- To use the framework of conferences in the University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) and Volunteering sectors at local, regional, national and European level
- To use national platforms in the ULLL sector (addressing all practitioners in Higher Education institutions such as managers in ULLL and teaching staff; addressing members of platforms working in the area of Learning in Later Life in a Higher Education context) and the Volunteering sector, e.g. Network of NGOs working for seniors
- To contact “Universities of the Third Age”, their Associations at national level and/or representatives of Older Students’ Associations
- To contact expert groups and also individual volunteers working on the issues of the sub-group
- To report to senior management in own institution; to use own websites, social media channels and/or newsletters

All these activities were planned to disseminate information about the sub-group theme and findings, to discuss issues of the sub-group and to receive feedback.

#### II. Implementation

Reflecting on the initial dissemination plan and the feedback received, the sub-group would like to highlight the following:

##### 1. Dissemination and valorisation at programme and strategy level (own institutions)

The sub-group work had an impact at institutional level of sub-group members:

In order to create a new university programme tailored to the needs and abilities of older volunteer learners, the Centre for University Continuing Education and Life Long Learning (AWW) of the University of Hamburg conducted a survey among the participants of an extensive programme for older learners and the general public of Hamburg by placing a questionnaire inside the semester brochure. Parallel to the questionnaire, the Centre contacted local businesses and volunteer organisations and asked them what kind of UCE training they would find useful for their volunteers from their perspectives; based on this, new courses were developed and offered (the activity is described in detail in the sub-group report).

The University of Graz offered, for the first time, within the framework of its programme “Vita activa – Bridging generations through learning” for adults of all age groups – but especially older learners – lectures and workshops where the subject of volunteering as a potential and valuable activity, also in later life, was explicitly addressed.

Both ULLL representatives discussed issues with representatives of Older Students’ Associations, representatives of Volunteering organisations and volunteers.

For the first time, sub-group members of the Volunteering sector contacted “Universities of the Third Age” and their Associations at national level. This was – from both sides – perceived as a first important step for future collaboration (reported in the sub-group report). It is seen as important that institutional collaboration is developed (and not only contacts at individual level).

Apart from using the usual communication channels such as websites, newsletters, social media, etc., sub-group members provided updates on these specific aspects of the project progress as part of their regular reporting to their supervisors, thus also exploring the strategic potential for future development. The universities clearly became aware of the potential of (increased) collaboration with the Volunteering sector (see “survey” above), both offering for the first time specific courses for those working as volunteers or for potential volunteers, although, at this point, non-credit bearing. Universities also confirmed that it is necessary to develop links in the local area to the volunteer organisations that provide opportunities for volunteer work for older students in the regular degree programmes.

The Volunteering organisations represented in the sub-group confirmed that they started to set up strategic links with universities, became aware of the fact that universities are offering programmes for older learners and could be seen as potential institutional partners (not only as a good source for individual expertise).

## **2. Dissemination and exploitation - experts (national platforms, conferences)**

Both sub-group members representing universities are active in the national platforms for University Lifelong Learning, namely the DGWF-Deutsche Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung und Fernstudium e.V (German Association for University Continuing and Distance Education) and AUCEN-Austrian University Continuing Education and Staff Development Network, addressing all practitioners in Higher Education institutions such as managers in University Lifelong Learning and teaching staff. Both representatives are also active in specific platforms for learning in later life such as BAG WiWA-Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung für Ältere representing universities and their partners in providing learning opportunities for older people at university level and the Austrian Expert Group for Learning in Later Life. The same can be said about the representatives of the Volunteering sector, being, for example, active in networks of NGOs working for seniors.

Issues of the sub-group work were fed into the discussions of the meetings of these platforms throughout the project, although it has to be said that older volunteers are – in general – not perceived as a specific group of learners in the Volunteering Sector and in ULLL; it was all the more important to promote this idea. However, experts from both sectors confirmed that whether the learning that arises from the experience of volunteering could be used more often to access and participate in University Continuing Education or Lifelong Learning is a topic for further exploration.