



Roadmap for policymakers

Supporting innovative, intergenerational and co-creative learning projects:
Insights from the GUTS-project





Generations using training for social inclusion in 2020 (GUTS)

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Introduction

GUTS is a project which has been co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission and is the acronym for 'Generations Using Training for Social inclusion in 2020'. The GUTS project contributes to one of the most important goals of the Erasmus+ programme and the Europe2020 strategy: the decrease of poverty and social exclusion, as well as an increase of employment. As most of the countries did not succeed in this during the last years, the GUTS consortium is convinced that common European knowledge is necessary to fight this problem. Our GUTS consortium consists of partners out of 7 European countries: Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, The Netherlands and Romania.

The GUTS project has realised new knowledge and innovative pathways in education and training for younger and older adults to increase their social inclusion. In total, 10 innovative, intergenerational and co-creative learning areas are developed. Using process and product evaluations, these innovative learning projects are scientifically investigated. These learning areas and the lessons learned will be presented within this roadmap.

The goal of this roadmap is to provide policymakers insights into the surplus value of intergenerational learning projects that focus on increasing social inclusion and employability of the participants. First, some key concepts of the GUTS-project are described (i.e. What do we mean with intergenerational learning, co-creation, and cultural activities). Second, the reasons why it is important to set up innovative, intergenerational and co-creative learning projects are discussed, focussing on the benefits related with intergenerational learning, co-creative projects and the incorporation of a cultural aspect. The last part of this roadmap presents some policy recommendations with regard to intergenerational practices.

What is not stated in the roadmap, but certainly worthy of mention, is the constructive way in which the GUTS partners have worked together and have shown a willingness to learn from each other.

I hope this action manual can give inspiration and aspiration to policymakers in facilitation of intergenerational learning projects throughout Europe.

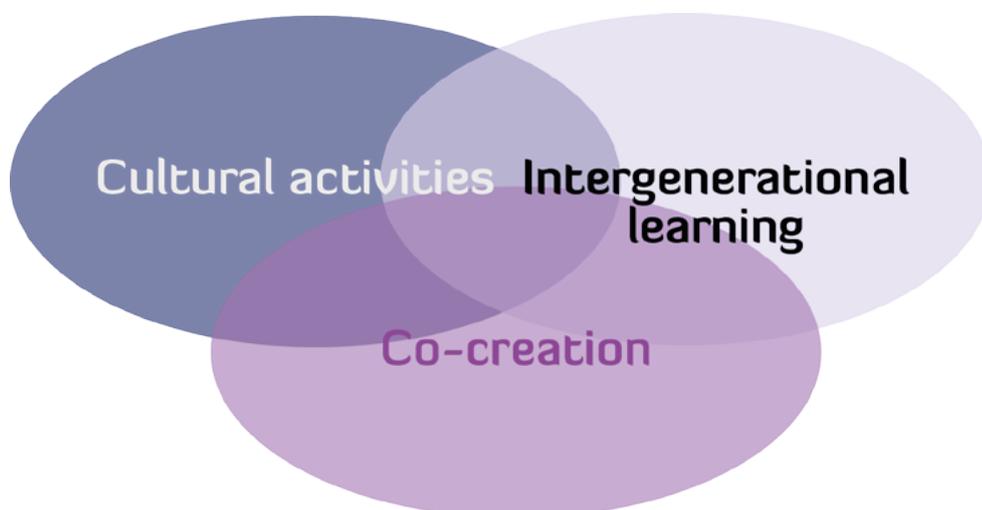
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1. Key concepts of the GUTS-project

The GUTS project is based on 3 key concepts

1. Firstly, intergenerational learning can be defined as “the way people of all ages can learn together and from each other” (EMIL, 2016). According to Sanchez et al. (2008) there are 3 central characteristics of intergenerational practices: (1) people from different generations are involved, (2) participation has benefits for everyone involved, and (3) the relations between participants are based on sharing.
2. Second, co-creation refers to a collective creativity of a group of people. All members of the group are involved in defining the targets, priorities and concepts of the project (Grignoli et al., 2015).
3. Finally the GUTS-project uses a broad definition of cultural activities including arts, visual artists, dancing groups, folklore tradition groups, libraries, new media, etc.

Figure 1. Overview of key-concepts of GUTS



Within the GUTS project, these key concepts are interconnected. The GUTS consortium has developed 10 innovative, intergenerational and co-creative learning activities using cultural activities. The projects have an intergenerational aspect, are co-created by the participants and organisers use a cultural activity in the learning process.



2. Why supporting innovative, intergenerational and co-creative learning projects?

2.1. Societal background

Europe has been confronted with an ageing population. While in 2004 16.4% of Europeans was 65 years old or over, this already increased to 18.5% in 2014 and will increase even further (Eurostat, 2015a). Looking at life expectancy in the 28 countries of the European Union, this is already higher than in most other regions of the world. In 2013, life expectancy at birth in the EU-28 was 80.6 years on average; 83.3 years for women and 77.8 years for men. Although the gender gap is shrinking (Eurostat, 2015b), also this will continue to increase.

These demographical developments have several implications for the society of today and the future. 'Ageing' is often considered as negative, as a 'problem'. For example, due to the fact that older adults are no longer or less active on the labour market, they are often perceived as an economic burden for society (Baars, 2006; Walker, 2006). Besides, older people are often stereotyped as having a bad health and / or being sick (Tinker, 2014). However, many older people actively contribute to society on various manners: e.g., doing voluntary work (Dury et al., 2014), taking care for grandchildren (Karsten & Buber, 2008), or participating in club life (Boudiny, 2013).

Since the past decade, 'ageing' is becoming an important topic featuring national and international political agendas. For instance, the World Health Organisation has launched 'active ageing' as a policy concept. They define it as 'the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.' (WHO, 2002: 12). 'Active ageing' has the objective to create a more positive perspective indicating that older people can be active agents of their own life course and can participate in society according to their own needs and desires (Walker, 2005; WHO, 2002). The concept 'active ageing' gained also importance at European level. The European Commission launched 2012 as the European year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (European Union, 2012).



2.2. Benefits of innovative, intergenerational and co-creative learning projects

Innovative, intergenerational and co-creative learning projects entail diverse benefits, both for individual participants, organisations and as well for society. We give an overview of the benefits we encountered in our 10 learning projects.

Benefits of intergenerational learning

Participants meet people of other generations and learn to know each other. Getting into contact with other people leads to sustainable networking, which increases the social cohesion between the participants of the project. Furthermore, people can also learn from each other, especially when the projects strive for equality between participants of the different generations. Skills and knowledge are transferred between people of different generations through which individual participants obtain new knowledge and skills that contribute to their personal development. In addition, bridging the ‘gap’ between different generations can lead to a higher acceptance of and having respect for ‘the other generation’. Intergenerational projects increase the skills of people to interact with people of other generations. In other words, it has a positive influence on the development of social skills. In addition, participation leads to a mutual appreciation and understanding and strengthens the solidarity between people of different generations. Throughout the project, people learn to trust each other.

Benefits of co-creation of intergenerational learning activities

Members are involved in the development of the learning activity and think together about the targets, priorities and concepts. Although people might have different needs and expectations, they get insight into the needs and expectations of the other participants and come to a supported project. Co-creating the project can increase the willingness of the participants to continue the project or to be involved in future projects. Participants learn to work together, become a member of a team and become ‘owner’ of the project.

Benefits of using culture for learning

The cultural approach is an autonomous access path and a more open-ended process with some surprises and inadvertent effects. Creative processes using various cultural techniques and approaches are possibilities for common learning processes to respond to social challenges and to take an active role in the civil society.

Furthermore, participating in innovative, intergenerational and co-creative learning projects has some benefits for the individual participants that exceed these key concepts. For instance, it can increase the competences that are necessary on the labour market (e.g., being on time, take responsibilities) and people can become more assertive.

More concrete the research results of the GUTS consortium concerning the quantitative



research among 117 participants in 10 learning areas in 5 countries show that circa 48% of the participants are more assertive after joining the learning area. Besides this 30% got better intergenerational skills and met more people in their daily live. Finally circa 25% joined more activities in nature and sports.

Supervisors, coaches or teachers fulfil a crucial role in innovative, intergenerational and co-creative learning projects. They have to support participants to complete the project successfully, both practical as emotional. Besides, they can discuss with the participants how they can use the knowledge and skills that they have learned during the project in their daily life.

*“What a luxury that I am able now to make video calls and email with my (grand) children in Australia and France. The world has become greater”
(Older women, 79 years, project I-Pad-lessons, The Netherlands).*

“When I came here I thought that I might get to know new people and that I can speak the language (German) with them” (Refugee, project ‘Quartier 177’, Germany).



3. Policy recommendations

In this part, 10 recommendations regarding the usage and promotion of intergenerational, co-creative and cultural learning on European, national, regional and local level are presented in order to create a solid background in facilitating projects of intergenerational learning.

3.1. Recommendations on European and national level

1. *Develop a policy strategy on Intergenerational Learning*
According various stakeholders, both national and European policy lacks a clear strategy on intergenerational learning and cooperations to realise this. International and national support is needed to promote a long-term vision on intergenerational learning.
2. *Need for more awareness-raising on intergenerational learning*
Intergenerational learning is not a very well-known concept. People often do not know what it means, what it can look like and what the benefits are. It is important to establish a clear policy definition for intergenerational learning that will be accepted across all European countries. There is a need to have more clarity about the concept of intergenerational learning.
3. *Need for a positive perception on ageing and older people: fight ageism*
Ageism or the systematic process of stereotyping and discriminating older people is a manifest form of inequality. Society often not values older people's contribution. This needs to change.
4. *Develop and improve national models for intergenerational learning based on input from international (European) partnerships*
International or European projects offer the opportunity to develop, test and improve intergenerational practices. Policy makers on national level should take the input of these international partnerships into account when developing national regulations about intergenerational learning.
5. *"Spend to save": Stimulate intergenerational learning by providing financial impetus*
There is a need to invest in intergenerational projects as these have clear benefits in terms of social inclusion among older people and youngsters. Although the benefits of intergenerational projects are documented, organisations and employees often face several barriers in developing this type of projects, which can hinder the motivation to start. Policymakers can stimulate intergenerational projects that aim to facilitate and increase the contact between younger and older people. They can offer funding for experiments (e.g., open labs) or facilitate initiatives from cultural, educational and recreational organisations when they program intergenerational learning activities.



6. *Give intergenerational learning an important place in the curriculum of secondary and vocational education*

Intergenerational learning should become an important aspect in the curriculum of students of secondary schools and those who follow a vocational education.

3.2. Recommendations on regional and local level

7. *Look beyond the usual partners*

It is valuable to start co-operations with other partners than you usually work with. Why not working with cultural organisations and artists? Involving cultural aspects in an intergenerational project can stimulate contacts between people of different generations through which cultures and traditions can be exchanged. Cultural activities are a good way to break barriers between people of different generations and cultures.

8. *Invest in efficient pathways in recruiting new learners*

Flyers, posters and emails are useful written communication channels. However, the face-to-face invitation, through a network of key-figures works best. Invest in the development of a lively network of recruiters. Key-figures can be, for instance, mentors from their own environment.

9. *Appoint an intergenerational learning attaché/ambassador on local level*

Appointing someone as the ambassador of intergenerational learning on a local level increases the visibility and feasibility of intergenerational projects. It gives these kinds of projects a higher profile.

10. *Give adult educational centres a key role in local intergenerational learning*

Centres for adult education can become centres for expertise on intergenerational learning. Furthermore, they can build a network with other relevant organisations in this field (e.g., secondary schools, youth and / or senior councils).

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