



INTERGENERATIONAL GUIDE

How to bridge the gap between the Youth and the Elderly?

Meeting in Italy – March 2013



European Year for **Active Ageing**
and **Solidarity between Generations 2012**



I- What is Old Age?

We shared our opinions and definitions about what old age is. It's difficult to include everything in a few sentences but we managed to come up with a conclusion which is the following:

Old age is the period of the human life when people are nearing or surpassing the average life span and it is also the end of the human life cycle. For most people it's the time when they stop working and retire.

There are 3 types of ageing:

- physical
- psychological
- behavioural

But some people continue working to contribute to a better life and world. Others are discovering things they have never seen before and are still learning because people, regardless of age, can learn new things during their whole life. People age differently according to their genes, lifestyle and experience.

We realized that life renews when you grow older, new opportunities open up ; old people can fully appreciate what life and the world have to offer.

That is to be respected and admired.

II – DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

	Year	Medium age of population	Percentage of people aged under 20 in total population	Percentage of people aged over 70 in total population
BELGIUM	2012	42.6	22	18
BULGARIA	2012	41.8	16	18.9
DENMARK	2012	40.5	23.8	11.6
FRANCE	2012	40.4	24.5	12.6
ITALY	2012	43.7	14	20.3
LITHUANIA	2012	40.5	20	16.5
SPAIN	2012	40.9	20	17.1
TURKEY	2012	28.8	35	6.3

We also compared the demographic profiles of the countries and we learnt that the situation is different in each country

The average age of all countries, except Turkey, is around 40. In Turkey the population is very young with an average of 28.8.

The percentage of people under 20 is very different as well probably because each country has different social policies. It's the same with people over 70 years.

III- WHAT DOES ACTIVE AGEING MEAN ?

Active Ageing means growing old as a full member of society and an involved citizen. Even when retired you can still continue having activities for which you are paid or not. Most often it concerns volunteer work.

Active Ageing - Many retired people continue to work in their field, often for free, continuing to contribute to the greater basket of world knowledge. Others are taking considerable care of grandchildren or other people's children through care arrangements in home or at childcare centers, ensuring that the next generation is getting the best start possible in life. Others are rediscovering lost hobbies, roaming the world, grappling with life's great mysteries and spending time learning new things that astound them. Perhaps you'll begin to realize that life renews when you grow older, new opportunities open up to flourish anew, to slow down and appreciate what life and the world have to offer. That's to be admired... and respected.

The process of active ageing includes NOT letting time “pass you by” and feeling as if you have been left behind.

Activities done by active retired people:

1. Active retired people can go on working as they did before they retired. Their work can give them pleasure and after they've retired they might not want to give up working. They might not want to stop seeing their colleagues every day at work.
2. Some people might want to stay at home and look after their grandchildren or help their daughters and sons with the housework while they are at work.
3. They can volunteer and help satisfy the needs of society if they feel in good shape – they can share their life experience with groups of youngsters and help them avoid the same mistakes they have made when they were younger.
4. They can learn how to use modern technology like the Internet and use it to learn about all the things they are interested in. They can go to modern libraries and have professional courses of computer literacy.
5. They can found clubs for people of the same age, teach traditional dances and songs to youngsters to help preserve the national heritage of their countries and pass it to the generations after them.

Why is it better to be an active old person?

Active ageing is the only way for old people to stay integrated in society. They shouldn't stay at home all day and feel that their time has passed – they should have every privilege a youngster has and they should do whatever they can to contribute to helping bridge the gap between the generations.

It's normal to have a big difference in the views and outlooks of different generations. Our grandparents have lived in a time, quite different from the world we live in today. And even though they haven't disposed of a bit of what we have today, we can still learn many things from them.

If both sides don't try to impose their views and respect the opinion of the interlocutor, we will find that communicating with an older or younger person than us, can actually be very easy. Some of us had the opportunity to participate

in a project in which we had to teach people, older than us, of computer literacy. What we found was that if patience is shown and if it is explained carefully, communication between us is very pleasant. We noticed that despite their age, they were highly interested in the opportunities that a computer offers them and were willing to learn as much as possible for the time we were there. For us it was very interesting since we showed them that while they can teach us many things, young people as well have things to show them.

IV- THE OBJECTIVES OF THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR ACTIVE AGEING AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS

The European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations' objectives are to make European citizens more age-friendly, make our societies more adapted to our ageing population, raise awareness of the contribution that older people make to society and how this can be supported. It seeks to encourage and mobilise policymakers at all levels to take action with the aim of creating better opportunities for active ageing and strengthening solidarity between generations.

V- THE EUROPEAN DAY OF SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS

The European day of Solidarity between generations is the 29th April.

Events in partner countries:

DENMARK

This campaign was launched in 2008 and is now supported by a growing coalition of European Organisations active in various sectors and representing different citizen groups and stakeholders. They have already planned at least 8 happenings in 2013 to come.

In Denmark we have different things to do - these are some of the Danish initiatives:

- KIFLI (Keeping fit in later life)

- Still going strong (mini TV-series)
- Mobility in every residential home

There were a lot of happenings in the year of 2012 (European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations) in the Comenius countries.

For example; in Denmark we try to connect with the elderly generation by finding their “skills” and to teach us what they once learned. On the other hand some of the elderly also enjoy telling us and enlightening us instead of having us running around and telling them all new modern things.

FRANCE

- ❖ In France the national association *Lire et faire lire* launched an initiative in October 2005 called *Sacs de pages* (Bags of pages) by which volunteers over 50 years old are invited to read to children in holiday camps and leisure centres, as well as encourage them to read.
- ❖ The association *Ensemble2générations* aims at facilitating intergenerational dialogue. It brings together a student who wants to rent an apartment and an old person. The student rents a room in an old person’s house and shares his daily life.

ITALY

- ❖ One example of action in Italy is the National demonstration held in Rome on April 30th, 2012 arranged by the association *Over 50* with the coordination of *Age platform Europe*. In this occasion the President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano’s message is very significant. He said that it’s necessary to make an intergenerational agreement founded on cooperation, integration and cohesion, motivating everyone to give his contribution in terms of human capital, cultural patrimony and creativity to build a better society morally more open and more alive from a civil point of view.
- ❖ 1 October 2012 - The Senior force Day was held in the city of Taglio Di Po as part of a whole month of activities programmed to honour the elderly.

VI- FIELDS OF COOPERATION INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- ❖ Cooking (exchanging recipes)
- ❖ Reading
- ❖ Gardening
- ❖ Teaching the Elderly how to use new technologies
- ❖ Helping young people in their transition from training to professional life and support young people in finding jobs, traineeships or an apprenticeship
- ❖ Taking care of grandchildren while parents are at work

VII- FOR A BETTER INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIP...

• Advice to the Youth

- ❖ Start noticing older people around you
- ❖ Be considerate of their well-being
- ❖ Show respect through your manners : help them cross the road, give them your seat in public transports, hold the door...
- ❖ Listen to them when they tell you about their past life
- ❖ Give them the right to be old and to be respected
- ❖ Be patient and speak clearly
- ❖ Spend more time with them
- ❖ Phone them from time to time to ask if everything is all right
- ❖ Get their medications from the chemist's
- ❖ Be occupied together in a common activity: play cards, watch a film or TV, walk, go to the park...
- ❖ Be interested in their lives and their problems
- ❖ Ask for advice
- ❖ Be respectful, tolerate their beliefs.
- ❖ Invite them to family celebrations
- ❖ Write them letters
- ❖ Use “the golden rule” – **treat others** the **way** you want to be treated
- ❖ Show them how to use Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites. It's likely that once some of them get the hang of it, they'll make the most of these tools for their own lives

Smile at them , hug them and show them you love them , that's what they need most !

- **Advice to the Elderly**

- ❖ Be more open and accept the changes that are happening, do not feel insulted by the living habits of the young generation
- ❖ Do not criticize young people's clothes, the music they listen to...
- ❖ They need attention, care, ideas and models
- ❖ Keep up with the new trends such as computer, Smartphone, Facebook and music.
- ❖ Try to help young people when they have problems and they ask you for advice
- ❖ Teach them what you know: how to cook, how to garden, share your knowledge with them
- ❖ Listen to your grandchildren when they have problems and need someone who listens without judging them, they need help for orientation
- ❖ Help your grandchildren with their homework
- ❖ Try to break barriers and understand young people's needs
- ❖ Don't make a young person feel stupid. Instead pay attention to what he is saying and has on his mind
- ❖ Don't complain about your health all the time
- ❖ Do not constantly talk about how things were in your days and complain about how things are today

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