

NEWSLETTER 3

Conference A SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES
Learning to LIVE and learning for LIFE
Future scenarios and strategies
On the occasion of Cyprus EU Presidency



The 2012 ForAge Conference was held in Limassol, organised by the Cypriot Adult Education Association (CAEA) on the 8-9th October. A large gathering heard lively and informative presentations about the latest national and European developments in later-life learning. There were also opportunities for questions and discussion in workshops.



George Demosthenous.

Those attending the conference were welcomed by the President of CAEA, and chairman of the organising committee, Klitos Symeonides and by Professor John Benyon, University of Leicester, UK, from the ForAge Network. There was also an upbeat message read out from the Minister of Education and Culture, Republic of Cyprus, Mr.

The opening ceremony included a most impressive dance show by a group of deaf people who are lifelong learners in the adult education centres in Cyprus.

It's never too late to learn

The opening key-note speech was made by Martina Ni Cheallaigh from the Adult Education and Grundtvig sec-



tion of the European Commission, DG Education and Culture. Speaking on the theme 'It's never too late to learn', she provided an overview of several EU programmes, including Grundtvig, and also European actions such as the European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity. Ms Cheallaigh highlighted various positive effects of these initiatives.



She was followed by Dr Katerina Popovic, vice-president of the European Association for Adult Education (EAEA), who gave an interesting and stimulating presentation on the EAEA policy debate on Active Ageing through Adult Learning, which had taken place in Brussels, on 27 September 2012.

Everyone is realising a unique hidden programme, not in the space, but in the time.

The first morning of the conference ended with a presentation by Jumbo Klercq, director of the Elephant in Diversity BV in the Netherlands, and member of the organising committee. He provided a context for later-life learning and presented three future scenarios for a Society for all Ages:



1. Big Competition between education providers, more independent trainers and more voluntary staff.

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2. Edumade: positive results of education on the market, tailor-made, more stakeholders, more investments in learning environments.
3. Back To The State: more influence and interventions by the governments, more focus on employability, greater obligation to show a social return on investment.

The world of the opportunities exists not in the space, but in the dimension of the time – it is a new chapter in the story about human knowledge.

Sharing knowledge and experience

After lunch, the conference started with workshops sessions on three themes:

- *Involving more stakeholders in later-life learning.*
- *Gender issues: learning for men and women.*
- *Giving older people a voice through learning.*



The workshops were followed by a plenary session with feedback from the workshops, chaired by Jim Soulsby, facilitator of the ForAge Network. There was then discussion on the three themes and their context, topicality, relevance and relationship to ForAge. This was a good opportunity for those present to share and exchange their own knowledge and experience.



The conference then heard three presentations about national initiatives. Dr Alexis Kokkos outlined the Greek adult education system, looking at its current position and recent innovative approaches.

Dr Simoni Symeonidou, Lecturer at the University of



Cyprus, considered theories about a Society for all Ages and the application of key concepts from disability studies.

Dr Katerina Popovic, President of the Serbian Adult Education Society, outlined the remarkable results of a photography competition in Serbia, entitled the 'Golden Age of Life'.



These three presentations paid particular attention to the power and meaning of the language of images, and made use of the

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ideas of Paulo Freire on popular and informal education. Conference participants were invited to express their comments about their experiences in European projects around later life and intergenerational learning. These were considered by an expert panel. The first day ended with a Cypriot night filled with dance and music.

Active ageing and solidarity between generations

The second day started with presentations about European programmes, networks and platforms. Julie Melville, from the Beth Johnson Foundation and Centre for Intergenerational Practice in the United Kingdom, outlined the European Map of Intergenerational Learning Network (EMIL).



Jim Soulsby and Jumbo Klercq gave a presentation about



the training course on Learning for Later Life which they have run for five years in Cyprus as part of the Grundtvig and Comenius training catalogue.

The conference then broke into smaller discussion groups to consider key ForAge topics such as effective networking, funding issues, and sharing knowledge. This was

another chance for participants to learn from each other's experiences.



In the afternoon Marina Efthymiadou, from the Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, explained the policies and practices in Cyprus for Active Ageing and Solidarity among Generations.



Dr Nataša Urbancikova, of the Technical University of Kosice, outlined a project called the Open Inn 2.0: A Knowledge Generating House and e-Assessment Model and Iveta Urbanova presented the SIGOLD project, turning the silver

challenge for older workers into 'the golden opportunity'.

Following detailed questions and discussion, Jumbo Klercq from the Netherlands spoke on Older People's Economic Wellbeing: Learning for Capacity, Capability

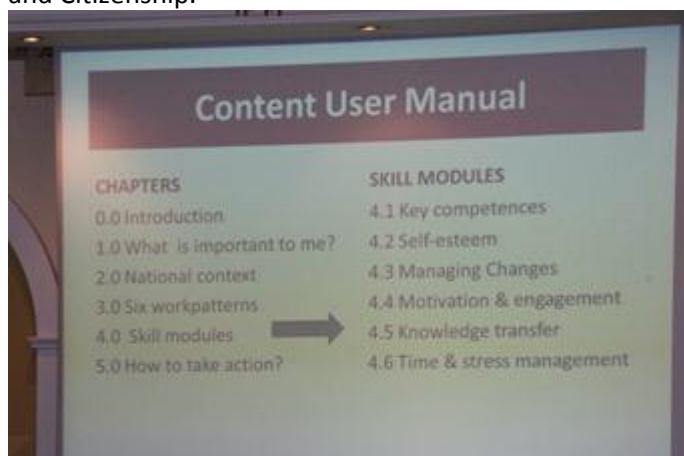


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and Citizenship.



The ForAge project wishes to thank all the speakers at the event and the participants who came from various parts of Europe. In particular, ForAge would like to thank the organising committee especially Klitos Symeonides, Jumbo Klercq and Jim Soulsby. There is already an air of anticipation about the 2103 ForAge conference which will be held in Hungary on 30 September and 1 October.



The conference ended with a final feedback session which reported the key findings from the working groups followed by a final expert panel session.



Fascinating and useful information

The general view of those present was that the conference was a great success and this was borne out by subsequent analysis of the participants' evaluation forms. During the two days, the conference attendees received a great deal of fascinating and useful information about how to move towards a society for all ages. There was also plenty of time for questions and discussion.



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