European Map of Intergenerational Learning

European Year 2012
Roundtable Events:

Final report

Julie Melville
Alan Hatton-Yeo
# Table of Contents

Foreword ........................................................................................................................................ 3
Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 4

Report:
Understanding of the term intergenerational solidarity ................................................. 5
Reflections on social justice and intergenerational relationships ......................... 7
How intergenerational initiatives can help promote active citizenship ............... 10
Priorities for intergenerational relationships and methods for addressing them ...... 13
Key ideas and themes captured during the roundtable events .............................. 16
Foreword

Society has changed dramatically across Europe in the last couple of decades. There are many factors which mean that ties have loosened in families and communities, particularly between different generations: geographical dispersal, increased numbers of women in employment, negative attitudes based on stereotypes and anxieties about the physical environment and safety. Intergenerational practice has sought to offer a response - finding ways to build and sustain solidarity across age groups in this new landscape and The EMIL network has played a vitally important role in supporting and developing such work.

Our support of the EMIL network first began in 2009 through our programme on Ageing and Social Cohesion: this was developed jointly by the UK Branch and the Human Development Programme in Lisbon. We recognised that there was significant intergenerational work underway across Europe alongside a growing interest in the field, but that there was no accessible, interactive home for intergenerational practice and learning. The establishment of a dedicated learning network in the shape of EMIL provided the platform that was needed to compare, disseminate and promote quality Intergenerational Practice (IP) more widely. The network exemplifies the value of collaboration, and now stands at some 400 members in 27 EU states. The majority actively contribute to discussions and add resources regularly, ensuring EMIL is recognised as an expert and leader in the field. Last year the network won European funding to develop a distance-learning course that will support the development of skills and expertise in IP across Europe.

The European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations in 2012 provided EMIL with an opportunity to share its learning and to reflect upon the state of intergenerational relations. Through the series of roundtables described here, some clear priorities emerged for future work, both for the network and for others. A number of these priorities align closely with the European Year’s foci of employment, community participation and healthy living. They highlight the importance of ensuring national and European ageing strategies do not focus solely on older people.

As EMIL develops its activities for 2013 and beyond, using the insights from these roundtables, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation will also be reflecting and consulting on next steps for our work on ageing. Exploring themes that have emerged from the support we have given over the past four years, we will consult key stakeholders on possible future strands, including: measuring the value of IP, creating all-age-friendly localities, and supporting transitions in later life. As we move into this new phase we look forward to collaborating with the EMIL network, drawing on its expertise and the wisdom of the individuals with whom it works.

Andrew Barnet
Luisa Valle
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Introduction

Project Background
The European Map of Intergenerational Learning (EMIL) is a collaborative network of members working together to support intergenerational learning taking place across Europe. Established in 2009, the network uses the existing expertise of organisations already working in the field to create a learning network for others involved in intergenerational programmes across Europe. Since its launch in 2009, EMIL has made significant progress in mapping intergenerational practice, highlighting intergenerational learning already taking place throughout Europe, developing its virtual learning model and engaging a growing active membership. More recently, EMIL was actively involved in the planning for the European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity, as well as the follow up year in 2013 on Citizenship.

EMIL’s response to EY 2012
EMIL has endorsed and supported the objectives of EY2012 as we saw the development, collaboration, connection and relationships between people of all ages as fundamental to achieving the objectives of EY2012 to:

• Promote Active Ageing in Employment
• Promote Active Ageing in the community through Active Citizenship, Volunteering and Caring
• Promote Active Ageing at home through enabling Healthy Ageing and Independent Living
• Enhance Cooperation and Solidarity between the Generations

We believe it is essential to create a Society for All Ages that promotes active engagement, understanding and exchange between the generations, if we are to meet the challenge of creating a fair and sustainable society for all. In addition, it was recently announced that 2013 is the European Year of Citizens. In preparation for EY2013 we are particularly interested in learning more about people’s ideas, thoughts, and priorities about local civic participation and action.

As part of EMIL’s sustainability strategy, a series of events were held across Europe during EY2012. Each of these events brought together an audience of people of different ages to consider a number of questions from their own national perspective. –After each event a report of its discussions, including recommendations for creating a ‘Society for All Ages’ was produced. These reports are all available on the EMIL website. We have subsequently done an analysis of all the reports and the findings from that form the content of this report. As you might expect from any cross-cultural comparison the differences are as illuminating as the areas of synergy.

What was striking was the consistent picture that emerged of all nations seeing strong relationships between the generations as essential for the future and the concern that was expressed between the generations for models of mutual support and engagement.

We would like to thank the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for their support that made this initiative possible. We would also like to thank the organisers and participants who freely contributed to the discussions and produced such a rich seam of material. This report has been produced by the generations and for the generations.

Julie Melville and Alan Hatton-Yeo
What was the understanding of the term intergenerational solidarity?

For the majority of participants, intergenerational solidarity was considered important; reasons provided for its necessity within families and wider society were varied and included such factors as it helps to foster understanding, respect, cooperation and support between the generations, generations can learn from each other’s experiences, it allows the generations to work together to solve problems facing society and provides an opportunity to support youth in a complex social time. Key words used to define the term “Intergenerational solidarity” were: cooperation, understanding, connection, knowledge, empathy between the generations, a caring community, shared voice, working together to break down barriers and stereotypes.

Younger participants in particular suggested that intergenerational solidarity should aim to keep people connected, help younger people avoid making the same mistakes that have been made in the past and help dispel the sweeping generalisations made by wider society. Conversely, older participants felt that intergenerational solidarity should be concerned with the generations ‘sticking’ together to make things better for everyone, bonding and communication between different age groups, and counteracting the barrage of negative images & stereotypes.

“It is necessary to develop socialization and create connections of one generation to the other. As a result of intergenerational solidarity, we will have a better understanding, coexistence, and dialogue, between the generations.”

Several participants acknowledged that intergenerational solidarity already exists naturally mostly within families and secondly, communities. It was felt that intergenerational relationships are important because it is not a ‘community’ if the ages do not get on together. As a result, the importance of creating an environment where all ages can mix and work together was emphasised on numerous occasions. Moreover, awareness and understanding between the generations was seen as important in creating stronger communities.

“Solidarity can work simply and naturally in every human community; it works from parents to children and vice versa, between relatives, colleagues and/or neighbors. Therefore, the whole community is responsible for supporting one another.”

However, barriers to achieving intergenerational solidarity were highlighted. One barrier repeatedly commented on was that each generation tends to spend their leisure and social time in pre-determined, age-segregated spaces that are often not readily accessible to the other generation. This acts as a barrier that prevents the generations from meeting and weakens intergenerational solidarity.

Many participants understood intergenerational solidarity as younger and older people sharing thoughts and perspectives, thereby reducing potential conflict. Nonetheless, others felt that there was a potential that intergenerational contact might not always be positive and could create tension between the generations in some circumstances.

There was also a focus on the idea of younger and older people joining forces to have a shared and stronger voice in society. For example, several participants expressed concern about the “wrong images of age in politics and media” and its effects. Equally, there was some agreement
concerning the assumption of potential negative effects of “changed living- and working conditions”. The implications of industrialisation, technical development, globalisation, individualization, migration, and a rising hostility towards children were mentioned as compromising factors of intergenerational solidarity. However, others saw the positive aspects of the recession and the current period of austerity as an opportunity to bring the generations back together.

“People in different age-groups may disagree on things, they will. However the awareness and understanding between the groups is important to have. This helps to build respect between generations and understanding. And that younger and older people could join forces and have a shared and stronger voice in society.”

There was debate around whether intergenerational solidarity was a family concern, or a wider social issue. For many participants, intergenerational solidarity meant “advocacy and responsibility for each other” – specifically, family, friends and neighbours, evoked through direct concern and relationships based on exchange and reciprocal appreciation. Numerous participants, of all age-groups, mostly understand the concept in terms of family relationships and consistently stated that intergenerational solidarity begins within the family – but often extends through to other institutions such as the church (congregation) and workplace (colleagues). More significant was the declaration of many younger participants who specified that solidarity is lived and experienced in the most direct way in families.

Nevertheless - if, how and why intergenerational relationships have changed – especially relationships in families – was a controversial debate across the summative reports. While there was some agreement about the (potential) negative effects of changing living and working conditions” on intergenerational relationships within the family, comments from some older participants reflect their view of unwanted developments within families. For example, many complained about troubles in family relationships caused by a lack of appropriate early education of children, forced labour mobility for the parent/middle generation, and competition on the job and in voluntary work for the older generation. Several older participants perceive young people to be subject to a “medial sensory overload” and have a “lack of interest and appreciation of the younger towards the older generation”. Conversely, some younger participants lamented the fact that families were too dispersed now and made reference to some of the older generations in the family being ‘greedy’ - now that we are in a recession it is even more important that we all work together.

“To talk about generations means to categorize people according to age … this categorization has consequences that can be useful as well as restricting. It is a way to describe groups that say something about the shared norms and values that are fostered in different historical time periods, and it is a comfortable way to group people. At the same time, people and generations change continuously and it can have a lock-in effect if groups are restricted to notions about what it means to belong to a certain generation.”

Intergenerational solidarity was understood and presented in a very diverse way. Many groups talked about their understanding of the term generation and stressed difficulties in defining the term. The definition often differed depending on the groups focus on family relationships, age range, workplace or wider society. For example, one group stated that solidarity may be just within one generational cohort and not across the generations and gave the example of a group of young parents living in an apartment n block who had a strong common connection.. Another group reminded us it is not just about generations but life stages – for example, inclusion of the role of the middle generation.
Similarly, another group suggested that in tough time people are pushed together – individualism is only possible ‘when we have enough’.

Finally, reports from the Netherlands and Northern Ireland provide us with a thought-provoking description of how different generations define the term by suggesting that it is dependent on one’s age and cohort - defined as a a group of people who have shared a particular event together during a particular time span, and the resulting social factors that may have contributed to their perceptions of intergenerational solidarity. As a final point, it should also be noted that a number of reports (i.e. Cyprus, Sweden and Romania) suggested that there was minimal discussion in their countries on the topic and no clarification of the terms at any level.

The issues of social justice and intergenerational relationships

When discussing the concept of social justice, participants broadly agreed on ideas and themes linked to such issues as fairness. Intergenerational work and building relationships was seen as a way of helping to meet the requirements of social justice and people mentioned key terms such as equality, equal human rights and fair treatment. They discussed the importance of equal rights regardless of socio-economic status or age and the protection of vulnerable members of society. The issue of respect and opportunities for all people, no matter what age, was raised often.

Most country reports suggested that social justice and equality should mean equal access to education, employment, health, services and all other facilities. The term was often described as a society which provides possibilities and gives opportunities to all citizens, regardless of their age, to develop themselves and to function well in society; a society where each age group respects all other age groups, realizes the sensitivities of other age groups, and tries to understand other age generations.

“Social justice is a task concerning society as a whole”.

Younger participants discussed social justice and mentioned key terms such as equality, equal human rights and fair treatment. Younger participants felt that wealth contributes to or detracts from social justice (i.e. being able to afford facilities and services - a lack of wealth may lead to social injustice as poorer people cannot afford the facilities and services that they need). Others also suggested that active generational social justice relates to the identification of the problems, potentials, and dynamic of each generation, as well as cooperation with other generations in group situations to discuss and solve the problems together.

However, there was some disagreement over the usefulness of the term social justice; it was often interpreted as relating to ‘equalities’. It was suggested that there is a lot of inequality in our society and the concept of social justice should be about addressing those inequalities. At a basic level, it was seen as something that involves doing right for others and yourself and building relationships was seen as a way of helping to meet the principles of social justice.

“Looking at power in society, who holds it and why and how those views can be damaging to age-groups such as older and younger people”
Sweden, as a society with well-developed societal structures for supporting individuals, privately as well as professionally, has few discussions and efforts to promote intergenerational relationships. There was a suggestion that the strong institutional structures are seen as a substitute for individual efforts and initiatives and for relying on the family as a supportive structure.

**Many factors that contribute to social justice/injustice and building effective intergenerational relationships were proposed and deliberated on by participants.**

Social justice was interpreted as a situation in which wealth, education, health care, culture, technology, provisions for frail and vulnerable people were available for all. But in practice there were, according to the participants in this event: ‘all kinds of barriers for women, migrants, young people and old people to enter or re-enter the labour market, to build or end a career, and raise children.’ The youngest and oldest working generations even face a new period of exclusion now. There were also barriers to enter the housing market or to participate socially and culturally. However, all the generations expressed the opinion that:

“Intergenerational dialogue and dialogue with younger generations is a precondition for reshaping our society in such a way that social justice reflects shared visions of all generations and includes all generations.”

Intergenerational work and building relationships was seen as a way of helping to meet the principles of social justice. Participants discussed the importance of equal rights regardless of socio-economic status and the protection of vulnerable members of society. Initiatives such as consultations about what members would like to do with and for their communities were offered as ways to help restore a feeling of community and re-engage people with their neighbours and people in their locality. Many participants also felt young people have a tendency to be responsible for the older generations. The current situation in our society, where an economic crisis causes young generations to return to their parents’ homes, makes family ties stronger and older people feel responsible for what is happening to young people. Nevertheless, the issue of respect and opportunities for all people, no matter what age, was raised most consistently as the best method of providing social justice.

“... education is as an investment in children and young people. Investment in children and young people is also an investment in social justice”.

A number of social changes were mentioned as factors that may be contributing to lesser links and/or cooperation between generations (social injustice). Factors listed include unemployment/employment opportunities, access to education and increasing student fees, pension (distribution), migration, the economic crisis, rapid urbanization, isolation of older adults, and antisocial behaviour of younger people. More specifically, a number of issues and/or barriers were raised that could negatively affect the achievement of social justice - such as lack of understanding, fear of the unknown, stereotypes, a lack of opportunities and places to meet with other generations, and the media’s role in its portrayal of different age groups.

“Each generation seems to struggle to survive and face social change. This results in less interest for intergenerational initiatives”.

**There was a broader discussion on whether there is currently social justice in local communities and wider society.** Many felt that a sense of community has been lost and
needs to be restored so that social justice can be achieved at a local level. Several countries participating in these discussions saw positive aspects of the recession and the current period of austerity which they hope will bring people back together; whereas families were more dispersed during more prosperous years. Many reiterated the fact that a sense of community has been lost and needs to be restored so that social justice can be achieved at a local level.

“The image of a society that has eliminated all the problems is unrealistic - no society without social problems.”

As one country report stated, every society throughout Europe faces a certain period of development, with a number of social problems whose meaning is defined in terms of the values and norms that existing in those societies.

**Most participants stressed the importance in achieving social justice and explained why it is crucial.**

“Social justice and intergenerational solidarity go hand in hand where everyone is made to feel included and everyone’s needs are integrated, diversity is respected and there is a harmony and fairness for all”.

**Many participants offered ideas about how to achieve social justice and build effective intergenerational relationships.** Participants discussed the importance of social policy in breeding social justice and recommended that it should incorporate all ages. More so, it was suggested that asking people what they would like to do with and for their communities might help in restoring that feeling of community and re-engage people with their neighbours and people in their locality. Younger participants felt that to achieve social justice, changes need to be made from the top down and policies put in place so that opportunities are created and supported for different generations to work together.

In Ireland, younger participants discussed their CSPE (Civic, Social, & Political Education) classes in school as the only current outlet that younger people feel they have in having a say about important issues going on in society. They felt that if younger people had more exposure to wider society and intergenerational relationships, it would help in achieving social justice and participation and make them feel like they were making a difference rather than being made to feel like a nuisance.

Younger participants (in Romania) believed that social problems can be solved by changing individual behavior through social institutions and social protection and believe that social problems can be reformed only by changing the social, economic, and social reforms through legislation. Similarly, the role of the government and NGOs was mentioned on a number of occasions as important in taking measures to increase the social justice. More specifically, The Netherlands report suggests that – on a national level - the creation of a basic pension system for all older citizens was one of the great social achievements of the country that has been embraced and celebrated by all generations. This was followed by the gradual expansion of the national social and health care system which contained strong intergenerational elements - offering all citizens the chance for a decent living and personal growth.
Can intergenerational initiatives help to promote active citizenship?

There was significant agreement on the high social value of active citizenship, which has become increasingly promoted. In general it was felt that active citizenship involves being enabled, and having opportunities to be involved particularly in the community. The key message, in relation to how to involve different generations from different backgrounds into active citizenship, was to have organised opportunities within communities to do so.

“We have to do it together, but this is not what we have learned. Solidarity feels like a necessity, we can no longer lean on institutional solidarity and on our provisions for the unemployed or for those who cannot cope.”

Many participants agreed that intergenerational active citizenship translated into the possibility to implement programmes with specific aims in creating an environment for all generations. Also confirmed by numerous participants was the statement that active citizenship is or should be perceived as a requirement for intergenerational initiatives; the identification of programmes to activate generations was seen as vital. For example, in Germany most intergenerational initiatives are based on active citizenship and volunteering.

“Intergenerational projects can help make people feel involved and included and so they automatically become more of an active citizen whether they realise it or not!”

At a basic level, active citizenship was seen as getting involved in community life. This could range from voting, to being involved in pieces of work led by organisations, or in community led work. Besides being seen as important, active citizenship was described mainly as one who participates within a society; while other definitions included citizens who are involved in political and social decision-making and occupationally active.

“With knowledge, people can become more active in lots of different ways = Active Citizenship.”

Younger participants in particular thought that active citizenship meant supporting one another and it was important to recognise that all citizens have both rights and responsibilities – all the emphasis should not just be on rights. Moreover, active citizenship is about speaking up and finding ways to help support your ideas. Whereas some older participants felt that it is important to give careful consideration before making any decisions that impact on intergenerational relationships as could have long term consequences, stating that “it is best not to jump in with short term answers”.

The key message in relation to how to involve different generations from different backgrounds in active citizenship was to have organised opportunities within communities to do so. In order to involve people of different generations and create an active population, many participants proposed that the primary factor must be a shared desire to have this exchange between generations and to attend/participate in the activities. More information and advertising would be required for this, as well as a larger proposal for intergenerational activities by institutions where people can meet.
Several participants recommended that intergenerational initiatives should be stimulated as early and as broadly as possible in education and schools, at work, and in the neighbourhood. Intergenerational initiatives were seen as one way to help tackle stereotypes and provide important information through sharing and learning with different generations.

Similarly, a strategic approach - to look at what is needed and then how to achieve it was highlighted as a necessary initial step in promoting and attaining active citizenship. Participants discussed how to forge active citizenship beyond the structures that exist: such as tidy town groups and other community groups. There was a strong feeling that something needed to be done to network groups together.

Participants referred to times of difficulty when communities came together to help each other (i.e. during the icy weather) and proposed that this sense of community should be built upon and should ideally happen all the time, not just through difficult situations. Comparisons were drawn between communities in rural and urban areas. It was the general consensus that there is a better sense of community in rural areas and it was difficult to see that same sense of community in urban areas – one idea was to foster a cross-over of intergenerational initiatives between urban and rural areas.

“We have to put in a lot of effort to involve generations with different backgrounds and interests in projects and programmes. We have to take into account the wisdom of older people and the energy of younger generation. Here the role of local authorities is crucial”.

Participants identified areas as recreation, education, work, housing, care and political representation as important fields of intergenerational initiatives in active citizenship. Here the discussion focussed on the existence and exchange of information in communities that would help support and build a community fabric:

- development of communication skills between generations;
- having your voice heard and listened to;
- influencing decision making (i.e. what is organised and how);
- Younger and older people promoting positive images of one another;
- Younger and older people working together to share information on what is happening in their community;
- learning about the rights and obligations of every citizen;
- addressing in environmental issues in the community;
- engagement in lifelong and intercultural learning;
- hiring several generations of workers to learn from each other and how to work together;
- promoting social inclusion in a multicultural society;
- engaging in volunteering to create a sense of community;
- promoting and supporting services, independent of public authorities, for hard to reach groups.

Benefits of active citizenship: It was felt that by bringing younger and older people together, in a planned and co-ordinated way, people can become more involved in their community. The majority of participants proposed volunteering as an optimal way not only to remain active, but also to obtain a higher quality of life. Moreover, participants believed active citizenship can help protect social cohesion, maintain solidarity between the generations and support people from various social groups and ethnic groups. A consistent message was that
it is important to support those who no longer work, but have the capacity and expertise that is needed and still useful for society. Intergenerational initiatives were considered to be particularly helpful in overcoming prejudices and contributing to gaining mutual respect and appreciation. As one younger participant observed:

“… a major task of our society has to be to reduce cliché’s and misconceptions. Ignorance and arrogance are a two way street in intergenerational communication.”

Younger participants put forward the idea that intergenerational initiatives could provide forums for people to learn about voting and how to get more involved in your community and proposed that their ‘transition year’ in school would allow young people to become ‘active citizens’. However there was a feeling that this strong focus on transition year students should not stop there - students should be encouraged to take part in initiatives before and after this year in school.

Several examples were provided that show how active citizenship already exists in some forms and can be replicated or expanded upon. Sweden provided an example of an intergenerational approach to achieving active citizenship - the ‘Grandad programme’ where older generations work in schools for the benefits of children. This programme shows that the best way for generations to meet is when they are working together, as in this case in the school. In Ireland, existing initiatives such as Community Games (celebrating the Olympics) were seen as a good way of using an intergenerational way to become an actively involved citizen. The German report provided examples of successful intergenerational activities and initiatives in neighbourhood centres, housing estates, local schools, multi-generational centres and sport associations. For example, cooperation between younger and older adults in local government has been established as an intergenerational parliament of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania.

**However, there are challenges to overcome- problems that may prevent full participation among people.** Some participants discussed questions concerning their understanding and the access of people to active citizenship, including volunteering. A certain level of scepticism was evident regarding the possibilities of the involvement of all ages as well as concerning real support structures and practices. What is more, younger participants brought up the issue of stereotyping of young people in local government has been established as an intergenerational parliament of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania.

“…. it is not so much young people that don’t listen to old people, but the other way around. Can we listen at all to young people? Understanding them should be key. We must ourselves find out why we hardly talk to young people or have their ear.”
What were the priorities for intergenerational relationships and how should we address them?

“The first priority must be for each generation to know the other generation in terms of their needs, interest, potentials, skills, capabilities, economic status etc. This will give thoughts and ideas of what the priorities are for intergenerational relationships”.

Participants listed a plethora of factors that contribute to building genuine intergenerational relationships. Within these there were a number of common themes:

- A two way process where each generation learns from each other by sharing skills and building confidence together;
- Mutual respect, dialogue and communication between age-groups on general issues in society;
- Focussing more on what you have in common instead of what separates the generations;
- An environment of trust;
- Awareness of the importance of intergenerational relationships;
- Promotion of the benefits derived from intergenerational relationships to a greater number of people;
- Motivation and willingness of participants involved to change something;
- Sustaining the connections made in intergenerational projects beyond the lifetime of the project.

“This discussion was supported by the belief of all participants that society can only be constructed by all generations together; generations are dependent on one another. There was a common agreement on the importance of youth employment, or rather the fight against youth unemployment.”

A priority for intergenerational relationships was to address significant societal issues such as:

- Loneliness and isolation;
- Challenge the traditional activities associated with specific age groups;
- Community cohesion – people from different backgrounds getting on together;
- Conflict in community areas;
• The imbalance of participation of different generations of workers in employment (i.e. more attention to/inclusion of the working generation - 30+ and 40+);

  “If young generations can’t get into the labour market, and the 45-plus unemployed find their way back blocked, than this will be in contrast with the ideal of a workplace for all ages in which all generations meet and work together.”

• Sustainability in finance, economic and environment policies, that do not shift the burden to future generations;

• Access of young people to the housing market;

• A lack of contact with other generations outside of the family or outside of carer-client relationships was a consistent concern that needs to be addressed.

  “... there is a growing need for intergenerational thinking and planning of restructuring neighbourhoods and cities, and financial schemes in such a way that they open up for all generations, create closer proximity of the generations and encourage contacts and cooperation between generations.”

How might these priorities be addressed?

Most participants admitted that these priorities will not be easy to achieve. Encouragingly, they believed they were attainable and provided numerous and varied examples of how to address these priorities:

• Intergenerational activity needs support, funding and facilitation.

• Communication about projects at a local level which focuses on how information is shared within communities.

• Common spaces and creating dynamic opportunities of bringing the generations together through organised activity;

  “A common educational programme might be developed concerning guiding through the streets of our town. Both groups should start learning separately and should join later and continue learning together on what could be ended up by a common public event.”

• Reducing the risk of unemployment and social exclusion of older workers by facilitating their access to quality information and advice and effective programs to update professional skills;

• Facilitation of co-housing and living by promoting flat-sharing communities and multigenerational housing;

• Training and education for all generations and those responsible to undertake intergenerational programmes;
• Community consultations - consult with older and younger about what their needs are or what projects/events/activities they are interested in and then carry out a project to address these needs;

• Outreach - reach out to younger generations by changing the methods of invitation - dare to ask young people personally to participate in the event and extend invitations to their networks.

“... measures and concrete actions must be integrated, taking into account the multidimensional nature of active aging policies involving appropriate employment, health care, housing, social protection (pensions and social assistance), education, culture and other services of general interest, thus ensuring social cohesion and construction of a society for all ages.”

To summarise, the further development of intergenerational relationships must take into account factors such as frequency and opportunities for interaction and exchange between the generations. Therefore, the number of people participating in intergenerational activities should be increased so that more exchanges were generated. For this purpose, participants commented on how important promotion is to make these activities known and available to a greater number of people. Space was also a factor that defines the location of people, generates a separation between generations - there are numerous spaces that older adults frequently use and others where younger people hang out so it would be good to establish common spaces and ways to integrate these spaces. For example, youth and older peoples association and clubs that already exist should be developed and given financial and technical assistance to work together.

Finally, participants strongly believed that intergenerational thinking and learning needs to become an issue for professionals in all sectors. As such, it important for institutions to get involved, since it is the ideal medium to promote it as access to both generations are available. Similarly, small and large societal organisations need to become aware of the potential benefits - to think and act ‘intergenerationally’ - one of the important messages of the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between the Generations. As one participant said:

“The Year may bring national governments to consider new legislation and investments in societal change in this light. Unfortunately the Netherlands government did not join the European Union in this Year of Active Ageing at all.”
Key points, including ideas or issues, participants felt were relevant to the discussion.

In general, both older and younger participants expressed a sense of responsibility to other generations, willingness to cooperate and agreed that various activities and projects will bring the generations together. There was a strong belief that intergenerational projects have a positive impact on the lives of those involved in relation to sharing skills, feeling a sense of belonging, increase confidence and cooperation among generations. Activities that were highlighted most favourably were ones that involved and were performed by all generations.

“Intergenerational dialogue is a precondition for reshaping our society on the basis of social justice and reflecting shared visions of all generations.”

Despite the fact that intergenerational relationships and learning has great potential to promote active citizenship and intergenerational solidarity, participants warned that this work is still premature; the first step must be to map what is going on and to discuss possible ways to organize this kind of work, not as projects but as long term efforts in the development of society. As such, participating country’s summative reports provided several recommendations for accomplishing these goals:

Many suggested that intergenerational solidarity expressed on a personal level is no less important than institutionalised solidarity and that there is not enough attention on behalf of government services to promote intergenerational programmes. Partnership development between community advocates/groups and local schools were seen as crucial in the success of projects within the community. Accordingly, further resources are needed. Though much of the work is undertaken on a voluntary basis, resources in terms of staff and financial are needed to support the development and sustain such initiatives.

Stereotyping of age groups was a clear theme which both younger and older participants felt needed to be addressed in order to overcome barriers of all ages working together. Mainstream media was recognised as playing a significant role in portraying stereotypes of older and younger people – it was suggested that the media should cover the positive aspects of being younger and older and highlight positive ageing.

A sense of community was important to all participants with many feeling that a sense of community has been lost. Intergenerational projects in the community have had a positive impact on community cohesion in terms of respect and communication between generations. It was also suggested that intergenerational projects have resulted in wider benefits within the community.

Participants broadly agreed on ideas and concepts linked to such issues as fairness and social justice. However, some participants felt that the term intergenerational is an issue in terms of understanding its definition and potentially highlights the divide between generations. Therefore, further discussions on what is meant by these terms are needed. Similarly, promotion and awareness about what individuals, organizations and society can gain from this work is also needed. In many participating countries, intergenerational learning is not yet on the governmental agenda. As such, participants advocated for some form of communication project at a local and national level to open up a dialogue on the subject. This idea could also extend to include how information is shared within communities themselves.

Concern about the risk of losing knowledge and experience if we do not include the older generations was discussed. Likewise, there are smaller initiatives and intergenerational
activities throughout Europe but participants advocated for a need to map the efforts done and
to collect knowledge and experience from intergenerational projects. Therefore, research is
needed to explore the needs and beliefs of both generations as well as the effectiveness of
intergenerational relationships. Moreover, evaluation of previous projects is also needed so
that we can learn from what has been done.

There are many internet projects currently going on – so what can we learn from this
from an intergenerational perspective?

On a general level, participants felt that there is a need to continue to support the generations in
keep in touch with the other; interaction among people produces a greater relationship with
people from other generations. Currently it seems that groups are segregated i.e. youth clubs
and active retirement groups ‘do their own thing’ – there is rarely a cross over. As a result, both
older and younger participants thought that creating a space where young and old could come
together and interact would be beneficial (i.e. an intergenerational club). As one older
participant stated:

“I would love to exchange views with young people but I do not meet them on a daily
basis. I have to find out where and how I can meet them”.

Volunteering was seen as having a crucial role to play in being an active citizen with
intergenerational learning supporting voluntary intergenerational work. Participants felt that
intergenerational leaning projects and activities should be about learning and cooperation of
generations within the family, workplace and voluntary organisations. Similarly, it was
suggested that education around intergenerational solidarity and how to become an active
citizen (i.e. how to vote) was needed; the sooner people learn about active citizenship, the better.
Both generations agree that the school and/or education system, which is near all citizens in
both rural and urban areas, could undertake initiatives towards intergenerational learning.
We would be happy to hear from anyone who wants to find out more about our work. Whether you are seeking advice on one of our specialisms or are interested in one of our services, please get in touch.

Contact details:

Tel: 01782 844036
Email: admin@bjf.org.uk/EMIL@bjf.org.uk
www.bjf.org.uk: www.emil-network.eu

Parkfield House, 64 Princes Road, Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 7JL

Registered Charity No 1122401
Company No 6454378

Copyright Beth Johnson Foundation First Edition April 2013
ISBN No: 0-907875-06-8