

Event 3

Participation: The event involved 90 citizens, including 51 participants from Kőszeg Város, Hungary, 5 participants from municipality of Škofja Loka, Slovenia, 4 participants from Stadtgemeinde Judenburg, Austria, 5 participants from Stadt Bad Kötzing, Germany, 3 participants from Mesto Sušice, Czech Republic, 3 participants from Municipality of Rokiškis, Lithuania, 2 participants from Tryavna, Bulgaria, 3 participants from Orasul Siret, Romania, 3 participants from Vereniging Meerssen, Netherlands, 4 participants from Zvolen, Slovakia, 4 participants from Chojna, Poland, 1 participant from Holstebro, Denmark and 2 participants from Agros, Cyprus.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Kőszeg, Hungary, from 26/08/2021 to 29/08/2021

Short description:

The event in Kőszeg focused on the relationship of seniors and modern technology, e-education of seniors, change of education, travel, and communication possibilities. Workshops, presentations, discussions, exchange of experiences and good practices and study visits were used to reach our goals. The main target groups were teachers and students, but the presence and point of view of some seniors and officials were also important.

Thursday, August 26:

The first day was mostly dedicated to the arrival and accommodation of international participants and their registration. The opening ceremony started with a remarkable piano concert given by a 107-year-old lady; it completely fits to the project theme. Participants were greeted by the head of the Lutheran school, which was the site of the meetings, and by the head of the organizer Town Twinning Association. The moderator – a young University student asked the participants to introduce themselves shortly. Delegations also gave those presents which – as a surprise – were put into the exhibition cabinet next day. The evening finished with a welcome dinner, which was an excellent opportunity for the introduction of traditional Hungarian cuisine, multicultural dialogue, and bonding among participants.

Friday, August 27:

The whole second day was a hard-working day beginning at 9 AM, finishing at 5:30 PM. Although it was long, and crowded, the variety of the methods ensured participants' active involvement.

At the beginning participants were welcomed by Béla Básthy, Mayor of the Town of Kőszeg, who underlined the importance of the theme, particularly because there are many seniors living in the town, and the officials try to help them. Mrs. Annigje Kruytbosch, President of the Douzelage expressed her happiness, that after such a long time when we could see each other only with the aid of the Internet we finally can personally meet, touch each other. She also emphasized how important the knowledge of modern technology is; we all could see this particularly during Covid time. She also talked about the importance of those kind of associations as the Douzelage because it helps the cooperation of different nations in many fields. As the president of the Douzelage she expressed her gratitude for the Slovenian project leaders and the local Kőszeg organizers.

Miha Ješe, the head of the applicant organization briefly introduced the ACTAGE project, underlining that the previous meetings' summaries are already uploaded on the towns' Websites. Finally, Ilona Tálós, the head of the Kőszeg program shortly reminded the participants of the most important program elements and information.

Two short lectures helped the participants to warm up, and to tune into the group work. The

title of the first lecture was a short sentence: You will be old, as well. Claire Strasbaugh presented advice on planning for a good quality of life from a lady who celebrated her 100 year birthday this summer. She urged participants to be mindful not only of external preparations such as medical or transportation needs, but also spiritual preparations and maintaining a positive attitude. After this Anna Heitler gave the presentation of the questionnaire results. The questionnaire – sent to the partner towns half year before the event – was answered by about 600 seniors in 12 countries. The questionnaire was made by Andrea Bancsó. Also, she analyzed the answers, prepared the PPT with graphs. These results were necessary to be able to explain some questions related to the behavior and attitude towards modern technology. (The questionnaire results can be found on the project's website.)

The lectures were followed by workshops in 4 mixed groups (by age and nation). Participants were so divided into 4 groups that – if possible – each nation could be represented in each group.

The first group discussed the following: What I like/dislike about young people/old people. The second group discussed the Stereotypes about young people/old people. The third group discussed the following: What am I/am I not envious of young/old people. The fourth group discussed the good effects and bad effects of the pandemic on the relationship between young people and seniors.

Workshops took place in 4 classrooms (equipped with computers, projector, and intelligent board). The workshops took only 45 minutes but were very efficient. Group leaders took notes, summarized the outcomes of the workshops. After the coffee break, they presented the summaries.

The 22 participants of the first group had to talk honestly about a difficult question: what they like and dislike about young and old people. The group leader, Mira Kuthi, a high school student presented the topic and used a method that the whole discussion was interactive, everyone could comment and share their idea. Participants have written their opinions on post-its, and stuck them on the board.

There were a lot of great ideas on the board, of which the group leader highlighted the most important ones when she summarized the outcomes.

First, they highlighted facts related to the seniors. Most of them agreed that they love to tell old stories and share experiences they have had in their lives. Also, among the many good ideas, they enjoyed life and not rushing through the moments. As a bad trait was mentioned that they have a hard time deviating from their usual habits and are picky about a lot of things they've been used to over the years. As well, they have a hard time tolerating things that bother them, so they are sometimes quite easily annoyed.

The group also had a lot of ideas for the youth part of the question. It was quite often mentioned among the best for being full of energy and open to novelties. They also mentioned that they have a good understanding of modern technology and are very receptive to their brains, so they can easily learn and memorize things. However, there were obviously mentioned a lot of properties for bad properties. First, they are impulsive, so they often make ill-considered and even bad decisions. They are also stubborn, so they often choose the longer and harder path to something than to take the advice of adults that could help them reach their goal more easily. Yet probably the most important thing that was also mentioned was that, unlike the seniors, they are always in a hurry and often do not enjoy the charm of each moment.

Overall, the group leader said that they had a very good group task behind them, where they

managed to gather a lot of qualities about what we like and what we don't like in the seniors as well as the youngsters. Luckily, nobody had the feeling of being hurt, actually they all agreed that those properties are right.

The 22 participants of the second group discussed the Stereotypes about young people/old people. The leader, Hanna Andrasek, a university student, provided a short time for participants to prepare their answers anonymously on post-it notes, and as she read them, the participants were able to discuss the merits of each, providing their own opinions. One of the key issues focused on the perceived lack of patience of young people, which some considered to be a hyper-focus on efficiency, driven by the techno-culture's speed and innovation. Another topic of discussion was that young people are the "native-born digital citizens," while older people are the "immigrants to the digital world." The group discussed the problems of communication mishaps, slow progress, and difficulty navigating the "new world" for these immigrants.

At the beginning, many general stereotypes were listed, to name a few: young people are careless, too rebellious, lazy, rude and how older people complain about minor issues and worry too much. The group agreed that these stereotypes are very extreme and cannot be discussed thoroughly – they may fit certain individuals, but not an entire generation.

A particular stereotype that appeared the most frequently was the impatience that juniors generally show towards the seniors. This takes many forms, however, the senior members of the workshop experienced it mostly while driving and when they asked for assistance with a particular digital device such as a mobile phone or tablet. The group discovered that a possible reason for impatience from the juniors' side is the fast-moving world itself – they are used to managing their time efficiently and that comes hand-in-hand with being quick with digital devices. Another reason could be demonstrated by the example that a member provided: youngsters are native digital citizens whereas seniors as immigrants to that world – or with other words, what comes as natural to youngsters has to be taught to seniors. Many seniors have a hard time adapting to new circumstances as they are accustomed to another, entirely different world – the argument from many seniors' side that „we have always had it this way” forms a root so deep in them that many are reluctant to adapt to the new world around them.

This brings up the second most frequent topic, that is seniors don't understand the younger generations. Some juniors opened about their experience of seniors not listening to them due to their vast life experience and wisdom that they had collected over the years. To form a bridge over this misunderstanding between the two generations, the group concluded that juniors should show more respect towards seniors, while seniors should stay open and hear out what juniors have to say – they could show a different way of looking at life. Lastly, many stated that juniors first do, then think, while the seniors first think, then do. Interestingly, there was complete agreement on this statement, both generations believed that this statement fit them personally. The group agreed that the lack of experience that leads juniors to make irresponsible decisions without thinking them through thoroughly is what seniors have collected throughout their lifetime. Seniors used to make such decisions as well, they have just learned from the consequences and have reflected on them ever since when they have found themselves in similar situations. It has also been highlighted that many of these mistaken decisions cannot and should not be prevented as these are the life lessons that form juniors into the adult they shall become.

All in all, besides having conducted a thorough discussion about stereotypes on the seniors and the juniors, the workshop left all members with a good feeling in their hearts, knowing that both groups have made a step towards each other to finally close that generation gap.

The 22 participants of the third group discussed the following theme: What am I/am I not

envious of young/old people. The leader of the group, Bence Vég, a university student first listed the ideas which came up during the discussion. These were the followings:

- Old people have a lot of experience
- Adults feel pressure because of the responsibilities
- They didn't have the pressure of the social media. They could enjoy their time more freely, made deeper connections with their friends
- As you get older, you don't need the opinion of all the people only your close family and friends
- After finishing work, they have time to travel and enjoy their life.
- Nowadays the young people "lost" 2 years of their life
- Young people have time. Don't have a lot of responsibilities
- Nowadays young people have computers
- A few years ago, studying and communication was more difficult.
- Learning new things is easier at a young age
- More choices in the field of work and study
- Easier to travel across borders
- Flexibility
- More opportunities
- Access of information. The huge amount of the information can make people depressed

It was not easy to summarize, as there were so many points of views. There are many things we can be envious of both young and older people, but also, because of many reasons we are not envious of either the young, or old people. It turned out: both being young and old have advantages and disadvantages which can or cannot be envied.

The group leader at the end shared his personal feelings and closed his summary with the following sentences: In the last few decades, the world has changed a lot, and because of this growing up changed as well. Older people didn't have access to internet, and it was more difficult to learn and gather information. But this had bright side as well because as it turned out learned libraries are a good dating place. Some of the young people are envious for the lack of social media because a lot of information and being always present can make people depressed. My parents grew up "in the street" playing football, going out with friends so they have more deeper connections. In the other hand I have the opportunity to have friends from many countries and I can maintain my connections from all over the world. In my workplace I am learning a lot of things from my colleagues, and I am a bit jealous for their experience and knowledge, but of course this will come with time. By aging comes responsibility as well. Young people don't have so many responsibilities as an older person and because of this they are more flexible. We can travel without fear and organize such events like this. For closing the topic, I would like to thank you the short discussion and the great ideas.

The 21 participants of the fourth group discussed the good effects and bad effects of the pandemic on the relationship between young people and seniors. The leader of the group, Hajnalka Rezner in her introduction described the workshop as very interesting. She summarized the findings and thoughts as follows:

- the pandemic thought us, that we cannot take things for granted
- young people became more conscious about their grandparents
- many young people helped their grandparents to discover Skype and other online chat programmes
- many of us thought that due to the pandemic society is going to change, but now it seems

that things have not changed as most people are the same as before covid.

- there has been a difference between the 2 lockdowns: the first period was all about solidarity, but during the 2nd one older people got vaccinated first and started to get around while young people had to stay at home, which caused tension between the generations.
- before covid there were so many events that people could not enjoy them anymore – now, we can enjoy those few events much better
- communication, discussions and compromise is needed between the generations to lower the tension between generations:
 - o in the Netherlands young people were blamed for the new wave
 - o in Austria many people blamed foreigners for bringing in the corona
 - o there is a conflict between people who are against the vaccination and those who support it
- More conversation is needed, but it should not be the task of the politicians or opinion leaders, but its down the communities (influencers, youtube) to achieve changes.
- The role of the media / social media is huge. Many people believe in the fake news, especially the seniors are easy to influence, because they usually rely on the politicians. The older people should listen more to the youngsters and learn from them how to be more open-minded. They can also learn digital skills from them. The lockdown was a good opportunity to teach the older ones how to use online communication channels to keep in touch with their family.

So, as a conclusion we can declare that Covid had – or rather has had - both positive and unfortunately negative effect on the relationship of the youngsters and seniors. As for the Internet, its role is ambiguous. It many times helped the communication between the family members, but the content of the social media should be accepted only with criticism.

After the group photo the work continued with a group interview. The panel discussion, modeled after the Hungarian talk show Ridikül, featured a multi-national, multi-generational group of “guests” and two Hungarian high school students acting as hosts or interviewers. Following that sample, seven participants were previously asked to take part in the program. The topics was: Communication earlier and now; Travelling opportunities earlier and now. The two Hungarian reporters, Anna Benedikti and Hanna Andrasek (both students) talked with interesting guests who were coming from different geographical region and age group. Kristina Volná, Claire Strasbaugh, Annigje Kruytbosch the president of the Douzelage, Nicolas Christofi, Julian Preidl, Cezary Salamończyk and Béla Básthy mayor were excellent participants to be interviewed.

The topics ranged over technology use, childhood perceptions of others, and even touched briefly on politics. The panel largely agreed that during their childhoods, letter writing, and telephone use were the main avenues of communication, but differed between Western European countries and Eastern or Central European countries as to the availability of telephones. The youngest member of the panel discussed the advantages of growing up with video conferences and the World Wide Web. Another area that the panel found large agreement on was the value of face-to-face communication. One member of the panel, an immigrant from the United States, mentioned her appreciation for digital technology, which allows for easier communication with friends and family on the international scale. Panelists were also asked about the impact of the Iron Curtain, a question relevant to almost all the panelists, but especially so to the youngest member of the group. He provided the story of his parentage, one parent from East Germany, and the other from West Germany, and how without the fall of the Iron Curtain, he would not be who he is. The audience and the other panelists found his personal history touching and insightful. This final question from the panel discussion led directly to the next day's activities, a trip to the Iron Curtain informational center.

After lunch the work continued with workshop about educational methods. As a warmup or introduction Claire Strasbaugh shared the interview with her 100-year-old grandmother who

talked about her experiences. After this, participants formed 3 groups: students, teachers, other (parents, grandparents etc.). The workshops were organized in 3 classrooms about the changing educational methods (Prussian, modern, digital etc.). After the workshop group leaders summarized the discussion results.

The leader of the students' workshop, Jázmin Fazekas underlined that students have personal experience only about the current time, the past is known only from movies or stories of their parents, grandparents: thirty years ago, education was based on books and lectures, now, it's iPads and websites. This was the base of their discussion.

They came up with some thoughts about the past, when students would have to spend hours in libraries looking through books for a project or research. With the huge advantages of having the Internet at our fingertips, we can change those hours of surfing through books into 30 seconds. One major difference that has changed through the curriculum in schools is teaching students skills instead of content.

In the past, students were sat down and told to memorize the facts, information of subjects. Now that curriculum expanded and is making students work in a group to compare, contrast, and discuss those topics to increase their knowledge and work on their communication skills which will come in more helpful in their future rather than knowing facts -they all agreed that they are thankful for this improvement, and they don't have to memorize all data from the old books.

School corporal punishment is the deliberate infliction of physical pain or discomfort and psychological humiliation as a response to undesired behavior by a student or group of students. Nowadays physically punished is gladly prohibited in schools and they are extremely thankful for that. According to their opinion kids can be punished by telling them off not just by hitting them with rules.

To summarize their main statement, she told: we are mostly happy about the improvement that the education system has made, and we can wait to see how it will change in the future.

The leader of the teachers' workshop, Henrietta Várvi summarized the opinion of the teachers. In the group there were teachers from almost all ages, some were only beginners, some others already retired. The main objective of this workshop was to share their experiences about the changes that have occurred in education over the last few decades. The engaging atmosphere of the workshop allowed the participants to be very active in the discussion. They touched on some crucial aspects of education including the spread of information technology and the occurrence of new learning assessment systems in education as well as such troublesome phenomena like too much testing, the increase in special educational students or helicopter parenting. It was interesting to see that regardless of which country we come from and teach, the difficulties and challenges that we have to face and cope with in our teaching practice are a lot alike. They all agreed that education might change over the times, but well-qualified, devoted, and enthusiastic teachers are key factors to education. We, teachers need to be versatile, adaptable, and curious about our students in order to be able to keep up with the ever-changing developments of education.

At the end of the workshop participants watched a three-minute buzzy slam-poetry performance by Taylor Mali (https://www.ted.com/talks/taylor_mali_what_teachers_make), sadly speaking, not alive, in which he points out that teachers do make a difference and, all in all, they are indispensable contributors to the constructive changes in education.

Finally, the leader of the third group (parents, grandparents etc.), Irena Mateliene presented their discussion. She listed the discussion arguments on the topic „How it was“. They were the followings:

- pupils used to sit in the wooden desks with an ink point.
- a child who used to write with left hand was forced to write with a right hand. He / she received negative remarks or even extra lessons to „fix“ the handwriting. No one knows today, what impact on the child's development it had.
- pupils used to obey. Those who didn't obey or made noise during a lesson, received physical punishment: slapping on a face, standing in a corner, punching on the head, kneeling in front of the classroom; pushing a chair around a classroom, ruler hits on fingers, extra time after school. The saddest thing to remember is that parents usually supported the punishment decisions as if their children were truly guilty.
- teachers used to write marks for behaviour. Those were even worse than a bad mark for a school subject. A school subject might be difficult and parents might be tolerant but they'd never be tolerant for a bad behaviour mark.
- a sitting locational in a classroom was also important. Pupils who misbehaved, were forced to sit at the front desks, called „donkey bench“.
- there was a big load of written homework that took 2-3 hours daily.
- school worked 6 days a week but the learning process was slower compared to the modern times.
- some pupils had extra learning time during summer holidays. It used to be assigned by a tutor to fill the learning gaps.
- learning by copying schoolbooks was most common in methodics. Lots of handwriting was implemented, as well. It is nothing to compare with today's gap-filling in a workbook. There were no workbooks.
- teacher used to be in front, he/she was a center of the classroom – the most important person. His knowledge was unquestionable. However, a teacher was respected better than he/she is nowadays.
- same was applied to the schoolbooks. The information in the schoolbooks were unquestionable as well. Pupils who lived in a communist republic and those who lived in the western Europe learn different history or social science. True information used to be received from books, teachers and scientist, no one doubted science as it is today.
- pupils and teachers had little international relationship, and a very narrow outlook.

The most shaking conclusion was that people of different nations (German, Czech, Lithuanian, Cypriot, Slovenian, Hungarian) experienced very similar educational systems.

After the coffee break the last part was short presentation of the good practices. Partners were asked to send a short PPT about their good practices on the following fields :

- teaching IT for seniors
- social inclusion of seniors
- maintaining physical and mental fitness of seniors
- what do seniors get from youngsters and vice versa?

Partners were asked to highlight those methods they have not seen before and were successful in their neighborhood.

We could see many good solutions for all the topics above. Some participants brought examples for inclusive social life, seniors' clubs, common celebration with seniors and children. Some others gave examples for their third age University, fitness club, physical activities. All presentations are uploaded to the project's web site.

To close the day, Andrea Bancsó presented the game KAHOOT she prepared just for this event to show how youngsters – or sometimes even seniors – can use their mobile, the Internet. Questions were related to Hungarian scientists – so Hungarian participants were not allowed to play.

At the end Ágnes Lepold, who was the moderator of the whole day thanked participants the active work and wished a pleasant evening – cultural program and dinner.

Saturday, August 28:

The whole program on Saturday contributed to the workshops and discussions on the previous day. It started with a town visit, but in an unusual way. First, some members of the “Darabonts” (a historical association) talked about the Turkish siege (1532) which made Kőszeg well-known all over Europe. It was also a good example of the cooperation of older and younger members, as their age ranges between 17 and 81.

After this presentation the guided tour gave impression about the life in an 800-year-old town. Not only the 500-year-old buildings, but the tradition, the honor market impressed the foreign visitors. Another group signed up to bicycle visit of the town and its surrounding. Meanwhile both groups could see examples for efforts the town leaders try to help older people with repairing roads, sidewalks etc.

The guided tour finished at the Town Twinning Park – or Europe Park – where participants could see how Kőszeg celebrates its numerous partner towns, how the local government and associations present the town’s partners to the citizens and visitors. As a surprise, they could already see those presents they took with themselves in the cabinet designed and prepared for this purpose. The participants also were informed about the plans how the town with the town twinning association will add other books, games etc. to make the park more interesting and informative.

The Local Government of the Town Kőszeg received support from the European Union for the implementation of the so called “Green Town” project. Within the framework of this project, complete or partial renewal of parks was implemented in five different parts of the town. The Municipality of Kőszeg decided on the project sites, considering the suggestions of the residents and non-governmental organizations. One of these areas is the Twin Town Park, or Europe Park where a new community space was created at a former grassy area in front of a primary school.

After the lunch participants were taken to the Iron Curtain Museum by bus. The museum is about the Iron Curtain and was set up by an old guard of the border. It is an open-air museum in which many parts of the Iron Curtain are shown. The museum covers three time periods: 1948-1956, 1956-1966 / 1970 and 1967 / 1971-1989. Each period has specific issues, and these are explained. Visitors from western countries or youngsters could not imagine life behind the iron curtain. They heard about it, but – as it turned out on the previous day – it was almost impossible to imagine it. No miracle, people are grateful that we could get rid of the communist era and are members of the European Union.

The day, and the whole event finished a multicultural performance of a Folk music group, and gala dinner. Next day, on Sunday morning the delegations said goodbye, and left for home.

The next meeting will take place at the end of September, in Judenburg, Austria.