Development of the L - N - A SYSTEM for seniors (L - Learn, N - Network, A - Act)

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Content

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Introduction

That the world population is ageing is no news at all. This tendency has been around for a long time now. The issue has been discussed for decades at world level and all the way to national institutions. Lifelong learning programs, programs belonging to social and health care and many other have overtaken the space. Some successfully, some to a certain extent.

In order to build the system of lifelong learning for older people that meets the demands of modern conditions and way of life, one has to take into consideration the factors that determine the development of the system. But, first of all, the fact that most older people today want to grow old in their own homes. Accordingly, this will be the main target group of the project. Among many factors that determine the development of the system of lifelong learning for older people, this project will be directed towards the gerontology approach, quality of life of older people, organisation and societal assumptions.

Conceptual framework for lifelong education of older people

Quality of life of older people

Taking into consideration the quality of life of older people is a very important issue. First of all, for the sake of evaluation of health and social care services for older people ageing in place, but also, and no less important, for the sake of education towards an active and quality life in the times we live in.

Probably the best research study in the past few years dealing with this issue is the study conducted by Karen M. van Leeuwen et al entitled "What does quality of life mean to older adults? A thematic synthesis" published in the magazine Plus ONE, 8 March 2019.

The authors of the research have identified qualitative studies on platforms PubMed, Ebsco/Psycinfo and Ebsco/CINAHL according to following criteria:

- focus on the perception of quality of life,
- older people that live at home as main participants,
- using qualitative methodology,
- carried out in a western country,
- published in English language
- not directed towards specific health issues

The results are as follows:

48 qualitative studies were included that represent points of view of over 3400 older people ageing in place in 11 Western countries.

Aspects of the quality of life that were identified in the synthesis were categorised in 9 domains:

Health perception - Feeling healthy and not limited by your physical condition

Autonomy - Being able to manage on your own, retaining dignity and not feeling like a burden

Role and activity - Spending time doing activities that bring a sense of value, joy and involvement

Relationships - Having close relationships which makes you feel supported and enable you to mean something for others

Attitude and adaptation - Looking on the bright side of life

Emotional comfort - Feeling at peace

Spirituality - Feeling attached to and experiencing faith and self-development from beliefs, rituals and inner reflection

Home and neighbourhood - Feeling secure at home and living in a pleasant and accessible neighbourhood

Financial security - Not feeling restricted by your financial situation

Based on the above, it can be concluded that quality of life can be expressed in a number of domains and related subtopics that are important for older people ageing in place. The synthesis supports the concept that quality of life should be viewed as a dynamic network of interwoven domains.

Lifelong education of older people

If we are looking for the beginnings, and for the biggest promoters of lifelong education for older people, then it would definitely be the Universities of the Third Age (U3A). Wikipedia defines them as "an international movement whose goals are the education and stimulation of mainly retired members of the community - those in the third age of life".

It should be noted right away that there is no generally accepted standardized model of these universities. Under this concept, one can find university programs for older people that are based on generational and intergenerational learning, research and development, such as the programs at academic level of the Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement, Network of Age Friendly Universities, of which the Blue University of Third Age Ljubljana, U3A Rijeka, Croatia, and many more are part of. However, this concept also covers programs at a lower level in which participants acquire new skills and knowledge or simply engage in learning for everyday life either in adult education institutions or in interest groups. Some of these programs are paid for and some are free. In principle, there are two models, the French and the British.

In 1973, the first such university was founded at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Toulouse. It, like any university, creates programs for older people following a non-formal type of education, which means that participants - older people - after completing such programs receive certificates of completion that have no formal significance. Therefore, the creation of such programs goes from the top down, from the university to the end users. The connection with the university opens up many possibilities: programs are led by highly qualified teaching staff, there is the possibility of choosing different subjects, intergenerational cooperation - the opportunity for students and teaching staff to conduct research based on the professional, cultural or historical experiences of older people, etc. This model is used in many countries, especially in continental Europe. Programs mainly relate to computer skills, languages, entrepreneurship, inheritance law, religion, politics, etc. Sometimes U3A provide groups with professional training and formal opportunities for continuing education.

On the other hand, this concept was applied in Great Britain in a completely different way right from the beginning of its application in 1980. U3A is a national network of learning groups which aim to encourage older people to share their knowledge, skills and interests in a friendly environment. There are no exams and homework, it is learning for fun, not with the aim of gaining qualifications. U3A activities usually take place in community centres or members' homes. The British concept follows a bottom-up methodology. Under this method, the programs offered to members are decided by members according to their taste and preferences. The programs can be different: art, history, literature and languages, crafts, gardening, photography, computer and digital technology. Sometimes U3A groups organize trips to museums, concerts or theatres.

The third, very interesting concept of U3A is the above-mentioned network of Age-Friendly Universities led by Dublin City University (DCU). It is based on 10 principles and is developing at a good pace. The principles of an Age-Friendly University are:

1. To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programmes.
2. To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue "second careers".
3. To recognise the range of educational needs of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master's or PhD qualifications).
4. To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.

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5. To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.

6. To ensure that the university's research agenda is informed by the needs of an ageing society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.

7. To increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that ageing brings to our society.

8. To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of health and wellness programmes and its arts and cultural activities.

9. To engage actively with the university's own retired community.

10. To ensure regular dialogue with organisations representing the interests of the ageing population.

Pedagogy – Andragogy – Gerontogogy

This section distinguishes between the definitions of pedagogy and educational directions created on its foundations.

Pedagogy[1] is a social science that studies, researches and improves upbringing and education, and studies various influences on individual and social development as well as other factors, processes and contents of shaping human personality and identity. Starting from the goal of education, pedagogy studies, determines and realizes pedagogical tasks, laws, contents and methods of their implementation. In its origin and development, it follows the course of social development and changes, using the scientific achievements of other disciplines and the natural human needs for socialization, inculturation, education and training for life. The system of pedagogical disciplines most often includes: history of pedagogy, systematic or systemic pedagogy, didactics (and methodology) as a theory of education and teaching, methodology of pedagogy, comparative pedagogy and pedagogical futurology.

Andragogy[2] is a scientific discipline that deals with the training and learning of adults. The name was used in this sense by the German author Alexander Kappa in his treatise of *Plato's Pedagogy* (Platons Erziehungslehre). In the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century andragogy was established as a relatively independent discipline within the science of education. More developed branches of andragogy are: general or systematic andragogy, andragogy didactics, history of andragogy, comparative andragogy, social andragogy, family andragogy, free time andragogy, media andragogy and andragogy methodology. New andragogic areas are also being developed, for example, education for peace, development, preservation of the human environment, health and population education. Media training and the use of new information and communication technologies have become part of adult education. In recent times, education has increasingly turned to social groups with special needs (older people, in some societies women, the handicapped, migrants, refugees, the illiterate, the unemployed and the unfree). Contemporary education and learning of adults becomes part of the process of lifelong education.

Gerontogogy[3] is an interdisciplinary educational science, created in the second half of the 20th century, the subject of which is upbringing and education of older people. The development of

[1] Pedagogija. Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2021. Retrieved on 16. 8. 2022 <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=47271>.

[2] andragogija. Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2021. Retrieved on 16. 8. 2022 <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=2579>.

[3] gerontogogija. Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2021. Retrieved on 16. 8. 2022 <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=21813>.

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gerontogogy is particularly related to demographic trends characteristic of the 20th century (decline in birth rate and decrease in mortality), development of the concept of lifelong education, respect for human rights (ensuring a quality and equal life in old age), changes in the structure of the modern family and the development of medical science (more successful treatment of serious diseases and enabling a higher quality of life).

In the teaching of older people, according to our analysis, several methodologies were applied: instructional, constructivist, cognitive, etc., along with many tools such as theoretical lectures, workshops and debates. Older people have extensive experience that can be usefully applied in discussions. Also, the learning process gave good results when it took place outside the classroom with friends and families, in an informal form through joint reading of magazines or watching television programs, i.e. through everyday life.

Gerontology

Gerontology[4] is an interdisciplinary scientific field that deals with the study of psychological, health and social problems of ageing and older people. Social gerontology investigates the impact of the development of modern society on the status and needs of older people in the family and society. Medical gerontology deals with diseases of older people from the point of view of clinical gerontology and geriatrics. Due to the explicit extension of the average life span (about 50% in the last 100 years), society is increasingly interested in the problems of older people, as well as in the treatment of their diseases.

Intergenerational Learning

Intergenerational Learning occurs when intergenerational projects or activities are purposefully planned to include one, or several, learning aims and outcomes across the generations, i.e. both sides learning from or with each other, to gain skills, values and knowledge.

Lifelong learning system for older people L – N – A

When talking about lifelong learning, it must be kept in mind that it is continuously present in the life of every person from birth to death. It is a process of informal learning. In the Guidelines it is stated that "Informal (experiential) learning is not organized and is never intentional from the student's point of view. Every person has many learning situations in their daily life, at work or in their free time. Learning takes place outside the classroom, in museums and libraries, at home, we can learn from books, television, movies, from friends and other people, etc. It is a lifelong process in a natural, intuitive way."

Therefore, older people are continuously in the process of lifelong education. However, regardless of whether it is non-formal or informal, the most important thing is that they must be aware of this process, which should be dynamic and open to every individual who should participate in it consciously and harmonize it with their wishes and abilities and, above all, be active participants.

"Inactivity is not an option" is not only a well-chosen sentence for the project name, but should become a lifestyle for all older people.

Why is this important?

First and foremost, it is important because lifelong education:

- Improves cognitive abilities, i.e. cognitive health,

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[4] gerontologija. Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2021. Retrieved on 17. 8. 2022. <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=21815>.

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- Increases positive emotions,
- Promotes social networking and
- Maintains a high level of activity.

For this reason, it is necessary to frame the lifelong education of older people in a system that will, on the one hand, provide a framework, and on the other hand, serve as a guide for activities and a better quality of life.

Specific objectives

- The focus of all activities is on older people ageing in place, who are the dominant group in the entire senior population,
- The inclusion of older people in the processes of lifelong education as an essential factor for a higher level of competence and quality of life,
- Raising the quality of intergenerational cooperation as a basis for raising the level of competences of the society as a whole,
- Reaching the necessary level of digital competences for independent solving of basic personal needs of older people,
- Encouraging networking, an important factor in the quality of life of every older person,
- Creation of a framework curriculum using gerontological guidelines for adult education institutions and other institutions that implement processes of lifelong education for older people,
- Encouraging the development of inclusive universities of the third age, institutions for adult education based on the principles of generational and intergenerational cooperation.

Principles

- High level of quality of lifelong education programs for older people on the principle of their creation from the bottom up, based on guidelines and social gerontology,
- Educators and volunteers must be trained to work with older people,
- The system should be scientifically based - it changes and improves according to modern scientific discoveries,
- Independence of adult education institutions/gerontology training centres - degree of freedom and independence in designing activities, programs and projects for older people as part of creating their own identity; freedom of choice of content, application of methods and organization in the implementation of lifelong education of older people.
- Pluralism in pedagogical work with older people - the degree of freedom and independence in creating diversity in the pedagogical, andragogical, gerontogogical or intergenerational approach
- European dimension in education – training for coexistence in the European context
- Interculturalism – understanding and accepting cultural differences in order to reduce inequalities and prejudice towards members of other cultures

Structure of the system for lifelong education of older people

The system for lifelong education of older people consists of three parts:

L: Learn – **N: Network** – **A: Act**

The system is circular and can be repeated indefinitely as needed. In addition, the components of the system overlap in the inclusion of key competencies (EC, 2018), and are open enough to be used independently. Furthermore, each component consists of units that can also be used independently.

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Simply put, the system does not require use in any order, but can be used on a self-service basis - take what you know you need at a certain moment and reach the required level.

L: Learn

Based on the Guidelines, the knowledge and skills that older people should generally have are specified in order to enable them to actively participate in the economic, social and cultural life of the country and the EU, and in this way to gain the necessary self-confidence. The topics chosen by the partners for the initial phase of this component are:

1. Basics of gerontology and intergenerational solidarity
2. The family: position of older people (traditional and new roles)
3. Quality of life of older people
4. Lifelong learning of older people: needs, possibilities
5. Guidelines for working with older people: methods, communication etc.
6. ToT Curriculum and Curricula for senior educators and senior volunteers
7. European values and Erasmus+

Basics of gerontology and intergenerational solidarity

With the demographic change and longevity, the number of older people is growing rapidly. The sciences such as medicine, biology, sociology, social work, education, psychology, economics, political science, management, and others have been studying ageing for decades within their own fields, whereas gerontology is a common concept of the knowledge about age, ageing and older people. Gerontology studies the social, cultural, psychological, cognitive, and biological aspects of ageing. The word comes from the Greek geron - "old man" and logy - "study of".

There are also few individual branches of science which have developed their gerontological knowledge with their own specific concepts: e.g., medical gerontology or geriatrics, social gerontology, pedagogical gerontology or gerontogogy, psychological gerontology or psychology of ageing, etc. Holistic or integrated gerontology includes multidisciplinary disciplines and their knowledge on age and ageing.

In the GER-APP project, the focus is on the field of social gerontology with emphases on the social aspects of ageing with the goal to help older people improve their communication and interactions with others and to live active, independent life, recognizing the value of understanding the full life course.

Good communication is especially important for coexistence and good relations among various generations. We do have to keep in mind that the traditional patterns of solidarity as they were known are gone. It is therefore essential to learn about new solidarity for intergenerational and interpersonal relations in the professional care institutions, in our families, social networks and society as a whole. It is necessary to fully understand that later life is equally important and purposeful stage of life as any other. In the GER–APP project different tools and methods were developed; they help us to better understand the characteristics of each generation, which can lead us towards better coexistence.

The family: position of older people (traditional and new roles)

Population ageing has most affected developed European countries, whose population is considered one of the oldest in the world. The reasons for this situation are, first of all, better health care and quality of life, as well as a continuous decline in the fertility rate. Changes in the population structure of each country bring a series of consequences that significantly affect economic, economic, health and social processes. As a result of modern social and economic changes, the immediate social

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environment of older generations has changed a lot. The life and family situation of older people is largely the result of changes that have occurred in the structure and forms of the family.

The biggest change, from the point of view of the position of the elderly in the family, was the transformation of the extended family into the nuclear family. The extended family (spanning three and/or more generations) had wide kinship networks that provided support for the elderly. In the extended family, old age was valued, individuality and independence were sacrificed for the safety and warmth of the community. In the past, caring for the elderly was considered a sacred duty, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, elderly people represented the head of the household, not today's dependent member in the home of their children or grandchildren. Life expectancy was much shorter, so care for the elderly covered a shorter period of time.

In the last few decades, society has undergone great and sudden changes in this respect. The traditional, patriarchal and rural family underwent a transformation into an industrially developed family. This change also brought many problems, especially in relation to older members of society. The previous large rural families provided adequate protection and care for their elderly members. In contrast, modern families, with the simultaneous process of daily reduction, increasingly face the difficulties of providing care and protection to the elderly, and today we can no longer expect families to be able to independently provide adequate care to the elderly. Therefore, the process of transferring the care of older people outside the family is increasingly at work. Part of the role of the weakened family, which used to be the main source of support and help for older members, is taken over by institutions and local communities, from state and private institutions, church societies and organizations to non-profit associations. Changes have also taken place in the way of living. Today, older people increasingly live in their own households, while until recently they lived with their children and grandchildren. Family life between generations takes place at a distance. We are talking about the so-called intimacy at a distance, which testifies to the increasing social alienation and isolation of older people.

Based on these trends and changes in the provision of care services to the elderly, it can be expected that the existing forms of care will not be adequate and sufficient for the new generations of elderly people in the future. Older people already today have more free time, more independence and security, and new generations of older people will be healthier, better educated, and therefore more demanding. In accordance with this and the existing demographic trends, it is expected that not only will the need for the use of professional care services outside the family increase, but the development of these services will have to be planned in accordance with the increased needs of older people. On the other hand, the construction of social relations, which are broken today, the reintegration of socially isolated older people, as well as the encouragement of the participation of older people in the social life of the community, will be the main challenges of the future social environment.

Quality of life of older people

Aspects of quality of life identified in the study "What does quality of life mean to older adults? A thematic synthesis" are categorized into nine domains of quality of life:

Domains and subthemes	Description
1) Health perception	**Feeling healthy and not limited by your physical condition**
- [Physical conditions and symptoms]	- Not suffering from physical, mental and cognitive symptoms or disorders
- [Point of reference]	- Feeling healthy compared to prior health status or that of others
- [Health as an ability]	- Not being limited by your health

Domains and subthemes	Description
2) Autonomy	**Being able to manage on your own, retaining dignity and not feeling like a burden**
- [Independence]	- Being able to manage on your own and do what you want
- [Control]	- Being able to choose what you want
- [Burden]	- Not feeling like a burden to others
- [Dignity]	- Being able to retain dignity by focusing on things that one can do
3) Role and activity	**Spending time doing activities that bring a sense of value, joy and involvement**
- [Control over time]	- Having the freedom to organize your time
- [Keeping busy]	- Having something to stay occupied and keep you from feeling bored
- [Valuable activities]	- Doing activities that bring joy or meaning to life
- [Staying connected]	- Staying mentally active, up-to-date and in touch with the world around you
- [Helping others]	- Feeling able to contribute to society and making a difference
- [Achievements]	- Being proud on (and achieving a sense of identify from) current and former achievements
- [Self-worth]	- Feeling valuable and comfortable in your own skin
4) Relationships	**Having close relationships which makes you feel supported and enable you to mean something for others**
- [Close relationships]	- Having (and keeping) valued relationships
- [Family]	- Enjoying bond with partner and/or (grand)children
- [Experiencing support]	- Experiencing that people care for you and care about you
- [Love and affection]	- Experiencing a sense of belonging and intimacy, being loved and appreciated
- [Reciprocity]	- Having the possibility to help and support others
5) Attitude and adaptation	**Looking on the bright side of life**
- [Positive attitude]	- Being positive and making the best out of life
- [Acceptance]	- Being able to accept what you cannot influence
- [Changing standards/expectations]	- Being able to put your situation into perspective (cognitively minimizing effects of deteriorations by lowering standards and comparing yourself favourably to others)
- [Changing behaviour]	- Being able to change habits, do things differently or with assistance from others/aids
6) Emotional comfort	**Feeling at peace**
- [Calm vs worried/anxious]	- Having peace of mind (not feeling worried or anxious)
- [Happy vs sad/depressed]	- Being happy (not sad or depressed)
- [Loneliness]	- Not feeling lonely or isolated

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Domains and subthemes	Description
- [Reminiscence]	- Not feeling troubled by past experiences
7) Spirituality	**Feeling attached to and experiencing faith and self-development from beliefs, rituals and inner reflection**
- [Being religious]	- Having religious beliefs, faith in God
- [Being spiritual]	- Being on a quest for meaning, self-development and awareness
- [Religious activities]	- Being involved in religious activities or a religious community
8) Home and neighbourhood	**Feeling secure at home and living in a pleasant and accessible neighbourhood**
- [Meaning of home]	- Having a home that provides privacy and comfort
- [Living at home]	- Living as long as possible in your own home
- [Safety]	- Feeling safe and secure at home and in the neighbourhood
- [Neighbourhood]	- Living in a pleasant neighbourhood with friendly neighbours
- [Accessibility]	- Being able to access and transport to important areas in the neighbourhood
9) Financial security	**Not feeling restricted by your financial situation**
- [Sufficient money]	- Having sufficient money to meet basic needs
- [Financial freedom]	- Having the financial freedom to enjoy life
- [Materials and conditions]	- Having material resources to feel comfortable and independent

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the quality of life can be expressed in a number of domains and related subtopics that are important for older people ageing in place. The synthesis supports the concept that quality of life should be viewed as a dynamic network of interwoven domains.

Lifelong learning of older people: needs, possibilities

Lifelong learning is the active pursuit of education (formal or informal) that extends far beyond formal schooling and into retirement. It is voluntary, self-motivated and often focused on personal development. Adopting the philosophy of lifelong learning can expand the social circle, encourage critical thinking and independence, and strengthen one's connection with the environment.

Examples of lifelong learning:

- Developing a new hobby or skill
- Attending a lecture or a class
- Participating in a research or a study
- Learning about the world

The benefits of lifelong learning cannot be overestimated – by remaining curious, older people open up to new possibilities and discover more about themselves, even later in life.

Through lifelong education and by participating in programs older people will:

- Increase their confidence,
- Set new goals for themselves
- Rediscover old passions,
- Improve personal and professional skills,

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- Expand their social environment,
- Live longer and happier.

Guidelines for working with older people: methods, communication etc.

A human being is developing throughout the entire life. At the old age, a person has a rich collection of life experiences which they can share with proudness, gratefulness, and happiness. Processing life experiences is an important task and gives a person a deeper insight and life wisdom.

Having that in mind, we consider that the most beneficial methods for working with older people are the ones in which a person can be actively engaged, share and contribute their lifelong learnings, skills, and overall experiences. An older person can also develop new skills that are of their interest, and for which there was no time in the active-working life period. For example, various societies and organizations for older people are very active such as pension clubs, hiking groups, art, craft, gardening, singing groups and so on. They usually connect the people with similar interests.

With age person's physical, mental, psychological, and other functionalities decrease; yet, the only thing that is increasing are experiences. Therefore, methods and approaches that involve good personal conversations and peer-to-peer learning are beneficial for older people. Peer learning can be defined as learning through active help and support from peers - persons belonging to the same age group. It usually involves people from similar social groups learning from each other and by themselves; participation of every participant is encouraged. Additionally, the gerontological insights promote the importance of the peer-to-peer approach, as it directly addresses the specific needs of older people such as passing on person's life experiences. Apart from methodological aspect, the GER - APP framework emphasises the importance of creating programs together with older people. All these points are important and may be acknowledged by the educators, volunteers and others who work with older people.

While working with older people the communication is equally important. In the GER – APP framework the importance of avoiding the negative stereotypes about older people that are commonly represented in the society is highlighted. Negative attitude can also be noticed in the verbal and pictorial communication. Additionally, it is important that older people themselves have positive attitude towards their age.

ToT Curriculum and Curricula for senior educators and senior volunteers

The ageing of the population is one of the most significant features of today's society. The life expectancy continues to increase, therefore this demographic change must be taken into account today, in order to best meet the needs of the older people. Consequently, the training of educators and volunteers has to be continuous in order to adapt to the constant changes and needs of society.

There are several types of services, depending on the wishes of the older people, their needs, their state of health and their autonomy.

The GER-APP project focuses, among other areas, on the formation of the professionals in contact with the elderly population, and the aim of one of the activities is to create a new training course for those professionals and volunteers. Based on gerontological knowledge and the stated needs, a ToT curriculum for senior educators was developed as described below.

Roles and functions

It is important to identify the needs and wishes of older people in order to elaborate with the interdisciplinary team the implementation of activities and projects. Indeed, these activities keep them motivated, as the main goal is to accompany older people to improve their lifestyle and well-being and to review and to update the activities during the process. One thing that can help to disseminate

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existing projects in the local community, is to maintain contact with employees within the public administrations and municipalities - if possible.

To be able to carry out the process, it is necessary to participate in the reception, communication and development of relations with the referent figures in order to build quality links with the users, both individually and collectively, to prevent any type of discrimination.

It is for this reason that a permanent training and updating of the educators and volunteers is required.

Qualities and Competences

The most important thing, in order to work with older people, is the inclination towards the projects and the users.

To have the capacity to work properly and efficiently with older people, a number of personal skills, competences and abilities are required. Good communication skills (verbal and non-verbal), sense of empathy and active listening skill to understand correctly the needs and personal situations of the users are the main competences and qualities indispensable to practice in this field. A good emotional management skill to maintain the self-control to be available, welcoming and receptive to the demands, and in order to maintain a positive attitude. In fact, the personality of the workers in contact with older people is something to take into account: the person needs to have a creative and imaginative state of mind, to be enthusiastic and to feel involved in the activities, and above all know how to be patient and tolerant.

The ability to work in a multidisciplinary team, as well as organizational skills, is also required. As it is a work in contact with people, the person needs to have the ability to resist tension and fatigue.

European values and Erasmus+

The GER-APP project wants to emphasize a strong link with the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, (2012). In Section III Equality, in Article 25, which refers to the rights of older people, the following is defined: "The Union recognizes and respects the rights of older people to lead a dignified and independent life and to participate in social and cultural life." Also in all relevant documents the promotion of equality, social cohesion and active citizenship is one of the strategic goals of cooperation in education and training at the EU level. However, although people of the third age witnessed the creation of the EU, the creation of common values, especially in the areas of freedom, security and justice, there are only a few who are fully aware of these facts, especially in the countries that went through the transition with the fall of the Berlin Wall. For this reason, one of the goals of this project is to raise the level of awareness of people of the third age about these facts through various types of educational programs and volunteer activities.

In the Erasmus+ program, one of the very important goals is an inclusive society. In the publication "How to achieve a more inclusive society with Erasmus+ programs and the European Solidarity Corps?" on the website of the Agency for Mobility and EU Programs the following is stated:

Starting from the assumption that every person has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills with which they can fully participate in society and the labour market, the European programs such as Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps promote equal opportunity and access, inclusion, diversity and equity through various activities and financial incentives.

Through these European programs, organizations and participants with fewer opportunities have at their disposal mechanisms and resources to achieve inclusion and diversity.

GER-APP
INACTIVITY IS NOT AN OPTION

Project 2020-1-HR01-KA204-077766

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of the European Union

The intellectual outputs of the project "Inactivity is not an option" (GER-APP) are also on this track.

Inclusion - activation of older people who live independently, especially those who have low pensions, is one of the primary goals of the project. Through project activities, a large number of older people were shown how through Erasmus+ programs they can create projects through which they will realize their ideas and how they can get involved in solving the social problems of their generation.
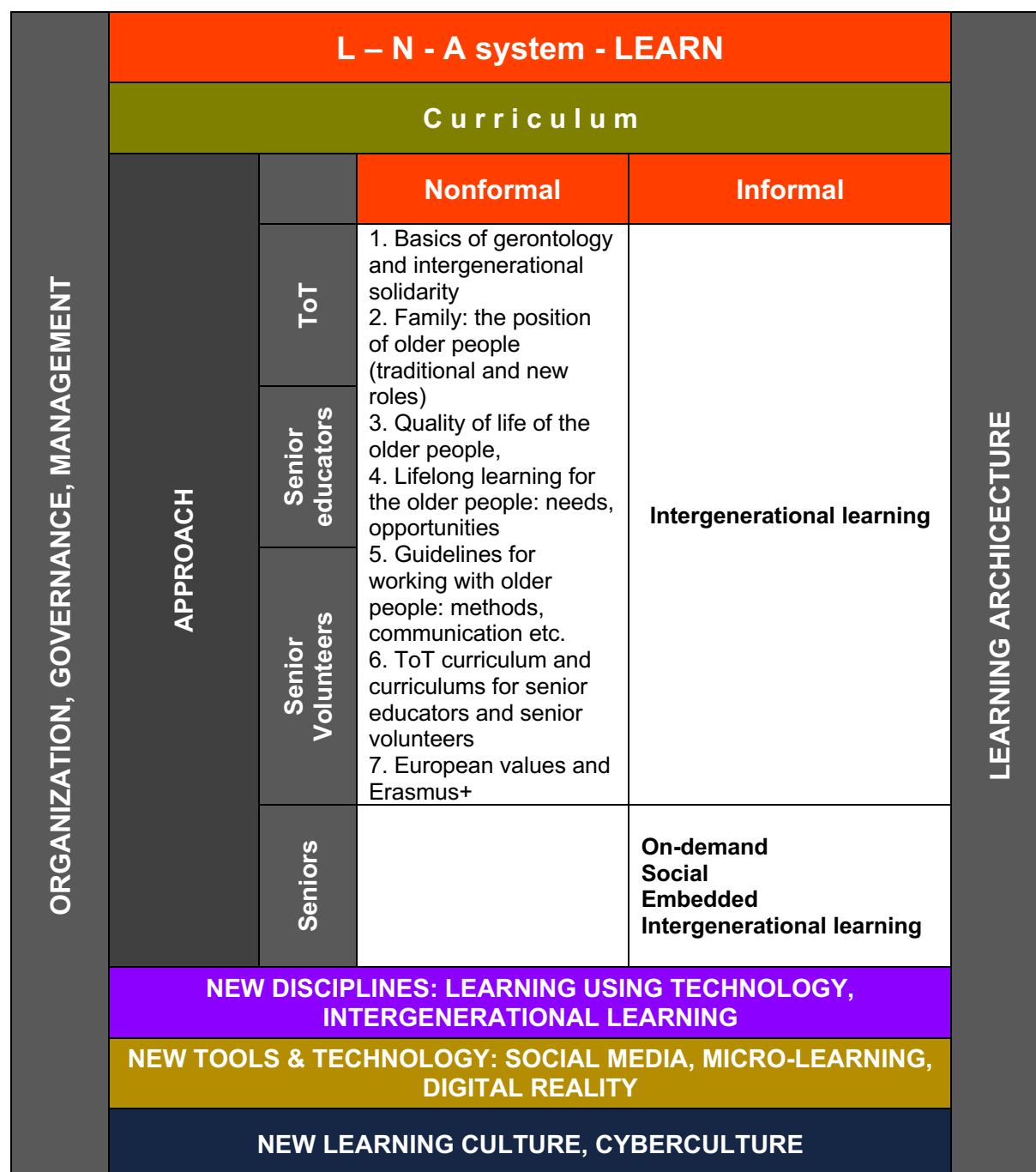
ORGANIZATION, GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT	L – N - A system - LEARN				LEARNING ARCHICECTURE
	C u r r i c u l u m				
	APPROACH		**Nonformal**	**Informal**	
		ToT	1. Basics of gerontology and intergenerational solidarity 2. Family: the position of older people (traditional and new roles) 3. Quality of life of the older people, 4. Lifelong learning for the older people: needs, opportunities 5. Guidelines for working with older people: methods, communication etc. 6. ToT curriculum and curriculums for senior educators and senior volunteers 7. European values and Erasmus+	**Intergenerational learning**	
		Senior educators			
		Senior Volunteers			
		Seniors		**On-demand Social Embedded Intergenerational learning**	
	NEW DISCIPLINES: LEARNING USING TECHNOLOGY, INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING				
	NEW TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY: SOCIAL MEDIA, MICRO-LEARNING, DIGITAL REALITY				
	NEW LEARNING CULTURE, CYBERCULTURE				

Figure 1: Schematic diagram of the constituent L-LEARN in the L-N-A system

Project 2020-1-HR01-KA204-077766

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N – NETWORK

"Online networks can offer older people a place where they feel empowered, because they can make those connections and they can talk to people without having to ask a friend or family member for one more thing."

Antonina Bambina, sociologist at the University Southern Indiana - from the book "Online Social Support" (Cambria, 2007.)   The source: The New York Times

Staying socially active and maintaining your relationships are an important part of healthy ageing. Social interactions become more difficult as a person ages. "Network", in this project, is not only a term of social (online) networking, but a term of social connection. Therefore, it is important for the older people to remain, constantly or as much as possible, connected with the family, the familiar, wider and mega environment.

Family

- connection between generations: giving-receiving (time, skills, support) and intergenerational solidarity;
- enhancement of the historical family memory of older people;
- the importance of listening;

Familiar environment

- create networks of friendship and solidarity with the closest neighbours:
- sharing of free time among peers;
- local / neighbourhood realities (e.g. pro loco)
- spontaneous local aggregation groups

Wider environment

- district / village day centres, social centres;
- voluntary associations;
- thematic associations dedicated to an elderly public (sport, music, singing, culture, etc.)
- thematic associations dedicated to everyone (sport, music, singing, culture, etc.)
- third age universities, training courses dedicated to retirees (creative workshops, etc.)

Mega environment

- voluntary associations operating on a national/international level;
- thematic associations operating at national / international level (travel groups, trekking, culture etc.)
- Erasmus+ projects to create networks and connections.

L – N – A networking

It is stated in the project proposal that "The project is based on a gerontological approach of working with older people, intergenerational cooperation and education of senior educators and senior volunteers who will be competent leaders in creating volunteer groups for certain areas and spreading project results to target groups. Likewise, the project will create a program for the training of trainers from adult education institutions and other competent institutions who will in the future educate senior educators and volunteers and thus spread the project idea in the post project time.

The innovative approach to networking in the L-N-A way is a combination of the French and British model of universities of the third age. Namely, the training of trainers, educators and volunteers takes place according to predefined programs of adult education institutions and gerontological institutions that carry out educational activities. It is a top-down process - a process of non-formal education.

On the other hand, the interest group and processes led by certified volunteers are formed according to the requests, ideas and needs of older people. It is a bottom-up process - a process of informal education (lifelong learning).

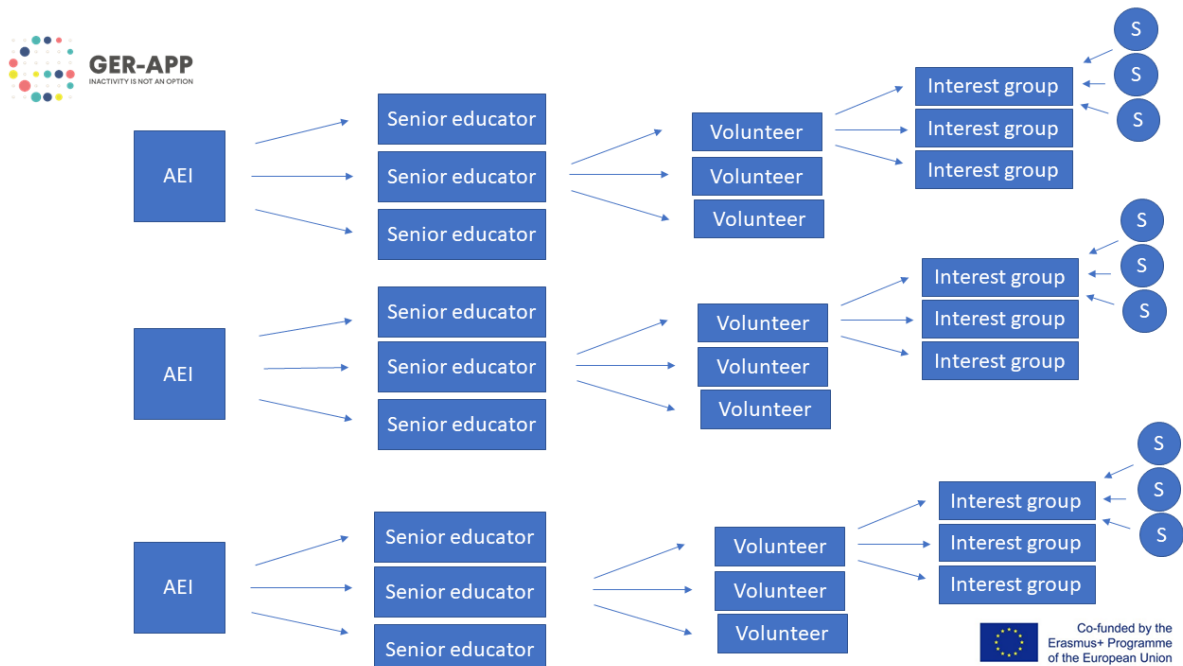The networking principle is shown in the following picture:

Figure 2: L-N-A networking

The most important thing to mention in this networking process is the following:

- Older people – pensioners ageing in place in the vast majority of cases do not have enough funds to pay for their education, no matter how low the price. On the other hand, our research has shown that older people are very interested in raising the level of personal competences, some in their profession, some in new areas of interest. For this reason, and in order to solve this contradiction, the work of interest groups should be free of charge or within the framework of associations that will raise the necessary funds, and not in any other way. The bearers of ideas for starting interest groups are exclusively older people.
- Management of interest groups should be left to certified volunteers who have completed training programs based on gerontological guidelines and who would lead interest groups in an organizational and advisory manner. They are helpers, mediators and representatives of older people.
- The entire organizational and advisory work should be led by facilitators or certified educators.
- Training programs for educators and volunteers would take place in institutions for adult education or gerontological institutions. The framework curriculum for trainers, educators and volunteers is also an intellectual output of this project. These programs should be financed at the national or lower levels of authorities, with public money.

A - ACT

Gerontology is increasingly showing a direct connection between an active, interesting lifestyle and healthy longevity. Physical activity and mental stimulation have a positive effect on cognition in both older people who do not have neurological disorders and those with conditions such as depression, dementia, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. Ultimately, happy older people who live full lives can expect to live better and longer.

Activity is the right option for older people. In addition to action, it also achieves the much-needed networking. Staying in touch is a very important detail in the life of older people.

Among the multitude of possibilities, only some of the activities that could motivate older people to act will be mentioned here.

Arts and crafts

Creative activities such as painting, making figurines from wood, stone, paper, making and scale models, modelling, sewing, knitting, crocheting, etc., encourage satisfaction and fulfil older people. Enjoying your work is a real incentive for continued activity.

Gardening and growing fruit

Work in the garden and orchard, from simple to more difficult physical tasks, the health of plants and fruit trees require constant activity that takes place in an open space. In addition to physical activities, the effects of the sun's rays and the obtained fruits fill every person with joy and pride. It also reduces the expense of purchasing them. A multiplying factor for happiness and satisfaction is if there is an excess of fruits that can be distributed to relatives and friends.

Outdoor and indoor exercising

Walking, hiking, yoga, aerobics, the walking football are all activities for increasing the aerobic capacity of older people and an active form of fighting against cardiovascular diseases.

Education

A great motivation for older people is to learn something that was not possible during the active working period of life.

Reading and writing

Reading, writing, discussing books, articles, writing blogs, essays, projects is a very good activity for the mental health of the elderly.

Cooking

Meal planning, preparation, cooking and serving of healthy meals is very popular with older people, especially those who could not engage in this activity often during their working years. Preparing cheap, healthy meals is a great contribution to one's own budget, especially for those who live independently with low pensions.

Volunteering

Helping others in any way fills older people with satisfaction and happiness.

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Intergenerational meetings and cooperation

Whether it's a family event, visiting neglected children in homes, joint learning and discussions on a specific topic between multiple generations, it fills older people with the feeling that they are still important and useful in certain activities.

Travelling

If they have the opportunity and the financial means, older people are very happy to travel to the places where they were born, but also to places they have never been before. The adrenaline they get in this way contributes to a better quality of life.

Digital reality (virtual, augmented and mixed)

Immerse yourself in virtual reality, visit museums, cities, swim with dolphins, climb the highest mountains, fly into space, reach places you could never have imagined, are events that fulfil every person and can only be experienced with digital reality.

Expected achievements of the system

The achievements of the system are reflected in the following elements:

Speech and communication: increasing the level of language competence in the mother tongue and, on personal request, in a foreign language.

Individual and society: group work, encouragement of tolerance and mutual respect during intergenerational learning, development of individual abilities and responsibility for the successful course of activities.

Nature and technology: systematic thinking and strategy development to find solutions to problems, use of digital technology.

Creativity and Inquiry: Encouraging creativity and ability by problem solving through inquiry.

Health and movement: developing awareness of general and cognitive health and the health benefits of movement and daily activities.

Work, discipline, results: participating in the process of lifelong education, older people and other participants come to the conclusion that with planned work and discipline, a satisfactory outcome can always be achieved.

Pedagogy and system methodology

Pedagogy (andragogy, gerontogogy) and applied methodology in the L-N-A system is divided into two parts.

The first part is the training of trainers, educators and volunteers. In this top-down part, program managers are recommended a new innovative didactic approach – a combination of micro-learning, group work on social networks and flipped classroom.

The content of this methodology is as follows:

1. Based on the program, the training leader designs a micro-lesson in which the main elements of the topic are given. The micro-lesson is delivered to participants in a closed group on Facebook.
2. During the next 7 days, the participants study the topic, research it on the Internet, communicate with each other and with the leader, who is the moderator in this activity.

GER-APP
INACTIVITY IS NOT AN OPTION

Project 2020-1-HR01-KA204-077766

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3. After that, the group meets face to face and the topic is completed in one to two lessons. The lesson has five sequences:

- A brief overview of the activities and results of processing the topic on Facebook is given by the leader,
- In pairs, participants work on a specific part of the topic in agreement with the leader,
- Each pair briefly presents their work and there is a discussion at the group level about the result of the work,
- The presenter concludes the topic with specific conclusions,
- At the end, the topic is evaluated with a short multiple-choice quiz.

Volunteer leaders of groups of older people will apply three approaches: peer-to-peer learning, social learning and intergenerational learning.

One of these methods of working with older people is the peer-to-peer learning methodology. The peer-to-peer approach directly addresses the specific needs of older people (by conveying their life experiences and interpersonal relationships) and can be applied in different social groups and settings. It is one of the trends in senior programs and is used in a variety of contexts. Peer learning can be defined as learning through the active help and support of peers. It usually involves people from similar social groups learning from each other and themselves. The participation of every person is encouraged.

Another method similar to peer learning is social in-group learning. It was developed by Associate Professor Jože Ramovš, founder of the Anton Trstenjak Institute. Social learning within the group is focused on the exchange of personal positive experiences, but also negative ones only when they have been successfully resolved.

Both methods emphasize the active engagement of each participant and the sharing of previous experiences and knowledge for the purpose of learning.

Group leaders (trainers, educators, facilitators, volunteers) moderate the conversations. Through the developed curricula in this project, they are trained to use these methods (methodology, overall dynamics, communication, etc.) and help the group to cognitively process good experiences in their memories.

The group has about 10 members, they usually meet once a week.

Both peer learning and social in-group learning contribute to quality ageing by developing and shaping human personality and interpersonal relationships.

Social in-group learning is a method of group learning based on the sharing of personal experience and knowledge of participants. The method is based on gerontological knowledge about ageing, anthropological knowledge about intergenerational relations and psychological knowledge about the importance of exchanging experiences.

Intergenerational learning is certainly the best methodology that is carried out in society as informal education from the beginning of each person's life. It is actually the educational foundation of every society. Under normal circumstances, it is ubiquitous in families from grandchildren to great-grandfathers and vice versa, in companies from older to younger and vice versa. In general, in the intergenerational "conflict" of opinion, there is an increase in the collective knowledge of individuals, their environments and society as a whole.

GER-APP
INACTIVITY IS NOT AN OPTION

Project 2020-1-HR01-KA204-077766

Co-funded by the
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Perhaps the best assessment of the value of intergenerational learning was given by one of the greatest living authorities in the field of human resources, the American Josh Bersin. He stated that some of the world's leading American industries are losing their leadership due to the loss of collective knowledge. And that loss occurred due to the frequent fluctuation of the labour force due to the low price of labour. In other words, in this way, the continuity of the intergenerational transfer of knowledge is lost, which results in a decline in the level of collective knowledge, and in this way, leadership is lost.

In the methodology of intergenerational learning, a minimum of one person from the middle and younger generations should be ensured in the group of older people, who would bring the necessary dynamics and intergenerational transfer of knowledge along with peer learning.

Concepts that support intergenerational learning are shown in the following picture.

Figure 3: Concepts that support IGL as intergenerational approach to learning
Source: Fitzpatrick (2019)

Intergenerational learning offers great ways to bridge age gaps, encouraging people of different generations to connect with each other, build meaningful relationships and learn together in programs that raise the collective knowledge of themselves, their communities and society as a whole.

Intergenerational learning and programs have a number of advantages. Only a few will be mentioned here:

- Participation in the work of intergenerational groups strengthens older people energetically and gives them a sense of importance in society, especially when they share their experience and skills,
- For older people, the feeling of isolation is reduced and potentially the possibility of depression,
- Intergenerational learning, where everyone learns from others through mutual exchange of knowledge and skills, raises the level of competence of all participants in the process.
- Older generations help younger generations to understand ageing and face their own in a more positive way over the years.

Project 2020-1-HR01-KA204-077766

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- Negative stereotypes are "broken" and connections between generations are encouraged. Through intergenerational connections, the "generational gap" disappears.

System characteristics

Characteristics of the L-N-A system are:

- **unification** for harmonizing the needs and interests of older people at the EU level
- **quality of the system** needs to be at a very high level
- **continuity** is achieved by continuous movement between all three components of the system
- **compatibility** - the system must be applicable in all forms of non-formal and informal education
- **flexibility** - the system must be adapted to the requirements of the individual, the organization for which it is implemented or the institution in which it is implemented without negatively affecting quality
- **dynamism** - individuals and organizations choose the dynamics of activities according to their requirements and abilities
- **openness** - the system is open to all changes that are expressed as a social need and for all older people regardless of gender, age and psychophysical condition
- **availability** - the system will be available to all interested parties without any restrictions upon completion of the project.

System quality

The quality of the system should be continuously checked through evaluation of the program, where the ratings for following 4 elements are important[5]:

Space for thinking

A space designed for learning, thinking and discussion. The ability of leaders not to dismiss any opinion and to value all aspects is evaluated. Mutual respect between the participants in the group and the leader is an essential element for evaluating the quality of program implementation.

Enjoyment

The satisfaction derived from learning new things and participating in or initiating new activities with other participants is evaluated.

Facing reality

Did the gathering of older people in a group and the proximity of people with similar problems help them face their own challenges, find solutions or simply show courage in contact with others.

New activities

Did the new activities chosen by older people bring improvements in the quality of life they expected?

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[5] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042812016102 Retrieved on 22.08.2022

GER-APP
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Project 2020-1-HR01-KA204-077766

Co-funded by the
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Expected result of applying the L-N-A system in practice

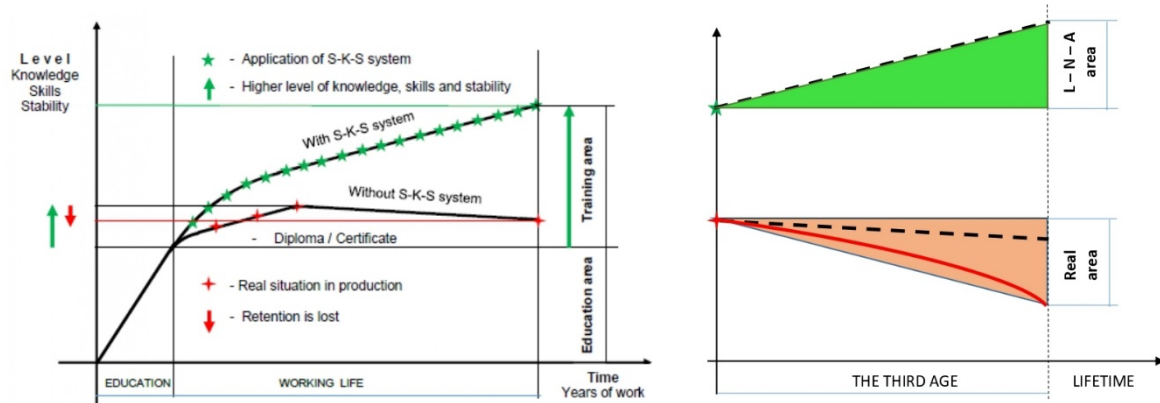The expected result of applying the **LEARN - NETWORK - ACT** system is shown in the following diagram:

Figure 4: Comparative graphics of L-N-A and S-K-S systems

The picture shows that competences increase with application of the S-K-S system of lifelong education (skills - knowledge - stability) throughout the working life, along with lifelong education.

If the S-K-S susav is not applied, it is evident that around half of the working life, the competences weaken. After retirement and inactivity, competences decrease more and more (red field in the L-N-A system). For this reason, activity in old age helps to maintain and strengthen the competences of those people who are actively involved in social events or work to increase the level of their skills and knowledge.

The L – N – A (learn – network – act) system for lifelong education of older people aims to maintain or increase competences (green field) in the third age. This is the expected result of applying the L-N-A system in practice.

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