ICT – why not culture and creativity for seniors?

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Pandemic times are not easy for the implementation of international projects. It is impossible to plan meetings in advance, especially when guests come from different countries ... But finally, we managed to organize the 1st International Project Partnership Meeting in the last days of October 2021.

All partners of the project "ICT - why not culture and creativity for seniors?" came to Warsaw for three days of joint meetings, socializing, and sightseeing.

The project partners are: from Sweden - MobilEducation, Finland Tiedetila, Turkey Troya, and Germany SLO. The meeting was hosted by the Social Ecological Institute.

The meeting agenda included: a visit to the University for Seniors in Wawer, a seminar with the partners' presentations and discussions, meetings with the Metaphysical Green group, a visit to the Cultural Center Zacisze, and a meeting with the organizers of workshops for seniors.

The partners have been cooperating for four years, implementing projects for seniors. The main topic was: the use of modern information and communication techniques (ICT) to deepen the knowledge about ecology and health. This time, they focused on how ICT can be a tool for participating in the cultural field, for developing ones' creativity, or for intercultural and intergenerational dialogue. This is especially important in the current context where the isolation of seniors due to the Covid-19 pandemic limits people-to-people contacts.

In the currently implemented project, seniors are the main actors, co-creators, and partners in activities, following the principle "Don't teach a tree how to grow. Just give him earth, sun, and water."

Partners and presentations

Poland: Social Ecological Institute
https://www.sie.org.pl

The association aims to act for ecology, lobby for sustainable development, and conduct and support various forms of non-formal education, especially for seniors.

The latest project is implemented, among others, together with the Wawer University for Seniors (http://www.u3wawer.com.pl/), whose mission is to keep seniors in psychophysical, intellectual, and social well-being through various activities.

One of the activities is visual arts. Members of this group talked about how they decided not to succumb to the depressing moods during the pandemic, and instead to actively participate in the life of the university. Joining hands to help people in need turned out to be very important - many overcame both the physical and mental weakness caused by isolation at home.

One such activity was, for example, painting portraits of cats and bidding them on social media, all in support of Koteria, an organization caring for stray cats. The group managed to sell 15 paintings and PLN 800 went to Koteria.

Communication, conversations and discussions, and even online lessons were made possible by setting up a group on WhatsApp called "Metaphysical Green". A week-long open-air session in September (in person) gave to all members strength and restored positive thinking. Its effects, in the form of many interesting paintings, can be seen on YouTube (https://youtu.be/nXEP0w61cYU).

During the pandemic, a lot of activities took place online: computer workshops, Spanish and English language courses, as well as workshops on coping with stress. Seniors also benefited from free online theater performances and concerts.

In this way, thanks to ICT, seniors remain moderately optimistic and try to maintain a relatively good psychophysical condition.

Sweden: MobilEducation
https://mobileducation.se

Non-governmental organization founded in 2013 in Stockholm.

The activities aim to support seniors in using ICT so that they can be creative and participate in cultural life. The course that MobiEducation proposes consists of activities on three levels; first for beginners - basic ICT skills; the second - for intermediate - using ICT to participate in cultural life, eg virtual visits to museums, online events; the third - for advanced users of ICT - creative use of ICT, e.g. creating your own stories, writing memories.

MobilEducation plans to create a website where every senior citizen will be able to find all ICT-related materials available in Sweden: training materials, guides, tutorials, lectures, videos, etc. (http: //seniornetstudera.se/).

MobilEducation works with SeniorNet Sweden, SPF Seniorerna (Swedish Association for Seniors), and SKR (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions) as well as municipalities and libraries.

It is in the process of developing an interesting course "WriterStep" supporting the creativity of seniors (www.skrivarklivet.se), by using mixed meetings in real life, with Zoom/Teams/Skype and Telephone.

Finland: Tiedetila

http://www.tiedetila.fi/tiedetila/aloitus.htm

A private non-profit organization founded in 2005 in the Toiminimi a region in central Finland. The organization has set itself two goals: to create a computer museum to preserve the history of PC and to cultivate and educate about wild plants. Culture and creativity of seniors are inscribed in both activities: computer and electronic equipment can be a support for anyone looking for information and knowledge about history, present or future; contact with nature is a magical place to talk with nature, get to know it, and respect it. The main principle followed by Tiedetila is to care and to act for the well-being of the planet Earth.

In September this year, Tiedetila organized a "Wood waste management day". This is an important action in Finland because forests cover 70% of the country. A group of people collected dry wood waste in the forest. These have been properly burned to produce charcoal which can be used as a valuable fertilizer to improve soil quality as it retains moisture and enriches it with nutrients. The forest tidying up was also carried out: rotting logs and branches that could not be converted into charcoal were placed in specially constructed fences. Fences constructed in this way can be filled with leaves or small twigs. Those fences are, among others, anti-wind roles. Such local charcoal production is not only beneficial for nature but also important for the people involved - it provides many hours of interaction for participants who work together for the environment.

Turkey: Troya

www.troyacevre.org

The organization focuses on two activities: promoting renewable energies, establishing energy cooperatives, and supporting seniors in improving their ICT skills. Those interested in Turkish culture and tradition were presented with an interesting cultural and touristic project showing the rich archaeological, historical, and natural heritage of the Canakkale region. A 70 km long hiking and cycling route from Troya to Assos is formed here.

At the same time, its online version is being created - those who, for various reasons, cannot go on tour - will be able to get to know the region and its treasures in a virtual form.

To better understand the needs of seniors and respond to them, the organization cooperates with other associations (e.g. Association for the Rights of the Elderly 65), with which websites for seniors, films, online courses, etc. are developed. Recently, as an answer to seniors' needs, an easy-to-use application CANIK has been added, thanks to which seniors can not only make calls and use social media but also search for information, play cards, handle banking matters, etc. The application is easy to understand and learn.

Germany: SLO
http://www.senioren-lernen-online.de

It is a small educational organization established in the form of a civil company. The organization operates online, and its experts are senior volunteers. It is committed to helping older people by informing and teaching them how to use lifelong learning tools - especially online and across platforms. This means seniors can participate from anywhere (for example at home) using the internet and a headset. In SLO, a trainer can be a student, and a learner can also be a trainer because every senior is an expert in their field in which he worked before retiring. In this way, seniors can also try out new ways of teaching and learning peer-to-peer. Since 2002, SLO has been developing and running online courses, workshops, and online meetings for seniors - focusing on the topics of using the

Internet and developing together education materials (e.g. the e-guide "Sensors for Seniors") and provides online help on questions and problems related to Internet and computers. SLO coaches and students disseminate their experiences in their blogs.

One of the recently proposed online workshops is the workshop on building a sensor for determining CO_2 levels in a room. Anyone can build such a sensor, with the help of a trainer and appropriate materials. And it's worth having it at home.

Johanna – a member of SLO, described her experience on blog:
https://blogsaetze.com/2021/07/04/zu-guter-letzt-die-visualisierung/