



REPORT 2
Heritage and the
Ageing Population

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Report 2 – Heritage and the Ageing Population
The Learning Museum Network Project
Edited by Ann Nicholls, Manuela Pereira and Margherita Sani

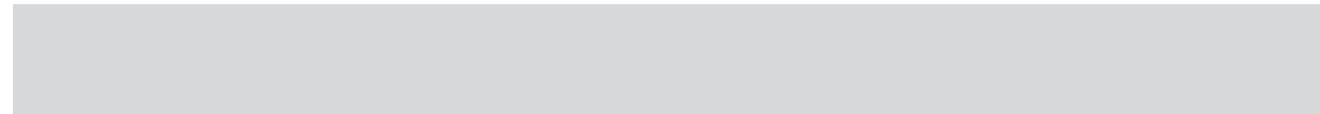
The report was compiled by Sara Grut at the Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning and Creativity
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Printed by Regione Emilia-Romagna
Graphic design: Maria Elena Tosi, Monica Chili

Front cover (titles and credits of front cover pictures)

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Photo 2: ‘Wandering Methods’ project during Bealtaine 2012. © Bealtaine Festival. Photo by Lian Bell.

ISBN 978-88-97281-07-8



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Introduction of LEM – The Learning Museum Project

Margherita Sani

'Heritage and the Ageing Population' is one of seven reports which are published within the framework of the EU funded project LEM – The Learning Museum, which aims to create a permanent network of museums and cultural heritage organisations, to ensure that they can exploit their potential as learning places and play an active role with regard to lifelong learning in a knowledge based Europe.

The project is funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme Grundtvig for the period 2010-2013 and can be regarded as the arrival point of a number of previous EU projects carried out between 2007-2010, which dealt with lifelong learning in museums (LLML and MuMAE), intercultural dialogue (MAP for ID) and volunteering (VoCH), all of which are documented in the LEM website.

LEM not only draws from the materials collected, the lessons learned and the contacts established by its forerunners, but moves one step further in the direction of establishing a permanent space for museum professionals and adult educators to meet, exchange experiences and good practices and learn from each other, therefore contributing to the creation of a European community of professionals interested in heritage education and lifelong learning in museums.

The network started with 23 partners from 17 European countries, plus one partner from the United States of America, the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Denver, taking advantage of the possibility offered in 2010 for the first time by the Lifelong Learning Programme, to involve third country organisations.

As a network, LEM aims in the first place to grow and acquire new associate members which, in March 2013, had tripled the number of founding institutions. A wide range of museums, heritage organisations, academies, institutes for learning and universities are now part of the network, representing 25 countries. There are Ministries, Museum Associations and other umbrella organisations, individual museums, small and large, institutions active in the education field, all working on an equal level and engaged in sharing information, making it available to a wider public and learning from one another.

The philosophy of LEM indeed is that of considering museums not only as learning places, where educational activities are delivered, but also as learning organisations themselves, learning from the public, the local community, other agencies and, of course, from other museums.



The idea of peer learning is core in LEM and, in order to fully support it, work has been articulated into working groups, each led by a LEM partner.

The research subjects have been chosen by the working groups themselves:

- New trends in museums in the 21st century
- Museums and the ageing population
- Audience research, learning styles and visitor relation management

- Museums as learning places- learning spaces in museums
- Museums and intercultural dialogue

'Heritage and the Ageing Population' is one of the outcomes of LEM Working Group 2. It draws on the research of the working group, on the papers and ideas presented at the international conference 'Creativity, Lifelong Learning and the Ageing Population' held on 11 October 2012 in Östersund, Sweden, as well as on the wider debate which took

place in 2012, the European Year of Active Ageing. The LEM Partner, Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning, coordinator of the working group, is indeed very sensitive to the issue of the present demographic change and to what it entails for museums in terms of a new and more focused cultural offer to meet the needs and expectations of a growing segment of the European population.

In addition to collecting materials, sharing them on the website and eventually producing a report on the theme researched, working groups undertook study visits to each other or to third institutions, to come in contact with working practices of other colleagues throughout Europe.

This idea of learning by being directly exposed to other people's practices and experiencing different work environments represents an important added value to the project, not only with regard to the members of the working groups, but more widely, through the LEM mobility scheme, which is open to partners and associate partners and provides the opportunity to spend some time working in another institution.

In fact some of the project partners, initially five, but increasingly more, have offered placements to other LEM members, for periods lasting from a few days to two weeks to three months. This results not only in the strengthening of ties within the network at personal, professional and institutional level, but allows individuals to actually learn by being exposed to different working situations.

Dissemination is another important aspect of LEM.

International conferences, seminars and round tables are being organised regularly and attract a wide European audience. They are occasions for intensive networking and learning, offer plenty of social events and are combined with visits to local institutions to meet stakeholders. Where possible, they are also live streamed to reach an even wider public. A number of smaller dissemination events are also organised at local or national level.

Finally, the website is the digital platform where all the knowledge acquired by the project is kept and made available. It is a dynamic and interactive forum, first of all to receive and exchange materials about the subject area 'museums and lifelong learning' and secondly to provide information about the project. It is a virtual learning environment, providing information on existing literature, projects and actors and is kept updated through continuous research, data analysis and provision of new information by an international editorial team and by the project partners. Everyone is invited to send materials to be published on the LEM website, and participation is favoured through the use of web 2.0 tools. At the beginning of each month an electronic newsletter is sent out to all those who have subscribed to it.

The website therefore functions as a community-building tool for all those who are interested in the topics addressed by LEM. Through the networking activities of its partners and associates, the website and the dissemination events, LEM expects to reach the whole museum and heritage community and a large part of the adult education sector.

www.lemproject.eu

Introduction: Working Group 2 “Museums and the ageing population” Henrik Zipsane and Sara Grut

‘The greying of Europe’ has been used as a metaphor to describe the fact that the percentage of Europe’s elderly population in relation to its workforce is steadily increasing. Since the Second World War European countries have experienced a rapid development of two extraordinary demographic trends, both of which have had a major impact on the need for welfare resources. On the one hand the average life expectancy has greatly increased, which means that the number of elderly people has grown drastically. On the other hand, the declining number of children per family, results in a decreasing number of people in the younger generations. Together, these two tendencies result in a smaller number of younger people to take care of a growing number of elderly. In the years to come, the EU-member states will therefore have to face the challenges of ageing populations, to develop strategies and find new ways of structuring society, economically and socially.

Lifelong learning is an important piece of this puzzle and has been named by the European Union as one of the main tools for dealing with the social cohesion and economic development aspects involved here, both in its 2000-2010 Strategy and in the new 2010-2020 Strategy.

Through different initiatives, communities in Europe have tried to use heritage to stimulate the mental health of elderly people. Today there are many individual examples of museums and other heritage

learning institutions providing learning activities for senior citizens. But, as yet, there has not been any aggregate analysis on how cultural heritage institutions in Europe deal with these issues.

The LEM Working Group on the challenge of the ageing population has been dedicated to finding good examples, analysing them and spreading the results through the LEM-network for the inspiration of others.

The research was conducted on the basis of three ‘soft themes’:

1. The third age – from retirement (part time or full time) to the stage when the physical and mental health starts fading (example of action: volunteering, family research);
2. The fourth age – when the physical and mental health has started to fade and the individual is in need of special care and support (example of action: reminiscence work);
3. The politics and the policies – structure of decision-making, policy development in the different national and regional contexts.

The soft themes were introduced for guiding the work of creating an overview of experience – to find out what had been done and what had been fruitful (and perhaps not so fruitful) in the different national contexts. The research group members were all



asked to contribute with ideas, examples of policies, practices, etc.

“On the basis of this material the group decided to produce *Guidelines* divided into different sections. *Policy recommendations* on how museums can contribute to the learning and the well-being of the older population. The policy recommendations are directed towards policymakers at regional, national and European levels.

An overall mapping of tendencies, in particular, with regard to national policies in the cultural field.

Good *practice examples* of projects or programmes for older people.”

This publication is the main outcome of the Working Group and intends to document what has been achieved in the field so far, and to provide inspiration to practitioners to develop new projects and programmes to address and cater for what is bound to become a very important audience for museums and heritage institutions in the years to come.

Museums and the ageing population

Policy recommendations

Preamble

The policy recommendations as outlined in this document are a direct outcome of the work conducted in the working group 'Museums and the ageing population', initiated through the Grundtvig network project, The Learning Museum.

We use the term 'heritage' in a broad sense, intending not only the physical buildings of museums, archives or art galleries, but all places in our communities where heritage is used as a tool, both for individual learning and for mutual gains, such as increased health and wellbeing, stronger and safer communities and a strengthened public life. We want to promote heritage in all its richness, going beyond a mere 'learning about' facts, to explore all the various ways of 'learning through' heritage.

Our vision implies an interdisciplinary approach to the challenge of the ageing population. Generally speaking, the cultural and the medical spheres need to find common grounds for cooperation and sharing of knowledge. Partnerships between heritage institutions and other stakeholders are already happening on a broad scale but could become more widely encouraged and implemented.

In light of the aforementioned points of departure, the working group recommends the following:

Recommendations for the European Commission:

- The Commission should by projects and comparative mapping highlight such policies and activities where heritage in its broadest meaning is not only made accessible for older adults but also made relevant.
- The Commission should by projects and comparative mapping highlight such policies and activities where older adults are not merely a passive audience but active participants.
- The Commission should by projects and comparative mapping highlight such policies and activities where the inclusion of marginalised older adults is prioritised.

Recommendations for member states and regional authorities:

- The member states and regional authorities should by policies on culture and directives to institutions make older adults a prioritised target group parallel with children and young people and allocate means for stimulating actions in that direction.
- The member states and regional authorities should by funding stimulate interdisciplinary collaboration, between the heritage sector and other stakeholders,

for the wellbeing and social benefit of older adults.

- The member states and regional authorities should by funding encourage the heritage sector to engage marginalised older adults in programmes and activities.

Recommendations for heritage institutions:

- Heritage institutions – especially those concerned with recent history – should realise the special competences which develop with lifetime experience.
- Heritage institutions should realise and develop the rising market for relevant activities for older adults.
- Heritage institutions should realise and develop means to consult older adults, from all segments of society, in the development of programmes and activities.

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Guidelines

The challenge of the ageing population

An introduction

The elderly population (aged 65 and above) will increase very markedly throughout the projection period. The number of the elderly will almost double, rising from 85 million in 2008 to 151 million in 2060 in the EU.

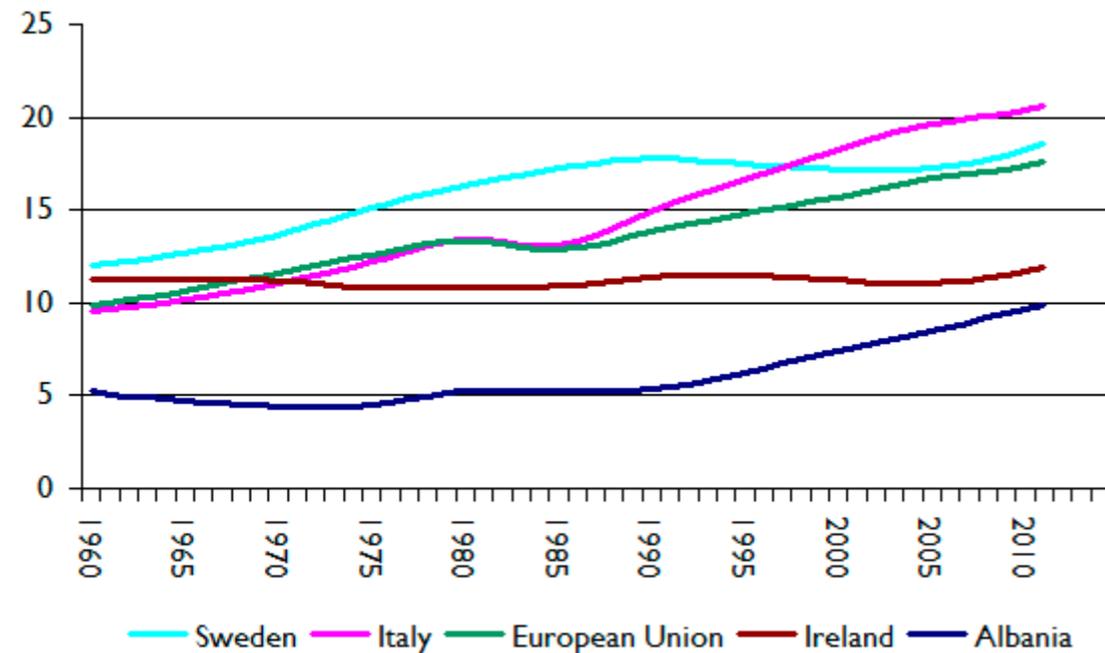
The number of very old people (aged 80 years and above) is projected to increase by even more, almost

tripling from 22 million in 2008 to 61 million in 2060.¹

'The greying of Europe' has been used as a metaphor to describe the fact that the percentage of Europe's old adult population in relation to its workforce is steadily increasing. In the years to come, the EU-member states must all face the challenges of ageing populations which will call for new strategies and new ways of structuring society, economically and socially.

Whilst populations are ageing rapidly in most European

Percentage of population over age 65 in EU, Sweden, Italy, Ireland and Albania 1960-2011



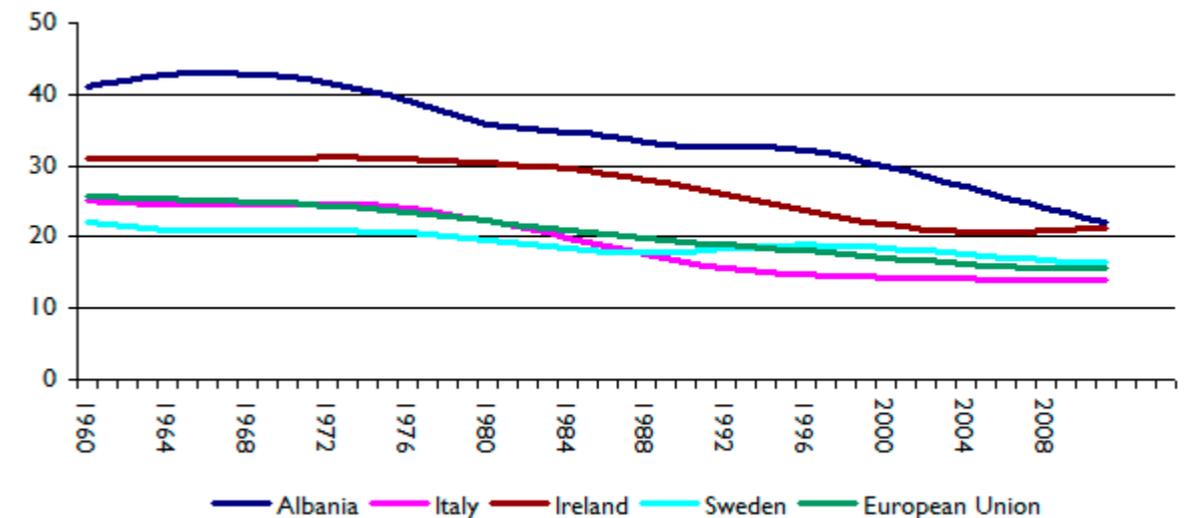
countries, the challenges are predicted to be greater for some than for others. Using this graph as an example we can see how, for instance, the proportion of older adults in Italy and Sweden has markedly increased during the last 50 years while the demographic changes in Albania and Ireland are evidently following other rationales. Notwithstanding these national differences, the whole of Europe is ageing. Not only is the percentage of older adults in Europe growing steadily but the number of babies born is going in the opposite direction. If we turn to the same countries again, we see this trend very clearly.²

The demographic change that has occurred during the last 50 years is still only the beginning of this story. As

shown in the graph below, projections for the coming 50 years say that the ratio of people over 65 to the population of working age in the EU will grow from 25.9 per cent in 2010 to 53.5 per cent in 2060.³ The share of people aged 65 years or over in the total population is projected to increase from 17 per cent to 30 per cent.

The concept of learning as a lifelong undertaking lies at the heart of the challenge but it is only in recent decades that the potential of promoting learning for the older population has really started to be acknowledged.⁴ And, when social and economic scientists are unveiling the demographical situation of the near future, it becomes increasingly clear that we need to go much further in our efforts to

Percentage of population between 0-14 years in EU, Sweden, Italy, Ireland and Albania 1960-2010



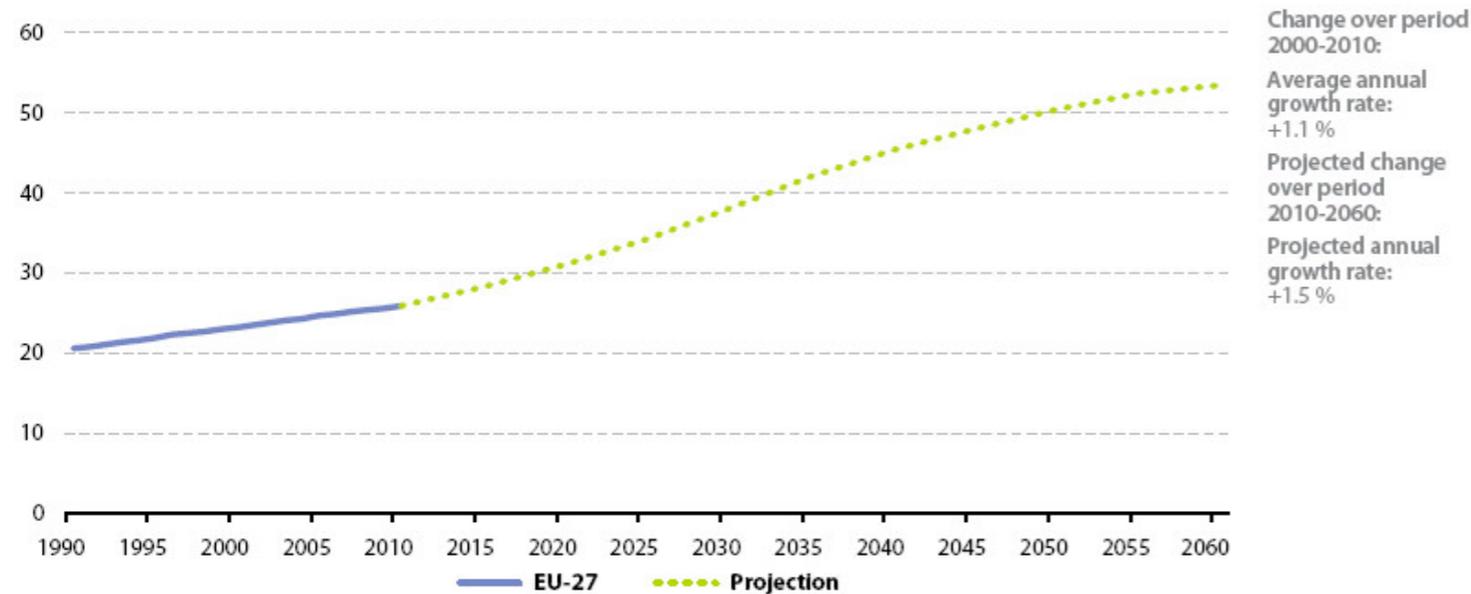
reconceptualise old age. In some academic disciplines a shift has already long since taken place and from the study of gerontology, which focuses on the social, psychological and biological aspects of ageing has sprung a number of disciplines that take a more direct interest in the learning of older adults, their emancipation and empowerment. These subfields are called educational gerontology, critical gerontology, geragogy, eldergogy *et cetera*.⁵

These new emerging perspectives have the potential of enabling older adults to do things and to take opportunities which were not open to people in the

past. But to achieve a true learning society we must look to other arenas for learning and stop relying solely on those which have traditionally provided us with learning opportunities. As Tom Bentley has pointed out, we are

*moving towards being able to measure our learning not by the amount of money we spend on it, or by the number of certificates we produce, but by our success in solving real problems, the time and care that we put into our own learning, our health and well-being, and the extent of our mutual understanding and shared achievement. Then, and only then, will we be on the road to the learning society.*⁶

Percentage of population over age 65 in EU, Sweden, Italy, Ireland and Albania 1960-2011



Source: Eurostat

In this report we will take a closer look at in what ways learning or more specifically, learning through heritage can be part of facing the challenge of ageing populations. Which means and approaches are currently being used by the European museum sector? How do national governments value the contribution of heritage and culture? And, lastly, what can be considered state of the art when it comes to using heritage as a tool for older adult learning?

- 1 The 2009 Ageing Report (2008) p. 17.
- 2 Data for these graphs has been retrieved from the World Data Bank. See also Zipsane (2011) p. 1 and Zipsane (2012) pp. 3-6.
- 3 Graph from EUROSTAT.
- 4 Findsen & Formosa (2011) p. 1.
- 5 Geriatrics is distinguished from gerontology as the branch of medicine that studies the diseases of older adults.
- 6 Bentley (2000) p. 364.



Defining the contribution of heritage

Let us return to the quote by Bentley and ask ourselves what kind of alternative structures or institutions have the potential to 'solve real problems': do heritage and culture have anything to contribute in this regard? As we shall see, a growing number of researchers seem convinced that the contribution of culture to society has been consistently overlooked.

In his paper on the role and potential of culture in European long-term competitive strategy, Pier Luigi Sacco identifies a strong relationship between lifelong learning and active cultural participation. In fact, he says: "one might even think of active cultural participation as a specific form of lifelong learning."¹

Further, Sacco argues that decision makers and policy officers should stop viewing culture as a low-productivity branch of the economy which mainly absorbs resources and start focusing on how we could save money through cultural participation. Cultural participation can impact significantly on life expectation and psychological wellbeing and, according to Sacco, older adults and the seriously ill are among those who would benefit the most from increased cultural participation, since in this category, "psychological well-being gaps between subjects with cultural access and subjects without cultural access is huge."²

Heritage institutions are, in many ways, well equipped and prepared to take on new roles. This sector is, undisputedly, in a process of transition, reflection and

change.

*[...] cultural institutions – and particularly museums - have dramatically changed in the last few years. They provide public services and have a social function which is more enhanced today than in the past. They relate to new audiences and new ways of communicating; they promote social cohesion and inclusion; they offer cultural mediation for visitors who come from different backgrounds and cultures, who have diverse previous knowledge.*³

In the past, learning in museums or other heritage institutions was the same thing as learning *about* something. And for many this perception of learning in a museum is still the most accurate one. But to realise how heritage institutions can contribute to the challenge of the ageing population we need to go further than merely focusing on what they can give us in terms of knowledge and understanding. We should view learning not as a product but as a process and acknowledge the fact that we learn, not just about, but *through* culture and heritage.⁴ This statement implies that heritage is a unique resource that can and should be used, to the social benefit of us as individuals and the communities we live in.

The UK Campaign for Learning has defined learning in a way which goes well together with the above stated view on heritage learning.

*Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve an increase in skills, knowledge, understanding, values, feelings, attitudes and capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more.*⁵

Typically, heritage learning would be categorised as non-formal or informal learning. Non-formal learning is voluntary and takes place outside a formal learning setting. It is organised but, in contrast to formal learning, does not end up in an exam or a qualification.⁶ Informal learning does not have to be intentional. It takes place in the family or in other social networks and settings.⁷

Throughout this report we shall further elaborate on what heritage and, more particularly, museums can contribute to the challenge of the ageing population. So far however a few traits of particular importance are discernible. It has been noted that heritage can be used as a tool in social processes and that heritage learning goes beyond learning about historical facts to include an increase in values, feelings, attitudes and capacity to reflect. Researchers like Sacco have also pointed out that cultural participation is a sound investment in the wellbeing of the ageing population.

1 Sacco (2011) p. 8.

2 Sacco (2011) quote from p. 7.

3 Da Milano, Gibbs and Sani (2009) p. 9.

4 See for example Gibbs, Sani and Thompson (2007) who state that "Learning in a museum is less about memorising facts and more about being creative in the sense that through culture you are able to explore new ideas, develop practical skills and discover hidden talents." p. 14.

5 Campaign for Learning: <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/index.asp>.

6 Dudzinska-Presmitzki & Grenier (2008) p. 11.

7 See for example Gibbs, Sani and Thompson (2007) p. 8.



Defining the target group

The question of who should be defined as an older adult is a matter of controversy. In the social sciences, chronological age is often used to determine when later life starts but this approach also lacks coherence. According to the United Nations, old age starts at 60, while the Eurostat suggests 65. National studies often use retirement age, which could be everything between 60 and 70 and in studies of developing countries, later life can start at 50 or at 55.¹

If later life, chronologically, can start anywhere between 50 and 70 it is perhaps more fruitful to look for other definitions. Marvin Formosa and Brian Findsen have suggested a lifecycle approach to later life, focusing on work and family related indicators.

...people, whatever their chronological age, who are post-work and post-family, in the sense that they are not longer involved in an occupational career or with the major responsibilities for raising a family²

The indicators introduced by the authors should not be used in a categorical manner in the sense that they exclude those partly retired or those with somewhat different family dynamics than described here. Their approach should be viewed as a broad social category in which roles and physical alterations and other transitions take place.³

The vulnerability, discrimination and dependency of older adults are a recurrent theme in the literature of ageing. But, as pointed out by, for example, cultural economists like Sacco or critical gerontologists such as Marvin Formosa, there are huge differences within the older adult group itself.⁴ Biological preconditions differ

as do the way people experience and define their own transitions of ageing. However, generally speaking, we often tend to forget how diverse this group is. Older adults are connected to many stereotypes and their dependency is often stigmatised as burdensome. Critical gerontologists Neal King and Toni Calasanti put this fact in a rather interesting perspective

[...] we know that children of, say, ages 0 to 5 will be dependent, more obviously so than people aged 65-70. Yet no major concern was voiced among the wealthy nations when their baby booms created a much higher dependency ratio in the 1960s.⁵

Today however, some suggest we are witnessing a change in this rather negative discourse. Educational sociologist, Tine Fristrup, for example, argues that there exists a tradition in the Western world of connecting ageing with health matters. Gradually, this discourse is being challenged and what we are witnessing in recent decades is something which might be described as a 'cultural turn' and a new approach towards ageing. This approach suggests that ageing is also development and renewal.⁶

For many, development means to learn and older adults, like everyone else, learn for a multitude of reasons. To some, learning is purely for enjoyment whilst others see it as a chance to fulfil lifelong ambitions and goals.⁷ Not only do we have different motives for learning but we also have very dissimilar experiences of learning in the past, experiences that will facilitate or create obstacles for our future learning. But the level of participation in learning is not just

about motives or past experiences. As previously mentioned, it is not unusual that people, as they age, gradually become marginalised by society. Learning is a way of combating social exclusion and to facilitate participation in democratic societies. But if learning is to have this effect, the learning provisions that society offers must be relevant, not just for experienced learners but also for those who have enjoyed very few learning opportunities in the past. Thus, facing the challenge of an ageing population to a great extent has to do with overcoming inequalities within the group itself. For heritage institutions this could mean getting acquainted with the big group of non-visitors among the older adults.

The third and fourth ages

The 'third age' is a frequently used concept which refers to the time in life between gradual or full retirement until the time when a reduction in mental or physical capabilities occurs.⁸ According to gerontologists Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, the concept should be perceived in relation to the dismantling of a society with ready-made life courses.

Increasing affluence across the life course, greater individualization in later life, and the de-institutionalization of the life course have established the third age as a cultural field capable of sustaining multiple meanings and numerous opportunities for choice, autonomy, self-expression, and pleasure in later life.⁹

The third agers are the older adults with a potential of leading active lives, who are in good health and can enjoy freedom from work and family related concerns. However, in contrast to the third age, the fourth age implies a growing need for care and a declining health situation. The fourth age has been less elaborated

than the third and some researchers have suggested that more than anything it is the antithesis of the third age.¹⁰ Entering into the fourth age can take place in a person's fifties as well as in his or her nineties, chronological age is not really the issue here.

Although most heritage-based programmes and activities are directed towards older adults in the third age there are, as we shall see in the coming pages of this report, also many good examples of initiatives for learning for people in the fourth age. One problem is, however, that the majority of existing programmes are run as projects for a short period of time. Often there are no funds for large-scale spreading of results and there is also a lack of political incitement, coordination and overview. Generally, people living in nursing homes are, when it comes to learning, very dependent on superintendents and their initiative or ability to use local resources. The challenge is to find relevant programmes and guidelines for learning and to find ways of cooperation between institutions for learning and representatives for health care.¹¹

1 Findsen & Formosa (2011) p. 10.

2 Findsen & Formosa (2011) p. 11.

3 Findsen & Formosa (2011) p. 11.

4 Sacco (2011), Formosa (2000), Zarifis (2010).

5 King & Calasanti (2006) p. 141.

6 Fristrup (2006) – on-line interview with Tine Fristrup.

7 Zarifis (2010) p. 2.

8 Schuller & Watson (2010).

9 Gilleard & Higgs (2010) p. 126.

10 See for example Gilleard & Higgs (2010) pp. 121-122. "One way of approaching this issue is to consider the fourth age as a kind of social or cultural "black hole" that exercises a powerful gravitational pull upon the surrounding field of ageing."

11 McNair (2009).

Activities and approaches currently used in European museums

In this report we have so far only spoken in more general terms about the contribution of heritage to the challenge of ageing populations. Many museums and archives already work very ambitiously and strategically with older adults but a lot of work remains before professionals both inside and outside of the heritage sector gain insight into the potential benefits that working with older adults could have on different levels: individual, institutional and societal. All heritage institutions, regardless of type, size or location, can work with older adults. Presented here will be a few models of activities and approaches that are currently being used in European museums. It should be noted, however, that the options are numerous and that these examples are not meant to map all existing practices but should be viewed as a mere inspiration.

Lecture series – a way to further engagement

Heritage institutions can provide learning opportunities with very differing levels of engagement. To follow a series of lectures at a museum or an archive is often a good way of becoming acquainted with the work of a particular heritage institution. If the intention is to include older adults who never or very rarely participate, it could be a good idea to keep the themes of lectures broad and varied and to let the participants give feedback on themes they are interested in learning more about. A series of lectures can also serve as the perfect arena to reconnect with old friends, making new acquaintances or just simply getting out of the house for a few hours. On the part of the museum,

organising a series of lectures could be done solely with the intention of mediating knowledge and facts. But museums that want to make a difference for older adults in their local communities can make sure these events make room both for socialising and for further engagement on the part of the participants.

Volunteering – a case of mutual learning

One way of supporting active citizenship among older adults is through volunteering. As studies on volunteering show, this form of engagement represents both an invaluable resource to our heritage institutions and serves, on the individual level, as a road to learning and personal development.¹ The range and magnitude of volunteer work differ from country to country and while, for example, the US and the UK have large volunteer sectors with some heritage institutions being run largely by volunteers, other countries are just starting to explore this possibility.²

It is a matter of discussion whether or not volunteer work gives economic added value to heritage institutions. A well-managed volunteer programme requires a lot of time and effort on the part of the organisation, to ensure that volunteers have the right training and working conditions, and that there are no legal impediments to pursue such programmes.³ However, given the right conditions, older adult volunteers often become important ambassadors of their museums and, besides their time, contribute with life experience and other 'soft' values on which it is

hard to put an economic value.

Surveys made both in the US and in Europe suggest that engaging in volunteering can have positive effects on the well-being of older adults and that programmes can even be modelled to further develop these particular aspects or side-effects of volunteering. Among health benefits that are connected to volunteering we find for example improved self-reported health, increased physical functioning, better cognitive functioning and reduced depressive symptoms. Still, it must also be noted that the fact that people in good health are more likely to volunteer makes it difficult to determine if better health can actually be attributed to volunteering itself. There are European studies suggesting that this is indeed the case but it still remains a claim that must be more firmly grounded in evidence.⁴ As Mary Kent puts it, "to inform decision makers about the public health benefits of volunteer commitments, future research must be able to identify what the benefits of volunteering would be if the decision to volunteer were independent of initial health status". This task becomes even more urgent if one considers the potential social and health benefits volunteering could have on countries with rapidly ageing populations.⁵

Participatory art. Empowerment through artistic expression

Arts organisations working with older adults as active participants are a relatively recent phenomenon. It is difficult to find examples of activities that date back to the time before the 1970s when larger segments of the population were being drawn into the community arts movement.⁶

Participatory art for older adults include many forms

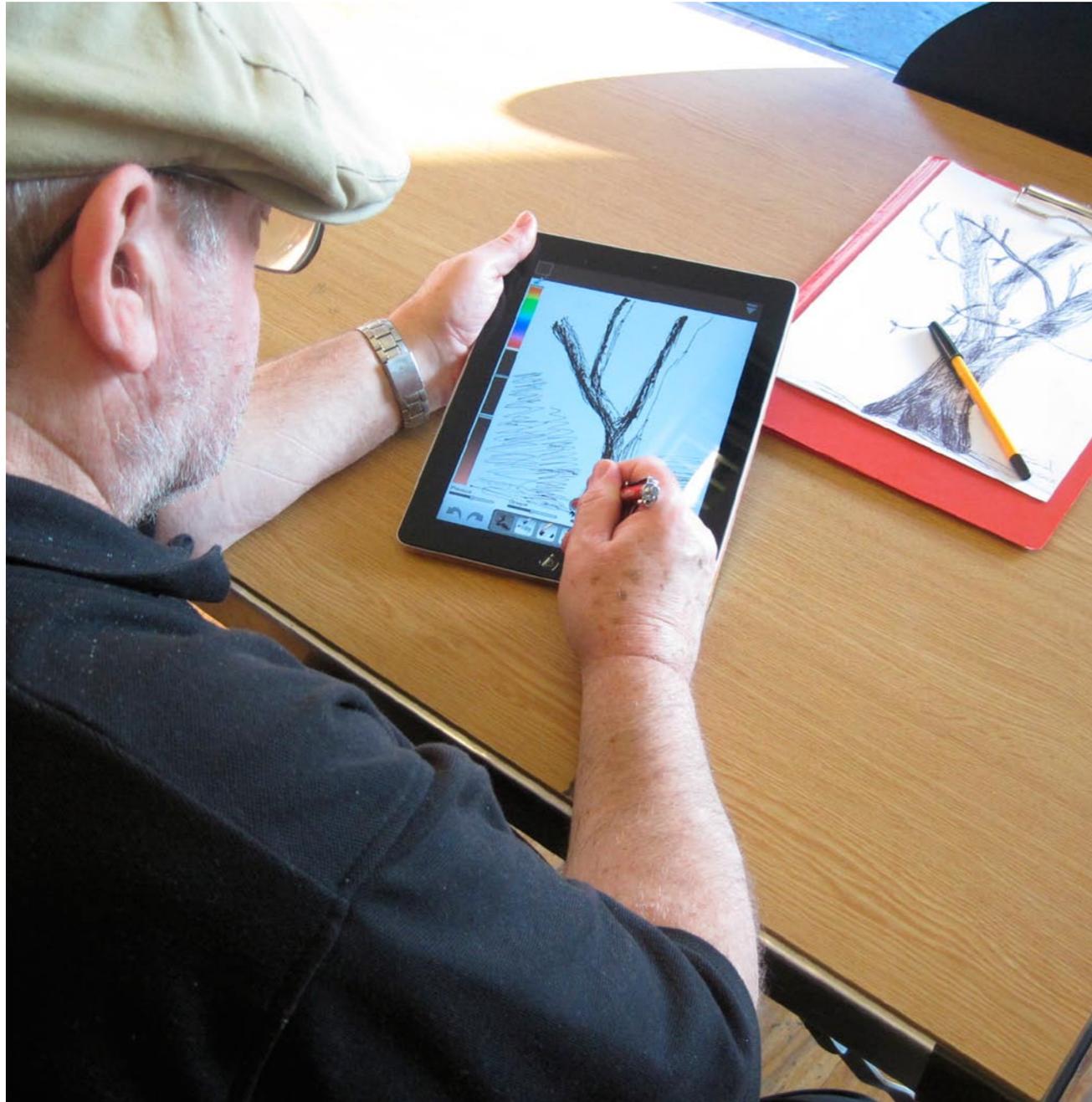
of artistic expressions: painting, drawing, etching, screen printing, singing, dancing, composition, film-making, creative writing and anything in between. In an evidence review commissioned by the Baring Foundation in 2011, participatory art is characterised in the following way:

Professional artists collaborate with people to create original artistic works that relate to and/or express to others the participants' experience, outlook and/or community context in some way. Participants can be involved in the planning, development and in some cases evaluation of the project along with the project staff.⁷

So, participatory arts involve a high degree of interactivity, reflection and expression on the part of older adults and have proved to be a successful way of increasing confidence and self-esteem, creating opportunities for meaningful social contact and friendship and contributing towards challenging and breaking down both the self and external stigmas of being older.⁸

The authors behind the evidence review clearly state that we should not view participatory art as something equal to a medical treatment: "[o]ld age is not a disease and the arts are not a medicine".⁹ There are of course limits to what can be achieved through arts and heritage. However, something that museums and galleries *do* offer that most health programmes do not, are new and important social networks.¹⁰

In a UK based participatory art programme over 50 per cent of the participants had not been involved in art activities since they were very young and for many the experiences of art from their days in school were not altogether positive, rather the contrary. They showed a very low confidence in their own creative ability and thought their participation in the programme would be



a waste of time on the part of the professional artists. But with help and encouragement many managed to find new skills and in some cases also created new identities for themselves: identities of being creative individuals.¹¹

Reminiscence – exploring and revealing the worth of older adults

I think reminiscence is one way of exploring and revealing the worth of older people because people come out with the knowledge and experience, the wisdom of years and they can share that with all kinds of people in a way which show they have worth, that they are a tremendous resource – just for being themselves. This is to me the whole point of adult education – it is about showing the value of worth on individuals what ever their situation in life.¹²

Since at least the 1970s there have been projects and actions throughout Europe and North America to activate socially older adults who have more or less developed symptoms of dementia. Many of the actions involve reminiscence methods as a way to promote awareness of the present through the reawakening of memories.¹³ As more people reach higher ages we will also see a steady increase in the number of people suffering from dementia.¹⁴ There is no cure for dementia but museums or archives can provide comfort through creating environments that are supportive and encouraging.

Reminiscence activities concern the history of ordinary people and value their experiences. A reminiscence session can take many different shapes or forms and virtually any museum can engage. An open air museum can create or use existing environments as a trigger for recollection; an art museum will perhaps use familiar themes from the history of art, whilst a museum with vast collections could focus on handling objects that

are well-known to the participants.¹⁵ But reminiscence sessions can also take place outside the museum using mobile units such as loan boxes or suitcases that mix materials (music, photographs, documents and objects).¹⁶

In open air museums the approach, when it comes to reminiscing, is often multisensory. The aim is to create an environment that looks, feels, smells, sounds and tastes like the time participants recognise from their childhood or adolescence.¹⁷ Everything in the surroundings could thus become a possible trigger for memories and for storytelling. Not least, the communication aspect is vital for people with symptoms of dementia. Cognitive decline often goes hand in hand with the loss of conversation, since people are afraid to make mistakes, to fail to make coherent thoughts or to find that no-one is listening.¹⁸ Studies made show that reminiscence can activate and raise the spirits of participants. It strengthens interaction and can also help remind relatives, friends and family that there are many different ways through which they can facilitate communication.¹⁹ Sometimes reminiscence can evoke negative emotions. For the person leading a reminiscence session it is therefore necessary to be well prepared, to exercise communication skills and a readiness for the different situations that may occur.²⁰

Loan boxes

Museums that engage in reminiscence work often have strong ties to their local communities and especially to institutions or organisations for nursing and care. In the case of reminiscence activities these connections are vital, not to say, a pre-requisite. As mentioned above, structured reminiscence activities also take place

outside heritage institutions. A museum can provide ideal conditions for reminiscing and other learning opportunities. But many of those who are most in need of joining a reminiscence session might be exactly those who have neither the strength nor the capacity to visit a museum. For this reason, but also as a way of integrating reminiscence in the day-to-day activities of nursing homes and other care facilities, museums and archives all over Europe put together loan boxes or suitcases to be used in reminiscence sessions. The museum staffs have filled the boxes with objects, documents and photos that are supposed to stimulate memories and encourage conversation. Often the boxes relate to certain themes such as, for example, childhood games, wartime food, gardening memories, transport etc.²¹

Object handling

Object handling is another form of reminiscence and learning that could be set both in the museum and elsewhere. Handling a museum object can, for example, positively impact on the well-being of a hospitalised patient. This conclusion was drawn from a London-based pilot project called 'Heritage in Hospitals'.²² In the project, museum objects were taken to the bedside of patients who, together with a facilitator, went through 20 to 50 minutes-long handling sessions. Patients who participated reported, compared to those who did not, an increase in life satisfaction and health status after having handled the museum objects. The project also showed that object handling in hospitals aided counselling on issues of illness, death, loss and mourning. Moreover it became, especially for older adult patients, a way to reminisce and to tell life-stories.²³

But object handling is not just about reminiscing and supporting older adults who suffer from cognitive impairment. One particularly interesting target group in this regard is people with impaired vision. Over the last couple of years an increasing number of conferences and workshops have been organised to raise issues concerning the accessibility or touch-friendliness of museums, but still this remains an area in which more recommendations or good examples are needed.²⁴

1 Da Milano, Gibbs and San, eds (2009) p. 10.

2 See for example McCurely and Lynch (2004) and Da Milano, Gibbs and San, eds (2009) p. 84.

3 Hansen (forthcoming, 2013).

4 Kent (2011) pp. 3-5.

5 Kent (2011) p. 5.

6 Cutler (2009) p. 9.

7 Mental Health Foundation (2011) p. 8.

8 Mental Health Foundation (2011) pp. 3-4.

9 Mental Health Foundation (2011) p. 37.

10 Harper and Hamblin (2010) p. 50.

11 Harper and Hamblin (2010) p. 16. and p. 50.

12 Housden (2007).

13 Housden (2007).

14 Bruce et al. (2008) p. 19.

15 See for example Zipsane (2011). For examples related to art and objects, see under object handling and the collection of best practices and the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome.

16 Loan boxes will be covered below as a separate category.

17 See for example Lindberg (2008) or Borgström (2010).

18 Bruce et al. (2008) p. 34.

19 Bruce et al (2008) p. 16.

20 Chao et al. (2008) p. 2652.

21 See for example a project involving loan boxes which was started in Essex, UK, 2004. Curteis and Heathcote (2006) pp. 70-71.

22 The pilot project 'Heritage in Hospitals' was created jointly by University College London Museums and Collections and University College London Hospitals Arts. The idea of this research project was to take museum objects to patients' bedsides and to assess whether handling museum objects has a positive impact on patient wellbeing. See Chatterje, Vreeland & Noble. (2009) p. 164.

23 Chatterje, Vreeland & Noble (2009) p. 164-167.

24 Spence & Gallace (2008) pp. 21-22.

Policies on Ageing Tendencies in Europe

Unfortunately, these gains have not yet been recognised by an official system that continues to view resource allocation for older people in terms of an illness paradigm rather than a health-enhancing paradigm.¹

In the above quote, the authors advocate for authorities to take a more pro-active stance in regard to older adults. This section concerns the question of pro-activeness and the readiness, on part of European policy-makers, to put the challenge of ageing populations on the political agenda. We do not provide a complete mapping of the current situation but will show some trends or tendencies.

In June 2011, a letter inquiring about national policies concerning older adults' access to culture in general or heritage in particular was sent to all European Governments (Ministries of Culture or Ministries of Health but most often to both, depending largely on the governmental structure). Despite reminders to ministries that had not replied after several months, only eleven answers were collected.² The lack of replies and the fact that the answers received predominately represent the northern part of Europe makes it difficult to make generalisations about the current status for policies on ageing. Still, some observations can be made. Clearly, the definition of ageing and who is considered an older adult differs a lot depending on the country. In Iceland for example, you are not considered an older adult until you reach the age of 70. Another observation worth mentioning is that

several of the respondents talk about physical access to culture rather than culture seen as a way towards learning, health and wellbeing for older adults. However important, physical access is not of primary interest in this report. Lastly, it should also be noted that access to culture for older adults is quite often regarded as a part of policies of access to culture for everyone. However, when reading the policy documents mentioned in the responses we have received, older adults as a group is not always even mentioned.

We shall now take a closer look at three countries that did respond to our inquiry. These examples will exemplify how differently European governments today approach the issue of access to culture. As the first example, we will focus on the Netherlands.

The message received from the Dutch Ministry of Culture can be described as straight forward. There is no official policy on the access of culture for older adults and no plans for it either. The reasons given are that older adults are well represented among the visitors to Dutch cultural institutions whilst young people are the least represented. Young people represent 10 per cent of the Dutch museum visitors and to engage them is, in contrast to the older population, more of a concern. To this picture the ministerial officer has also added that Dutch museums enjoy great liberty to set their own policies.³

The comment by the Ministry on the freedom of Dutch museums is confirmed by a study from 2010 on the Future of the Dutch Museum Sector. The document, called Agenda 2026, was commissioned by the Dutch Museums Association and maps the trends that will influence the museum sector in the near future. Out of the seven trends listed, the first one concerns the retirement of the baby boom generation.⁴ The fact that the population is ageing is, in this document, not perceived as a threat or challenge but as an opportunity from which all museums could possibly benefit.

A growing target group with a large amount of time, money and interest in cultural and museological activities will generate a great degree of potential for the museum sector. Small, medium and large museums will all benefit from this trend.⁵

It is also envisaged that the number of volunteers, friends and donors to the museum will increase in the coming years. Furthermore it is foreseen that this generation, through their memories and first account of historical events and traditions, will add to the current knowledge and collections of Dutch museums and make more people interested in the history of the 20th century. One potentially negative aspect of this trend is, however, mentioned. If too much focus is directed towards this target group, younger people might not feel welcome at or engaged by the museums. Agenda 2026 is not a policy document in the strict sense. Nevertheless, if we are to understand more about the challenge of ageing populations, it is equally important to get an image of the interplay between the policy level and level of implementation.

From the Netherlands we will now turn our attention

to the Czech Republic. A government resolution in 2006 established the Government council for older persons and population ageing which today is a permanent advisory body to the Government of the Czech Republic on issues related to ageing and older persons. The Council's mission is to promote conditions for healthy and active ageing, dignity in old age, and active participation of older persons in economic and social development in the context of demographic ageing. It aims to ensure equal rights for older persons in all areas of life, to protect their human rights and support development of intergenerational relationships in family and society.⁶

Two national programmes of 'preparation for ageing' have also been launched in the Czech Republic, one for the period 2003-2007 and one for 2008-2012.⁷ In the first national programme, culture is identified as beneficial for older adults. The role of culture is, however, more pronounced in the second national programme where culture is described as a means of combating social isolation and exclusion but also as a source of self-fulfilment, enjoyment and of relationship building.⁸ But what is perhaps more extraordinary about the Czech policy is the length and strength in which the recommended approach towards ageing and older adults is stated.

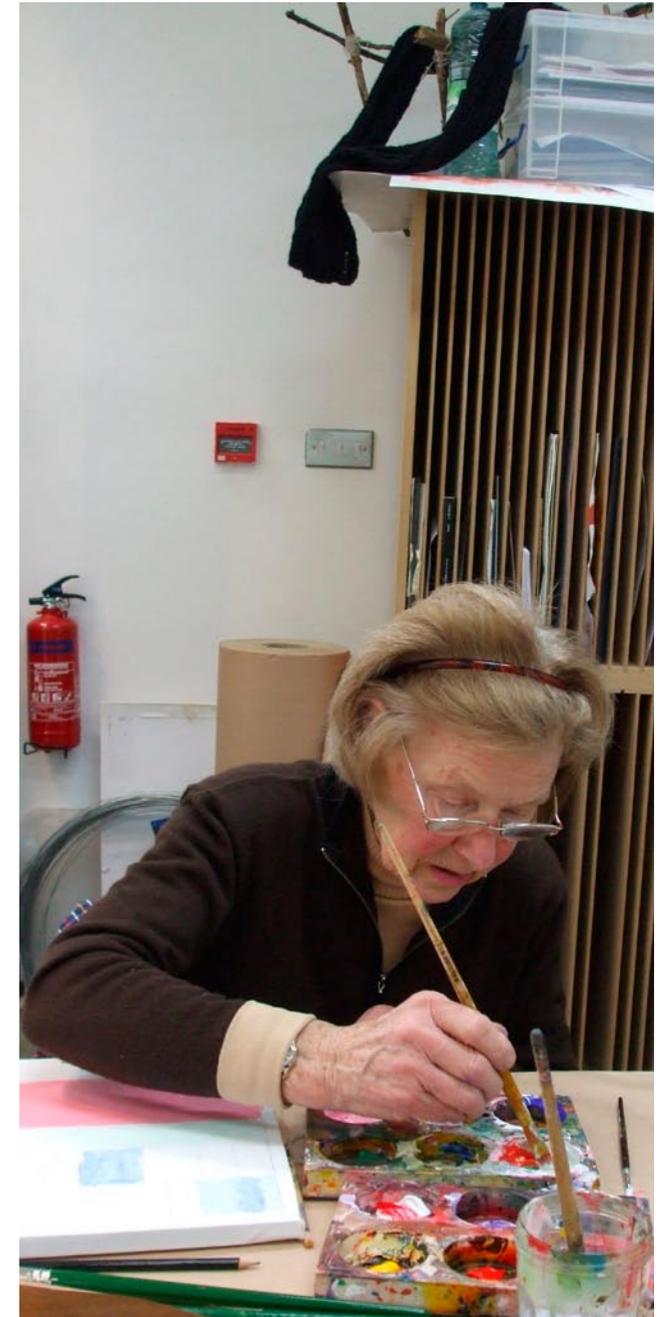
[It is] necessary to challenge and change the current stereotypes of ageing and old age, to counter prejudices concerning the life, status and significance of older persons in society. A change in the attitudes of individuals and society to ageing and older persons must be the basis for the implementation of a National Programme of Preparation for Ageing.⁹

This might seem self-evident – of course we should not hold prejudiced attitudes towards older adults. But,

self-evident as it might seem, this policy goes further than anyone else when it comes to speaking about changing the conceptions of and the connotations associated with ageing. The aim stated is to create “a society for all generations”.¹⁰

So, has this national policy also had an effect on the way Czech museums conduct their work with the ageing population? Further studies are needed to answer this question. Currently however, it seems as though the Netherlands and the Czech Republic represent two opposite approaches towards the challenge of the ageing population. On the one hand there is the Netherlands where the government is not planning to launch any policies concerning ageing and access to culture but where the museum sector is very much setting its own agenda about ageing. On the other hand there is the Czech Republic with an outspoken profile and vision for this field but where the level of activities and engagement on the part of the cultural sector is low. The examples of the Netherlands and the Czech Republic can be contrasted with that of Norway. In Norway a policy on older adults' access to culture go hand in hand with activities implemented on a practical level in the Norwegian heritage sector.

The Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services (HOD) is responsible for providing good and equal health and care services for the population of Norway. In 2006 HOD launched a new policy concerning culture and the ageing population – the cane of culture (den kulturelle spaserstokken). The government wished to strengthen the public health policy through political measures that would reduce inequalities in health



between social and ethnic groups and between the sexes. It was stated that social and cultural activities apart from good health, give us tools to express thoughts and experiences that normally can be hard to express, have therapeutic and preventive effects, develop and strengthen social networks and communities. Still, on municipal level, these kinds of activities and programmes are often the first ones to be excluded. Launching a particular programme for the benefit of the ageing population served as a way to make sure that municipalities would not make cuts and reductions in their cultural offerings to older citizens. Furthermore, this solution was meant as a way to support cooperation between providers of culture and providers of health care. The policy should cover all forms of culture and art activities and involve culture providers of all shapes and sizes. The new policy was established in 2007 with a budget of 10 million NOK (approximately 1,3 million €). Each year the municipalities are invited to apply for funding from the Ministry of Culture to sponsor cultural activities for older citizens. In 2010 the total budget for the care of culture was 24 million NOK (approximately 3 million €). 281 municipalities submitted applications out of which 275 were accepted. The care of culture is a provisional policy but before 2014 the government is planning to triple the budget and make the policy permanent.¹¹ Here we have merely scratched the surface of the large and rather complex field of European policies on ageing, heritage and culture. It is certainly an area in which more research is needed. From policy we will now go back to practice, and highlight a few interesting examples of programmes or activities which are currently being implemented in European institutions for culture or heritage.

1 Ní Léime & O'Shea (2008) p. 13.
 2 The eleven are: Iceland, The Czech Republic, The Netherlands, Austria, Luxemburg, Denmark, the UK, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Ireland.
 3 The answer from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science was received on July 15, 2011.
 4 Meijer, Weide & Krabshuis (2010) The other trends listed are: 2. Growth of international cultural tourism, 3. Cuts in subsidies, 4. Development of the Randstad metropolitan area, 5. Digitised society, 6. Greater European influence, 7. The Dutch Museum Sector in 2026.
 5 Meijer, Weide & Krabshuis (2010) p. 5.
 6 The answer from the Czech Ministry of Culture was received on July 7, 2011.
 7 International Plan of Action on Ageing (Vienna 1982) the UN Principles for Older Persons (1991) the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid (8-12 April 2002) and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 have served as examples and inspirational pieces when creating the Czech policies.
 8 National Programme of Preparation for Ageing for 2008-2012.
 9 National Programme of Preparation for Ageing for 2003-2007.
 10 National Programme of Preparation for Ageing for 2003-2007.
 11 Information on the care of culture can be found on the website of the Norwegian government <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kud/tema/kultur/den-kulturelle-spaserstokken.html?id=586628> and in St. meld nr 25. (2005-2006) Mestring, muligheter og mening. Framtidas omsorgsutfordringer. In the end of 2011 the Norwegian Ministry of Culture also launched a new policy on Culture, inclusion and participation. St. meld nr. 10 2011-2012. The answer to our inquiry from the Norwegian government was received on December 13, 2011.

Good practices

The good practices put forward in these policy recommendations have been suggested by the members of the Learning museum working group, Museums and the ageing population. It has been the group's intention to find examples that are, in one way or the other, ground-breaking and representing the current situation

in Europe from north to south, east to west. Between them, the examples should cover a wide range of activities and be directed to both the third and the fourth ages. Moreover, the members of the group agreed to prioritise projects that had undergone some kind of evaluation.





Example 1. The House of Memory Den Gamle By, Århus, Denmark

Den Gamle By in the town of Århus, Denmark is an open air museum dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. The possibility of experiencing an environment of the past with all senses lies at the heart of the open air museum mentality and in the case of *Den Gamle By*, this fact is made use of in a new and interesting way. Since 2005 the museum has conducted reminiscence sessions for older adults suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia.

The reminiscence sessions in *Den Gamle By* began as an experiment. The idea was to create environments that would trigger all senses. Furniture and objects, the light and lamps, the music on the radio and smells and tastes should help call back memories, encourage older adults to take part in social life and share their memories with others. Many older adults participated and the results were both astonishing and moving. From 2006 onwards the museum, in close collaboration with the municipality, has turned this opportunity into a general offer.

In 2012 a new house – The house of memory – was inaugurated. It is built especially for reminiscence sessions with kitchen, living room, dining room, bedroom and bathroom - all furnished in the style of the 1950s and with the possibility of a later chronological adjustment for coming generations.¹ The programme is striving towards a holistic approach in which all senses of the participants are triggered and

the staff members have received special training to encourage personal expressions from the participants through listening and conversation.²

The municipality always informs the museum who will be participating in a reminiscence session, whether they have special needs or requirements, etc. Every programme is modelled to suit a particular group of participants and afterwards the museum is keen to receive feed-back from the municipal staff on how the programme was perceived. They also ask for reports concerning the participants' behaviour and wellbeing. These programmes require good planning and the programme has to be balanced between conversation, questions and reflection together with the participants.³

Tina Jeppesen and Dorthe Berntsen from Århus University have researched the effects of this particular reminiscence programme. They used a group of participants in the museum reminiscence programme and a control group who had not participated and gave both groups similar objects from household life to work with. Preliminary results suggest that reminiscence work had a significantly positive effect on the activation of autobiographical memories. Participants of the reminiscence programme had considerably more autobiographical memories than the control group. Furthermore, the properties of the activated memories tend to follow the same pattern among museum programme participants: that is, the mean value for specific episodic content, semantic

content, time content, place content, and details are numerically lower in the reminiscence condition than in the condition of the control group. In addition, the mean value for nonspecific episodic content and spontaneous content are numerically higher in the reminiscence condition.⁴ Both at *Den Gamle By* and in other open air museums, who have copied the method, the same results have been seen. The participants become engaged, excited and in their own words - they have a good time.⁵ This kind of programme is made possible through a partnership between a municipality and an open air museum. In addition to the older adults that participated in the programme, it also involves pedagogical staff from the museum and caretakers and nurses from the municipality. The collaboration not only includes delivering the programmes but also joint courses for the municipal staff and the museum staff about reminiscence. This creates a common ground and a common professional language for all the people involved. From the perspective of legal aims both municipality and museum are winners here. The municipality delivers a high quality product within the care for older adults and the museum uses the history of the local community to retrieve personal memories.



1 Lindberg (forthcoming in 2013).
2 Lindberg (2008) pp. 51-56.
3 Lindberg (2008) pp. 51-56.
4 Jeppesen & Berntsen (2011).
5 Lindberg (2008) and Borgström (2010).





Example 2. The Bealtaine Festival Age & Opportunity, Ireland

...to bring about a shift in attitudes and practices that will create opportunities for older people to participate fully and meaningfully in the arts.

Age & Opportunities' vision for the Bealtaine festival

Bealtaine is a festival dedicated to creativity in the older ages. It is a month-long annual event which took place for the first time in 1996. The event was initiated by the (largely) state funded Age & Opportunity, an organisation that promotes active citizenship among the older generations of the Irish population. Throughout the years, Bealtaine has gained support from a number of organisations both nationally and internationally, raising both ambitions and the scope of the festival. Bealtaine is a national festival and the first of its kind in the world. In other European countries and region it has often been regarded as a model of international best practice.¹

Apart from the vision cited above, the Bealtaine festival has three more specific aims. Firstly, to raise awareness about people's capacity to grow and be creative in older ages and to make sure this is also brought to the attention of politicians and policymakers. Secondly, to let older adults participate meaningfully in the arts both as artists, organisers, audiences and critics. Thirdly, to frame a national policy that acknowledges the potential of arts to transform the lives of older adults. Apart from this, the festival also strives to involve people from all sectors of society.²

In contrast to the other offers to older adults presented in these policy recommendations, Bealtaine is the only one that does not take place in a heritage institution. Though heritage and the arts is part of the festival, Age & Opportunity has an eclectic view on what comprises an experience of art.

[...] we don't think of arts institutions in the traditional vertical hierarchy of national, regional and local or even of art form in a vertical hierarchy (that is, opera, country and western, singing in the car). Rather we think of them as a horizontal selection of options that people value, dip in and out of, find invigorating, at different times in their lives.³

Bealtaine takes place in the month of May and it has been estimated that around 120,000 people take part each year. About 600 different organisations are involved in the up to 1000 events, including all forms of art, including dancing, cinema, painting, theatre and creative writing. Many of the events let people explore their own creativity through workshops organised by local authorities, arts centres, national cultural institutions, libraries, active retirement groups, care settings, community groups and clubs.⁴ Age & Opportunity co-ordinates the festival on the national level and chooses, for every year, a central theme. The local organisers are free to connect their events and programmes to the theme if they so wish.

In 2008, Áine Ní Léime and Eamon O'Shea of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology at the National

University of Ireland released their evaluation of the Bealtaine festival. The work was commissioned by Age & Opportunity and focused primarily on the impact and implications of the festival for different stakeholders like organisers, facilitators, arts agencies, older adults and policy-makers.⁵

The evaluators used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Postal questionnaires were sent both to organisers and to participants.⁶ The survey directed towards participants enquired for example about the impact of Bealtaine in aspects such as encouraging self-expression, encouraging personal

development, improving quality of life, meeting new people, involvement with local community, etc.⁷ 86 per cent of the participants agreed with the statement “participation in Bealtaine has improved my quality of life”, 95 per cent said that through the festival they had got to know people they would not otherwise have met and 85 per cent estimated that their level of involvement in the local community had increased thanks to Bealtaine.

The external evaluators concluded that the festival has significant impact both on arts policy and practice for older adults in Ireland. It was said to encourage participation in the arts among older adults and to



create awareness of the importance of creative activity in their lives.⁸ Moreover, the evaluation illustrated that participating in Bealtaine actually increased the overall wellbeing of participants, both in terms of health and quality of life gains and through enhanced social relationships with others.⁹ However, evaluators also criticised the lack of policy for the arts and older adults in Ireland. This policy vacuum “serves to undermine rather than enhance the work of the festival in achieving the goals set out by the organisers”. As the situation is now, Bealtaine is vulnerable for cuts in funding and very dependent on the goodwill of its volunteers.



- 1 Ní Léime & O'Shea (2008) p. 22.
- 2 Ní Léime & O'Shea (2008) p. 24.
- 3 Submission by the Bealtaine Festival, Age & Opportunity to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Environment, Transport, Culture and the Gaeltacht (2012) p. 7.
- 4 Submission by the Bealtaine Festival, Age & Opportunity (2012) p. 7.
- 5 Ní Léime & O'Shea (2008) p. 9.
- 6 Ní Léime & O'Shea (2008) p. 9.
- 7 Ní Léime & O'Shea (2008) p. 48.
- 8 Ní Léime & O'Shea (2008) p. 103.
- 9 Ní Léime & O'Shea (2008) pp. 11-12.



Example 3. The Memory of Beauty National Gallery of Modern Art, Rome, Italy¹

The National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome is a public museum for art of the 19th and 20th centuries and displays all the major current schools of visual arts of the period. The neoclassical building lies in a quiet and green area of the city.

In October 2010 the museum was visited by two educators, Amir Parsa and Laurel Humble, from the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York who presented, during a very captivating workshop, their project dedicated to older adults affected by Alzheimer's disease, *Meet me at MoMA*². It immediately became clear that the National Gallery of Modern Art wanted to create its own programme for Alzheimer's patients, tailored to support their specific needs and fit in the structure of the museum.

A small team of museum educators formed a work group under the guidance of Martina De Luca from the educational department of the museum, who also drew up a partnership with the Medical Centre of Ageing of the Gemelli Hospital in Rome. The staff from the Gemelli would select patients and carry out the scientific survey, whereas the museum would set up the visits for the patients.³ The programme, *The Memory of Beauty*, was carefully planned and organised so as to create a quiet and comfortable setting for a group of up to eight patients and their caregivers.

The aim of the visit to the museum was not to teach

art history or to give a classical guided tour, but to use the artwork to establish a contact with the patients, and to give them, through the contact with beauty, the opportunity to express themselves and retrieve personal memories.⁴ The museum did not want to create a one-off experience, so it planned a cycle of three visits for each group. Each session focused on four pieces of art (figurative, non-figurative, paintings or sculpture) which had a common theme (e.g. landscape, women in art).

The groups were taken on tour by specially trained staff who encouraged them to describe the artwork and to express opinions, memories and feelings with regard to the themes exposed. The staff also tried to encourage group discussions and interaction among the participants. After some initial puzzlement, the participants often became very lively and their contributions were often moving and also surprising for both their family members and the medical staff, who also were present during the visits. The comments ranged from accounts of (sometimes forgotten) personal memories to often very meaningful considerations about life and beauty.

After the visit, the medical staff made quick surveys to enquire about the level of satisfaction of patients and caregivers. The aim was to create a programme centred on the participants and to give both patients and family members a different setting for being

together and sharing a positive, stress-less experience. Giving attention to every participant was important in order to allow expression of opinions and memories.

Rossella Liperoti and Federica Mammarella from the Gemelli Hospital in Rome have carried out a medical survey whereas the visitors' observation of the museum performed a survey of the overall satisfaction of participants. The clinical survey included follow-up visits and took into consideration several aspects, ranging from the distress of the caregivers to neuropsychiatric evaluation and the adjustment of the pharmacological treatment of the patients during the period.

The programme The Memory of Beauty has now turned into a stable initiative offered by the educational department of the museum. In October 2011 the museum organised a workshop to present the programme to a larger public. Moreover, it has also received an economic contribution from the Ministry of Cultural Activities. Other care institutions for Alzheimer's patients have since joined the programme, thus increasing the number of people that can benefit from the programme.⁵ Enlarging the size of the programme has also made it possible to adjust it for patients coming from different types of assistance, and the kind of care given there (diurnal, residential or ambulatory care). This has proved to be significant for the reaction of the patients. All patients have undergone medical evaluation and the results are about to be collected in future publications. One result is the fact that non-pharmacological therapies have a significant impact on psycho-behavioural symptoms of the patients, among the most difficult aspects to be treated with conventional therapies. All of the participants express

positive feelings towards the programme. And, even if affected by a cognitive pathology they are able to appreciate the pleasure of the experience.

Very important is also the impact of the initiative on the caregivers who seem to have gained more self-esteem due to a new and rewarding activity in a "place of beauty", as one of them called it. Also the feelings towards the patient they care for improve in a positive way and can stimulate new conversation and new activities to share.

The *Experimental Alzheimer Center* – San Giovanni di Dio Institute – Fatebenefratelli, Genzano (Rome) has evaluated a group of 26 patients affected by various typologies of dementia at various stages who underwent a standard rehabilitation program (residential) in 2012. Patients were randomized in two groups: one group of 13 patients participated in three structured visits at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome; the other group was occupied by other open air extra activities. Each patient was accompanied by the respective caregivers during the visits or the extra activity. One week before the beginning of the programme and one week and one month after the end of the activity, patients were double-blindly evaluated with an extensive neuropsychological battery. As expected, both the groups of patients improved their performances in tests of memory, attention and executive functions and reduced behavioural disturbances. Patients who participated in museum therapy significantly improved their performances in the tests of cognitive estimation and pragmatic abilities. This did not happen with the other group. All caregivers reduced significantly their



depression and burden, but only the caregivers who participated in museum therapy reduced the level of alexithymia (i.e. inability to express feelings with words) and improved coping strategies.

The Memory of Beauty is the first stable initiative in Italy dedicated to Alzheimer's patients and thus to enlarge the offer of the museum for special publics and at the same time to promote the museum as a place that goes beyond enjoying fine arts but enhances the position of the museum in the society as a socially important setting for exchange and encounters. The project has received an award from CECA/ICOM for carrying out 'good practices' of the International Museum standards.

As an overall result this project has shown evidence that art and associated activities can have an important role in the rehabilitation of people affected by dementia, since they activate emotional circuits that remain preserved for a long time during the evolution of the disease.

1 The National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome, Italy has kindly agreed to write an account of the programme especially for these policy recommendations. The museum has managed to set up this programme thanks to the efforts of Martina De Luca, responsible for the project, and the partnership with the different care institutions who were precious partners during the elaboration and the fine-tuning of the procedures. The initiative has given the museum staff the opportunity to increase significantly their professional skills and create an important asset for the museum as an institution, as well as a contribution for the care and well-being of people affected by Alzheimer's disease.

2 For information on Meet me at MoMA see: <http://www.moma.org/meetme/index>

3 The members of the museum team were: Martina De Luca (team leader and responsible for the Educational Department of the National gallery) Laura Campanelli, Fabiola Di Fabio, Valentina Filamingo, Carla Gunnella, Alessandra Lanzoni, Susanne Meurer, Lilith Zulli (members of the Educational Department and museum operators) together with different interns, Maria Mercede Ligozzi, Francesca Valentini (Visitors' Observatory of the National Gallery). The staff from Gemelli were Rossella Liperoti, neurologist, Federica Mammarella, geriatrician, joined by three psychologists.

4 Read more about the programme on: www.gnam.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/168/la-memoria-del-bello-percorsi-museali-per-malati-di-alzheimer.

5 Alzheimer Uniti, a centre for diurnal assistance, and the Experimental Alzheimer Center of the Fatebenefratelli Hospital in Genzano, Rome, a residential care institution.

Example 4. The Lithuanian Deportation The Open Air Museum of Lithuania in Rumšiškės¹

The open-air museum of Lithuania is situated outside the town of Kaunas. Covering an area of 195 hectares, it is one of the largest open-air museums in Europe. In this museum older adults, because of their life experiences, become important links to the history of the country. As this example will illustrate, older adults give invaluable contributions to society as first hand witnesses of significant events in the histories of countries, peoples, certain eras, etc.

During the course of the 1940s and 1950s the Lithuanian population suffered not only the terror of the Nazi occupation but also that of the Stalinist regime, during which many thousands were deported to Siberia and to other remote parts of the Soviet Union, and yet others were killed or imprisoned. Not only adults but entire families were put on cattle trucks and taken thousands of kilometres from their homes. Many of them would never return to Lithuania.

One of the deportees was Mrs Irena Špakauskiene. In the summer of 1941, at the age of 13, she lived in Kaunas with her mother, father and 16-year-old brother. Irena's father was an officer. Until the first mass deportation one year earlier, the family had lived happily but with talk of disappearances among her father's colleagues, of diplomats and others, the tension and fear escalated.

Early in the morning of the 14th of June 1941, Soviet soldiers burst into their house. They were not allowed to take any belongings before being rounded up, together with other families and taken to the cattle trucks. Irena's father, like the rest of the men, was separated from his family and moved to the Soviet labour camps in Siberia. Women, even pregnant ones, children, babies and elders were pushed into other trains.

Somehow the relatives of the Špakauskiene had learned about what was happening and managed to give Irena's family some food, warm clothes and coats for Irena and her brother, as they were in summer clothes. In the cattle truck of Irena and her brother and mother, there were 65 people. The four small windows with barbed wire hardly let any air inside, there was no possibility to lie down and no food was distributed, only a bucket of water a day, or not even that, which had to be shared by everyone in the car.

After a few weeks they reached the labour camp in Altai where Irena, her mother and brother shared a small hut with a local woman. Those who still had personal belongings exchanged them for food. Irena and her family did not have much to trade with and lived on soup prepared from grass and water. After a year they were asked to gather their belongings. They crossed the mountains on foot and were then



transported by lorries, cattle trucks and boats until, in the summer of 1942, they reached the Laptev Sea and the uninhabited islands of the Lena delta in the Arctic Ocean.

On their arrival, there were no lodgings in the area. So Irena, her mother and brother, together with other children and women, first had to build houses from logs for the soldiers guarding them. After having worked for 12-14 hours the hungry, weak women and children were allowed to build shelters for themselves. Winter came in August and the deportees then built yurts, in this case made from pieces of logs, wood and branches. The mothers and the older boys made the framework, smaller children cut pieces of the sod to put on the frames. During the first 5-6 months at the Laptev Sea, 50 to 90 per cent of the deportees died from illness and starvation. Irena's mother was one of those who did not survive the deportation. By giving her bread ration to her children, she managed to save them but not herself.

In 1947, a group of students came to the Lena delta to study the habitat of fish. They noticed Irena, who was half-dead with hunger and managed to take her to Jakutsk. Later Irena came back to Lithuania where she had to hide for some years to avoid being imprisoned and deported back to Siberia. At this time her father had been dead since 1942 when he was executed in Reshiotai camp near Krasnojarsk, Her brother came back to Lithuania for good in 1963. In 1989, Irena together with a group of former deportees revisited the

Lena delta. Irena then found her mother's grave and could bring her remains back to Lithuania for reburial. At the Open-Air Museum of Lithuania this painful part of the country's past is commemorated in the section of deportation and resistance. Today, Mrs Irena Špakauskiene is over 80 years old and came as a volunteer to the museum in 1992. Since 1997 she has been employed by the museum to tell visitors the story of how her and her family were deported and how they lived at the Arctic Sea. To further illustrate this period in the history of Lithuania, the museum has moved a cattle truck, used during the deportations, to the museum grounds. A yurt, similar to the one Irena stayed in, was built on the site in 1992, commemorating 50 years of deportation from Altai to the Arctic. This kind of yurt would house up to 40 people.

Irena's life story is both unique and moving but the practice of using the special competences that comes with having led a long and eventful life is, of course, not new. It exists all over the world but deserves to be emphasised as one important method, among others, in which heritage institutions and older adults can mutually benefit from each other. As Henrik Zipsane puts it:

The growing numbers of elderly people in society should primarily be seen as a challenge about how to create synergies in the meeting of people's memories and the collective memories in museums. The museums can learn from our senior citizens and the senior citizens can learn from the museums.²

What is important in these instances is that heritage institutions ensure they have a long-term plan for the preservation of the memories of older adults who participate in the work of the museum, as volunteers or employees. Life-stories must be documented in ways that makes future generations able to come as close to the real thing as possible. Today, this documentation can take many different forms and can be done at low cost.³

1 A special thanks to Teodora Murkuniene at the Open-Air Museum of Lithuania for providing the material on which this example is based.

2 Zipsane (2012).

3 Irena's life-story is one of several stories of deportees that are bound together in a novel by Ruta Sepetys, *Between shades of gray*, which became a New York Times Bestseller. Irena's story is also captured in the international project *Ledo vaikai – Children of the ice* <http://www.childrenoftheice.eu/en>, in which documentary film is used to tell about the experiences and destinies of children deported from the Baltic States during the times of Soviet terror.

Concluding remarks

In this report we have highlighted a number of different ways in which museums can contribute actively to the challenge of ageing populations. The examples show both depth and breadth and are targeted towards older adults in differing life-situations. But the level of engagement and especially the will for more strategic commitment and involvement varies a lot between heritage institutions. In this aspect, European cooperation and comparison is fundamental: for the development of new methods and approaches, joint activities and programmes and for the sake of inspiration, reflection and discussion. We see a great need for new European networks that are related to the issues raised in this report.

But there are also other obstacles for reaching the full potential of heritage institutions in their work with older adult learning. Today, many museums work in what could be described as a policy vacuum. The EU policies and recommendations are not keeping pace with recent developments within the heritage sector and on a national level we see a scattered landscape of actions and policy-development, ranging from very ambitious to non-existing. Museums have thus, for the most part, taken on the challenge of the ageing population without back-up from political stakeholders. This system has clear disadvantages. As we have seen in this report, many museums that engage in older adult learning have developed strong connections to the health sector, thereby extending

local networks, reaching new groups and, hopefully, in the long run, exploring ways to cut public spending on health and welfare. But in order for museums to go in this direction they need encouragement and support, both on local and national policy level. Heritage institutions need to know that their actions are valued and considered important.

However, museums also have a responsibility to show political stakeholders what they do, how they do it and explain why it is important. Authorities at all political levels must be introduced to activities where heritage in its broadest meaning is made accessible and relevant for older adults. Through the Learning Museum Network Project and the work group on museums and the ageing population we have jointly taken upon ourselves this important task. We believe that more and better policies would encourage increased cooperation between the heritage sector and other community agents in relevant fields, including those with knowledge and experience of performing high quality evaluations of mental and physical wellbeing. Because even though we have here made an effort to include examples that have undergone some kind of assessment, it is clear that this field is neglected in terms of evidence based research. We still, for example, know very little about the effects of older adult heritage learning in strictly economical terms.

Heritage can offer learning opportunities for older adults with very diverse sets of interests and experience. But in all examples of programmes and activities displayed in this report, older adults are also great assets to the museums. They are people whom, by sharing their memories, time and enthusiasm, enrich the sector and make our institutions keep on learning.



Appendix

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you as the representative of a European project funded work group consisting of ten museums across Europe. Our group – Museums and the ageing population - is currently investigating how the European museum sector is facing the challenge of rapidly ageing populations.

When it comes to choosing target groups and initiating programmes and projects, museums in Europe are, by and large, bound by the priorities of their national cultural policies. Our research acknowledges this fact but in order for us to create an overview of different national policies concerning the access to culture of older people, we will need your kind assistance.

We kindly ask you to take a few minutes to answer the following question.

1) Does your government have a national policy concerning older people's access to culture in general or heritage in particular?

- If YES, please describe the outline of this policy(ies)
- If NO, are there plans for such a policy?

Please send your answer to <sara.grut@nckultur.org> no later than July 18.

Our work group is part of the EU-funded Grundtvig network *The Learning Museum*. Please visit the project website for more information <www.lemproject.eu>

I thank you in advance for your kind assistance in this matter.

With kind regards,

Dr. Sara Grut
on behalf of the work group on Museums and the ageing population

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With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union. This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Published by Istituto per i Beni Artistici Culturali e Naturali
Regione Emilia-Romagna (Italy)
Project Leader of The LEM Project
Printed in June 2013
Centro Stampa Regione Emilia-Romagna, Bologna (Italy)

ISBN 978-88-97281-07-8