



Lady Cafe – Motivating Activities for Women Aged 45+

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ABSTRACT

This short paper discusses the details of a research project entitled “Lady Cafe – motivating activities for women aged 45+”. The project is based on motivational activities on different fields including e-learning, literature, psychology, health and traditional medicine. It is designed to make women over 45 aware of their abilities, so that they can transfer their ‘know-how’ from the domestic field to a wider scope within society.

Keywords: Motivation, Awareness, Self-esteem, E-learning, Literature.

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I. Introduction

The project entitled “Lady Cafe – motivating activities for women aged 45+” is a partnership of eight heterogeneous institutions. These organizations will develop and execute a series of activities (min. 3 training sessions per institution) to meet the varied needs (dependant on place of residence and context) and expectations of women aged over 45; and guarantee their active participation in the public sphere.

The activities will focus on very different fields: e-learning; literature; psychology (positive self-image and self-esteem building via theatre techniques); learning to promote their own interests in the public sphere; slow food; health; and traditional medicine. In the first phase, there will be workshops, courses and lectures conducted by qualified trainers. In the second phase, women over 45 (previous learners) will participate in lectures designed to help them recognize their own skills, so that they can become active trainers. The main aim is the comprehensive non-professional development of women over 45 (the project’s target age group): their improved self-esteem as a person and a woman; and, ultimately, their active participation within their social environment. Throughout the project, new teaching materials and sociological observations will be exchanged. Moreover, the project uses modern ICTs – an e-learning course devoted to gender issues will be prepared for the women learners. The new teaching materials and methodology description will be published in a good practices manual. This manual, as well as the products resulting from the e-learning course, will be exhibited. The two plays resulting from the drama workshops will be performed in 3

countries.

II. Details

The project, focused on motivational activities and aimed at women aged 45+, is designed to make them aware of their abilities, so that they can transfer their ‘know-how’ from the domestic field to a wider scope within society. These women have played a pacifying role in their families and small communities; they have often developed excellent communication skills. Nowadays, there is a social need to develop ‘emotional intelligence’ (social and civic competences) as a tool in preventing conflicts and ‘violence against women’ (present in all the participating partners’ countries). Domestic violence and chauvinistic attitudes have greatly increased in recent years, according to ‘official data’. Unfortunately, these problems are worsening in European countries currently experiencing economic recession. The combined factors of the aging demographics in most European countries, as well as women’s longer life expectancy, means that women aged 45+ are in peak condition and able to contribute positively to society.

The Lady Cafe project will help break misogynist stereotypes and include women aged 45+ in the public sphere. The training sessions are aimed at reducing the gap between social expectations about women 45+ and their real needs and aspirations. The project’s target group ranges from women from small towns, often isolated from social and cultural centers, to women living in larger towns with only basic formal education, but who’s life experience has resulted in a fund of knowledge that represents valuable, transferable skills for society. During the partnership’s second year, the project has 3 aims for

the participants: to gain awareness of the value of their own experience within a wider societal context; to become trainers of other marginalized women who left school without basic education; and to become trainers of non-qualified young adults with misogynist stereotypes who are likely to be involved in domestic violence. The project responds to the need for exchanging experience between partnership organizations by expanding the educational offerings for women aged 45+. The Lady Cafe project will also help change the image of our institutions, by showing them to be agents of important social change; and as adult education providers supporting innovative ICT-based educational content (digital competence).

The project will facilitate also inter-European cooperation aimed at encouraging women aged 45+ to become active in the public sphere. The exchange of information, experiences and good practices in the above-mentioned scope will help expand and update the education offerings for women over 45; participation in the project will help develop cooperation between European institutions involved in lifelong education. The project will foster ties between European countries with historically bad relationships. This project incorporates the priorities of the 2012 European Commission, as well as the following key competences from the European reference framework: the development of social and civic competences; digital competences; and the 'learning to learn' competences.

The fact that not all European countries have progressed to the same degree on gender issues is a situation that this project will turn to advantage. Women over 45 will establish a relationship with women from other European countries, enabling an exchange of knowledge that will highlight the viability of the project. They will keep in touch via the e-learning platform and travel. For our participants, belonging to Europe means a democratization of society, implying new job opportunities for women who are, after all, half the total population of Europe. Women in all European countries face common problems in the labor market, e.g. the 'glass ceiling'; cooperation between countries can help to find solutions by exploring various approaches in partners' countries. The exchange of information, experiences and good practices in the above-mentioned scope will help expand and update the education offerings for women 45+.

All project participants (women learners and staff) will improve their qualifications in terms of English language and digital competence as they will have to communicate constantly with other participants. They will learn about the culture, history and social situation of women in each partner country.

Participation in the project will help develop cooperation between European institutions concerning lifelong adult education. The project will also improve the quality of work at all the participating institutions. The project participants (trainees) will take an active part in the planning of activities and mobilities, and their evaluation.