

EURAG

European Federation of the Elderly

EURAG General Secretariat

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EURAG Response to the European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning

EURAG welcomed the European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning.

EURAG promotes the European dimension of the meaning of lifelong learning particularly for older people. EURAG supports activities which promote innovative forms of lifelong learning and improve the access and the quality of education possibilities for the population group of 50 plus.

EURAG considers its activities on this topic supported by the Portuguese EU-Presidency, which at its Lisbon Summit in March 2000 identified a new vision and strategy for Europe to base its economic progress and social cohesion on the advancement of a knowledge society.

An essential point is above all the improvement of the access to lifelong learning and IT skills for all.

Among the principles of EURAG activities is the promotion of the right of older people to participation in society and the right to self-determination. Particularly, the right of older people to have access to education facilities is an indispensable prerequisite to guarantee participation in social life. This also applies to older employees who are frequently excluded from further education measures.

An important role in these developments plays the improvement in the co-

ordination of the measures and programmes which refer to education, occupation and social integration, professional further education, lifelong learning.

The European dimension of EURAG measures in the field of lifelong learning

EURAG - with its established structures and networks (150 member organisations in 33 European countries and a permanent Work Group on Senior Education)- can play an important role in the co-ordination and promotion of programmes and strengthen necessary synergy effects to promote a European support of investments into human resources.

The EU Presidency and the Commission have expressed their readiness to promote employment and investments into lifelong learning for all, including older employees and unemployed.

"The readiness to promote active ageing" also means that those persons who have already left the labour market are included in these programmes, too.

EURAG demands that the needs of older people in retirement (and other groups considered as "not productive") with regard to lifelong learning are recognized as a human right and be adequately included in programmes.

Lifelong learning should be understood as a wide range of educational activities leading toward the higher quality of life of individuals, not necessarily only promoting their employment, but also offering non-vocational study.

Intergenerational projects are considered as particularly efficient means to combat social exclusion. Unrestricted access to university studies is seen as an important measure to promote intergenerational contacts.

Local initiatives very often remain restricted - through their limited possibilities - to local target groups and effectiveness. The participation at congresses or colloquies as well as in exchange programmes allows to establish the necessary contacts and to assist partner organizations in other countries in the implementation of same or similar projects or solutions, thus having significant benefits for the people concerned.

By including a large number of old-age organizations and social institutions, the various networks which develop in the context of educational programmes are expected to result in a sustainable improvement.

EURAG enhances particularly the exchange of experience and best practices and provides an international platform to present good practices and to encourage mutual assistance and collaboration to find new solutions to current problems. The direct contact between the protagonists is in the centre of the regular meetings and events.

On these occasions, contacts and networks within EURAG are also built up

and developed with organisations in the applicant countries and other Eastern European states.

EURAG demands:

- Support of the co-operation at European level in the field of education for older people
- European exchange of experiences and information about education facilities for older people
- Emphasis of the right to education as a means to combat social exclusion of older people
- Support of exchange of good examples and elaboration of innovative approaches
- Promotion of networks of organisations and experts in the field of "education for older people"
- The right of older persons to unrestricted access to university studies.

„ACCESS OF OLDER PEOPLE TO EDUCATION“ Lifelong learning as knowledge acquisition and prerequisite in eEurope EURAG-Colloquy in Vienna, 9 February 2001

Older people should have a right to further education - this was the motto of the International EURAG Colloquy in Vienna, held on 9 February 2001. 140 participants from 18 countries took part in this event to find new approaches to further education and especially to the new technologies for a rapidly growing generation of people aged 50+.

A comprehensive report on this colloquy will be published in one of the next editions of EURAG NEWSLETTER and will be available from:

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EURAG is the oldest and largest Seniors' organisation and represents many millions of older people in Europe by its member-organisations in 33 countries, thus being the most representative organization of older people in Europe.
