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TALES2SHARE:

Promoting Lifelong Learning of Elderly Women Through the Upgrade of Adult Educators' Methodologies for Inclusive, Accessible and Participatory Communities

Key Conclusions of Innovative forums

InterArt Foundation

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Contents

Contents 3
Consolidation analysis innovative forums 4
Inclusion in Society: 4
Exclusion from Society: 4
Challenges in Working with Elderly Women: 5
Effective Engagement Strategies: 5
Best Practices: 5
Digital Storytelling: 5
Conclusion: 6

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Key findings from innovative forums

Six Tales2Share innovative forums were conducted with senior women and senior educators across Poland, Bulgaria, and Cyprus to explore the challenges, strategies, and best practices for promoting inclusion and engagement among elderly women, including those from migrant backgrounds. This consolidated analysis synthesizes the findings from six reports, providing a comprehensive overview of the themes and insights that emerged.

The total number of participants across all **forums groups is 33.**

- Senior Educators from Bulgaria: 5 participants
- Senior Women from Bulgaria: 7 participants
- Senior Educators from Cyprus: 5 participants
- Senior Women from Cyprus: 5 participants
- Senior Educators from Poland: 6 participants
- Senior Women from Poland: 5 participants

Inclusion in Society

Inclusion was universally defined as being an **active, recognized, and valued member of a community**. Participants across all groups emphasized the importance of feeling **valued, respected, and appreciated**. Inclusion provided a sense of belonging, community, and access to essential resources, support, and opportunities for personal growth. Benefits mentioned included improved mental health and well-being, reduced feelings of isolation, and enhanced self-esteem and social bonds. Engaging in social, cultural, and political activities was seen as crucial for maintaining a sense of purpose and connection.

Exclusion from Society

Conversely, exclusion was described as leading to feelings **of loneliness, unhappiness, fear, sadness, and worthlessness.** Participants noted that exclusion exacerbated feelings of isolation and could lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. Lack of social interaction and support contributed to a diminished sense of self-worth and hindered the ability to participate fully in society. Physical health issues were also cited as a consequence of social isolation, further compounding the challenges faced by excluded individuals.

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Challenges in Working with Elderly Women

Educators and participants highlighted several common challenges in engaging elderly women, particularly those from migrant backgrounds. Language barriers were a significant obstacle, making it difficult for migrant women to fully participate in activities and discussions. Cultural differences also impacted learning styles and preferences, requiring educators to be sensitive and adaptable in their teaching methods. **Trauma and past experiences of hardship were additional barriers,** necessitating the creation of **a safe and supportive learning environment**. Social isolation and resilience were recurring themes, with many elderly women demonstrating remarkable strength and a strong desire to learn despite these challenges.

Effective Engagement Strategies

Effective strategies for engaging elderly women included **personalizing learning content based on their needs and interests, using interactive and practical activities**, and fostering an open and supportive environment. **Storytelling** emerged as a powerful tool for making content relatable and engaging, with participants responding positively to opportunities to share their experiences. Other successful approaches included **incorporating music and creative activities**, **celebrating achievements, and collaborating with different organizations to offer a variety of programs.** Practical hands-on sessions and peer education were also highlighted as effective methods for building confidence and competence among senior learners.

Best Practices

Several best practices were identified across the forums. **Co-designing** learning content with participants, rather than for them, was emphasized as a way to ensure relevance and engagement. Using **associations** from seniors' past experiences helped stimulate interest and participation. Providing clear, simple, and practical knowledge was preferred over complex materials. The importance of **social clubs, cultural events, and lifelong learning opportunities** was underscored, along with the need for accessible and user-friendly digital tools. Successful programs included recording music videos, organizing **integration activities, and creating strong community networks to support elderly women.**

Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling was recognized as a valuable tool for engaging elderly women, helping them share their stories and connect with others. Key elements of successful digital storytelling programs included creating a supportive and safe environment, offering user-friendly digital tools, and providing technical support. **Training in digital skills** and storytelling techniques was necessary to build confidence and competence. Participants expressed a strong interest in learning how to use digital tools to share their

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narratives, with group work and hands-on practical activities being preferred methods of instruction.

Conclusion

The forums revealed common themes in the challenges and needs of senior women and educators across Poland, Bulgaria, and Cyprus**. Digital literacy, social interaction, personalized learning, and practical activities were identified as crucial components for promoting inclusion and engagement among elderly women. Storytelling, both digital and traditional, emerged as a powerful tool for fostering connections and sharing experiences.** These insights will inform the development of inclusive programs and methodologies aimed at enhancing the well-being and participation of elderly women through innovative approaches.

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