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TALES2SHARE:

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

Innovative Forums Objectives, Discussion questions & Participants List

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Form for adult educators

Note: not all questions have to be asked.

	FORM	
		Answer column
DESCRIPTION & FORMAT	Way of recruitment of the participants	Telephone invitations to representatives of institutions suggested by the entire team involved in the project activities. When selecting educators, we considered the significance of the institution for future collaboration and sharing of results, experience in working with adults, openness to discussion and cooperation.
	Way of conduct	The meeting was blended, held in a small group: 3 participants online, 3 face to face. After introducing the idea of the project with the help of a Power Point presentation, the moderator asked the guests to introduce themselves, describe their experience in adult education, and she suggested addressing each other less formally, to which all the guests readily agreed. Next, an in-depth conversation took place with the aid of questions asked according to a previously prepared agenda. All six invited women spoke freely and shared their experiences in a meaningful way. The meeting was recorded, attendees were asked to sign a list of participants, and provided consent for the use of downloaded data. Finally, they were asked to complete a survey regarding their satisfaction of the forum (6 questions, mostly closed questions, 2 - descriptive).
	Number of participants	6 women (3 Ukrainian, 3 Polish)
	Moderator	Anna Szmyd
	Date and location of the conduct	14.06.2024 ul. Toruńska 59, 85-023 Bydgoszcz, Poland
	Profile of participants (type of trainings they deliver) Be specific	Participant 1 – Polish; extensive experience in working with various social groups, including seniors, career counsellor. She has a wide range of techniques and tools useful in

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	educational work, a fan of social media spots; experience in working with refugees from the UKR: "when refugee women learn Polish, they often replace the Polish word with a Ukrainian or Russian word, but I do not correct them, because the most important thing is to break the language barrier and just start talking (don't judge, strengthen your boldness). The conversation with refugees itself has a therapeutic effect - it is a kind of "storytelling". I notice a great need to share their stories. Being heard and understood in a foreign country makes them feel better and fills them with hope." Participant 2 – Polish; (University of the Third Age, University of Economy in Bydgoszcz, Day Care Homes): conducting classes for seniors using music (music therapy). She invites seniors to become active through fun and play. She shares her personal experiences with seniors, which helps build an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion in group interactions. Organizes outdoor and stationary entertainment events. Conducts memory training classes. Participant 3 – Polish; (University of the Third Age, Kuyavian-Pomeranian Cultural Centre): conducting manual and handicraft classes for seniors, in accordance with the principles of art therapy. Most enthusiastic participants are generally female, although some men do find passion and enjoyment. Participant 4 – Ukrainian, Coordinator of the Regional Integration and Advisory Centre at the University of Economics in Bydgoszcz; conducts educational classes, artistic workshops, Polish lessons for refugees from the UKR; helps legalize your stay in Poland; English philologist by education. Participant 5 – Ukrainian, the enterprising president of the Dobra dla Dobra Foundation operating for refugees from

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		the UKR, whose mission is to inspire women to self-development and make bold decisions in life and business; certified coach and mentor, helps women consciously undergo change processes at various stages of their career path. Participant 6 – Ukrainian, Local Activity Centre Coordinator. Psychologist. Occupational therapist. Conducts activation activities for seniors; puts emphasis on the integration of refugee women with Polish women by organizing integration activities.
ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS (not mandatory)	Why did you decide to join the innovative forum?	- interest in a transnational project, - the desire to deepen knowledge about new activities for seniors, - desire to exchange experiences, - interest in the topic of digital storytelling as a therapeutic tool; - desire to share any good practices.
	What you would like to have as take-aways from the innovative forum?	- innovative ideas for working with older people, useful work tools, - possibility of participation in interesting events in the future, - expanding contacts, networking, - knowledge of other good practices.
	Do you have any expectations you would like to share before we start?	no special expectations, openness to new experiences
EXPLORATION QUESTIONS	What does being "included" in society mean to you? What are the benefits and privileges that come with it?	"included" - being with others, being noticed, flourishing, cheerful, having fun, supporting the community, active participation in social, cultural, political and economic life, conscious involvement in community affairs, taking actions for the common good and acceptance and respect for diversity and differences. Benefits: - leaving the house, expanding your horizon, - taking advantage of the available offers for free-time management and personal development, - getting rid of loneliness, - spending pleasant time with others, - group acceptance and appreciation, - certain imperative to maintain self-care, - sense of security, - sense of belonging and acceptance,

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	- the ability to influence decisions about your own life and environment, - developing your social and professional skills and building relationships with other people.
How would you describe the feeling of being "excluded" from society? What are the disadvantages and drawbacks that come with it?	"excluded" – lonely, unhappy, afraid, sad, unnoticed, worthless, marginalized, rejected. Disadvantages: - insulation, - depression, - poverty, - anxiety, - neglect of self-care, - rapid aging, - complaining, frustration, - diseases, - loss of sense of belonging and social bonds, - lack of social support and support network, - decreased self-esteem, - difficulties in establishing relationships with other people and building healthy social bonds, - inability to participate in social, cultural and political life.
Can you describe your experience working with elderly women, particularly those from migrant backgrounds?	Experiences mentioned included: Language barriers: many elderly women from migrant backgrounds have limited Polish proficiency, making it difficult for them to participate fully in offered activities and discussions. Adult educators need to find creative ways to overcome language barriers, such as using visual aids or providing translation services. Cultural differences: elderly women from migrant backgrounds sometimes have different cultural norms and values that impact their learning style and preferences. Adult educators should be sensitive to these differences and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. Trauma and past experiences: refugee women have experienced trauma or hardships in Ukraine or during their journey to Poland. Adult educators create a safe and supportive learning

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	environment that validates their experiences and fosters healing. Social isolation: elderly women from migrant backgrounds may face social isolation and loneliness, especially if they have limited social networks in their new community. Adult educators can play a key role in providing a sense of community and connection through their classes and programs. Resilience and strengths: despite the challenges they may face, elderly women from migrant backgrounds often demonstrate resilience, resourcefulness, and a strong desire to learn and grow. Adult educators try to tap into these strengths and empower the women to reach their full potential. Overall, working with elderly women from migrant backgrounds can be a rewarding and enriching experience for adult educators, as they have the opportunity to support these individuals in overcoming barriers and reaching their educational goals.
What are the most common challenges you encounter when working with this group?	- the need to impose a script due to the lack of certain independence and self-discipline, - to attract seniors, it is necessary to offer them the so-called "lure", because the average senior may not consider participating without additional incentives, such as a leaflet or a balloon, and will also be disappointed by the lack of decent refreshments, - difficulties keeping the balance between being liked and maintaining authority, which is often manifested in seniors treating young educators patronisingly and condescendingly, - when learning a language, for example Polish, it is important to allow learners to replace missing words with their own to strengthen their boldness in speaking, without correcting too much to avoid a judgmental atmosphere, - the process of inclusiveness may be slowed down by the burden of loss, war,

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	foreign culture and lack of fluency in the language, which requires patience and creativity in attracting participants to classes, - sometimes a demanding, entitled approach is exhibited, expressed in huge expectations with little willingness to participate in activities, - many older women may not know or have access to the technology necessary for online learning, making it difficult for them to participate in virtual classes, - seniors may have health problems that limit their ability to attend classes or fully participate in educational activities, - older women often have caring responsibilities that make it difficult for them to devote time to education.
What strategies have you found effective in engaging elderly women in learning activities?	When the first crisis centers for refugees from Ukraine were established, it was observed that beneficiaries came only to receive humanitarian aid packages and then left the center. To increase the involvement of refugees in the activities of the centers, a valid identification card was required to obtain assistance, which could only be issued during a personal visit. The meetings offered refreshments, casual or advisory conversations, and the prospect of spending time in the company of people with similar experiences, which encouraged most participants to stay longer and make subsequent visits to the centers. The involvement of seniors in recording music videos results in them focusing on the words, which often contain life lessons and refer to their experiences and past. This process requires dressing up in interesting costumes, taking care of one's appearance and participating in dancing, which brings joy. Posting recordings on social media platforms leads to increased interest from family members or friends, causing the senior to become perceived as "famous." Being open to seniors' ideas and suggestions can help create more

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	interesting and engaging activities, and can also help develop their motivation, creativity and problem-solving skills.
Can you share any good practices or successful programs you have implemented or witnessed that promote the inclusion and engagement of elderly migrant or native women?	Recording music videos is an interesting and creative form of activity for seniors that combines their passion for music with physical and artistic activity. By playing music videos to famous songs from their youth, seniors can return to pleasant memories and spend time together in a fun way. Such activities also contribute to improving the well-being and physical fitness of seniors, which is important for maintaining health and fitness in later life. It is good practice to choose projects that are at the appropriate skill level of the recipient so that they can enjoy the creation process and be satisfied with the end result, but the use of new techniques and ideas should be encouraged. It can be helpful to use guides and tutorials available online, as well as be inspired by beautiful photos from sites such as PINTEREST, to better understand the techniques and methods of making projects. An educator from the peer group plays a very important role in sharing technological (among others) knowledge to seniors. Because they are close to the age of seniors themselves, they have a better understanding of their needs, skills and limitations in relation to new technologies. Thanks to this, they are able to adapt the teaching method to the recipient, which significantly facilitates the acquisition of knowledge. A senior educator can more easily establish a relationship with seniors based on trust and empathy, which promotes a more effective learning process. Because of this, seniors are more open to learning and more willing to experiment with new technologies. On the example of the president of the Dobra dla Dobra Foundation: enterprising people from Ukraine join forces to help and support others. Thanks to

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	cooperation and solidarity, they receive and are then able to give support and inspiration to develop their goals and achieve success in a new environment. Through mutual help and sharing experiences, they create a strong community that enables them to achieve their professional and personal goals, as well as support those in need. A "living library" project is an excellent practice because it allows people to share their experiences, stories and knowledge with others. By participating in such a project, people can learn about diverse perspectives, understand other points of view, and develop empathy and understanding for others. Individual as a "living book" becomes not only a source of knowledge, but also a symbol of the diversity and richness of life experiences. Sharing stories and experiences can help build social bonds, develop tolerance, and promote acceptance and understanding of others. Thanks to the "living library" project, people have the opportunity not only to share their stories, but also to listen to the stories of others, which leads to mutual learning and development as individuals. It is an excellent practice that helps build a valuable society based on openness, respect and empathy. Polish language courses for migrant women - organised by various institutions, such as foundations or aid centres for migrants, Polish language courses help migrant women learn the language and integrate with the local community. Workshops and training for women with fewer opportunities on the labour market - these programs offer support in the development of professional skills, career counselling, coaching and the opportunity to establish contacts with potential employers.
How do you incorporate storytelling into your teaching practices? What are the	Storytelling is a tool that most educators use in their work without naming it. A key element of a successful digital storytelling

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key elements of a successful digital storytelling program for elderly women?	program for older women is creating a space where they can share their own experiences, reflections and emotions. It is also important to create an atmosphere of trust and support in which seniors feel comfortable telling their stories. Additionally, the program should include various forms of expression, such as music, painting, etc., which will help older women express themselves and their stories in a creative way, because words will not be a preferred form of expression for everyone. It is also important to adapt the content to the needs and preferences of the participants, so that the stories told are meaningful and inspiring for them. Finally, it is also important to maintain a balance between reflecting on difficult experiences and celebrating positive moments and achievements in life. A digital storytelling program should be a place where seniors can discover their strength and wisdom, making them feel valued and inspiring to others.
Can you name a specific example of good program for inclusion of elderly women in your country?	**Fundacja Dobra dla Dobra**: https://dobradladobra.com/ At the **Pro Omnis Foundation**, during a break in projects implementation, seniors met every Wednesday on the sole initiative of one of the previous participants. This awesome lady also created a group called "Walking Together", which has its own profile on FB; meetings have been held every week for several months now. This lady was one of the participants of the Innovative Forum for Older Women. Most **communes** in Poland implement educational and integration programs aimed at seniors, with participants being divided by gender naturally, due to their own individual preferences. For example, crocheting and embroidery classes are open to both sexes, but men rarely decide to take part in them, choosing

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		other activities. Then women have the opportunity to share their experiences among themselves. **Rural Women's Circles** are a good example of an integration program for women, because the activities of these organizations are aimed at integrating women from various social and professional backgrounds living in the countryside. By participating in various activities, meetings, workshops and trainings, women can establish new contacts, exchange experiences, acquire new skills and support each other. Rural Women's Circles give women the opportunity to actively participate in the life of the rural community, which may contribute to their self-fulfilment, increased self-esteem and social awareness. Moreover, the activities of Rural Women's Circles may also support the development of local initiatives, promotion of culture, tradition and local heritage, as well as strengthening the rural community. Rural Women's Circles are recognized as an important instrument of social integration and shaping local community bonds, especially in the context of supporting the development of rural areas and equal opportunities for women.
EXPLORATION QUESTIONS	How can the TALES2SHARE project support you in improving your practices and methodologies?	1. Possibility to explore the methodology of creating digital storytelling and acquire practical skills in this area. Learning tools and techniques for creating digital stories. 2. Possibility to obtain a textbook or educational materials on digital storytelling that educators can use in their classes with adults. Thanks to this, they will be able to continue their education in this field on their own and use the acquired knowledge practically. 3. Participation in meetings, workshops and conferences as part of the project, during which participants will have the opportunity to exchange experiences,

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	ideas and good practices with adult education in Europe.
What impact have you seen from your programs on the lives of elderly migrant women?	The programs had a positive impact on the lives of older migrant women by enabling them to integrate socially, access support and education, and help them cope with health and financial problems. Thanks to specific material and educational assistance provided by the Dobra dla Dobra Foundation, many of them received the support necessary to adapt to a new country. Material, financial and psychological assistance allowed immigrant women to find accommodation, work and educational institutions, which had a positive impact on their everyday lives. Moreover, music videos featuring older women shown across many social media platforms resulted in them receiving numerous calls, which contributed to building family and social bonds. Thanks to our programs, older immigrant women found support and understanding, which had a positive impact on their integration and well-being in the new environment. They could also feel more confident, independent and actively participate in the community.
What knowledge and resources you need at this stage to work more effectively with senior women?	1. Psychological support and workshops on dealing with a group of seniors at work (especially for young educators). 2. Workshops introducing the storytelling method as an educational tool.
If you could design a new initiative or program for elderly women, what key elements would it include?	1. Tailored services: recognizing that elderly women have unique needs and challenges, the initiative or program should offer services that are specifically tailored to meet those needs. 2. Accessibility: the program should be easily accessible to elderly women, including those with limited mobility or transportation options. This could involve providing transportation services, offering

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	virtual/remote options, or locating services in easily reachable locations. 3. Socialization opportunities: Many elderly women may experience feelings of isolation and loneliness, so the program should provide opportunities for socialization through group activities, events, and support groups. Refreshments must be provided. 4. Educational resources: The initiative should offer educational resources on topics relevant to elderly women, such as healthcare, financial planning, and legal rights. This could be done through workshops, seminars, or informational materials. 5. Wellness and fitness programs: Promoting physical and mental wellness is important for elderly women, so the program should include opportunities for fitness classes, wellness activities, and mental health support. 6. Advocacy and empowerment: The initiative should empower elderly women to advocate for themselves and their needs, as well as provide resources for navigating challenges they may face. 7. Volunteer opportunities: Many elderly women have a desire to give back to their communities, so the initiative should offer volunteer opportunities that allow them to contribute their time and skills. 8. Collaboration with other organizations: To maximize impact, the program should collaborate with other organizations and community partners that serve elderly women, to ensure a comprehensive network of support and resources. 9. Other elements mentioned included: - the necessity of team work from idea to execution, assigning roles and tasks for better efficiency; - common appreciation of effort through celebration.

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	Do you have any comments or recommendations?	
	What is the story you wish to tell the world?	
Personal notes of the moderator After the conduct of the forum		

Conclusions of the moderator/facilitator:

(please write your conclusions here)

The meeting brought together participants from various sectors focused on seniors, showcasing a diverse range of perspectives and expertise that could be used for collaboration and knowledge-sharing in future projects. The positive and open atmosphere, along with all participants being willing to speak and share experiences, indicates a promising future for collaboration and community building among educators. The mix of in-person and online participation suggests technology can effectively bridge geographical gaps and broaden participation in future activities. Using music videos to engage seniors was inspiring and showed potential for creative approaches with this demographic. The expressed needs of young educators emphasize the importance of ongoing professional development and exchange of experiences to enhance support for senior women, particularly migrant populations. Overall, the meeting illustrated potential for collaboration, learning, and innovation in adult education for senior women, especially from migrant populations. This insight can guide future project activities focused on educational experiences, knowledge-sharing, and innovative support methods for senior women.

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