

# Research Report

## Impact of transnational exchange experiences on senior volunteers and organisations

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## Executive Summary

The learning impacts of trans-national exchange programmes for senior volunteers were analysed from two perspectives: the senior volunteers participating in the projects and the organisations which sent and hosted the volunteers or coordinated the exchange.

Senior volunteers profit from their learning experience in various respects: they demonstrate greater flexibility, improved tolerance, more effective communication skills, a greater desire for intercultural learning and increased professionalism. Furthermore, results show that longer the duration of the stay abroad the greater the learning impact. Long term evaluation shows that this is sustainable learning - senior volunteers gain insights into managing and performing voluntary projects which they are willing to pass on to members of their home community thus offering an active promotion of follow-up projects. The demand for these offers, however, is less pronounced than it could be - resulting in untapped knowledge and potential.

With regards to the learning impacts for institutions – traditionally either focussing on the exchange of young volunteers or on work with senior volunteers at a local level – many of them have broadened their range of activities offered, while taking into account the particular needs of senior volunteers regarding physical workloads and lodging conditions. In some cases organisational structures were adapted so that the interests of senior volunteers are now actively addressed. In other cases, however, conceptual adaptations necessary to integrate the skills of senior volunteers are still missing. When they are treated as incidental “show ups”, problems between paid staff and senior volunteers can be a result.

From the research results the following recommendations can be derived:

- Although participating in a trans-national exchange can stimulate a new interest in voluntary work at home, a transfer of voluntary work experiences across countries is more intense and more likely to happen if the exchange participants are experienced volunteers.
- Senior volunteers should be encouraged to engage in exchanges of at least three weeks to improve the chances of intercultural learning. This can, however, include offers of shorter stays for those who need a trial period before participating in longer stays.
- Preparation of senior volunteers prior to their exchange is a fundamental necessity. This includes personal contacts to their host organisation and clear information of what will be expected from them during their placement.
- Organisations offering to host senior volunteers are well advised to develop plans to deal with their particular requirements. They should give seniors the opportunity to transfer their experiences thus making use of the seniors' specific resources for the benefit of their own projects.
- A feedback seminar upon return, preferably at local level, is not only crucial for the quality assurance of the exchange projects but also enhances the chance that senior volunteers can exploit and valorise their experiences to the home community's advantage.

# 1. Introduction

Europe is witnessing an important ageing of its population. The expectation of a longer life has brought about a deep change in the lifestyles and needs of seniors. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) acknowledges these changes, stating that "the Union recognises and respects the right of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life" (Chapter III, Art. 25).

In Europe, the majority of seniors enjoy better living conditions than in the past but increasing age still incurs a certain degree of risk of social exclusion. In order to create a European society active at all ages, a strategy is required that enables seniors to take part in social life after retirement. Seniors represent richness in terms of experiences and acquired skills which are not yet sufficiently appreciated and used by societal bodies for cultural, social and economical growth. A European exchange of senior volunteers addresses the issues of active citizenship, social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and personal fulfilment, since the volunteers are involved in a learning process which ideally results in being active in their own community after the experience abroad.

One significant difference between youth and seniors who work as volunteers abroad is that seniors prefer a much shorter stay and appreciate other organisational settings. Since organisations fostering transnational exchanges mainly focus on younger volunteers, the involvement of senior volunteers presents new challenges for them which need to be addressed and can be understood as a learning experience for the organisations themselves.

Of equally importance is that the opportunity for a transnational exchange constitutes a new form of informal learning for seniors as regards new cultures in which they take on an active part. Contrary to being a tourist, voluntary work in an NGO in another European country forges a European identity: It promotes familiarization with what is experienced as foreign, it encourages a better understanding of diverse cultures and history; it enhances mutual understanding between European citizens, respecting cultural diversity and contributing to cross-cultural dialogue. Senior volunteers are thus not only recipients of learning offers but also providers of knowledge which they transfer from one country to another.

SEVEN is an international network of 29 organisations promoting senior volunteer exchanges. Its member organisations include NGOs, local governments, universities and research centres with sustained experience in the co-ordination and management of senior volunteer programmes. The SEVEN network developed from a series of pilot projects financed by the European Commission (2000, DG ESA - Pilot programme for the Exchange of Senior Volunteers, 2001 DG EAC - Mobility 55, 2003 DG EAC - Still Active!, 2004 DG ESA Teaming up!, 2006 DG EAC Conference on senior volunteers exchanges). It also is co-

financed by several local governments in Europe who are actively involved in the network (in Italy, Austria, Belgium and Germany).

The SEVEN network wants to create a "European Wide Space" where all the organisations involved - local governments, NGOs, universities and institutions working with volunteers - will be facilitated in the implementation of their mobility and exchange projects. Its main objective is to set up a platform where participating organisations can exchange information easily and take part in a common project-implementing framework. SEVEN further intends to provide advice and offer an informed point of view to national and international institutions dealing with active ageing, educational tools, active citizenship and social cohesion. In addition, the SEVEN network aims at increasing the intercultural and intergenerational competence of seniors, to improve conflict management and to enhance their knowledge about the European Union. Besides the training of senior volunteers, the hosting organisations will be trained in dealing with senior citizens.

Accompanying research was planned in the framework of the SEVEN network activities to give special awareness to the impact of transnational exchanges on both organisations and senior volunteers. Given that the coordinating organisation of the SEVEN network, Lunaria in Rome, and the research institute, ISIS in Frankfurt am Main, functioned as main initiators of the above-mentioned pilot projects, there was the unique opportunity to use the existing addresses of the participants in previous years for a survey on long-term impacts. In addition, the numerous partner organisations within the SEVEN network provided information about their own development, and they actively supported the survey in the conceptualisation phase and the dissemination of questionnaires to participants of current exchanges.

This report describes the impact of transnational exchanges on senior volunteers and organisations: Here the focus is not only on how and what senior learners can achieve through their experience abroad; the relatively new phenomenon of senior volunteers exchanges – before 2000 a privilege of youngsters – involves the chance for all institutional actors involved to become “learning organisations”. This applies to hosting and sending organisations but also to local authorities who stand to gain from their senior citizens a very special resource of knowledge which, however, needs to be used and valorised.

The following report is divided into the following sections:

- The first section focuses on the state of recent surveys and debates concerning senior learners on one side and service learning on the other. Further, the institutional setting in European voluntary service organisations is described to depict the starting point for the learning of organisations.
- The second part is dedicated to senior volunteers and starts with the characteristics of the respondents of past and recent exchange projects, deals with their intrinsic motives and external framework conditions for learning and finally analyses the learning impacts on the participants and their home community.

- The third section deals with questions addressed to learning organisations. Again, the structural characteristics of the survey partners as well as transnational exchanges are described. The resulting impacts of the experiences on their self-concept and objectives, management and practice are considered in more detail.
- The final chapters deal with lessons which were learned, and summarize the results to arrive at conclusions for the state of the art, but also for future research and action.

## 2. Thematic Background

### 2.1 Learning impact of seniors' volunteering

Seniors are important actors in voluntary services as their knowledge and experience can enable them to pass on learning and practical knowledge. One can also ask what seniors can learn through volunteering and what learning processes are set in motion, for it is still often assumed that older people can no longer learn from experience. This supposition is false, as studies and psychological trials have shown, but the stereotype reoccurs over and over again. In particular, it is interesting to examine what and how seniors can learn through European exchange programmes and how this can contribute to a European identity and the growing together of the European Community.

The primary concept of transnational voluntary service is mutual intercultural learning, bringing together people from different social and cultural backgrounds. This can be of great benefit for seniors, with regard to "lifelong education"<sup>1</sup> and in view of older citizens' high motivation to continue learning. As a first step, it is useful to consider the value of learning and education outside the formal system and show that the importance of this is continually increasing.

Learning can be subdivided into three different categories – formal, non-formal and informal learning – depending on how and in what context the learning takes place. Formal education is achieved within the educational system, non-formal refers to self-organised learning within an organised context<sup>2</sup> while informal learning involves unintentional learning through everyday perception and processing of information (cf. AG Weiter Bildung im Alter, 2007: 23). Informal learning grows in importance with increasing age, playing a bigger role (cf. AG Weiter Bildung im Alter, 2007: 23), and is desired by older citizens themselves in combination with (non-) formal learning – in view of their new goals and needs after retirement (cf. Resch/Strümpel, 2009: 94).

Possible goals of learning include: acquiring knowledge, enhancing personality, mental well-being (cf. AG Betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V., 2001: 64) and improved opportunities for seniors to take part. Learning with other people in a team should facilitate participation in social life and developing as an active citizen.

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<sup>1</sup> This concept was typical of the seventies – it was thoroughly discussed in the nineties – and promotes the continuity of learning experiences and efforts throughout the lifespan of every individual (cf. Dietsche/Meyer, 2004: 6-8). Lifelong learning is "learning everything throughout one's whole life that would lead to an improvement in knowledge, qualifications and competencies and takes place in the context of perspectives of a personal nature, fostering of citizenship, and of social and political participation" (European Commission, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> This includes the participation in further educational activities, professional and private education and further training, and interest in education and further education etc. (AG Weiter Bildung im Alter, 2007: 29)

In order to assess the success of learning in older age, the concept of competence is useful. This term refers to skills and to know-how that enables particular situations to be dealt with. Thus, Connell et. al. (2003) refer to “realised abilities” that can be acquired and trained (cf. Resch/Strümpel, 2009: 189). Activities generally considered to further competence are complex in nature, constantly changing and mentally stimulating, manifestly promote personal and social meaning, involve a variety of possible responses and embrace cooperative and communicative behaviour (cf. AG Betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V., 2001: 131).

The acquisition and extension of fields of competence is not limited to youth and relevant for young adults only but, on the contrary, represents an important part of seniors’ lives, for whom social engagement and participation are desired goals.

### **2.1.1 Learning in later life**

In the surveys of volunteers made by the German Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Young People it is clear that seniors are very interested in further education, and that the demand for specialised knowledge is rising. (Engels et al., 2007: 30). So it is well worth examining the kinds of learning and the educational opportunities available to seniors: what they can learn with what results.

It is important to note that an ability to gain new knowledge is essential for participation in social, political, economic and cultural fields of life (cf. AG Weiter Bildung im Alter, 2007: 10). This can contribute to personal fulfilment in old age, through interaction with others, namely, the extension of networks, and through amassing new experiences. Demographic trends are leading, not only to higher life expectancy, but also to increasing physical and mental fitness among seniors, enabling them to participate for longer in social life. This is especially true of those enjoying the necessary economic and intellectual resources (cf. European Commission, 2006: 10). An expansion of opportunities for learning would thus address the needs of this group. The idea of “more from life from more years” comes into focus and encourages a vision of active citizenship after retirement.

A further significant aspect to consider is the connection between health and learning in old age. Several studies have demonstrated that active older learners are generally healthier than the control group (cf. Schuller et al., 2004: 2f). Intellectual faculties can be retained through mental training or even extended, and memory loss, for example, counteracted (cf. AG Weiter Bildung im Alter, 2007: 21), just as physical fitness can be maintained through exercise. Furthermore, learning ability in old age – in spite of the progressive reduction in processing speed and impairment of short-term memory – does not decline overall and does not account for existing apparent deficiencies in further educational programmes (cf. Resch/Strümpel, 2009: 195).



In addition to such health and social factors, “lifelong learning” can now be regarded as a social necessity. For not only does a society that depends on the learning levels of its members stand to gain from lifelong learning, but also discrimination can be reduced, a differentiated image of old age promoted and social involvement encouraged (cf. AG Weiter Bildung im Alter, 2007). At an individual level, the main aim of “lifelong learning” is to ensure autonomy for as long as possible, to improve quality of life and avoid loss of roles. Together, these factors constitute the concept of Empowerment, denoting the encouragement and strengthening of self-determination (cf. AG Weiter Bildung im Alter, 2007). In particular, disadvantaged seniors should be encouraged and supported to become aware of their needs, improve their skills and to expand their potential scope of action (cf. AG Weiter Bildung im Alter, 2007: 23).

Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that areas of competence of seniors already exist, as represented in extensive social networks among other aspects. And yet, to maintain an increase in such skills, it is necessary to create favourable conditions (cf. Resch/Strümpel, 2009). Frameworks within which people can meet to further social competence must be created. Intergenerational meeting points can help to reduce prejudice and stereotypes as regards other generations and further mutual respect (cf. AG Betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V., 2001: 65).

Thus, it is not surprising that many members of associations – according to a study of voluntary engagement in clubs – reported that collective activities involving seniors had extended their horizons and had a particularly advantageous effect on their social skills (cf. Hansen, 2008: 88). This is also true for the seniors themselves, of course, so that a process of mutual enhancement takes place. Voluntary participation or active involvement as a citizen can play a large role in the concept of “lifelong learning”, as different people from various backgrounds, generations etc. work and learn together.

### **2.1.2 Learning by volunteering**

Learning through volunteering, in voluntary organisations, should be distinguished from other forms of learning and its characteristics will be described briefly in this section. Voluntary engagement is both the site and the aim of this learning process and can combine informal and formal learning.

It is necessary to differentiate between various kinds of voluntary work which involve different learning processes and possibilities. “Honorary” work is usually unpaid and involves a temporary position of choice. “Citizen’s Participation” generally refers to self-organised engagement for the common good, and covers contributions of time or financial gifts. “Voluntary services”, however, involve contracts and time-limited work, which may be organised at a local or international level.

Volunteering mainly involves informal learning processes e.g. “learning by doing” (cf. Hansen, 2008: 39). Accordingly, competence already at hand is augmented by new, unfamiliar skills and experiences: creativity, conceptual thinking, innovative skills etc. (cf. AG Betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V., 2001: 105).

Numerous learning effects have been studied in principle in volunteering as also in gainful employment in general<sup>1</sup>. These can be divided into four areas of competence: specialist competence (formal professional/school knowledge), methodical skills (analytic thought etc.) social skills (empathy etc.) and personal competence (organisational skills etc.)<sup>2</sup>. In volunteering, exceptional additional skills are involved, including coping with diversity and working across generations. In practice, it is noticeable that most informal learning processes lead to the blossoming of such skills (cf. Hansen, 2008: 93). This form of learning can be observed in all kinds of associations, independently of the level of engagement, so that one can assume that this benefit applies to volunteering as a whole (cf. Hansen, 2008: 94). In the case of transnational voluntary services, it is of additional significance that intercultural experiences and skills can be acquired relevant to work at home and in the host country.

### **2.1.3 Learning as a senior volunteer in transnational exchanges**

In this section, the question will be considered of whether seniors encounter a good learning climate in intercultural volunteering.

As a rule, volunteering abroad requires a lengthy phase of preparation and follow-up and has an especially positive effect on informal learning experiences. However, these findings are drawn from studies that focus on young people<sup>3</sup>. The organisations that are responsible for transnational volunteering by young people have only recently been adapted specifically for seniors and have only begun to develop the necessary framework for learning among the older age group<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> From the point of view of the development and promotion of competencies, contractually defined voluntary activities can be assessed in the same manner as normal working relationships (cf. AG Betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V., 2001: 102).

<sup>2</sup> Extracts from the list of fields of competence according to the AG Berufliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V. (cf. AG Betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V., 2001: 96): specialist expertise: specialist professional know-how, skills, accomplishments, general specialist know-how, dexterities, proficiencies, everyday and specific professional knowledge etc.; methodical competence: analytical thought, conceptual skills, recognition of interrelationships and causal connections etc.; social competence: empathy, willingness to understand, readiness to help, ability to adapt and be flexible, adequate teamwork, networking and project activities, ability to reach a consensus etc. and personal competencies: self-management, organisational and coordination abilities, capable of showing individual initiative and engagement, readiness to develop as an individual, tolerance of contradictions, goal orientation, ability to succeed etc.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the documentation “Hessen total international”, which evaluates the existing forms of international youth work (cf. Hessisches Sozialministerium, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> The problems related to this focus on young people will be considered more closely in chapter 2.2 together with the learning processes that can occur within the organisations.

In the case of young people and adults, it has long been shown that in European volunteering they acquire important experiences, although not as formal learning<sup>1</sup>. (3) Thus, informal education can, for example, lead to viewing the country of origin from a different angle and to raising awareness (cf. Hessisches Sozialministerium, 2006: 22). In the same way, it can be assumed that through intercultural encounters and the experience of participation and solidarity, seniors can extend their expertise and apply this directly in their everyday lives. Intergenerational collaboration can be expected to further personal development of all participants as their different capacities and skills are brought together.

It is precisely the intercultural context that plays a major role in informal learning experiences. For seniors who did not grow up in a united Europe, their identification with Europe and European cohesion can be reinforced leading to greater appreciation of its culture and history. Intercultural learning makes it easier to exchange concepts and ideas, as reflected in work and organisational processes, but also in a diversity of views transcending prejudices and stereotypes (cf. Stiehr/Ritter, 2005: 4, 31f). The special feature of transnational volunteering is that a substantial period can be spent in a novel environment – in a non-everyday situation – and amount to an around-the-clock service. This means that non-everyday situations must be coped with, thus promoting informal learning, including intercultural learning. Confirmation in this respect was obtained from association members, although it should be noted that it is essential for the “learning environment” to be perceived as safe (cf. Hansen, 2008: 107).

A possible obstacle for seniors can – at least, as regards the current generation – be a lack of proficiency in foreign languages, and this lack may dissuade someone from participating in an exchange or limit the opportunities for intercultural experiences during an exchange. But language proficiency can be targeted and acquired if sufficient motivation and access is available. It is wrong to equate age with health disability when planning volunteer projects for seniors.

According to results obtained by Haski-Leventhal (2009), who have analysed the connections between volunteering and well-being using data from the Survey of Health Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), there is a positive relationship between volunteering and subjective well-being as regards health, life satisfaction, life expectancy, and there is a negative relationship to the onset of depression. Such psychological effects as recognition and “being needed” can affect health. Thus older volunteers help themselves by helping others as they develop protection against the negative effects of growing old, thus retarding physical decline and inactivity. The health benefits apparently only apply to organised and formal voluntary activities that involve a wide range of learning experiences

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<sup>1</sup> “Voluntary activities constitute a rich experience in a non-formal educational and informal learning context which enhances young people’s professional skills and competences, contributes to their employability and sense of solidarity, develops their social skills, smoothes their integration into society and fosters active citizenship” (Council of the European Union, 2008: 4)

and a high level of recognition. The chicken and egg causality dilemma also needs to be discussed here, as one cannot say whether seniors seek out volunteering activities because they are already exceptionally healthy and feel well or whether volunteering itself is the cause (cf Haski-Leventhal, 2009: 388-391).

Overall, it is significant that older volunteers benefit strongly themselves from a transnational exchange just as younger people do. But there are differences between the generations which should be considered. In contrast to young people and young adults, seniors are not just recipients but also providers of knowledge. As they have put their professional life more or less behind them, they are not focused for the most part on a “profession” as a stimulus for learning.

The motivation of volunteers is essential for their willingness to learn. In this respect, older volunteers often entertain social motives, especially helpfulness, as a priority so that they are more content with their work as a volunteer than younger people who are more likely to name professional motives (cf. Haski-Leventhal, 2009: 389-390).

Finally, it is true to say that the learning climate and the conditions for voluntary services by seniors can be fruitfully arranged. But a whole row of aspects must be taken into account if a step is to be made towards lifelong learning citizens, and to promote intercultural understanding and solidarity. The following working hypotheses can be formulated, and will be treated in more detail:

- Willingness to learn in the case of seniors depends on both their own motives and the framework provided by the exchange.
- While informal learning processes predominate, acquisition of foreign languages may play an important role.
- The preparation of the exchange and follow-up have a strong effect on seniors’ success in learning and their attitude to volunteering.
- The ability to participate in intercultural and intergenerational collaboration and thus in coping with diversity can be especially well promoted by transnational voluntary services.
- Volunteering promotes the mental and physical well-being of seniors and enhances their personality and skills.

Seniors as a source of knowledge, experience and competence must be integrated into the conception of learning opportunities that are designed for them. An unquestioned transfer of methods used for young people should be avoided. It is necessary for organisations offering transnational volunteer exchanges intending to extend their target groups to evolve specific learning and engagement offers for seniors. This will be considered in detail in the next chapter.

## **2.2 Organisational context of transnational exchanges of senior volunteers**

The focus of this study is not only on the learning experiences of senior volunteers but also on the organisations undergoing this experiment. Over the last seven decades when volunteering abroad was exclusively for young people, fixed structures emerged with which the new target group of seniors are now confronted. Hence, there is an exciting possibility for those organisations and the participants alike to learn from the exchange and develop further. But how does an organisation learn?<sup>1</sup>

This question will be addressed in this chapter. After a short classification of the structures of the organisations observed in this study, a theoretical analysis of how learning processes evolve in organisations will be presented, followed by a more detailed presentation of the relevant organisations offering volunteer services abroad. An approach to learning will be extracted from both pictures, suggesting what can be expected from these organisations. Furthermore, possible sources of conflict will be identified that can result from the encounter of the two parties – the senior volunteers and the organisations.

### **2.2.1 Structural characteristics of third sector organisations**

In contrast to the familiar image of an organisation that is primarily profit-oriented and acts accordingly, the kind of organisation active in the field of volunteering can be located within the Non-Profit-Sector and thus classified as a Non-Profit-Organisation (NPO). A common designation for this type is “voluntary association”.<sup>2</sup> This term encapsulates, at best, the charitable aims underlying the organisation and that their dependence on the “voluntary worker” as a resource.

And yet the design of the organisational frameworks aiming to fulfil these goals varies tremendously. The organisations that have participated in pilot projects in recent years range from the traditional Non-Profit-Organisation type, as well as universities, institutes, statutory departments at local and provincial levels, all offering exchanges for volunteers. A thorough description of these different organisational types is to be found in chapter 4.2.1. But it is necessary to note here that, in view of this wide spectrum, no single obvious organisational type can be identified. This finding is not insignificant as it has consequences for how to view

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of an organisation is defined here according to Abraham and Büschges who denote the features of an organisation as follows: founded by specific people, goal-oriented, hierarchically organised, supplied with resources, with an operational decision-making and control centre that aims to fulfil the aims of its members (cf. Abraham et al., 2009: 58f.).

<sup>2</sup> Horch introduces this term and defines 5 characteristics of such an association: it is autonomous, the membership is voluntary and practised on an honorary basis, the decision-making structures are democratic and the organisation represents an association of interests (cf. Horch, 1983: 20).

these organisations (cf. Wex, 2004: 3). But firstly, the learning processes of organisations in general will be considered.

### **2.2.2 When and how does an organisation learn?**

Basically, there are three conceivable reasons why an organisation might be induced to learn and, as a result, undergo changes: improving efficiency, new goals, and the appreciation of problems.

The goal of efficiency is a frequent feature of profit-oriented enterprises. Here, restructuring or the implementation of innovations is undergone to increase profits (cf. Heimerl-Wagner, 1992: 64). As we are dealing with charitable organisations, this stimulus for organisational learning in this context can be ignored.<sup>1</sup>

Setting new goals can also lead to changes in an organisation (Abraham et al., 2009: 255). In the field of the NPO, in particular, new challenges may be identified suggesting a need for action or the extension of existing task fields. An example would be an association that helps the homeless and then decides to offer a leisure programme for young people as well in order to keep them off the streets. One could imagine that organisations offering transnational volunteering for young people might see the need from the dropping birth-rate in Europe to address new target groups. But often, the idea of participating in European pilot projects has come from the coordinators of the projects who make proposals to the organisations. This suggests that setting new goals is rarely a priority.

The third case in which an organisation begins to learn and to change is through coming up against problem connected to their work. The problem may be recognised by the organisation itself or be brought to their notice by a third party, “forcing” a reaction (cf. Heimerl-Wagner, 1992: 61). Argyris and Schön propose a theoretical concept in this context of how an organisation may deal with such a problem. They distinguish between single-loop-learning and double-loop-learning. Single-loop refers to a simple reaction to the change, or the problem respectively. Here, the aim is usually to incorporate the new impulse within existing structures and thus to solve the problem. The organisation reacts to a change in tried-and-trusted ways. The concept of a double-loop, in contrast, describes a response that throws existing structures into question and can thus lead to the implementation of completely new approaches. The organisation changes more fundamentally in this kind of learning process and reaches a “higher level” (cf. Argyris/Schön, 1999: 35ff).

We can assume that the learning effects and the changes in the organisations included in this study were a response to the recognition of problems as described above. In order to

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<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that there is no need. These are just the kind of organisations liable to inefficient working structures. But since improved efficiency in relation to profit is not a high priority, most of them fail to change.

understand how these problems are received, the Heimerl-Wagner interactionist-systemic model can be employed.<sup>1</sup> This envisages the organisation as an entity capable of learning from its environment and reacting to it through its own culture, structure and strategy (cf. Heimerl-Wagner, 1992: 57ff). Hence, both the external impulses and the characteristics of the organisational type in question (such as charitable goals) are covered.

### **2.2.3 Voluntary associations offering transnational exchanges**

The organisational structure pertaining to the field of international volunteering consists chiefly of three parts, according to Sherraden:

1. International Voluntary Service Organisations: These are the real actors who take on volunteers and/or send them to other countries. They take care of board and lodging and the organisation of the work that the volunteer is expected to undertake. The organisations concerned may be exclusively for volunteers but there are also other actors, operating in the field of education or social services that offer programmes for volunteers. So these actors may be found in the private and state sectors (eg. programmes offered by local councils or government departments).
2. International Voluntary Service Networks: These adopt the function of umbrella organisations and offer a support framework for the individual organisations. They help the actors with the implementation of voluntary services and coordination. They put volunteers and organisations in contact with each other.<sup>2</sup>
3. International Voluntary Service Support: The supporters of international voluntary service do not get involved themselves in the area of supplying volunteers but support the relevant projects and conduct research into the field of voluntary work<sup>3</sup> (cf. Sherraden et. al. 2006: 172ff).

At the centre of this analysis are those organisations offering exchange programmes for volunteers. Within Europe, the aim of the traditional organisations with volunteering as their core task is primarily as a switchboard for intercultural learning experiences (cf. European Commission, 2010). No particular qualifications are required of the participants. The volunteers' opportunity to learn from other cultures is in the foreground and thus "extension of horizons". Short-term projects therefore last at least three months while the usual length amounts to a period of from six to twelve months.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to this model, Heimerl-Wagner presents two more: the behaviouristic and the personality-theory model. While the first of these tends to consider the organisations in their development, referring to adaptation rather than to causal factors, these tending to be ignored, the second model assumes that the organisations are strongly influenced by leading personalities and develop according to their intentions and character (cf. Heimerl-Wagner, 1992: 54-57).

<sup>2</sup> Examples of such networks are: the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations (ALLIANCE) or the International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE).

<sup>3</sup> Examples of supporters are: Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS); The Association for Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and the European Voluntary Service (EVS)

However, there was also an uptake of pilot projects among other kinds of organisations in addition to the traditional volunteer organisations described above. These were for the most part locally based, had never been involved in volunteering before but were invited to participate on account of their expertise in the area of voluntary work with or for seniors. Hence, their primary goals, in contrast to those organisations referred to above, are not to promote intercultural understanding but rather, to offer seniors the opportunity of becoming volunteers abroad, thereby contributing their life experiences in a fruitful manner.

A further difference between the two types of organisation is the manner in which seniors are enrolled. Whereas the local establishments lacking experience in running such projects, invest a great deal of energy in arranging the work, the accommodation and the leisure pastimes of their foreign guests, the volunteer organisations that have been organising youth exchanges for years admit new target groups to their projects but omit to adapt their arrangements to the new type of volunteer. Thus, a potential for conflict between the two parties becomes evident.

#### **2.2.4 Potential cleavages**

Generally speaking, an informational imbalance emerges benefiting the organisations to the detriment of the individuals. This results from the surfeit of information enjoyed by an organisation active in the field compared with the individual who thus becomes a kind of “client” (cf. Abraham et al., 2009: 69). In the case of transnational volunteering for seniors, the volunteers often in practice have little information about the content of their work and the management of it within the organisation<sup>1</sup>, so that they may be highly reluctant to come forward with criticisms. In order to make improvements in these projects at all possible, it is necessary to uncover and evaluate possible points of criticism through social scientific research.

As already became clear in the summary of evaluations in the report of the project “European Exchange Programme for Older Volunteers” 2002, seniors, for a variety of reasons, prefer relatively short projects of from two to four weeks (cf. Stiehr, 2002: 10).<sup>2</sup> At the same time, they desire – and should be enabled – to be deployed in areas in which intercultural learning and exchange of knowledge can take place. As explained in the previous section, traditional organisations usually foresee a minimum stay of three months so that offers for seniors are few and far between. A further aspect relevant to the expectations and demands of volunteers is their accommodation. The report from 2002 also shows that seniors prefer private to group bedrooms (cf. Stiehr, 2002: 14). It is usual for young volunteers to be accommodated in shared rooms or even sleeping arrangements en masse such as sports

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<sup>1</sup> Information could be about the precise nature of the work to be done, the actual living conditions in the accommodation, the manner of allocating the placements and the planned procedure for the voluntary exchange in general.

<sup>2</sup> This project duration was reconfirmed in the study (see chapter 3.2.2).



halls. Similarly, a job designed for a young person may not be suitable for a senior. Tiring physical work, for example in the building or farming sectors, may be beyond the physical capabilities of the senior volunteers. Here, too, the seniors' expectations in volunteering may conflict with reality.

As these projects are often introduced to the organisations by the initiators of model projects, in the case of a conflict of expectations between the project participant with what the organisations actually offer, it is reasonable to assume a response in terms of recognition of the problem by the organisation.<sup>1</sup> Ideally, a learning process of Argyris and Schön's double-loop type should take place leading to structural changes.<sup>2</sup> The change is based on the special interest of these organisations in enabling volunteers to experience working abroad. Consequently, they should not reject seniors but try to make this experience possible for them too.<sup>3</sup> But since seniors do not fit into the existing organisational concepts, restructuring is essential, and double-loop-learning can be assumed.

However, further lines of conflict can open up as a result of such restructuring. The changes within the organisations may lead to difficulties and dissatisfaction among staff who are required to accept new challenges and fulfil new roles (cf. Abraham et al., 2009: 255). Thus it is possible that the change in clientele, namely the senior volunteers, may be associated with a perception of problems by the staff.

In summary, the special needs and expectations of older volunteers directed at the traditional volunteer organisations bring changes to the project conditions (accommodation, length of project, kind of work) and require appropriate adjustments on behalf of the paid staff and the honorary workers. However, this may, if the organisations are not sufficiently willing to learn or not at all willing, lead to conflicts in the wake of the restructuring both within the organisations and in their relations with senior clients, who may become embroiled in these conflicts.<sup>4</sup>

In the local establishments, on the other hand, the question arises of what these learn from the relatively seldom admission of older volunteers from abroad and whether their

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<sup>1</sup> This means that within the organization, the different expectations of the older volunteers are perceived as a problem, since the evaluation report of 2002 with its conclusion that changes in framework conditions are necessary was already able to draw attention to this issue.

<sup>2</sup> That this is a possible course of events and not just a single-loop level, a mere take-up of seniors, can be accounted for by reference to the NPO goal orientation towards the common good. It can be assumed that the setting of goals reflect the premises of action and the organisation acts in compliance with its goals. That this is indeed the case can be shown using Heimerl-Wagner's interactionist-systemic model, which accords the organisational culture (and thus its goal-orientation) an important role in how the organisation performs.

<sup>3</sup> The premise that the volunteer is important for the organisation can be found, for example, in the ALLIANCE handbook for organisations: „This [building up a close relationships with the volunteers] can mean you need to spend a lot of time on the phone and e-mail but remember that the volunteers are the heart of our activities; they are the life-blood of all voluntary organisations!“ (Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations, 2010: 21).

<sup>4</sup> For example, as an outlet for the dissatisfaction of the staff about new tasks and situations.

engagement in this area shows continuity and is becoming a sustained part of the landscape of organisations offering transnational exchanges to senior volunteers. These aspects will now be clarified using the following results of interviews with volunteers and organisations.

## 3. Impacts of transnational exchanges on senior volunteers

### 3.1 Methodology

For measuring the learning impacts of the transnational placement of senior volunteers and – if possible – to distinguish between long-term and short-term effects, written questionnaires were prepared for the participants of earlier and more recent exchange projects.

In order to make use of the broadest possible spectrum of expertise, areas of interests to be investigated as well as questions which should become part of the survey were discussed in a workshop with interested SEVEN partners. Based on these results, ISIS drafted a questionnaire which was circulated and approved by the partnership.

The questionnaire, in a first step directed at participants of earlier exchange projects, contained the following sections and topics<sup>1</sup>:

- Characteristics of the European exchange
  - Duration of stay
  - Foreign language skills
  - Working conditions
  - Accommodation
  - Supervision and trouble-shooting
- Reasons and motivations
  - Learning motives
  - Helping motives
  - Other reasons
- Impact of the experience on skills and competencies
  - Work performance
  - Social skills
  - Managing diversity
  - Technical knowledge
- Potential impact of the experience on the home community
  - Public presentations
  - Preparation and monitoring of other exchange participants
  - Impact on voluntary work and projects and initiatives
  - Impact on transnational relations of NGOs and local authority
- Framework conditions of the exchange
  - Pre-departure training
  - Working conditions

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1

- Financial conditions
- Feed-back seminar
- Support for follow-up activities
- Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Size of hometown
  - Professional status
  - Voluntary work experience

In June 2008, printed questionnaires in four languages – German, English, Italian and French – were sent to 293 volunteers in 12 European countries who took part in the projects “European Exchange Programme” in 2001, “Mobility 55” in 2002, “Still active” in 2004 and “Teaming Up” in 2005, based on the communication data which were filed by the project coordinators (ISIS, Frankfurt, and Lunaria, Rome). The addressees were also offered the opportunity to fill in the questionnaire online on the SEVEN website.

With 122 returned questionnaires an above-average response rate of 42% was achieved. Facilitated by SEVEN network partners and/or individual senior volunteers of the past exchange projects, especially high rates were observed in Germany (64%), in the Netherlands (58%) and in Italy (57%), as shown in table 1. In countries where no local contact person was available and the questionnaires thus had to be sent to an unfamiliar foreign organisation, the thresholds for participation were higher and resulted in a lower – or zero – response rate.

**Table 1: Responses of senior volunteers by country (wave 1)**

Country	Mailings	Responses	Response rate (%)
Austria	52	22	42
Belgium	42	10	24
Czech Republic	14	0	0
Estonia	5	2	40
France	14	6	43
Germany	67	43	64
Greece	5	2	40
Italy	42	24	57
Luxembourg	9	2	22
Netherlands	19	11	58
Poland	1	0	0
United Kingdom	23	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>42</b>

In the next step the questionnaire of wave 1 was slightly adapted in order to address participants of recently completed exchange projects as well. Changes were made to take into account the fact that some effects need time to unfold, e.g. reporting about one’s experiences in public or being engaged in the preparation of future volunteers.<sup>1</sup> The questionnaire of wave 2 was thus intended to measure immediate learning impacts and to compare them with the results of wave 1.

The questionnaire for wave 2 was published in English, Italian and German on the SEVEN website, and the network members were asked to circulate the link to senior volunteers who were recently or presently engaged in exchange projects. Again, the SEVEN network members actively supported its dissemination and thus contributed to a satisfactory response: Within 18 months, 62 senior volunteers had sent in their questionnaires, most of them stemming from Italian participants, as depicted in table 2.

**Table 2: Responses of senior volunteers by country (wave 2)**

Country	Responses
Bulgaria	4
Czech Republic	1
Estonia	7
France	2
Germany	10
Israel	1
Italy	32
Spain	6
Total	63

Altogether, 185 completed questionnaires form the basis for our analysis. Even if the number of cases is not high and restricted to a limited number of projects, we believe that valuable conclusions can be drawn, especially with regards to the question of how future projects can make best possible use of the learning potential of transnational placements for senior volunteers.

In the following chapters the results for potential learning impacts of transnational exchange programmes for the individual senior volunteer but also for his or her home community are described, differentiated as far as possible for specific sub-groups among the seniors. The framework conditions facilitating or hindering are also explored.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 2

## 3.2 Results of written surveys among earlier and more recent exchange participants

### 3.2.1 Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

Although all past and recent projects were open for men and women to the same extent, the results in table 3 illustrate that participation in transnational placements for volunteers is more attractive for women than men. If differences between the exchanges in the past (before 2008) and recent exchanges are taken as an indicator for a trend, the rising number of male participants might be cautiously interpreted as an emerging balance in the gender ratio.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 3: Gender of volunteers (%)<sup>2</sup>**

Gender	Wave 1	Wave 2
Female	70,2	65,1
Male	29,8	34,9

Participation in a European exchange experience is a challenging endeavour and appealing to senior volunteers who are fit and of relatively stable health. Therefore it is not surprising that only a minority of the participants is older than 75 years (see table 4). At first glance an “ageing” of the participants of wave 2 compared to wave 1 seems to have occurred. However, it is necessary to take into account the fact that some of the early pilot projects explicitly addressed younger seniors (“Mobility 55”) or implicitly were more attractive for them due to offers in the realm of work camps (cleaning of landscapes, construction etc.). For both groups of respondents it holds true that the typical participant of a European exchange project for senior volunteers is in his or her early sixties. Nevertheless, younger and older volunteers are not so seldom that they should be considered peculiar.

**Table 4: Age of volunteers during the exchange (%)**

Age group	Wave 1	Wave 2
Up to 60 years	39,1	25,0
61 to 70 years	49,6	60,0
71 years and older	11,3	15,0
Average age	62,6	63,7

In both waves, the responding senior volunteers share the following characteristics:

<sup>1</sup> In the first project, the “European Exchange Programme of Senior Volunteers” of 2001, 71% of all participants were female.

<sup>2</sup> Missing answers („no response“) are only reported if their share of all responses is high or if they are relevant with regards to content. Otherwise only the valid answers are included in the analysis.

- Most of them live in large cities of more than 100.000 inhabitants or conurbations (wave 1: 57,6% / wave 2: 67,8%).
- Despite the considerable share of “young” seniors, the vast majority of participants are retired (wave 1: 88,5% / wave 2: 83,6%).
- Most respondents had already been volunteers before the exchange (wave 1: 86,9% / wave 2: 73,3%) and were still active as volunteers at the time of the survey (wave 1: 82% / wave 2: 79%).

In summary the participants in transnational placements under study are hale and active seniors with a significantly higher share of women. The offer seems to be of particular interest for early retirees, and the majority of participants have an urban if not metropolitan background. Only a small minority is a total newcomer in voluntary work.

### 3.2.2 Structural characteristics of the transnational exchanges

The countries in which the exchange organisations and their European networks are based are highly similar to the countries in which the exchanged seniors reside and were placed. In wave 1, there was a predominance of locations in Central and Western Europe (Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom), while in wave 2 residences and placements were geographically more diverse (with most of them in Italy, Germany and Estonia).

**Table 5: Country of residence and country of placement (%)**

Country	Wave 1		Wave 2	
	Residence	Placement	Residence	Placement
Austria	18,0	18,0	--	6,3
Belgium	8,2	8,2	--	--
Bulgaria	--	--	6,3	--
Czech Republic	--	5,7	1,6	--
Estonia	1,6	--	11,1	12,7
France	4,9	4,1	3,2	4,8
Germany	35,2	26,2	15,9	22,2
Greece	1,6	--	--	--
Hungary	--	0,8	--	--
Israel	--	--	1,6	--
Italy	19,7	5,7	50,8	31,7
Luxembourg	1,6	5,7	--	--
Netherlands	9,0	4,1	--	--
Poland	--	--	--	3,2
Slovakia	--	--	--	1,6
Spain	--	0,8	9,5	12,7
United Kingdom	--	18,0	--	--
No response	--	2,5	--	4,8

The vast majority of the volunteers stayed abroad for 2 or 3 weeks (wave 1: 80,4% / wave 2: 80,6%) with only a minority preferring 4 or more weeks. The average duration of 2 to 3 weeks differs significantly from expectations of international voluntary service providers for young people amounting to a minimum assignment of 3 months abroad. Reasons given by senior volunteers for their preference to stay abroad for a few weeks only include reference to spouses, children, grandchildren and pets, usually preventing longer durations of exchange.<sup>1</sup>

In most placements abroad – and even more in wave 2 than in wave 1 – senior volunteers had to speak a foreign language. A lack of foreign language skills can be considered a barrier to travel abroad and includes the risk of loneliness during the stay. For that reason at least, basic language skills are an important precondition for volunteers interested in a European exchange. Offering placements in a country with the same language or a language with the same roots (like Italian and Spanish) may therefore encourage senior volunteers to take part in transnational exchanges.

The majority of the seniors were sent to the designated location in a team (wave 1: 47,9% / wave 2: 66,1%) while the rest was either travelling alone or accompanied by a friend or partner. The increase in numbers volunteering abroad in a team reflects the further development of the concept of the transnational placement of senior volunteers. Whereas in the early years, an individual exchange was practiced, the coordinators of later exchanges had learned that many problems (including the problem of language barriers and the organisation of leisure time activities) can be solved more easily when senior volunteers travel and work in a group.

Some framework conditions are a must in the transnational placements of seniors, and there are only slight differences in their provision throughout the years:

- The exchange participants were mostly accommodated in single rooms (wave 1: 75,9% / wave 2: 65,6%) or in a room they had to share with one or two other persons (wave 1: 22,4% / wave 2: 23%). The insight that senior volunteers are not willing and able to sleep in gyms on airbeds with numerous other people, as is the practice in voluntary services for young people, has meanwhile become widely accepted by their organizers.
- If problems arose and had to be addressed, senior volunteers had in most cases the possibility of contacting a person outside work (wave 1: 87,7% / wave 2: 93,4%).

Variations in the framework conditions are identified with a view to their effects on the opportunity for international and intergenerational cooperation:

- Approx. half of the senior volunteers had been working in international teams (wave 1: 50,4% / wave 2: 50%) including volunteers from other countries than the hosting one.

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<sup>1</sup> This was a subject of an in-depth evaluation within the “European exchange programme of senior volunteers” (2000 – 2002), but turned up as an issue in all later exchange projects, too.



- More offers of cooperation with volunteers younger than 30 years were reported by the seniors as years passed (wave 1: 34,7% / wave 2: 54,1%). This result is due to a conceptual shift on the one side and the stronger involvement of voluntary service organisations traditionally focussing on young people on the other.

The listed working fields of senior volunteers in table 6 on the one hand reflect the areas in which the cooperation partners of the organisers of the past and recent projects are active. On the other hand they describe realms which were considered especially apt and attractive for senior volunteers from another country, often unable to speak the language of the hosting country fluently (and sometimes not at all).

**Table 6: Working field of volunteers by gender (%)<sup>1</sup>**

Working field	Wave 1			Wave 2		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Social work	65,9	61,1	63,9	58,5	45,5	54,0
Culture	23,5	25,0	23,8	19,5	13,6	17,5
Ecology	15,3	16,7	16,4	17,1	36,4	23,8
Education	12,9	16,7	13,9	9,8	9,1	9,5
Work with children	11,8	2,8	9,0	7,3	4,5	6,3
Development aid	1,2	5,6	2,5	2,4	18,2	7,9
Sports	1,2	0,0	0,8	2,4	0,0	1,6
Other	9,4	5,6	8,2	22,0	27,3	23,8

There are four prevailing working fields: social work, culture, ecology and education, and little difference can be observed between the results of wave 1 and wave 2. If at all, women show a certain preference for social work and work with children, while development aid and ecology seem to be much more male than female domains.

However, it is worthy of note that in the process of becoming conceptually more “customer oriented” throughout the years, more offers in the area of ecology seem to have contributed to the increase of male participants. The same is true for “other working fields”. In past projects, these embraced tasks in the realms of terminal care, inpatient care, residential care of the elderly, palliative care, recreation/vacation of seniors, while in the more recent projects, their share not only rose considerably but also broadened to include: accompanying groups of teenagers, gardening, harvesting, rebuilding an old house to create holiday apartments for people with low income.

<sup>1</sup> Since some senior volunteers had been working in different working fields, multiple answers were possible (wave 1: N=169 / wave 2: N=91). Thus the sum of the answers varies at around 140%.

As displayed in the table 7, some working fields also correlate with age groups:

**Table 7: Working field of volunteers by age group (%; multiple answers permitted)**

Working field	Wave 1			Wave 2		
	up to 60 years	61 to 70 years	71 years and older	up to 60 years	61 to 70 years	71 years and older
Social work	55,6	73,7	53,8	46,7	58,3	55,6
Culture	17,8	28,1	30,8	6,7	19,4	33,3
Ecology	22,2	14,0	0,0	46,7	19,4	0,0
Education	8,9	21,1	7,7	6,7	8,3	22,2
Work with children	13,3	5,3	0,0	6,7	5,6	11,1
Development aid	0,0	1,8	7,7	20,0	5,6	0,0
Sports	2,2	0,0	0,0	6,7	0,0	0,0
Other	11,1	3,5	23,1	13,3	22,2	44,4

According to the available data, some working fields seem to be especially attractive for younger seniors or, in other words, lose their attractiveness with increasing age – and vice versa:

- Ecology and sports, more oriented towards physical activities, are unambiguously a domain of the younger participants.
- Cultural activities, however, gain in attractiveness with increasing age.

For all other areas, especially social work, education, work with children and development aid, no statistical difference can be observed. These fields seem to be appropriate for all age groups and selection a matter of individual preferences.

### 3.2.3 Reasons and motivations of senior volunteers

Since the reasons and motivations of seniors to engage in voluntary work abroad might also play a role in their personal learning efforts, one section of the questionnaire explicitly referred to this issue. 14 widespread potential reasons and motivations<sup>1</sup> were listed including

- altruistic motives, such as helping other people or making the world a better place,
- learning motives, e.g. curiosity or the aim of improving language skills, and
- other personal reasons, like the wish “to do something for myself” or because other people participated in the exchange.

The respondents were asked to indicate three of the given reasons and motivations which were of highest importance for them on a scale of 1, 2 and 3 according to their relevance. In addition, the respondents could add additional causes and motives if they were not mentioned in the list.

<sup>1</sup> Prevalent reasons and motivations of senior volunteers were collected in the conceptual workshop of the kick-off meeting by the participating SEVEN network members.

According to the results in table 8, the strongest single reason or motive for doing voluntary work abroad is not an ostensible desire to learn but to help other people. Learning, however, plays an important role in numerous other settings: the wish to transfer experience to others – thus not being a learner but an instructor in the first place – was almost as widespread as helping other people – at least in the responses of wave 1. For the participants in the more recent projects “staying in the country without being a tourist” was the second most important driving mechanism hinting at a desire and readiness for new experiences. In both groups, the main motives are complemented by “curiosity”, “needing a new challenge” and “wanting a change”. Thus, almost 40% of the respondents of past as well as of recent projects mentioned reasons and motivations including aspects of learning or teaching as being their strongest impetus to go abroad as a volunteer.

**Table 8: Strongest reason and motivation to participate (%)**

Reason/motivation	Wave 1	Wave 2
Help other people	13,9	20,6
Transfer experience to others	11,5	6,3
Was asked to participate	9,8	3,2
Curiosity	9,0	9,5
Needed new challenge	9,0	9,5
Make the world a better place	8,2	7,9
Stay in the country without being a tourist	5,7	11,1
Make new friends and meet new people	3,3	1,6
Have time for volunteering	3,3	4,8
Wanted a change	3,3	3,2
Could not do it when I was young	2,5	4,8
Improve language skills	0,8	3,2
Do something for myself	0,8	0,0
Because of other people participating in the exchange	0,0	0,0
Other reason	7,4	6,3

Other reasons and motivations mentioned by the volunteers of earlier and more recent project are, for example:

- The participation of the organisation in which voluntary work was performed, in a European exchange project,
- The desire to support the international exchange of senior volunteers,
- An interest in getting to know habits, customs, environments as well as the social and political systems of other countries.

Since decisions like registering as a volunteer for a couple of weeks in a foreign country are usually based on a set of reasons and motivations, we considered it worthwhile to look also at the second and third most important causes which were mentioned. The results of these cumulated shares are displayed in table 9.

**Table 9: Strongest reasons and motivations to participate (cumulated, %)**

Reason/motivation	Wave 1	Wave 2
Transfer experience to others	36,1	17,5
Was asked to participate	35,2	22,2
Curiosity	31,1	23,8
Help other people	25,4	33,3
Make the world a better place	24,6	15,9
Stay in the country without being a tourist	23,0	36,5
Needed new challenge	18,9	20,6
Make new friends and meet new people	15,6	22,2
Have time for volunteering	15,6	27,0
Wanted a change	12,3	11,1
Could not do it when I was young	10,7	15,9
Do something for myself	9,0	9,5
Improve language skills	8,2	9,5
Because of other people participating in the exchange	2,5	0,0
Other reason	9,8	11,1

The motive of “helping other people” – chosen in the case of voluntary work for the common welfare – loses its relative importance when a broader motivational setting is considered. In the responses of wave 1, it is outnumbered by “transferring experience to others”, having been “asked to participate”, and “curiosity” and in wave 2 by “staying in the country without being a tourist”. Also the improvement of language skills, when not regarded as the strongest motive, was mentioned by almost a tenth of the respondents as one of the most decisive causes for participating in the exchange.

Interestingly enough, the desire to share one’s experiences with others triples in the responses of wave 1 and more than doubles in wave 2. This is another hint towards realising a desirable respect for the “experience knowledge” of seniors when learning issues are discussed in the context of their transnational placements.

A difference anticipated between the strongest reasons and motivations of men and women could hardly be confirmed: a desire to help other people is not clearly a domain of women, nor can transferring experiences to others be considered a predominantly male preference.. The few exceptions for which such hints exist when looking at the set of the three strongest reasons and motivations are shown in table 10:

**Table 10: Gender related reasons and motivations for participation (cumulated, %)**

Reason/motivation	Wave 1		Wave 2	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Curiosity	37,6	16,7	29,3	13,6
Do something for myself	11,8	2,8	12,2	4,5
Could not do it when I was young	14,1	2,8	17,1	13,6
Needed new challenge	12,9	30,6	17,1	27,3

“Curiosity” as a motive is mentioned much more often by women. In addition, women tend to be a bit more eager to “do something for myself” and were not able to gain such an experience when they were young. In contrast, men express a somewhat higher need for a “new challenge”.

With regard to age, no correlations could be detected for reasons and motivations. Thus stereotypes on typical background motives for participation in a transnational exchange of senior volunteers by gender and age could not be verified.

### **3.2.4 Facilitating framework conditions for learning**

In the same way as intrinsic motives can influence the learning impacts of a placement as senior volunteers abroad, external framework conditions may hinder or facilitate the learning process. As working hypotheses, the following aspects were assumed to be relevant:<sup>1</sup>

- Written information about the exchange conditions provides the basis for the decision for a specific placement and thus the environment in which the experience takes place.
- Personal contact with the hosting organisation prior to the exchange can avoid potential misunderstandings about contents and framework conditions for the voluntary work abroad.
- Pre-departure training can contribute to clarification of whether the personal reasons and motivations of the participant comply with the conditions offered in the placement.
- Working and lodging conditions play a decisive role in facilitating technical learning in the course of the work process and personal learning experiences in leisure time.
- The financial conditions for making use of the existing learning offers must be good enough to avoid putting undue strain on one’s personal budget.
- A feedback seminar and other forms of support for follow-up activities can encourage the gained experiences to be exploited and transferred to the home environment.

In a first step, the respondents were asked to assess the quality of the above-mentioned framework conditions. In a second step, the respondents should indicate whether the specific offers, if available, facilitated or hindered positive impacts of the exchange on their personal development.

<sup>1</sup> Again, the list was based on the workshop discussion results in the SEVEN kick-off meeting.

The evaluation results for the general quality of the above-mentioned items are shown in the following tables.

**Table 11: Quality of framework conditions (wave 1, row %)**

Framework condition	High	Medium	Low	Nonexistent
Written information about the exchange conditions	50,0	36,1	9,0	4,9
Personal contact with the hosting organisation prior to the exchange	20,7	39,7	18,2	21,5
Pre-departure training	45,7	31,9	12,1	10,3
Working conditions	50,0	42,5	7,5	---
Lodging conditions	61,2	28,1	10,7	---
Financial conditions	44,0	41,3	14,7	---
Feed-back seminar after the exchange	25,4	34,4	14,8	18,9
Support for follow-up activities	12,3	16,4	20,5	39,3

**Table 12: Quality of framework conditions (wave 2, row %)**

Framework condition	High	Medium	Low	Nonexistent
Written information about the exchange conditions	27,4	53,2	11,3	8,1
Personal contact with the hosting organisation prior to the exchange	14,8	21,3	27,9	36,1
Pre-departure training	33,9	48,4	8,1	9,7
Working conditions	59,7	35,5	4,8	---
Lodging conditions	62,7	28,8	8,5	---
Financial conditions	46,7	41,7	11,7	---
Feed-back seminar after the exchange	38,9	37,0	0,0	24,1
Support for follow-up activities	44,4	31,5	1,9	22,2

In the past as well as in the recent exchange projects, the working, lodging and financial conditions were evaluated to have been of high or medium quality by the overwhelming majority of the participants. For other conditions, however, the picture is more diverse.

All measures which can be taken prior to the exchange (and thus influence the decision about whether the envisaged placement will be the right personal environment) have deteriorated in quality since the start of the first pilot projects from the point of view of the participants. In particular, the quality of the personal contact between the volunteer and the hosting organisation prior to the exchange was, if available at all, assessed much less favourably in recent projects. In contrast, feedback seminars and other support for getting engaged in follow-up activities have been developed meanwhile to a much higher degree and are, where performed, more appreciated than in the first attempts.

With special regard to the relevance of the listed framework conditions for the facilitation of learning, tables 13 and 14 illustrate the assessments of the responding senior volunteers.

**Table 13: Relevance of framework conditions for personal development (wave 1, row %)**

Framework condition	Positive effects facilitated	Positive effects hindered	Neither/nor response <sup>1</sup>
Written information about the exchange conditions	50,8	4,1	45,1
Personal contact with the hosting organisation prior to the exchange	36,1	4,1	59,8
Pre-departure training	48,4	2,5	49,2
Working conditions	45,9	3,3	50,8
Lodging conditions	43,4	4,1	52,5
Financial conditions	35,2	5,7	59,0
Feedback seminar after the exchange	34,4	4,1	61,5
Support for follow up activities	20,5	2,5	77,0

**Table 14: Relevance of framework conditions for personal development (wave 2, row %)**

Framework condition	Positive effects facilitated	Positive effects hindered	Neither/nor No response
Written information about the exchange conditions	52,4	6,3	41,3
Personal contact with the hosting organisation prior to the exchange	28,6	12,7	58,7
Pre-departure training	65,1	6,3	28,6
Working conditions	69,8	1,6	28,5
Lodging conditions	71,4	1,6	27,0
Financial conditions	65,1	9,5	25,4
Feedback seminar after the exchange	50,8	6,3	42,9
Support for follow up activities	46,0	6,3	47,6

For most framework conditions, the general quality assessment complies with the impact assessment on personal development. For volunteers in earlier projects, this was especially true for lodging conditions and written information about the exchange, and for respondents from recent projects for lodging and working conditions. A special case are personal contacts with the hosting organisation prior to the exchange which were assessed quite favourably by the volunteers in wave 1. In recent projects, these contacts were conceptually less enforced or encouraged, a fact which seems to have hindered positive impacts for a considerable number of respondents in wave 2. As a conclusion, the existence and quality of the mentioned framework conditions are not an end in themselves, but they do play an important role for realising potential learning impacts.

<sup>1</sup> In wave 1 „neither/nor“ was to be indicated by no response. Both forms are displayed together in Tables 13 and 14.

Ideally, senior volunteers who have participated in a European exchange, function as key actors in transferring the newly gained insights to their local communities and promoting a European dimension. Since this transfer can only happen in a long-term or medium-term perspective, only volunteers who had completed their exchange before 2008 were asked about the relevance of the framework conditions under study for impacts on their local community. The results are shown in table 15 below:

**Table 15: Relevance of framework condition for the local community (wave 1, row %)**

Framework condition	Positive effects facilitated	Positive effects hindered	No response
Written information about the exchange conditions	21,3	0,8	77,9
Personal contact with the hosting organisation prior to the exchange	18,0	0,8	81,1
Pre-departure training	19,7	0,8	79,5
Working conditions	15,6	2,5	82,0
Lodging conditions	10,7	2,5	86,9
Financial conditions	7,4	3,3	89,3
Feedback seminar after the exchange	10,7	0,8	88,5
Support for follow up activities	7,4	1,6	91,0

Again, written information plays a crucial role for impacts on the home community, but also personal contacts with the hosting organisations prior to the exchange and – in contrast to the assessment of the impact on personal development – pre-departure trainings. The results point to the significance of a strong involvement of organisations in the preparation of the exchange and suggest that the value of learning experiences afterwards can be overestimated. This corresponds with the relatively unenthusiastic assessment of the impact of follow-up measures, these having been conceptually developed and augmented in quality only in recent years.

Besides the assessment of the framework conditions listed above, the participants in past and recent exchange projects were also asked to indicate the most relevant factors for learning experiences adding to or specifying the above-mentioned framework conditions.

The following issues were mentioned as most important for positive impacts:

- Being active in tackling problems;<sup>1</sup>
- Staying in the country without being a tourist;
- Getting acquainted with different voluntary work fields;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mentioned in 5 out of 73 responses, also in the sense of feeling useful for someone.

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned in 6 out of 73 responses.



- Getting acquainted with different procedures in voluntary work;<sup>1</sup>
- Sharing ideas and experiences with actors, including, volunteers, in another country;<sup>2</sup>
- Sharing work and leisure time with young people;<sup>3</sup>
- Becoming aware of the European dimension,<sup>4</sup> e.g. the differences in possibilities and chances of senior citizens or different cultures in voluntary work;
- Being included in a training offer for staff of the host organisation;
- Benefiting from in-depth experiences through bilateral exchanges of senior volunteers;
- Being placed as a couple at one work location;<sup>5</sup>
- Good personal relations with people in the host country;<sup>6</sup>
- Well organized exchange;<sup>7</sup>
- A positive feedback of citizens on hosting volunteers from another country.

In contrary, most important for negative impacts were:

- Badly organized exchange;<sup>8</sup>
- Being placed as a single volunteer, not in a team;
- Too short duration of the exchange;
- Overly long distance between lodging and work;
- Misleading information about the placement and target group;
- Lack of language skills;<sup>9</sup>
- Lack of preparation;
- Lack of follow-up activities;<sup>10</sup>
- Lack of background information about the economic, political and social conditions in the host country;
- No adequate leisure time offers for seniors, only for young volunteers;
- Poor personal relations with other volunteers.

While the results in tables 13 – 15 point to the general relevance of the accompanying conditions and measures for positive and negative learning impacts, the answers to the open questions contain valuable information on how to design them in detail. A well organized exchange, including preparatory and follow-up activities, without dire mistakes (such as a distance between the living and work place of one hour's travelling, or leisure time offers for young people only) is the basis for a placement with positive learning impact. In addition to adequate and efficient organisation, all framework conditions should be checked against the

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<sup>1</sup> Mentioned in 4 out of 73 responses.

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned in 5 out of 73 responses.

<sup>3</sup> Mentioned in 5 out of 73 responses with important differentiations: one participant highlighted the moderation between the oldest and youngest group members, another participant noted that it was a very powerful experience, but next time he or she would prefer to be in a group of volunteers of the same age.

<sup>4</sup> Mentioned in 7 out of 73 responses.

<sup>5</sup> Mentioned in 2 out of 73 responses.

<sup>6</sup> Mentioned in 16 out of 73 responses.

<sup>7</sup> Mentioned in 6 out of 73 responses.

<sup>8</sup> Mentioned in 2 out of 73 responses.

<sup>9</sup> Mentioned in 3 out of 73 responses.

<sup>10</sup> Mentioned in 2 out of 73 responses.

criterion of furthering personal relations , whether in the form of non-single placements or teams of volunteers from different countries or of different ages. Bilateral exchanges in teams seem to ensure the biggest success in this sense, and even a lack of language skills of individual volunteers – mentioned as very important in hindering learning effects – can be partly coped with if peers take on interpreting functions. In addition to that, there is plenty of room for creative measures like involving the volunteer from another country in in-house qualification measures.

### **3.2.5 Impacts of exchange on personal skills and competencies**

With regard to the extent to which the placement abroad affected the personal development of the senior volunteers, skills and competencies were collated in the following areas which were considered relevant for a placement abroad:

- Work performance skills
  - Ability to work in a team
  - Ability to work independently
  - Ability to perform voluntary work
  - Ability to function well in a voluntary work project
- Managing diversity
  - Ability to cope with people from different social backgrounds
  - Ability to cope with young people
  - Ability to cope with different habits and cultures
  - Ability to make and maintain friendships
- Foreign language and technical knowledge
  - Ability to handle a computer and the internet
  - Ability to speak a foreign language
- Social competence
  - Ability to adapt to new surrounding
  - Ability to adapt to changing conditions
  - Ability to manage conflicts

The respondents were asked to assess their levels of competencies before and after the exchange on a 5 score scale (“very low”, “low”, “average”, “high”, “very high”). Improvements were noted as displayed in tables 16 – 19 below:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In wave 1, up to 40 out of 122 and in wave 2 up to 8 out of 63 respondents gave no or incomplete indications. Responses reporting the highest possible level (“very high”) of knowledge already prior to the exchange were excluded from the analysis, because no improvement was possible in these cases.

**Table 16: Share of volunteers with improvement of work performance skills (%)**

Skills and competencies	Wave 1	Wave 2
Function well in a voluntary work project	46,8	65,4
Perform voluntary work	56,8	60,4
Work in a team	41,0	55,1
Work independently	15,6	31,7

Between approx. one half and two thirds of volunteers from both past and recent exchange projects agree in their self-assessment of work performance skills, that the European exchange contributed to their ability to function well in a voluntary work project and to perform voluntary work. Also working in a team was very often improved whereas a tendency to work independently was much less influenced by the experience.

The higher shares of positive answers from volunteers in more recent exchange projects could mean that learning impacts on work performance skills can be lost again, if not practised. Nevertheless, with regard to the fact that most of the volunteers from past projects speak about improvements in skills which were gained up to 6 years previously, there is reason to believe that we are seeing a relatively sustainable impact.

**Table 17: Share of volunteers with improvement of ability to manage diversity (%)**

Skills and competencies	Wave 1	Wave 2
Cope with different habits and cultures	63,8	68,0
Cope with people of different background	47,1	55,3
Make and maintain friendship	36,4	52,8
Cope with young people	34,7	42,2

All listed competencies in coping with diversity were strengthened noticeably through the exchange of senior volunteers. This is especially true for coping with different habits and cultures as well as being at ease with people of different background – two obviously lasting impacts. When interpreting the lower rating of coping with younger people it must be noted that not all seniors had the opportunity of working with young volunteers. But again, when this occurred it seemed to have had sustainable effects.

**Table 18: Share of volunteers with improvement of foreign language and technical knowledge (%)**

Skills and competenceies	Wave 1	Wave 2
Speak a foreign language	47,3	57,9
Handle a computer and the internet	14,5	15,4

Not all volunteers in a transnational exchange had to speak a foreign language, and in earlier projects, especially, the coordinators tried to ensure placements in countries of the same

language area (e.g. France and Belgium, Italy and Spain, Germany and Austria). Since ten new member states joined the European Union in 2004 and their organisations have got involved in the European exchange of senior volunteers, the variety of placement opportunities has broadened and also became more challenging as regards foreign language skills. This might be one of the reasons that more volunteers from recent projects mention improvements in this realm.<sup>1</sup>

Internet and computer technology was scarcely a specific aspect in the placements abroad. Nevertheless, as it forms a convenient means to stay in touch over long distances, each seventh participant benefited from the exchange through persistent improvements in this area, too.

**Table 19: Share of volunteers with improvement of social competence (%)**

Skills and competencies	Wave 1	Wave 2
Adapt to changing conditions	51,6	56,3
Adapt to new surrounding	53,9	54,2
Manage conflicts	44,4	43,1

Finally, social skills like the ability to adapt to new surroundings and to changing conditions require mental and physical flexibility. More than half of the participants of both past and recent exchange projects state that these aspects of their social competence were strengthened. This result complies with the high share of respondents who improved their ability to cope with different habits and cultures (see table 16). As an amazing result with regards to the usually high satisfaction with their stay abroad, the ability to manage conflicts was assessed to have improved by a considerable number of project participants in both waves, underlining the complexity of this learning experience.

According to the self-assessment of the respondents, the average improvement of skills and competencies varied between 1 and 1,4 on the scale of 5 levels before and after the exchange. Especially positive changes were noted for being able to function well in a voluntary work project (wave 1: 1,3 / wave 2: 1,4), to perform voluntary work (wave 1: 1,2 / wave 2: 1,4), to cope with young people (both waves: 1,3) and to cope with different habits and cultures (both waves: 1,2).

Summarising the results on the impacts of transnational exchanges on the personal skills and competencies of senior volunteers, the comparison of answers in waves 1 and 2 shows highly consistent results, and deviations are mostly explained by a number of conceptual further developments. In addition, there is reason to believe that learning impacts are not

<sup>1</sup> A higher share of volunteers is also found in recent exchange projects among those for whom the opportunity to speak a foreign language was one of their three strongest motives for participation. 50% of the respondents in wave 1 and 60,8% in wave 2 reported an increase of their foreign language skills.

limited to the short-term but can be sustainable, especially when used and practised in follow-up activities.

The following section will take a closer look at some more specific factors which might influence the reported outcomes with special regard to age, gender and duration of stay.

There is little indication that the improvement of particular skills and competencies is age related since the results in different waves and age groups are either ambiguous or show differences too small to be considered significant.<sup>1</sup>

More distinct correlations can be found for gender related improvements. Table 20 displays skills and competencies for which men and women in both waves reported improvements, to notably different degrees.

**Table 20: Gender related improvement of skills and competencies (%)**

Skills and competencies	Wave 1		Wave 2	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Adapt to new surrounding	57,8	45,8	58,1	47,1
Cope with people of different background	50,0	42,3	58,6	50,0
Cope with young people	36,7	27,3	44,4	38,9
Speak a foreign language	52,9	31,8	59,0	55,6
Manage conflicts	52,6	26,1	51,5	27,8
Perform voluntary work	59,2	50,0	67,6	42,9
Function well in a voluntary work project	52,7	34,8	70,3	53,3

For all mentioned skills and competencies – the ability to adapt to new surroundings, to cope with people of different background, to cope with young people, to speak a foreign language, to manage conflicts, to cope with and perform voluntary work – women seem to have benefitted in learning to a much greater extent than their male peers. This leads to the assumption that the learning environment of senior volunteers' exchanges seems to be oriented towards meeting women's needs and preferences in accordance with the significantly higher female participation rate of 65% – 70% in transnational exchange projects (see table 3).

Another factor for learning impacts is the duration of the exchange – the longer the stay the stronger the impact can be – at a first guess in this context. But again, for a couple of skills no linear results or only little significance can be found. Obviously the ability to handle a computer and the internet, to perform voluntary work, to work independently or in a team

<sup>1</sup> The only exception is the ability to cope with people of different background: In wave 1, 52,9% of the up to 60 year old respondents noted an improvement, 45,2% of the 61 to 70 year old respondents and 40% of those at the age of 71 years plus. The same tendency can be found in wave 2: Here the shares decline from 61,5% in the youngest age group to 59,3% in the middle age group and 20% of the oldest participants.

depend more strongly on individual or external factors than the length of stay in a voluntary work project abroad. For other skills and competencies, however, there is reason to believe a longer exchange period leads to improvements.

**Table 21: Duration related improvement of skills and competencies (%)**

Skills and competencies	Wave 1		Wave 2	
	up to 2 weeks	3 weeks or more	up to 2 weeks	3 weeks or more
Adapt to new surrounding	51,4	55,6	45,8	60,9
Cope with people of different background	39,4	51,9	48,0	66,7
Cope with young people	24,0	40,4	30,0	54,2
Cope with different habits and cultures	62,2	64,9	58,3	80,0
Make and maintain friendship	25,0	42,9	42,9	62,5
Speak a foreign language	32,0	55,1	46,7	69,2
Manage conflicts	43,3	45,1	40,0	48,0
Manage a voluntary work project	30,0	57,1	60,7	69,6

Despite some differences between the results of wave 1 and 2 in the extent of reported improvements<sup>1</sup>, the results in table 21 confirm the assumption that a longer exchange period indeed has a higher impact on the personal development of the participants in the following realms:

- Flexibility: Being able to adapt to new surroundings and to cope with different habits and cultures
- Tolerance: Being able to cope with people of different background and, not self-evidently for a senior, with young people
- Communicativeness: Being able to make and maintain friendship, manage conflicts and, important in international relations, speak a foreign language
- Professionalism: Being able to manage a voluntary work project

With view to the potential impacts of particular reasons and motivations for participating in senior volunteers' exchanges on individual skills and competencies no indications could be found. Learning effects result from typical learning motives, such as curiosity, the desire to stay in the country without being a tourist and the need for a new challenge, but also from altruistic motives like the wish to help other people, transfer one's own experiences and make the world a better place.

### 3.2.6 Impacts of exchange on the home community

The experiences of senior volunteers through their placements in other European countries are, besides achievements in the realm of lifelong learning, also relevant with view to the idea of strengthening the individual's responsibility for social well-being. Thus it is matter of

<sup>1</sup> Again these differences can be usually explained by conceptual settings.

interest whether, and if so how the European exchange of senior volunteers is promoted and established in their home communities. In order to assess the impacts of the exchange experience at local level, a couple of questions seemed to be of interest, namely:

- if the participants have been involved in activities promoting the transnational exchange of seniors,
- if they – as experienced seniors – have been involved in the preparation or monitoring of other volunteers in European exchange projects,
- if their motivation to go on with volunteering has increased through their experience abroad,
- if the exchange has contributed to the further development of their voluntary work,
- if their local voluntary association and their host organisation have established links,
- if new projects have resulted from their transnational exchange and
- if they have contributed in any way to the town twinning activities of the local authority.

Since impacts on the home community take time to develop and to become observable, these questions were not relevant to volunteers of recent projects who usually sent in their questionnaires immediately upon return. For participants of wave 2 only the first three issues became part of the questionnaire. Besides the potential increase of motivation they were asked if they were willing to get involved in promotional activities and in preparing and monitoring participants of future projects.

The European exchange of senior volunteers, as shown in all previous projects, is still a major event at local level, be it a rural location or a metropolis like Frankfurt am Main. Thus a strong public interest exists, not only in learning about senior volunteers from a foreign country but also in hearing about the experiences of their own citizens who went abroad.

**Table 22: Share of volunteers involved in promotion activities (%)**

Promotion activities	Wave 1
Presentations of experience to the public after return	74,8
Other activities promoting transnational exchange of senior volunteer	36,4

According to the results in table 22, the majority of the participants in past projects reported their experiences to the public afterwards, and more than one third were involved in other promotional activities. As regards the latter, there is still a considerable resource lying idle: more than 80% of the respondents from recent projects are ready and willing to publicly present their experience reports and get involved in other activities for promoting the transnational exchange of senior volunteers. Unfortunately, many of them will not be asked.

In some of the previous pilot projects, bilateral exchanges between two specific hosting and sending organisations were – in contrast to a random selection of places, e.g. according to the interests of individual volunteers – explicitly part of the concept to optimise the impact on the local environment. This is mirrored in the results of table 23:.

**Table 23: Share of volunteers involved in follow-up exchanges (%)**

Accompanying measures	Wave 1
Involvement in the preparation of new volunteers going abroad	11,7
Involvement in the monitoring of foreign volunteers	42,4

More than 42% of the past projects' volunteers – the majority of whom were presumably in a mutual exchange relation – did not only benefit from the offer of a placement abroad. They have also been active in accompanying the visits of senior volunteers from another country thus enjoying additional learning opportunities. Interestingly enough, almost 12% reported that they engaged in the preparation of the “next generation” of volunteers going abroad. As experts in the field they have obviously taken care of newcomers in follow-up exchanges which were not necessarily organised through a centralised European pilot or an SVP project (not yet established before 2008) but might have been at least partly self-organised. As in the case of general promotion activities, more than 80% of the respondents of wave 2 are willing to engage in such accompanying measures. They represent an important potential for the valorisation of the knowledge and experience gained and can be used in organising and performing following-up exchanges.

The offer of a voluntary placement abroad promotes various positive aspects: It can encourage seniors to take on voluntary work for the first time in their lives and can also be an incentive for experienced volunteers who need a change and new challenge. The majority of participants in past and recent projects had indeed been volunteers before the exchange, as shown in table 24.

**Table 24: Volunteering before exchange (%)**

Volunteering status	Wave 1	Wave 2
Yes	71,3	68,3
Yes, but more than 5 years ago	15,6	5,0
No	13,1	26,7

Participating in a transnational volunteers' exchange programme considerably increases the motivation to further perform voluntary work in one's home community. Approx. 90% of the respondents in wave 1 who were either working presently as volunteers or had been doing so in the past confirmed that their experience abroad had strengthened their readiness to go on with this kind of work. In wave 2, this applied to up to 100% of the respondents.

Despite the increase in age of the respondents in wave 1, 82% of them reported that they were working as volunteers at the time of the survey, 10% more than before the exchange. The same holds true for the participants in recent projects: Their share of presently active volunteers increased from 68,3% before the exchange to 79% thereafter. But also approx. 40% of the total newcomers to voluntary work (wave 1: 37,5% / wave 2: 43,8%) were active



as volunteers, which means that the European exchange triggered actions in their hometown.

Measurable impacts are not only observed for the individual senior volunteers but also for other actors. For participants in European exchange programmes it is likely that they learned about new possible contents and methods of voluntary work (for details see chapter 3.2.4) which they might wish to transfer to their own organisation. In addition to that, they have gained expertise in transnational relations and can act as promoters of transnational networks and are able to support the responsible persons in their NGO or local authority.

**Table 25: Share of volunteers reporting an impact on projects or town twinning activities (%)**

Further impacts	Wave 1
Further development of voluntary work	81,1
New projects or initiatives resulting from the transnational exchange	32,1
Transnational links between local and foreign organisations	44,1
Contribution of transnational exchange to town twinning activities	19,1

Table 25 displays the impact of transnational exchanges of senior volunteers on a variety of community related aspects, as reported by the respondents of wave 1:

- The vast majority of the participants who volunteered already agreed, before their exchange, that it contributed to a further development of their voluntary work.
- In one third of the cases, new projects or initiatives resulted from the experience. Especially favourable conditions seem to exist in smaller towns of up to 25.000 citizens where it was noted at an above-average degree of 41,7%.
- 44,1% of the senior volunteers report that their local organisations used the opportunity to establish links with the foreign hosting organisation. This was much more the case in towns of up to 100.000 inhabitants (68,2%) than in bigger conurbations (33%) or smaller towns (38%).
- Every fifth volunteer also contributed his or her expertise to the town twinning activities of the local authority with an above-average share in towns of up to 100.000 inhabitants (34,8%).

In summary, it can be concluded that the European exchange of senior volunteers has a high learning potential, not only for the senior volunteers themselves but also for all other actors involved, especially voluntary associations and local authorities. While the individual volunteers profit from their newly gained experiences, often in a sustainable way, as some of the data indicates, the impacts on the local community are not yet being realised to the best possible extent. Although there are effects in the sense of further development of voluntary work, as well as new projects and enhanced transnational collaborations of voluntary associations and local authorities, the experiences of the senior volunteers have not yet been

put to full use in a satisfactory way. Many more seniors are interested and ready to transfer their experiences to the public than are encouraged to do so.

The different aspects applying to a European exchange of senior volunteers were tested and probed in the pilot projects, and many open questions could be answered in the course of the years. Notwithstanding, follow-up measures upon return from the placement abroad and the valorisation of the learning experiences in the home community are among those aspects needing future action and research.

## 4. Impact of transnational exchanges on organisations

### 4.1 Methodology

In order to learn about the impact of transnational exchanges on the organizations involved in this new experience, a methodological session of the SEVEN core group was held right after the project had started. Unfortunately, the communication data of persons responsible for placements or host organizations had not been not systematically filed, unlike the data from the volunteers who took part in the pilot projects in the past. Further, there was reason to believe that, due to changes in personnel, it would be difficult to get in touch with an appropriate number of representatives from organizations able and willing to answer our questions. Therefore it was decided to focus on the SEVEN network members who are all interested and experienced in the topic of transnational exchanges of senior volunteers. They represent a broad range of key organizations promoting the idea of transnational exchange of senior volunteers and can thus be considered important agents of change.

The SEVEN network members were approached in multiple steps:

Firstly, an explorative survey was conducted in the form of a short written questionnaire<sup>1</sup> which aimed at creating a rough picture of the composition and characteristics of relevant actors as well as their awareness of how their own organizations instigated a development process through becoming involved in this new realm. The questionnaire covered the following sections:

- Experiences with transnational exchange of senior volunteers
  - Number of volunteers sent abroad
  - Number of hosted volunteers
  - Mother country of hosted volunteers
  - Working areas of the senior volunteers
  - Follow-up measures, i.e. further exchange in 2008/2009
- Effects of the transnational exchange of senior volunteers on the organisation
  - Effects on aims and objectives of organisation
  - Effect on range of activities
  - Effect on management
  - Effect on human resources (paid staff and volunteers)
  - Effects on the local community

The questionnaires were distributed at the 1<sup>st</sup> partner meeting in January 2008. 15 of the 29 member organisations (52%) returned the questionnaires. One response from an NGO was

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 2

omitted from the analysis as the organisation had started implementing transnational exchange of seniors only in 2008 and therefore had neither sent nor hosted any volunteers at the time of the survey. Thus, 14 questionnaires formed the basis for the analysis.

In a second step, based on the results of the explorative survey, 8 organisations were interviewed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SEVEN partner meeting in February 2009. Three complementary interviews were accomplished in November/December 2009 at the 3<sup>rd</sup> partner meeting of the SEVEN network. The following topics were addressed:

- Ideas for new projects initiated or encouraged by participation in senior exchange programmes
- Impacts on working routines, e.g.
  - Exclusive offers for seniors or integration of seniors in intergenerational teams
  - Work tasks offered to seniors
  - Working time of senior volunteers
  - Consideration of special demands and preferences of seniors as regards accommodation
- Impact on know-how at management level
- Effect on working time
- Insights into the transnational context of exchange programmes
- International dimension in the work of the organisation
- Intersectional aspect in the work of the organisation
- Future involvement in the transnational exchange of senior volunteers

The interviews were transcribed and analysed using a computer based programme, MaxQDA2007.

## **4.2 Results of oral and written surveys among network partners**

### **4.2.1 Characteristics of the respondents**

The organisations included in the questionnaire survey were not necessarily identical with those being orally interviewed. They included public institutions like local authorities or a university, but mainly NGOs which either coordinate the transnational exchange of volunteers or act as placement or hosting organisations.

Regardless of their legal status or work focus, they can be categorised as national or international voluntary service organisations, usually focussing on environmental work, restoration of old buildings etc. as regular offers for young volunteers, and a wide spectrum of institutions or departments of organisations directly targeting seniors in their work. Whereas the voluntary service organisations are highly experienced in transnational

exchanges of volunteers, they are less experienced in addressing seniors. This situation is offset by the organisations which are experienced in appropriate offers for seniors, but for which transnational exchanges of volunteers are a new challenge. For both groups it holds true that the transnational exchange of senior volunteers is still an experiment for which work routines do not yet exist and need to be developed.

Among those who provided us with information about their learning experiences through the European exchange of senior volunteers, 10 SEVEN network members belonged to the group of voluntary service organisations, and 11 organisations were working in other contexts with or for local senior volunteers:

#### *Voluntary service organisations*

- Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia (FCEI) – Federation of Protestant churches in Italy: The Office for International Voluntary Service (UVI) within the FCEI offers a hosting programme for foreign volunteers in Italy and a placement programme for Italian volunteers abroad. The volunteers work in social, cultural and environmental fields. The UVI also participates in the sending and hosting programme for senior volunteers of the Ecumenical Diaconal Year Network (EDYN).
- Internationale Jugend Gemeinschaftsdienste (IJGD), Germany/Member of the Alliance of the European Voluntary Service Organisations: The IJGD is a non-profit work camp organisation involved in international youth work. They offer work camps and a voluntary year in the social, ecological and political field. Volunteers from Germany and from abroad are offered placements in Germany as well as in foreign countries.
- Alliance of the European Voluntary Service Organisations: Alliance is a cooperation network of 43 independent and active national organizations in 28 countries, which work together on the quality and development of International Voluntary Service.
- Diaconia Year in Estonia: The Diaconia Year is a non-profit organisation coordinating and organising national and international voluntary work. They also coordinate European Voluntary Service projects in Estonia, send Estonian volunteers to different projects and organise voluntary work camps in Estonia.
- Evangelische Freiwilligendienste für junge Menschen (Protestant Voluntary Services for Young People), Germany: They mainly focus on young volunteers between 18 and 30 years old, organising voluntary services in the social field in Germany and abroad. Further, they organise long-term voluntary services abroad for people over 30 years of age.
- Etudes ET Chantiers UNAREC, France: UNAREC is involved in international short- and long term voluntary services through partnerships with 85 organisations in more than 60

countries. They organise international camps for younger people and volunteers older than 30 years of age.

- Estyes, Estonia: Estyes organises voluntary camps in Estonia and sends Estonian volunteers abroad. Furthermore, they send volunteers to long-term voluntary services abroad and host volunteers from abroad at long term projects in Estonia.
- Concordia, France: Concordia offers international work camps for young people in many different fields (e.g. environment, culture, education, social work), which are set up by local authorities. The head office and eight regional delegations are also responsible for the recruitment of technical and teamwork coordinators and the development of regional partnerships with city councils, local authorities and organisations.
- LEGAMBIENTE, Italy - League for the environment: LEGAMBIENTE is an environmentalist association consisting of 1.500 local clubs, 20 regional committees and over 115.000 members and supporters. It carries out information and awareness campaigns and organises actions of environmental voluntary work. LEGAMBIENTE promotes long-term voluntary service in Italy and abroad. In Italy there are several voluntary centres hosting volunteers of all ages, some of them included in the European Voluntary Service programme or Active European Citizenship.
- Seeds, Iceland: Seeds aims at peace, tolerance, cross-cultural learning and environmental sustainability by offering transnational exchanges, international work camps, research activities, short- and long-term voluntary services, European Voluntary Service for young people, educational programmes and seminars.

#### *Organisations working with or for local senior volunteers*

- Wiener Hilfswerk in Austria: The Wiener Hilfswerk is a social service enterprise providing services for people in need of care (e.g. neighbourhood centres, home care, health care, geriatric centres, cleaning service, play-centre for disabled children, supervised housing for former homeless people, social and legal counselling). The Wiener Hilfswerk hosts and sends volunteers.
- Ehrenamt Gießen e.V., Germany: The Ehrenamt Gießen association promotes voluntary work in Gießen focussing on senior work, culture, art, education and local history. Therefore it supports public institutions by coordinating volunteers and liaises with other volunteers' organisations.
- Bulgarian Red Cross: The Bulgarian Red Cross is part of the international movement of the Red Cross. The BRC offers various social services for older people like social assistance programmes, soup kitchens and home care services. It has a network of more than 600 active volunteers participating in various initiatives

- Seniors Initiative Centre (SIC), Lithuania: The Seniors Initiatives Centre is an association working with seniors and for seniors. Its goals are to encourage active citizenship of seniors by strengthening their self-confidence. Seniors are offered informal learning activities under national and international programmes. The SIC also promotes volunteering activities.
- CSV-RSVP Retired Senior Volunteers Programme Scotland: The CSV Retired and Senior Volunteer programme develops volunteering opportunities for people over 50 in their local communities. The volunteers, aged 50-100, work in the fields of education, environment and health as well as social care projects. Many of the projects are developed in cooperation with health and social care authorities.
- Teatro Nucleo, Italy: The cooperative, consisting of nine operators, works in the fields of theatre research, pedagogy and production, especially in the field of social application of arts. Teatro nucleo is running a theatre project at the Jail in Ferrara, a community theatre group dealing with the social problems of the quarter, a project directed to women in arts and a special project in Argentina directed to teaching open air theatre to disadvantaged children.
- Municipality Ferrara – International Relations Office, Italy: The office organises and supports cultural initiatives at an international level and is involved in projects focussing on active citizenship and European identity. It cooperates with other local authorities, national bodies, schools of all levels, educational institutions providing non-formal education, volunteers' organisations, social and cultural associations.
- University of Lancaster – Department of Continuing Education, Great Britain: The department's aim is to offer higher education to people of all ages and to widen participation, access and lifelong learning by offering courses for e.g. older citizens or a study programme open to all citizens.
- Seniorenrat of the City of Raeren, Belgium: The Seniorenrat works for the interests of older people with the aim of avoiding isolation and social exclusion by developing senior activities.
- Kreis Offenbach – Ehrenamtsagentur, Germany: This voluntary agency in the District of Offenbach initiates new voluntary projects, consults volunteer organisations, organizes qualifications for volunteers and promotes voluntary work for seniors.

- SeniorInnenbüro Graz, Austria: The Senior's Office is a local platform for public and private services for older persons and acts in a networking function with organisations from the care or social sector. It promotes civic engagement and participation of older citizens and supports initiatives accomplished by older persons for older persons.

#### 4.2.2 Characteristics of the transnational exchanges and potential impacts

Based on the answers in the explorative written survey, about twice as many volunteers have been hosted than sent abroad (134 versus 68) by the responding partners. They were mainly sent to Central and Western Europe. The majority of hosted senior volunteers came from Western, Central and Northern Europe.

**Table 26: Destinations**

Countries	Organisations having sent senior volunteers abroad to ...	Organisations having hosted senior volunteers from ...
Northern Europe	2	5
Southern Europe	1	1
Central Europe	4	5
Western Europe	5	6
Eastern Europe	2	1
Outside Europe	0	3

Most of the hosted volunteers were working in the area of social work, followed by ecology, education and culture. "Work with children" and work with other seniors were only rarely mentioned.

Voluntary service organisations hosted four times more volunteers than they sent abroad (78:18). The predominant working areas were ecology, social work and culture. Most volunteers were sent to Western Europe, but they hosted volunteers from all over Europe, sometimes also from Third Countries.

For organisations working for or with local senior volunteers the number of volunteers hosted and sent was much more balanced (56:50), because they usually engaged in bilateral or trilateral relations with partner organisations in all parts of Europe. According to the organisations' habitual focus of work, senior volunteers were placed mostly in the realms of social work, education and culture.

As regards the potential impacts of the exchange experiences, the voluntary service organisations broadened their concept through the exchange of senior volunteers. Herewith the "dialogue of generations" was strengthened and new working fields for senior volunteers were developed. There was apparently little impact on the management, staff and own



volunteers: one organisation did not employ paid staff, two organisations did not observe any impact on their staff and the remaining three organisations describe the impact as an increase in workload, the addition of an international dimension to their work and finally the need for changes in management. In the case of volunteers' involvement in the management of the organisation this helped to strengthen relations to the local community. Other senior volunteers supported the organisations in developing new programmes. Summarising their experiences, the majority of voluntary service organisations emphasised their newly gained motivation to host senior volunteers, the continuation of the exchanges and greater flexibility in working with volunteers of different ages.

Organisations working with or for senior volunteers also mentioned a broadening of their concepts: the university stated that joining the programme had had effects on their lifelong learning strategies as one of its main strategic objectives to "widen participation in higher education for young people and adults of all ages". They further stated that the management of the department is now looking at other ways of working. The impact of the project on the staff was assessed as promoting an increase in knowledge about the European Union, and providing new options for their senior learners.

Similarly, the representatives of local authorities mentioned that joining the seniors' exchange programme had strengthened their inter-departmental work and broadened their range of activities, especially at the European level. The empowerment and improvement in personal skills of the local volunteers was mentioned and a stronger motivation to organise and take part in international projects.

The organisation of a European exchange is especially challenging for small, locally oriented NGOs. Additional working tasks were mentioned such as arranging accommodation and projects for foreign volunteers with sparse knowledge of English or putting a focus on preparatory measures. The impact of the project on the volunteers of the organisations, however, was an increase of knowledge of organisational structures, increasing flexibility in coping with own expectations and strengthened motivation to continue after the exchange. Finally, one organisation described the effect on the local community in terms of increasing intercultural competence and managing of diversity.

From this outline of relevant aspects, a couple of issues were derived for further in-depth study through personal interviews concerning the self-concept and objectives of the organisations, managerial and practical arrangements with a view to the transnational exchange of senior volunteers and finally the European dimension. The results of these in-depth inquiries are depicted in the following chapters.

### 4.2.3 Self-concept and objectives

#### *Personal development of young people*

The majority of voluntary service organisations target young people and adolescents. Their work is based on educational objectives and ethics that promote the autonomy of the young volunteers and support them in becoming responsible and sociable adults. Volunteering itself but even more its pedagogical concept is viewed as an important cornerstone in fulfilling the educational objective.

Here, living and working in a group seems to be essential, encouraging the individual to learn about social communication like solving conflicts or asserting oneself. Another cornerstone of the pedagogical concept is “role modelling”, meaning that working groups are led by people of the same age. The group leaders function as role models; most of them had been volunteering before and underwent training for their new role and position.

Furthermore, some of the voluntary service organisations get public funding on the grounds of youth welfare laws, as in Germany. According to German law (KJHG) a young person has the right to personal growth and education to become an autonomous and sociable personality. Those aspects are promoted by the volunteer organisations. Since the German law defines youth by a certain age, this limits the access to offers.<sup>1</sup> Thus, adults and even more, senior adults are excluded. In line with this philosophy, the European Voluntary Service Programme is open to all young people aged 18 – 30 years.

To target seniors, not only do the educational objectives of the voluntary service organisations aiming at juveniles and adolescents have to be revised but even more, their strategies of refunding activities directed at seniors have to be addressed.

#### *Social inclusion*

Some voluntary service organisations aim at juveniles and adults as well, since their main objective can be conceptualized as social cohesion:

*We have a long experience with voluntary work either for young people or adults and we have a long experience with inclusion programmes or unemployed people, people facing exclusion etc. in our region. (VS, France)<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> For example: the German KJHG defines a person up to 14 years old as a child, a juvenile up to 18 years and a adolescent up to 26 years of age.

<sup>2</sup> The responses given by the organizations are distinguished in country and type of organization. VS means Voluntary service organization and SO stands for Organisations working with or for local senior volunteers.

Some social organisations like neighbourhood help services, neighbourhood centres or senior centres, etc. can either be part of big organisations like the Red Cross or a church, or they are grassroots organisations solely dependant on voluntary work. In their activities they address people of different ages; they are not restricted to a specific age group. Nevertheless they pursue educational objectives as well, but those may differ to those of the organisations aimed solely at young people. The organisations interviewed emphasise intergenerational and intercultural learning through voluntary work experiences.

### *Active citizenship*

Especially in Eastern European and former Soviet countries, the idea of volunteering is lacking and there exist only a very few self-help organisations. The interviewed organisations aim at social cohesion and therefore fight poverty, unemployment or address marginalized social groups. They provide food, health care, day care for children, computer classes and teach language skills and so on. Usually they are locally active and are not experienced in transnational exchange of volunteers.

*So, the SEVEN network was very interesting for us mainly for the idea of volunteering because we don't have this practise or tradition of volunteering in Lithuania. (SO, Lithuania)*

The attitude of the population toward volunteering is described as follows:

*I: So people do not usually volunteer?*

*A: No, no.*

*I: They don't know this idea?*

*A: They do know the idea but they say: "Why should I?" "Why should I do unpaid stuff?" (SO, Lithuania)*

The interviewee describes the attitude of the population towards volunteering as follows: citizenship is not defined in terms of actively contributing to social cohesion. Own activities are viewed as labour which should be paid, and it is the task of the government to attend to social cohesion. This way of thinking is explained by the long tradition of a communist society in the Soviet Union.

After establishing a democratic society at the end of the 1980s, citizens are now in the process of realizing that active citizenship is essential within this new system.

*We recruited a lot of volunteers, but it is not because we want to receive their free time to do something, we are educating them. And for them the seminars which we are providing are very attractive. And they are motivated to show up in front of the mayor, in front of the ministry, to say that is it not good for example in*

*this hospital, we cannot reach this hospital because we have architectural barriers, please do this, [...]. (SO, Bulgaria)*

*Because they must be active. Because they must follow their rights and most of them don't know what their rights are. Because they must be included, not excluded. (SO, Bulgaria)*

But it also seems that the idea of volunteering is perceived differently by younger people compared with seniors:

*Younger volunteers are not so well orientated yet. Senior volunteers are more, from my point of view, more motivated, they realize more what they must do, what is the idea to do something, they are grown up enough, that's why they are more motivated. (So, Bulgaria)*

While the seniors had been living for many decades in a communist system, the younger population may either be born after 1989 or is too young to apprehend the communist social systems. Young people may be familiar with the idea of volunteering but do not associate it with the political idea of democracy.

The history of a communist system influences the teaching method as well:

*I personally believe that active citizenship is very important and it is impossible to lecture about, people have to go out and see themselves. (SO, Lithuania)*

Volunteering, i.e. being active for welfare purposes, seems to be the appropriate teaching method since, according to the interviewee, another type of teaching like lecturing would promote a more passive attitude. Some social organisations realize that active citizenship is not limited to the national perspective but that becoming a European citizen also means encouraging participation in a transnational exchange:

*[...] it is very difficult for me to tell stories, so I really want to make people go. And with this GIVE programme we intend to have a project ourselves, but I also would like, as many organisations in Lithuania, find a partner and do this exchange if possible, because the seniors have to go out and see and then they will bring back ideas [...]. (SO, Lithuania)*

A conclusion from the results is that the idea of active citizenship is closely linked to democracy, and further, becoming an European active citizen is linked to the idea of transnational volunteering. The representatives of the organisations interviewed can be considered vanguards in terms of their self-concepts which maintain that social cohesion and inclusion are important aspects of a democratic society and that becoming active citizens is a

major tool to achieve this goal. The organisations take on an important function as role models for other East European public and non-governmental organisations.

### *Intergenerational learning*

Some of the organisations interviewed share the objective of intergenerational learning. Therefore they are addressing young people as well as seniors. But they have different approaches in fulfilling this objective. Some of them offer specific programmes for seniors, others integrate them into their regular work programmes, offer “family” camps where people of different generations can take part or split the work groups but reunite them in leisure time.

A major aspect of intergenerational learning seems to be that participants have to realize and to recognise that people have different needs and can provide different services. At the same time, the volunteer’s work results are recognised and validated as the outcome of the whole group rather than the contribution of each single person.

*Because what we try to create is a group of volunteers in the hosting projects and it is part of the program that we offer the volunteers to be part of this bigger group. (VS, Italy)*

Nevertheless, intergenerational activities can also be considered a risk which has to be kept in mind when trying to accomplish the aim of the work camp:

*I: Does this mean that working with juveniles or adolescents and working with seniors has different educational objectives?*

*A: Not necessarily different educational objectives. But in my opinion I do not believe that everything can be implemented within the same setting. Because of life... of the points of views. The points of views of people are so different that sometimes they might impede each other. (VS, Germany)<sup>1</sup>*

Confronted with this background, some organisations adjust the work programme to the needs of the senior volunteers. The senior volunteers have different tasks to the others but are still viewed as being part of a bigger collective:

*[...] even though we provide them a certain frame, a certain timetable, then at the end the group of volunteers in the placements end as a group of volunteers, and that is part of the inter-generational learning that we have in this structure. (VS, Italy)*

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<sup>1</sup> Original text: I: Das heißt, ihr würdet schon sagen, dass die Arbeit mit Jugendlichen, respektive Heranwachsenden und die Arbeit mit Senioren unterschiedliche Bildungsziele verfolgen?  
A: Es muss nicht unterschiedliche Bildungsziele, aber es kann nicht, glaube ich nicht, alles im gleichen Rahmen umgesetzt werden, weil das zum Teil vom Leben, ... von dem Standpunkt her. Der Standpunkt der Menschen ist so unterschiedlich, dass sie sich manchmal gegenseitig behindern könnten.

In this setting, the workload and framework conditions are organised according to the capabilities of the different age groups. Through the modification of working conditions this approach can be defined as an active policy of the organisation in addressing and inviting senior volunteers.

### *Intercultural learning*

Transnational exchange is closely linked to the idea of intercultural learning:

*Because it is our understanding of the international voluntary service that we would like to provide this intercultural opportunity not only with the local hosting places but also with the group of other volunteers, let them share their motivation, the reason why they decided to come to Italy or whatever and to grow up together with the project through conjoint experience. (VS, Italy)*

Intercultural learning happens in two ways: Volunteers working abroad experience the culture of their hosting country, and the group itself consists of people from different nations. Some of the transnational exchanges are between organisations in the same working area. This offers the opportunity to exchange experiences and to take home new ideas and concepts:

*As an effect of the first transnational exchange we did sent volunteers from different neighbourhood centres to Berlin. During the selection process and the workshops they got to know each other. And they realized that it is great to look beyond one's own nose into another neighbourhood centre. And how interesting it can be to experience how things are run somewhere else, how different cultures are in other neighbourhood centres. What their focus is on, which work areas exist there. (SO, Austria)<sup>1</sup>*

The transnational exchange does not only affect the individual volunteer but the hosting and sending organisations profit as well:

*There were around 40 people at the project presentation in January. There we did realise that other departments are interested in the project, too. And that they know more about what is going on in the volunteering sector. Thus, the volunteer sector has been integrated a little bit more into the whole organization. And it had*

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<sup>1</sup> Original text: Folgeeffekt hat es insofern gehabt, als wir in dem Fall auch wieder Ehrenamtliche nach (.)Berlin geschickt haben, die aus verschiedenen Nachbarschaftszentren kamen. Und die sich in der folgenden Auswahl und in den folgenden Workshops einander erstmals kennen gelernt haben. Und gemerkt haben, wie toll das ist, über den Tellerrand des eigenen Nachbarschaftszentrum hinauszuschauen. Und wie interessant es auch sein kann, zu erfahren, wie es anderswo läuft, wie (.) vielleicht eine andere Kultur ist in dem anderen Nachbarschaftszentrum. Wie die Schwerpunkte dort laufen, welche anderen Freiwilligen, Einsatzbereiche es möglicherweise wo anders gibt.

*the effect that the volunteers brought home two projects from Berlin. (SO, Austria)<sup>1</sup>*

This quote indicates that the volunteers sector of the organisation has gained a higher significance and more awareness by others through the outcomes of the transnational exchange. The volunteers brought back new ideas and concepts which may contribute to professionalism and success of the social organisation.

Finally, it is evident that there has been a change of thinking about adult education which might have led to a conceptual change in the work of the organisation:

*Just for the University the focus previously was on formal adult education. [...] Since I have been involved in the project, my colleague has been involved in a similar national project in G., we started to look at other ways on adult education, informal education. Now we have a senior learners programme at the University where people just come in once a week, [...] to listen to a lecture, so that has broadened the way of adult education. [...] Volunteering is a specific way of doing it, this is the whole activating concept, it is not just about academic learning. (SO, UK)*

Volunteering now is viewed as being an aspect of lifelong and adult learning. Thus the idea of learning as “academic” learning has been elaborated and various ways of “learning” are acknowledged as such.

#### **4.2.4 Managerial issues**

All organisations interviewed describe changes in the administration of volunteer work if senior volunteers are integrated into the concept.

##### *Building networks*

Networks play a major part in voluntary service organisations since placements for volunteers are organised via networks. Diverse volunteers need a wide range of working opportunities. Only through building networks can the increasing number of applications be satisfied.

Building strong local networks is emphasised by an interviewee:

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<sup>1</sup> Original text: Das waren ungefähr vierzig Personen im Jänner bei der Präsentation. Also wo man auch da gemerkt hat, andere Abteilungen interessieren sich auch dafür (.) und bekommen dann ein bisschen mehr mit, was im ehrenamtlichen Bereich läuft. Also auch da ist in ehrenamtlichen Bereich ein bisschen mehr in der Gesamt- Organisation verankert worden. Und hat den Effekt gehabt, dass wir (.) eh dass die Ehrenamtlichen zwei Projekte aus Berlin mitgenommen haben, mitgebracht haben, ....

*I think, in general what I see from a lot of demanders of our network, I see a weakness of the associations being just alone where they work. I don't see many people working in the local network and maybe I am a bit fanatic about that but I think it is the main point. You can do very nice things but if you are not trying to adapt the local situation, you are not very successful. [...] (SO, Italy)*

The stronger the networks are, the more successful is the organisation. And the bigger the network is the more placements can be offered:

*The point is that our organisation has a network which is not that big, so it is not realistic to think that we will be able to develop different hosting placements from seven up to twenty, but this is not our case. (VS, Italy)*

Local networks can be developed systematically or in using a snowball system:

*With this project, but it is, you know we don't really have a clear [strategy] we always learn new things and always find out new people and then it's mainly networking because people who come to courses say "You know, I know somebody, who ..." and they introduce them to us or us to another organisation [...] (SO, Lithuania)*

The stronger a network is, the closer the social net that can be built. This is of the utmost important for social organisations aiming at social cohesion since a close social net allows those to be reached who usually might not be.

Further, when actively addressing senior volunteers, intersectional networks are important as well:

*The issue is that the biggest project that we have for senior volunteers are houses for elderly people, that means that in the house there are experts of senior learning opportunities. So the training that we give is to combine their knowledge or their experience with the concept of voluntary work. (VS, Italy)*

In this example, two areas have been connected: senior learning opportunities and volunteering. Volunteers get trained in the idea of senior learning while those institutions working with seniors get acquainted with volunteering.

But intersectional networks seem to be more important when there is a concept of actively addressing senior volunteers. Strategies coping with "show ups" do not necessarily need intersectional networks since here the focus is on the aim of the assignment and only to a lesser extent on the special needs of the participants.



## *Training the trainers*

Work assignments are organised in such a way that volunteers are guided by a trainer or work camp leader. The latter usually have been recruited from former volunteering and are trained specifically for their new positions. In more locally embedded organisations trainers function mainly as facilitators, i.e. they undergo training in a certain skill and later on they train people in their neighbourhood. As work camp leaders they are responsible for achieving the duties to which the camp is committed. Further, they are responsible for fulfilling the educational objectives and social cohesion of the group. Having a mixed age group may challenge the trainers and work camp leaders:

*It seems that the group of seniors, the way you lead seniors is not the same as when you lead teenagers or young adults. (VS, France)*

Addressing and integrating senior volunteers has an impact on the training concept of the work camp leaders and facilitators. They need to become acquainted with the methods and tools of adult education. Usually the group leaders are younger than the senior volunteers. The age difference may be an obstacle to establishing authority. Senior volunteers need to be treated differently to younger people. They have life experience which should be appreciated and they cannot be “ordered” about. Therefore it is extremely important to adopt the methods of adult education.

*Yes, because I think most of the seniors got a life experience, a long life experience and some can't imagine and we practise it, that they will not accept that if we say "You have to do this or that" That is not the same way, you can't practise authority with them, that you can't do with adults either and that is very different from adults to teenagers, too. That is very, very different. (VS, France)*

Furthermore, not every group leader wants to work with senior volunteers. They prefer to work with people of the same age. They are more familiar with them while older people are somehow “strange” and they do not know how to work with them:

*I think it necessitates exactly this, the awareness, a different training for my leaders. [...] we are working with volunteer leaders. We train them a whole week and then they get deployed. Usually they are 22 years old. [...] we train them three times. They are really excited and they want to do this. But there are three of them and the other fifty say: "I want to run a camp with people of my age or younger. But what should I, how should I, what should I do with somebody who is over sixty?" It is not unsolvable, but those are the discussions we have here. (VS, Germany)<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Original text: Ich glaube, es erfordert eben genau das, die Aufmerksamkeit, ein anderes Training für meine Leiter, meine Leiterin. [...] also, wir arbeiten mit freiwilligen Teamern. Wir bilden sie aus eine Woche lang, wir setzen die ein, die sind in der Regel 22. [...] wir schulen sie dreimal, [...] Die

In this statement the strangeness of senior volunteers and the desire to work with people of the same age is expressed by a group leader. It should be assumed that this desire is at least partially influenced by the experience of strangeness toward older people. The problem only can be mitigated or dissolved if the voluntary service organisations develop a concept aimed at intergenerational learning. This should include the perspective of the senior volunteer as well as the younger participants and the group leaders.

### *Addressing senior volunteers*

The educational objective of intergenerational learning leads to the question how senior volunteers are addressed. Two approaches can be found:

- Senior volunteers show up without being explicitly invited;
- Senior volunteers are addressed actively.

*For the first part, our work camps in our organisation, there is no age limit, anyone can apply [...] Every year we have volunteer that appear to be senior and usually they are French or coming from other countries but they decided to join the work camp and they know that it is a usual project, a group for young people.  
(VS, France)*

This statement indicates that senior volunteers are not specifically addressed, they simply show up. Here, intergenerational learning is a side effect depending on the presence of senior volunteers. The approach of coping with senior “show ups” is viewed ambivalently:

*We did realise that when people applied they said on the phone: Yes, they are interested but “I don’t want to be the only older person there”. Then one should ask if the camp really has to be organised intergenerationally. (VS, Germany)<sup>1</sup>*

This indicates that seniors are interested in taking part in work camps but do not want to be marginalized because of their age. Thus, they prefer to be in a group of seniors. Since there is no active policy of integrating senior volunteers the single “show ups” are at risk of being overburdened and marginalized.

This correlates with the two main views of the relation between volunteer and placement:

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finden es total spannend, so und wollen das machen. Aber da habe ich vielleicht drei und die anderen fünfzig sagen: „Ich will einfach, ich will das Camp machen mit den Leuten, sie so alt oder junger sind wie ich, aber was soll ich denn, wie soll ich denn, was soll ich mit jemandem machen, der so irgendwie mit sechzig da sitzt?“ Es ist nicht unlösbar, aber das sind diese Diskussionen, die wir halt da haben an dem Punkt.

<sup>1</sup> Original text: Weil das hatten wir schon gemerkt, wenn wir Anfragen hatten, dass manche am Telefon sagen: Ja, sie hätten schon Lust, „Aber ich will nicht die einzige oder nicht der einziger ältere Mensch jetzt da sein“. Das man das eher dann wirklich über-, so generationsübergreifend anlegen muss.

- In the first one, the placement is the focus of interest and volunteers are selected according to the needs of the placement.
- In the second approach the volunteer is in the centre of interest and the organisation tries to find the appropriate placement for the volunteer.

The first approach may be connected to the perception of senior volunteers as “show ups”. This means that seniors who are interested in volunteering show up sporadically and therefore the organisation tries to deal with them on demand. The placement is in the focus of consideration. Volunteers are chosen according to the circumstances at the placement. The organisations are of the opinion that in describing the placement and its requirements the volunteers themselves already pre-select the placement. Hence senior volunteers are not specifically addressed.

An alternative strategy is adopted by other organisations actively addressing senior volunteers. This has an impact on their administration since new – intersectional - networks have to be established to provide appropriate placements. Furthermore, the placement has to be organised differently . This modification mainly applies to accommodation, the duration of stay, the workload and the daily working hours, as explained in more detail in the following chapter.

The placement can be directed solely to senior volunteers or the group of senior volunteers can be part of a bigger group – which may be intergenerational. The idea of having sub-groups may follow from the insight that homogenous age groups are preferred by the volunteers.

*The three to five places are organized in this way, we never send a volunteer in a structure where he is the only volunteer, we always send a volunteer, it doesn't matter if he is young or a senior, in a hosting placement that has a least a group of four or five volunteers, so the senior is one volunteer within this group.(VS, Italy)*

In any case (senior) volunteers are part of a group.

The representative of a German voluntary service organisation points out that only around 4% of their offers are physically exhausting work camps. These may not be appropriate for senior volunteers. The work camps are described in detail and volunteers can decide to join:

*... if I explain in detail, everybody can make up their own mind. (VS, Germany)<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Original text: ... wenn ich ausführlich Informationen dazu schreibe, kann sich jeder entscheiden.

Thus, not all organisations address senior volunteers explicitly but in general select the volunteers via description of the workload. They trust that in this way a pre-selection of volunteers will take place:

*Therefore we do a little bit of a kind of labelling like open age. Only then, when I already know that I can post the offer everywhere. I mean, it will be then as it is. It will interest only very few people. (VS, Germany)<sup>1</sup>*

Nevertheless it can be assumed that some senior volunteers may assess their (physical) capabilities according to their perceived age and not according to their actual state of being. This may cause difficulties, which must be solved by the group leaders.

However, some of the organisations explained that the work assignment has changed a lot within the last years. Physical exhausting work camps are in the minority and there are a lot of working fields in the social sector. These assessments are less physical challenging and can be performed by younger and older volunteers. This might contribute to the assumption that seniors do not need to be addressed specifically.

Contrary to this assumption the organisations actively addressing senior volunteers explain that the concepts have to be modified regarding preparation and practical arrangements:

*[...] because even though the training concepts for volunteers are quite the same, the (assessments) need to be organised in a different way of preparation and everything. (VS, Italy)*

Looking for specific hosting projects which may be appropriate for senior volunteers can add to the workload of the administrative staff.

*[...] usually in this hosting projects there is a group of five to ten volunteers and they are [...] younger seniors and that simply means that there are three or four groups of different programs of volunteers that are living and working together in the same project, so at the beginning it is more an organisational difference but the difference is much more administrative than any other. (VS, Italy)*

#### **4.2.5 Practical arrangements**

The potential modification of practical arrangements concerning accommodation, the duration of stay, tasks and workload, and daily working hours.

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<sup>1</sup> Original text: Deswegen machen wir ein bisschen so eine Etikettierung dann, open age also. Aber wenn ich schon weiß, das kann Angebot, das kann ich überall rein stellen. Ich meine, das wird dann so, wie es dann da ist. Es wird dann einfach nach wie vor ganz wenige interessieren.

### *Accommodation*

Again organisations vary substantially in their treatment of their senior volunteers: Some of them provide the same accommodation as for their young volunteers while others provide single rooms or apartments which may be shared by a maximum of 2 to 3 people.

*Usually they are hosted in a separated apartment, it usually has a common facility like kitchen, bathroom or living room, then there are two or three bedroom and we usually offer volunteers a single room but sometimes people ask to have a double-room, it is up on the request of the seniors, if they are coming in a couple or as two friends or whatever. (VS, Italy)*

Again, the practical arrangements are a consequence of their general philosophy about how to deal with senior volunteers: If volunteers are selected with a focus on the work assignment there are no special provisions for seniors. If the work assignments are selected for their suitability for the volunteers there is a chance that practical arrangements will be made according to their needs.

*When I receive the application from the senior, I have their availability, their preferences, their options. So, at first my job is to make the connection work between the hosting placement and the senior, providing information, exchange and providing direct contact between the two of them. (VS, Italy)*

In the case of long-term stays the senior volunteer is asked to visit the hosting placement beforehand and to decide if all the arrangements meet his/her needs.

### *Duration of stay*

The voluntary service organisations offer a variety of programmes with different time spans. The interviews do not confirm a correlation between the duration of the work assignment and the age of the volunteers. It seems that the duration of the assignment depends more on the activities, e.g. if the volunteer is working in a special programme for seniors with dementia or if he or she is part of a team restoring a neighbourhood centre.

Even though previous research indicates that senior volunteers prefer short-term assignments, the organisations interviewed offered no such responses. The results are not inconsistent, since most of the voluntary service organisations specialise in either long-term stays or short-term placements and/or work camps. Consequently the organisations only rarely encounter volunteers having other time preferences than those offered. The difference between the expressed needs of the senior volunteers and those of the organisations may indicate that the seniors check information before they apply to a certain agency. Thus, a pre-selection has taken place before the senior volunteers join the programme.

### *Duties and workload*

The organisations interviewed describe the distribution of tasks as follows: some of them offer a variety of duties and the volunteers can choose what they want to do. Others do not differentiate between younger and older volunteers and thus allocate no tasks according to age. Finally, some organisations try to find out the capabilities and abilities of the volunteer and try to place him/her accordingly. Here, the focus is on the volunteer but takes into account the whole person, not only his or her age. This holistic approach often applies to organisations from the social sector with less demanding physical activities. Therefore age may play only a minor role in allocating duties to the volunteers.

Nevertheless, some organisations who explicitly address senior volunteers offer placements in senior centres or care homes to support the seniors of a very advanced age. Work camps with physically challenging activities are rare. In work camps, seniors usually share the same activities as the younger volunteers.

### *Daily working time*

The organisations interviewed describe different approaches: In some work camps senior and younger volunteers share the same working hours, but in other work camps different working hours are viewed as being part of intergenerational learning.

Generally, most of the organisations offer reduced working hours for senior volunteers. But the organisations also mentioned that different options based on age are not welcomed by every senior volunteer. They consider “equal treatment” to mean working the same hours and sharing the same workload as their younger colleagues.

## **4.2.6 Transnational dimension**

The transnational exchange of senior volunteers is viewed by some of the organisations as being integral to becoming an active European citizen. The SEVEN network can be described as transnational and intersectional since here, voluntary service organisations, social organisations like the Red Cross or seniors organisations participate. Thus, the SEVEN network offers the opportunity to promote transnational and intersectional networks and to convey the idea of volunteering to the home country:

*The SEVEN network was very interesting for us mainly for the idea of volunteering because we don't have this you know, this practise or tradition of volunteering in Lithuania. (SO, Lithuania)*

In other countries the idea of volunteering is already well established and strong local networks exist. The introduction of a European dimension promotes the idea of European citizenship:

*We have a lot of things going on. I think the only new was introducing the European dimension. People are very open eyed, at the local level we had what we call (?) organised by elderly people for themselves. (SO, Italy)*

Furthermore, experiences gained in the SEVEN network contribute to strengthening local and national networks:

*[...] the organisation between the SEVEN network is a very good experience to know because it always gives us idea for networking on the local or national level because we know about other experiences that might be, if not repeated, but at least taken as an inspiration for other projects. (VS, Italy)*

The interviews indicate that the expectations toward the SEVEN network are quite diverse and reach from inspiring national networks to promoting European citizenship and the idea of volunteering. Nevertheless all partners included in the interviews share the idea of integrating senior volunteers into their programmes.

## **5. Lessons learned**

### **5.1 Senior volunteers**

With a view to their personal characteristics, the typical participant in one of the earlier or more recent European exchange projects for senior volunteers was female, in their early sixties and living in an urban or metropolitan setting. Men represent approx. one third of the participants, so that gender specific approaches could be considered to address them explicitly. European exchange projects are mostly attractive to experienced volunteers; total newcomers to voluntary work are relatively rare.

The vast majority of volunteers stayed in their placement abroad for 2 or 3 weeks. In most placements – and with increasing frequency – they had to speak a foreign language, and most participants were sent in a team. Accommodation was offered in many cases in the form of a single room, and in almost all cases a designated person existed who could be contacted in case of problems. Work in international and/or intergenerational teams was offered to many participants.

The predominant working fields were social work, culture, ecology and education, and the work offers seem to be thoroughly suitable for both genders and all age groups. If at all, women prefer social work and work with children, while men tend towards activities in the realms of ecology and development aid. Physically demanding work is more appropriate for younger seniors, while cultural activities gain in attractiveness with increasing age.

The most powerful single reason or motive for doing voluntary work abroad is to help other people. Learning is not mentioned as top priority but however, plays an important role in numerous other settings. This becomes evident when the motivational settings of the three strongest reasons are considered. Helping motives are then clearly outnumbered by learning motives such as the aim of “staying in the country without being a tourist” or “curiosity” but also the desire to “transfer experience to others”. With regard to reasons and motivations by gender or age, only weak or no correlations at all could be detected, so care should be taken to avoid stereotypes in this respect.

Accompanying measures and framework conditions, such as written information about the placement, personal contacts between volunteer and host organisation prior to the exchange, pre-departure training and follow-up offers, have all proved to be relevant for the learning impact of the placement abroad. Basically it must be ensured that the European exchange is well organized and no undue strains are put on senior volunteers in regard to physical workloads, long distances, inadequate lodging conditions or unsuitable leisure time offers. The particular design of the framework conditions should always be oriented towards good personal relations, these being of vital importance to learning, while absent or poor relations contribute to just the opposite.



Significant impacts on individual skills and competencies could be observed in all realms – work performance skills, management of diversity, foreign language and technical knowledge and social competence – and for almost all listed skills with the exception of “handling a computer and the internet” and “working independently”. The strongest improvements were noted for “being able to function well in a voluntary work project”, “to perform voluntary work”, “to cope with young people” and “to cope with different habits and cultures”. Cautiously it can also be concluded that the improvements in these realms of work performance skills and the ability to manage diversity have exhibited some degree of sustainability, since they were still being reported up to 6 years after the exchange.

The improvement of skills through a voluntary work placement abroad is obviously not age related so that no differences between younger and older seniors can be observed. Women, however, do not only form the larger share of participants in European exchange projects but also seem to benefit much more from learning experiences than men. To a much higher degree, women report improvements in “adapting to new surroundings”, “coping with people of different backgrounds”, “coping with young people”, “speaking a foreign language”, “managing conflicts”, “performing voluntary work” and “functioning well in a voluntary work project”.

In addition, the duration of the stay abroad contributes significantly to the learning experiences of seniors: Skills and competencies which allow for flexibility, tolerance, communicativeness and professionalism were developed to a higher degree when the exchange period was 3 or more weeks compared with shorter durations. Together with the above-mentioned results, the transnational exchange entails strong learning impacts for senior volunteers and should be viewed as a cornerstone in informal strategies of lifelong learning.

There are various possible impacts on the home communities of the participants of volunteers exchange projects, but many of them require follow-up measures which actively involve the seniors in the process and do not restrict them to a passive consumer role.

Pleasantly enough, 75% of the participants in past projects reported their experiences to the public afterwards, and more than one third were involved in other promotional activities. Mostly volunteers in projects which foresaw mutual exchanges were also engaged in monitoring the visits of peers from abroad, and a few were also active in preparing newcomers to European exchange experiences. However, more than 80% of recent project participants are also ready and willing to get involved in follow-up measures, but unfortunately, most probably, many of them will remain unasked.

The vast majority of seniors (if not all) confirm that the European exchange has strengthened their motivation to go on with their voluntary work, and even 40% of the seniors who were not active before took on a civic engagement after their placement abroad. Thus the number of

active volunteers increased by 10% when comparing their overall percentages before and after the exchange.

From a theoretical perspective, the hypothesis is confirmed that participation in the social, political, economic, and cultural sphere is a generic desire of older people. As shown by the comprehensive learning efforts, transnational exchanges of senior volunteers lead to an enrichment of their life perceptions and experiences. The exchanges empower seniors to actively participate in community life and accomplish mental flexibility. Hence there is compelling evidence that senior volunteers gain knowledge and skills and are ready and able to pass them to others.

Frequently the responding volunteers also report highly desirable results from the perspective of those who are responsible for social planning, work with seniors and, last but not least, the finances of municipalities: a further development of their voluntary work (81,1%), new projects and initiatives resulting from the European exchange (32,1%), links between their local NGO and their hosting organisation abroad (44,1%) as well as their involvement in the town twinning activities of their local authorities (19,1%). Given the various political attempts and measures to promote voluntary work in general and among seniors in particular, amazingly little attention has been given in the past to follow-up measures at local level to make use of the experiences gained abroad and valorise the results for the local community.

## **5.2 Exchange organisations**

With regard to the impact of the European exchange of senior volunteers on organisations, a couple of potential areas could be identified: new dimensions may be added to their work and their range of activities can be broadened. To a varying degree, there may be an impact on the management and paid staff, but also on the volunteers of the organisations and their local communities.

Even though the volunteers' exchange organisations mainly focus on juveniles and adolescents there are social organisations which focus mainly on marginalized groups. The organisations focussing on youth share an educational objective while the others share the objectives of social inclusion and active citizenship.

Concluding the results of the in-depth interviews, a plethora of approaches in integrating senior volunteers into the transnational exchange programmes becomes evident.

Involving senior volunteers from other countries can have a strong impact on the self-concept and objectives of voluntary service organisations, especially work camps. A major objective of working with juveniles and adolescents is to encourage them to become responsible members of society while the main objective of working with senior volunteers is to promote

active citizenship. For both approaches, a European exchange of senior volunteers offers opportunities for intergenerational and intercultural learning.

There are three main perspectives on intergenerational learning in a work camp:

- Intergenerational teams may impede the aim of the work camp;
- There are mixed age groups which work for the same aim but differ in duties and activities;
- There are groups of equal age but all working for the same aim (module concept)

Besides the intergenerational work camps the majority of placements are in the social sector and are not intergenerationally organised. There are special offers for senior volunteers like working in a nursing home or teaching other seniors computer classes etc. In leisure time it is possible to meet representatives of other senior organisations and to establish transnational relationships. The sending/coordinating organisations offer the placement with the aim of attracting senior volunteers for their transnational exchange programme.

Networking is essential for all organisations. The kind of network depends on the objectives and approaches of the organisations. The more senior volunteers actively addressed the more important are intersectional networks.

The organisations show two main approaches in addressing senior volunteers:

- Some of the organisations accept “show ups”, seniors who are interested in volunteering and contact the organisation. Again there are several ways to deal with them: the offers do not specifically aim at seniors and thus the organisations assume that a pre-selection takes place in response to detailed descriptions of the placements and workloads. Those seniors who join are integrated into a mixed age group. There are no specific arrangements for the senior volunteers; if necessary, their working hours may be adjusted but in general they have to adjust to the group.
- Some of the voluntary service organisations actively address senior volunteers and offer specific placements and workloads. Further, the placement is organised according to the needs of the seniors. Seniors can be part of a group of people of the same age or can be part of a mixed age group.

Two main approaches in working with volunteers in European exchange activities could be identified. The first approach focuses on the assignment and is led by the question: “Does the volunteer fit the assignment?” In the second approach, the volunteer is at the centre of consideration and therefore the service is led by the question: “Does the assignment fit to the volunteer?” Both approaches may lead to different ways addressing seniors.

Addressing senior volunteers has an impact on the training of the work camp and group leaders or the facilitators within the organisations. Seniors cannot be instructed in the same way as juveniles or adolescents. Further, most work camp and group leaders are younger than the senior volunteers and do not share their experiences. This age difference and, along

with this, a possible “strangeness” may cause some group leaders to avoid working with senior volunteers. The reverse is presumably also true. Senior volunteers seem to prefer groups of people of the same age as well, since they do not want to be the “one and only” of advanced age in the placement. Group leaders who are encouraged to work with senior volunteers have to learn additional tools of adult learning in order to guide seniors and to establish authority.

As regards organisational impacts, the following main areas of adjustment to the specific needs of senior volunteers are mentioned:

- Accommodation
- Duration of stay
- Duties and workload
- Daily working hours

Depending on attitudes to the volunteers, modifications in the practical organisation are made – or not. In work camps, the senior volunteers share the same accommodation as the younger volunteers but may have different working hours and/or workloads. In other placements the seniors have an apartment which may be shared with another person or is available exclusively for them.

Within the last few years the variety of voluntary work offered to seniors has broadened. Physically challenging activities (especially linked to environmentally focussed organisations) now seem to be of minor significance while the number of activities in the social sector is clearly on the increase. Therefore physically less demanding work is becoming more varied, thus meeting the desires and prerequisites of seniors better than before. The requirements of the volunteers have changed as well.

All organisations which took part in this study offer senior volunteers the opportunity to work fewer hours than their younger colleagues. But, again, there are different approaches: Some organisations organise the placements a priori in a way that enable seniors to work less than younger volunteers would do in the same position. In intergenerational camps the senior volunteers are offered less work, but work is not organised that way a priori. Further, some organisations are concerned that this kind of “unequal” treatment may not be approved by all seniors.

Interestingly, no other age related factors are mentioned, as for example nutrition or local health care.

It seems that intergenerational camps may reduce the impression of foreignness – which is shared by both age groups. But the interviews do not reveal a distinct pedagogical concept for intergenerational learning. A major key point is the functioning as a group and its work result. The workload may be organised differently according to age and ability. Younger volunteers have more working hours than senior volunteers. Thus the productivity of the

seniors may be viewed differently to those of the younger volunteers. Therefore the group has to learn to deal with different capabilities and abilities – and at the same time appreciate each contribution to an optimal work result. Other possibilities are so called “family camps” where family members of different ages can participate. However, a clear strategy to overcome perceived strangeness was not revealed in the interviews.

To sum up, depending on the perception of senior volunteers as either sporadic “show ups” or an intended target group the organisations develop more or less developed concepts to integrate them into their programmes. When senior volunteers are perceived as a target group the needed modifications have an impact on the self-concept of the organisation, its administration and the organisation of the transnational exchanges.

These structural changes demonstrate that organisational culture plays a decisive role, as already suggested in chapter 2.2. Both types of organisations (traditional voluntary service associations and local organisations working for and with seniors volunteers) experience a process of change by “double loop learning” in order to offer placements to senior volunteers. Through these efforts, cleavages arising from the expectations of seniors can be resolved. However, the conflicts which can be assumed due to the structural changes become evident in resentment of young group leaders which again must be mitigated by the organisations in order to create an appropriate learning environment.

From the research results the following recommendations can be derived:

- Although participating in a trans-national exchange can stimulate a new interest in voluntary work at home, a transfer of voluntary work experiences across countries is more intense and more likely to happen if the exchange participants are experienced volunteers.
- Senior volunteers should be encouraged to engage in exchanges of at least three weeks to improve the chances of intercultural learning. This can, however, include offers of shorter stays for those who need a trial period before participating in longer stays.
- Preparation of senior volunteers prior to their exchange is a fundamental necessity. This includes personal contacts to their host organisation and clear information of what will be expected from them during their placement.
- Organisations offering to host senior volunteers are well advised to develop plans to deal with their particular requirements. They should give seniors the opportunity to transfer their experiences thus making use of the seniors’ specific resources for the benefit of their own projects.
- A feedback seminar upon return, preferably at local level, is not only crucial for the quality assurance of the exchange projects but also enhances the chance that senior volunteers can exploit and valorise their experiences to the home community’s advantage.
- Local authorities should promote and support the exchange activities since they can directly profit from the engagement of their senior citizens and, for example, revitalise town twinning relations which might only exist on paper.

Hence, the evaluation of Senior Volunteers Projects in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme outlines the key aspects necessary to enhance the learning of both senior volunteers and the participating organisations. However, it would be highly commendable to support a pilot project which tests and probes different ways and procedures for the valorisation of the newly gained experiences of senior volunteers at community level.

The presence of senior volunteers should be viewed as an enrichment. Their integration offers the opportunity to build new intersectional networks, and their contributions may inspire new projects and working styles.

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## Questionnaire for senior volunteers who participated in a trans-national exchange



Please tick the appropriate boxes or write down your answers to open questions.

### A. DETAILS OF YOUR EUROPEAN EXCHANGE

1. In which country were you placed as a volunteer?

.....

2. In which year did your exchange take place?

.....

3. In which working area were you placed?

- ecology       social work       education       development aid  
 sports       culture       work with children       other, namely:

.....

4. How long did you work as a foreign volunteer?

- 1 week       2 weeks       3 weeks       4 weeks       longer

5. Did you have to speak a foreign language during your work abroad?

- yes       no

If yes: What level of fluency was needed?

- fluent       average       basic

6. How were you sent to your placement abroad?

- individually       with a friend or partner       in a team

7. Did you cooperate with young volunteers (less than 30 years) during your exchange?

- yes       no

8. Did you cooperate with volunteers from other foreign countries (except from the hosting country) during your exchange?

- yes       no

9. What was your accommodation like?

- in single room       sharing with one or two others  
 sharing a room with more than two persons

10. Was there a designated person supervising your work?

- yes       no

11. Was there a designated person you could turn to in case of problems outside work?

- yes       no

## B. REASONS AND MOTIVATIONS

Why did you take part in a trans-national exchange of volunteers? Please chose up to 3 answers and rate their importance indicating 1. (= most important), 2. and 3.

- ..... Because I was curious.
- ..... Because I wanted to make new friends and meet new people.
- ..... Because I wanted to help to make the world a better place.
- ..... Because I wanted to stay in a country without being a tourist.
- ..... Because I wanted to do something for myself.
- ..... Because I could not do it when I was young.
- ..... Because I wanted to help other people.
- ..... Because I wanted to transfer my experience to others.
- ..... Because I finally have the time for volunteering.
- ..... Because I was contacted and asked to participate.
- ..... Because I wanted to improve my language skills.
- ..... Because I needed a new challenge.
- ..... Because I wanted a change.
- ..... Because of other people who participated in the exchange.
- ..... Because of a completely different reason – please tell us about this: .....
- .....

## C. IMPACT OF THE EXPERIENCE ON SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Did the trans-national exchange affect your skills and competencies?  
Please rank them between 1 (very low) and 5 (very high) before and after the exchange.

level before the exchange

level after the exchange

1	2	3	4	5	Being able to ....	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Adapt to new surroundings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Cope with people from different social backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Cope with young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Cope with different habits and cultures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Make and maintain friendships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Speak a foreign language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Work in a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Work independently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Adapt to changing conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Manage conflicts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Perform voluntary work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Manage a voluntary work project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Handle a computer and the internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**D. IMPACT OF THE EXPERIENCE ON THE HOME COMMUNITY**

1. Are you willing to be involved in presentations of your experience to the public?  
 yes                     no
2. Are you willing to be involved in other activities promoting the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers?  
 yes                     no
3. Are you willing to be involved in the preparation of new volunteers going abroad?  
 yes                     no
4. Are you willing to be involved in the monitoring of foreign volunteers sent to your country?  
 yes                     no
5. If you were a volunteer before the exchange: Has your experience abroad increased your motivation to go on with volunteering?  
 yes                     no                     does not apply

**E. FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS OF THE EXCHANGE**

1. How do you assess the quality of the following conditions of your trans-national exchange?

Framework conditions	Quality			non existent
	high	medium	low	
Written information about the exchange conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal contact with the hosting organisation prior to the exchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-departure training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lodging conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Feed-back seminar after the exchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support for follow-up activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Did the following conditions, if occurring, facilitate or hinder the impacts of your exchange on your personal development?

Framework conditions	Positive effects on personal development		
	facilitated	hindered	neither nor
Written information about the conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal contact with the hosting organisation prior to the exchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-departure training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lodging conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Framework conditions	Positive effects on personal development		
	facilitated	hindered	neither nor
Financial conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feed-back seminar after the exchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support for follow-up activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Most important was something completely different, namely

for positive impacts: .....

for negative impacts: .....

## F. PERSONAL DETAILS

1. Which is your year of birth? .....
2. Which is your gender?  female  male
3. Which is your country of residence? .....
4. How many people live in your hometown?  
 - 5.000     5.000 – 25.000     25.000 – 100.000     100.000 – 1.000.000  
 more than 1.000.000
5. Is the town you live in situated in a conurbation?  
 yes     no
6. How many people live in your household? Please count yourself, too.  
 1 person     2 persons     3 persons     4 or more persons
7. What is your current profession or the one which you had before retirement?  
.....
8. What is your professional status?  
 employed     self-employed     not employed     pensioner
9. Have you been a volunteer before your European exchange?  
 yes     yes, but more than 5 years ago     no, never before
10. Are you presently working as a volunteer?  
 yes     no

**Please send back this questionnaire to:**

**ISIS-Sozialforschung • Kasseler Straße 1a • 60486 Frankfurt am Main • Germany**

**Thank you for having spent your time to contribute to our study!**



## Questionnaire for senior volunteers who participated in a trans-national exchange



Please tick the appropriate boxes or write down your answers to open questions.

### A. DETAILS OF YOUR EUROPEAN EXCHANGE

1. In which country were you placed as a volunteer?

2. In which year did your exchange take place?

3. In which working area were you placed?

- ecology       social work       education       development aid  
 sports       culture       work with children       other, namely:

4. How long did you work as a foreign volunteer?

- 1 week       2 weeks       3 weeks       4 weeks       longer

5. Did you have to speak a foreign language during your work abroad?

- yes       no

If yes: What level of fluency was needed?

- fluent       average       basic

6. How were you sent to your placement abroad?

- individually       with a friend or partner       in a team

7. Did you cooperate with young volunteers (less than 30 years) during your exchange?

- yes       no

8. Did you cooperate with volunteers from other foreign countries (except from the hosting country) during your exchange?

- yes       no

9. What was your accommodation like?

- in single room       sharing with one or two others  
 sharing a room with more than two persons

10. Was there a designated person supervising your work?

- yes       no

11. Was there a designated person you could turn to in case of problems outside work?

- yes       no

## B. REASONS AND MOTIVATIONS

Why did you take part in a trans-national exchange of volunteers? Please chose up to 3 answers and rate their importance indicating 1. (= most important), 2. and 3.

Because I was curious.

Because I wanted to make new friends and meet new people.

Because I wanted to help to make the world a better place.

Because I wanted to stay in a country without being a tourist.

Because I wanted to do something for myself.

Because I could not do it when I was young.

Because I wanted to help other people.

Because I wanted to transfer my experience to others.

Because I finally have the time for volunteering.

Because I was contacted and asked to participate.

Because I wanted to improve my language skills.

Because I needed a new challenge.

Because I wanted a change.

Because of other people who participated in the exchange.

Because of a completely different reason – please tell us about this:

## C. IMPACT OF THE EXPERIENCE ON SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Did the trans-national exchange affect your skills and competencies?

Please rank them between 1 (very low) and 5 (very high) before and after the exchange.

level before the exchange

level after the exchange

1	2	3	4	5	Being able to ....	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Adapt to new surroundings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Cope with people from different social backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Cope with young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Cope with different habits and cultures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Make and maintain friendships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Speak a foreign language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Work in a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Work independently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Adapt to changing conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Manage conflicts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Perform voluntary work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Manage a voluntary work project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Handle a computer and the internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**D. IMPACT OF THE EXPERIENCE ON THE HOME COMMUNITY**

1. Are you willing to be involved in presentations of your experience to the public?  
 yes                       no
2. Are you willing to be involved in other activities promoting the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers?  
 yes                       no
3. Are you willing to be involved in the preparation of new volunteers going abroad?  
 yes                       no
4. Are you willing to be involved in the monitoring of foreign volunteers sent to your country?  
 yes                       no
5. If you were a volunteer before the exchange: Has your experience abroad increased your motivation to go on with volunteering?  
 yes                       no                       does not apply

**E. FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS OF THE EXCHANGE**

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Working conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lodging conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Feed-back seminar after the exchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support for follow-up activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Did the following conditions, if occurring, facilitate or hinder the impacts of your exchange on your personal development?

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Working conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lodging conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Framework conditions	Positive effects on personal development		
	facilitated	hindered	neither nor
Financial conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feed-back seminar after the exchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support for follow-up activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Most important was something completely different, namely  
for positive impacts:  
for negative impacts:

## F. PERSONAL DETAILS

1. Which is your year of birth?

2. Which is your gender?  female  male

3. Which is your country of residence?

4. How many people live in your hometown?

- 5.000       5.000 – 25.000       25.000 – 100.000       100.000 – 1.000.000  
 more than 1.000.000

5. Is the town you live in situated in a conurbation?

- yes       no

6. How many people live in your household? Please count yourself, too.

- 1 person       2 persons       3 persons       4 or more persons

7. What is your current profession or the one which you had before retirement?

8. What is your professional status?

- employed       self-employed       not employed       pensioner

9. Have you been a volunteer before your European exchange?

- yes       yes, but more than 5 years ago       no, never before

10. Are you presently working as a volunteer?

- yes       no

**Please send back this questionnaire to:**

**ISIS-Sozialforschung • Kasseler Straße 1a • 60486 Frankfurt am Main • Germany**

**e-mail: stiehr@isis-sozialforschung.de**

**Thank you for having spent your time to contribute to our study!**

Name of the organisation: .....

Website: .....

### Experiences with the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers

**1. How long has your organisation been dealing with the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers? Please enter the year of your first activities.**

.....

**2. How many senior volunteers from your own country have you sent to a placement abroad? Please enter the approximate number.**

.....

**3. To which countries did you sent these volunteers? Please tick all appropriate boxes.**

- |                                          |                                          |                                         |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Europe | <input type="checkbox"/> Southern Europe | <input type="checkbox"/> Central Europe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Western Europe  | <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Europe  | <input type="checkbox"/> Outside Europe |

**4. How many senior volunteers from abroad have you hosted? Please enter an approx. number.**

.....

**5. From which countries did you host senior volunteers? Please tick all appropriate countries.**

- |                                          |                                          |                                         |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Europe | <input type="checkbox"/> Southern Europe | <input type="checkbox"/> Central Europe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Western Europe  | <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Europe  | <input type="checkbox"/> Outside Europe |

**6. In which working areas did you place the hosted senior volunteers? Please tick all appropriate areas.**

- |                                  |                                      |                                             |                                          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ecology | <input type="checkbox"/> Social work | <input type="checkbox"/> Education          | <input type="checkbox"/> Development aid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports  | <input type="checkbox"/> Culture     | <input type="checkbox"/> Work with children | <input type="checkbox"/> Others, namely: |

.....

**7. Is your organisation planning an exchange of older volunteers in 2008 or 2009?**

- yes                       no

### Effects of the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers

**1. How were the aims and objectives of your organisation effected by the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers? Please tick the appropriate box and answer, if possible, the open question.**

There were no effects for the aims and objectives of our organisation.

The following effects resulted from the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers:

.....

.....

.....

2. How was the range of activities of your organisation effected by the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers? Please tick the appropriate box and answer, if possible, the open question.

- There were no effects for the range of activities of our organisation.
- The following effects resulted from the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers:

.....

.....

.....

3. How was the management of your organisation affected by the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers? Please tick the appropriate box and answer, if possible, the open question.

- There were no effects for the management of our organisation.
- The following effects resulted from the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers:

.....

.....

.....

4. Which were the effects for the human resources – paid staff and volunteers – of your organisation? Please tick all appropriate boxes and answer, if possible, the open questions.

- We do not employ paid staff.
- There were no effects for the professional know-how or the personal resources of our paid staff.
- The following effects for the professional know-how or the personal resources of our paid staff resulted from the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers:

.....

.....

.....

- We do not employ own volunteers.
- There were no effects for the professional know-how or the personal resources of our volunteers.
- The following effects for the professional know-how or the personal resources of our volunteers resulted from the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers:

.....

.....

.....

5. Which were the effects for your local community? Please tick the appropriate box and answer, if possible, the open question.

- There were no effects for the local community.
- The following effects for the local community resulted from the trans-national exchange of senior volunteers:

.....

.....

.....