

Using the assessment rates that the partnership has been developed within the project, NoProS is experiencing now a sunny atmosphere, having reached the development of both the organizational and methodological models and of the didactic one.

specific feature and areas of interventions of the Non-Profit sector for achieving "an excellent outlet for a variety of society's labour & skills" (Paul Drucker).

- **The European theatre on an historical perspective:** to promote cultural awareness and expression. Learning through such an approach means open oneself to emotional and cognitive level, compare with oneself, with one's own abilities, wishes and awareness.

## NoProS ... one year later



- **Cultural heritage for multilingual communities:** food tasting to promote communication in mother tongue and in foreign languages. The importance of cultural heritage for initiatives being run by non-profits, how cultural heritage influences attitude and behaviour and

The guidelines for organizing the Learning Circle curricula as well as the handbook for the facilitators will be soon published in their final version and have been the result of a participatory learning process of the entire partnership, as well as of dedicated coordination activities. The NoProS partners themselves, the ordinary implementation of the project and of the coordination meetings have been structured as Learning Circle, where each partner has a unique viewpoint and valuable knowledge to share. Without which contribution, the partnership's ability to understand or respond to a difficult situation or simply to the achievement of the project objectives would have been reduced. The successful implementation of NoProS stays indeed in this: in acting as facilitators and thus in every partner's role of drawing out knowledge and ideas from all the others, learning from each other and act together: empowering each other and giving responsibility to the group.

its effects on integration in multi-lingual communities.

- **Creative communication and cooperation:** to promote digital competences and gain an understanding of new media in culture with particular reference to theatre; to develop participants' skills in using and analyzing digital media.

- **The value of social enterprises:** to promote responsibility, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship by studying the value of maximising income generated through trading.

- **Cooperation and sustainable resource control:** financial planning & management of an international cooperation project and towards a sustainable household to promote mathematical competences and basic scientific knowledge.

This process has been made explicit and has been explained during the facilitators' training so to consciously and effectively replicate it during the experimentation phase of the five Learning Circle curricula developed, each of them dealing with

Right in those weeks a challenging phase of NoProS just started up: the national testing of the Learning Circles curricula ... so let's wish good luck to the NoProS partnership!

**Silvia Francario (Tamat, Perugia, IT)**

# Lifelong Learning building Social Capital in Europe

NoProS is contributing to the objectives of the Life Long Learning initiative and EU core competencies through Learning Circles, where each learner's knowledge and skills are seen as equally valid and relevant.

Learning Circles are defined by the NoProS project as a “structured form of collaboration that balances the value of individual ownership with collective responsibility for accomplishing shared learning goals.”

Social Capital is defined by the OECD as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups”. Clearly there is a very close fit between the two.

The central aspects of social capital, *networks* (bonding, bridging, linking), *reciprocity*, *trust*, *norms* and *values* are all evident in the Learning Circle methodology. Involvement in the NoProS Learning Circles means that participants, will take part in regular discussions contributing to mutual exchange through five different curriculum covering core communication and knowledge management skills which have been developed

by the NoProS partners in Italy, Portugal, UK, Greece, Lithuania, Estonia and Switzerland.

By experiencing the outcomes of the Learning Circles the individuals are developing shared norms, which, as they begin to get to know each other, will enable them to communicate, cooperate and make sense of this common experience.

Mutual benefit tends to increase the confidence of the participants in each other and so build trust. As confidence and trust grow, participants are inclined to take on shared ownership and so input more into the group, increasing the amount of information shared amongst them; leading to a virtuous circle of knowledge exchange, mutual benefit and confidence.

Learning Circles begin with a group of strangers who work together to build their knowledge base collectively and individually. In so doing, they are also extending

their social networks and contributing to their overall wellbeing. Through the use of Learning Circles, NoProS' is building positive social capital by promoting and delivering lifelong learning as well as the opportunity for adults to connect with individuals from different cultural backgrounds and access new ideas and resources.



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**Assist Social Capital (Edinburg,UK)**

For more information on the benefits of Social Capital please visit our website: [www.social-capital.net](http://www.social-capital.net)

# The experimentation of LC2 in Perugia

An extra experimentation session held in Perugia, in occasion of the last meeting of a 2009 Leonardo Learning Partnership "From The Good to the Best", (LLP-LDV-PA-09-IT 0388), involving six partner organisations, all VET providers, two of which also member of the NOPROS partnership. The aim was overall to create a synergy between the objectives and the outcomes of two projects; thus, during the two hours testing two objectives related to the projects have been crossed: evaluating the experimentation in terms of quality value and of K-competence acquisition.

The experimented learning circle was Learning Circle 2 "Cultural Heritages for Multilingual Communities" whose aim is to promote acquisition of key competence "Communication in the mother tongue" & "Communication in the foreign language". A single unit of the LC2 curriculum was tested, that is the module: "Food as an intercultural exchange", whose topics explore the ways in which food can be seen as a vehicle for intercultural exchange.

The LC was hosted by the training centre "Università dei Sapori". The setting was a classroom whose chairs had been moved to form a circle. Duration was two hours. The short time at disposal didn't allow explaining exhaustively the Learning Circle Methodology, neither to introduce exhaustively the NOPROS terminology (i.e. the Glossary) and the Learning Circle's concepts.

However, the group proved to be highly collaborative and important goals were reached. First of all the group spontaneously and jointly fixed the learning goal of the session that is: "Disambiguating Italian and other languages lexical items relating to cuisine, in order to reach more effective communication".

Secondly, the participants had brought materials and objects (specifically food) to stimulate the discussion and gave important hints to the organiser (Tamat) concerning the ways to create a more motivating and attractive learning set also in terms of better organization of the physical space. For instance, all the participants have perceived that: the more

"informal" and "cosy" the setting is the more the participants feel motivated to learn through this peculiar methodology.

Ten persons filled in with very positive feedback the evaluation module concerning areas such as the quality of tools and the topics used by the facilitator, the quality of the group dynamics, and the quality of the topics respect to the learning goal and the level of the personal participation.

**Corinna Bartoletti (Tamat, Perugia, IT)**

CenJOR



## Coordination Meeting in Lisbon

The third coordination meeting of the NoProS project was held in Lisbon, Portugal, organized by the partner CENJOR. The meeting took place on 27th, 28th and 29th of September in intensive work sessions.

Some of the issues discussed were the preparation of the progress report, the review of the Learning Circles curricula, the organization of facilitators training and the strategy of dissemination and exploitation, on which important decisions were taken for the continuation of the project.

Several aspects of the Lisbon meeting were filmed for the realization of a video clip by the partner La Società dello Spettacolo.

The meeting participants in Lisbon made a study visit to a cultural and educational association that acts in a suburb neighbourhood of Lisbon mostly populated by African immigrants. The visit aimed to learn about the pedagogical methods used in the association and evaluate the possibility of using Learning Circle NoProS in similar environments.

A visit to CENJOR was also made for direct observation of training activities in the area of communication.

**CenJOR  
(Lisboa, PT)**



# “Green beans or love story the Estonian way”

## – an exciting start for a learning circle

The first stage of our learning circle took us to watch the performance "Green beans or love story the Estonian way" ("Türgi oad ehk armastuslugu eesti moodi"). The fact that it was the first public theatre project of the Artistic Association Oma Lava (Own Stage) gave us the hint that it is not going to be just another theatre visit. The venue – Telliskivi Creative Campus – confirmed it providing the cold, gloomy, dilapidated Soviet circumstances serving as a perfect background as the performance advanced. The production would probably have suffered considerably if it had been staged in a warm and cosy theatre hall.

So, the first task was to watch the performance and there was plenty to watch: the actors' masterful playing and movement, the producer's work, the set design. All this made us start a discussion already during the recess.

The feedback forms that we had to fill in afterwards included

a number of questions helping to focus upon and analyse the thoughts that had emerged and, at the same time, enabled the discussion not to digress.

At the second stage of the learning circle, there was a joint discussion of the viewed performance which, among other things, included pointing out the differences between a project-based theatre and a repertory theatre. The aspects brought out by the participants were quite versatile, such as project-based theatre's closer contact with the audience but at the same time not being quite 'real', revealing that the popular project-based theatre format in Europe is not that fully accepted in Estonia – Estonians seem to prefer the more classical approach (warm theatre hall, bright lights and nice costumes).

The learning circle was unanimous about the perfect acting, but questions like: which character we related to the most and what mattered to us personally created confusion. The learning

For Hecuba, by Linnateater



"Estonians seem to prefer the more classical approach (warm theatre hall, bright lights and nice costumes)."

circle facilitator, actress Külli Reinumägi gave the reasons for that. "It is important to give reasonable feedback and review of the viewed production. Usually we encounter only with answers such as 'I liked it' or 'I didn't like it'. I think we need to provide convincing explanations to these opinions, too". I tried to use this knowledge discussing another performance I had seen with my colleague, and it worked! At the end of the second stage we reached a common conclusion that we need a further discussion about how to express our ideas better.

Such a learning circle would serve as a perfect training for students of upper-secondary schools who often find expressing themselves and focusing upon the ideas difficult, often failing to understand the readers' expectations and their own real feelings and impressions.

**Agne Narusk**  
Member of the learning circle  
(AEAE Andras, Tallinn, EE)

## The facilitator's view

The issue of expressing one's thoughts had to be addressed by each member of the learning circle during the discussions about the performance. Do we succeed in phrasing our thoughts and expressing them in public?

Expressing one's thoughts and ideas in public is a topic we all often encounter. We need to defend our views, deliver a rousing

speech or describe a theatre production. How do we do it? Do we have anything to say?

Discussion was led by Külli Reinumägi and was based on the book "Vajadus olla mõistetav" ("The need to be understood") by Martin Veinmann a leading expert in the field, an actor, teacher and trainer.

The topics we addressed were the following:

- **Self-expression – an ability and courage of expressing one's ideas**

People often say 'I can't express what I saw' or 'I can understand, but I can't describe it'. Behind this there lies a prejudice that we apprehend the reality more than we really do. We are not accustomed to expressing ourselves. It seems that we know what to say, but once we start saying it, we often fail. Expression of an idea is the prerequisite of this idea being understood. Comprehension is hidden into the expression, i.e. if we cannot express ourselves, we have not been really understood.

- **Fear for self-expression and lack of self-confidence**

We often feel that our ideas are not worth expressing. They seem too irrelevant or too different from the common view, thus maybe provoking an inappropriate conflict. When we do express our opinion, there is often a hidden apology, 'I'm sorry, I feel that way'.

There is a competition between the listener (the audience) and the performer (the actor). When the actor is unconfident, the audience becomes more confident. It is important to gain the trust of the audience, and that is only possible when a person trusts himself/herself and the idea he/she is trying to express.

- **How to express the ideas**

When the diction and pronunciation are terrible and the voice is unpleasantly shrill accompanied by constant self-correction and very vague thoughts, it is very complicated for the listener to understand what has been said. When the listener has to concentrate on how it is said not what is said, even vivid imagination has little effect.

In conclusion, the short training on that matter was exciting and playful including the extensive discussions, different examples, real situations and reference to several public speakers (TV presenters, actors etc.).

**Külli Reinumägi**  
Facilitator of the learning circle  
(AEAE Andras, Tallinn, EE)

# Introduction to Computers for Senior Citizens

Computer literacy provides senior citizens with huge opportunities to a massive information and network of people. The usual dilemma with this segment of the population is of the sort, "IT is not for us, we can never learn it" and the likes. In this article we report our experience in delivering an introduction course to computer technology for our senior citizens. The aim of the short course is to demystify the IT world and introduce the basics of computer technology and the use of the internet in a hands-on fashion. We have been very careful to let participants drive the pace and depth of the training.

## Who is a senior citizen?

A senior citizen may be defined as an old age pensioner. Some describe it as anyone over the age of 60. Whatever is the definition, Europe is an ageing society because of demographic changes taking place in the continent.

In 2006, there were around 83 million elderly people aged 65 and over in the EU-27 member states, compared with 38 million in 1960. Today there is one elderly person for every four persons of working age. By 2060, the ratio is expected to be one elderly for every two persons of working age<sup>1</sup>. The proportion of very old people (aged 80 and more) is expected to triple in the EU-27 member states, from 4% in 2007 to over 12% in 2060. Low fertility levels, extended longevity and baby-boomers' ageing mean that the EU-27 population is ageing.

These tremendous changes in the population structure will have far-reaching consequences for society as a whole. It has repeatedly been pointed out that the increasing share of an elderly population may result to a rapid rise in the demand



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for education and training if older people are to avoid social isolation.

Educating and training our elderly and disadvantaged senior citizens now and in the future will enable them be in contact with close relatives, friends and the wider community using the power of the internet and digital technology. In doing this, there are some challenges to overcome as far as senior citizens and computer technologies are concerned.

## Seniors and Computers: The Challenges

Some of the main challenges in getting senior citizens to learn about computers technology include; Phobia, attention and attitude issues and physical challenges. All of these and many more often get in their way during training.

In this article we shall discuss some of these common challenges and how we tackled them.

The issue of phobia: One of the greatest challenges faced was how to overcome their abnormal intense and irrational fear of touching the computer itself in case it breaks. Closely related are the issues of *attention and attitude*. How do we gain the attention and change the attitude of a senior citizen towards the use of computer. We find it difficult to have them focused and consciously present. It is understandable that being elderly with lots of responsibilities, attention will be everywhere and divided. As if that is not enough, they are quick to disregard computers as something not for their generation and very difficult to understand.

Another challenge is that of physical discomfort. Many of our senior trainees have various degrees of tolerance to cold, heat, glaring light from the screen, flexing wrists, long hours sitting and sometimes suffer from inflammation of joints causing pains and stiffness; in other words suffering from arthritic wrists/hands.

#### **Our approaches to resolving the challenges**

Our approach to these challenges consists of helping them clear their mind from some of their preconceived thought programmes. Having cleared all the thought programmes and having taken away some of their mysticism, the next thing we do is to open the box and invite them to see what is inside, unpack, plug and unplug each component to enable them appreciate how all the parts fit together. Introduction to some of the peripheral hardware such as the keyboard, mouse, monitors and their functions are discussed. It is very important

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to pay close attention to any dilemma or discomfort as this task is performed. We encourage them to work in a group of two or more, and after spending sufficient time familiarizing themselves with the hardware, they are invited to name the

hardware and make presentations to a group. We have found this approach to be very effective and inclusive indeed.

The attention and attitude issues were addressed by encouraging trainees to sit and relax and help them to stop thinking about the problems and to start acting on them. By so doing, trainees were encouraged to directly take charge of their own learning and empowered with the necessary skills to cope and deal with a computerized world.

While some of the physical discomforts are hard to avoid, we provide our trainee with the necessary facilities that would enhance their experiences. For instance, we make sure that every screen in the computer lab is adjustable to fit individual angles. Trainees are also taught how to make the adjustments themselves.

Some of our trainees with extreme difficulty are introduced to antiglare screens, improved contrast screens and the Microsoft accessibility tools. In some cases, we found out that using ergonomic chairs and cushions for back support proved useful. In some cases, mobility could be a big issue, the standard mouse could be unusable, we therefore use some suitable mouse with bigger trackballs and natural keyboards.

Our trainees are also encouraged to move around the room quietly during some training sessions.

Our teaching method and style are designed to take account of any identified challenge. We recognise that some of the challenges maybe related to other issues that have not been treated here; but our teaching styles are largely based on understanding and exercising great patience and to accommodate some of these challenges recognising the technological gap that exists between generations.

Together, trainers and trainees began to actually experience the challenges and resolving them with encouraging results. Whilst this article does not claim to have found the ultimate solution, but our approach seems to have worked for us and our trainees.

Policy makers should not allow some of these challenges to become a barrier to educating senior citizens and consequently further exclusion from the community.

**Education and Training Department  
of De-Charles Resources Limited  
(London, UK)**

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2006). The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity – Commission Communication, (COM (2006) 571), Brussels, Belgium.

# Digital Literacy and Learning Circle 3

In less than 20 years the Internet has completely changed the landscape of communication, influence and relationships and how society functions. The World Wide Web has radically changed the way many people live their lives: access information, do business, consume media, shop, enjoy entertainment, date and make friends.

It is more than ten years since the term "Digital Divide" was first used to describe the growing gaps between people who have access to and can use technology and those that can not. The amount of digital communication and interaction continues to increase and the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" continue to grow. Those who have online access and are digitally literate are more likely to be economically secure and at less risk than those who do not.

Ofcom (the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries) describes media literacy, which includes digital literacy as "the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts"<sup>1</sup>. It involves not just being able to use a computer or digital technology but being able interpret information; form an opinion based on knowledge and understand the context and background to the issues raised.

The first two modules of Learning Circle 3, aim to develop participants' digital competencies and include tools to

encourage the group to discuss issues linked to the technology they are using. For example, the session which looks at how news is presented online includes time for group participants to look at news websites and explore the content and then discuss whether newspapers should charge for access to their sites. Since Rupert Murdoch announced that he was going to charge for access to his News Corp group sites in 2009 the discussion about whether people will pay for what was previously free and what may still be provided for free by other newspapers has started. Similar issues that might be discussed include how traditional media companies like newspapers and music companies have had to adapt their business models to ones that work in the digital age and what effect that has on our consumption of news and music.

As technology develops and becomes more readily available it is possible for anyone to create content and put it online, we can all become authors and editors as well as consumers. These discussions are important as greater knowledge enables individuals to engage with current debates and make informed decisions about the digital media they consume, create and share.

**National Media Museum  
(Bradford, UK)**

<sup>1</sup> David Currie, Chairman of Ofcom, "Media Literacy Audit, Report on adult media literacy", March 2006.



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