MENRVA Project - Multigenrational Education of Elderly by Virtual Arts

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Abstract. Demographic changes and the noticeably prolonged 'third age' of human life and later retirement lowers the degree to which ageing is considered as a period of life dominated by being disadvantaged in many ways. However many older people face various barriers in achieving their desired quality of life. Menrva was an Etruscan goddess of Wisdom and Learning, the Arts, Sciences and Medicine thus representing the scope of the MENRVA project, namely combining lifelong learning, multigenerational cooperation, ICT supported virtual museum visits and art education to help elderly acquire and improve necessary ICT skills to maintain their cognitive abilities, health and quality of life and become equal part of the information society.

Introduction

Demographic changes, and the noticeably prolonged 'third age' of human life, later retirement, the opportunity for senior citizens to obtain new skills lowers the degree to which ageing is considered as a period of life dominated by being disadvantaged in many ways. Post-professional life is no longer seen as a period of disengagement but rather as a period which opens up on new opportunities and new perspectives; the elderly are no longer seen as dependent and taken care of, but rather as active and self-determined. Beyond this individual perspective, however, the societal perspective is of equal importance: recent studies have shown that, due to decreasing reproduction rates throughout Europe, the competence and experience of elderly people will be absolutely crucial in the future in order to stabilise economies and in order to maintain the overall competence of the societies of Europe. This can only be achieved if the elderly are integrated into a network of competence acquisition and provision. However many older people face various barriers in achieving their desired quality of life, work-life balance, inclusion in social networks, possibility to gain new knowledge, access formal or non-formal education, realization of their potential for wellbeing throughout their lives, participation in society according to their needs, desires and capabilities and finally integration into the Information Society. With the possibility to access various public and commercial services. In addition older people face also various health barriers like dementia and reduced hearing, visual and cognitive abilities.

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The Menrva project

Menrva was an Etruscan goddess of Wisdom, Learning, the Arts, Sciences and Medicine thus representing the scope of the MENRVA project (Multigenrational EducatioN of elderly by Virtual Arts) namely combining lifelong learning, multigenerational cooperation, ICT supported virtual museum visits and art education to help elderly acquire and improve necessary ICT skills to maintain their cognitive abilities, health and quality of life and to remain the most useful member of the information society and society in general and to offer younger generations their wisdom, experience and knowledge. The MENRVA project is the continuation of two successfully finished projects namely PRIMER ICT and GEROM and will be based on the results of the EUROPEANA art platform.

The mission of the proposed MENRVA project is to teach older population the basic and advanced ICT skills/practices using virtual art museum visits and art social networking as innovative motivational didactic paradigm performed by two level (teachers, multipliers) multigenerational pedagogical process in the manner that older people will be integrated into the information society and would have all the necessary skills to use information society public and commercial services aiming to increase their health and social benefits (prevention and healing of dementia, increasing cognitive abilities, access to e-health services, telemedicine, telenursing, health social networks, emailing to physicians, prevention and reducing of depression, isolation and loneliness), reactivation of elderly into the society (the elderly will be able to transfer their skills, knowledge, and wisdom to the society), get access to formal and informal education and degrees, find work - free time balance, reducing of digital divide, reduction of elderly abuse).

The MENRVA objectives, outcomes and target populations

The main outputs of the MENRVA project will be the Virtual Art Visits portal/social network enabling older people together with museum curators and multipliers to know each other, to organize and implement virtual visits to art museums, discuss and other various topics. Five blended learning courses will be developed: the course for teachers, the course for multipliers, basic ICT course for older people, advanced ICT course for older people and a general course about how the modern gadgets like tablet computers, Android based phones, etc. could be used to support virtual art visits platform and other activities which can enhance the quality of life of the ageing population.

In addition to above outputs the additional objectives are:

- we will educate students primarily from health, ICT, art and related fields which will educate both elderly and the multipliers (community nurses, nurses in elderly homes, family members, nursing art students, ICT student - volunteers from different sectors/ages), who will educate elderly on basic ICT skills, teach them how to use the Virtual Art Visits portal and based on older people positive experiences with art visits and social networking motivate them to learn advanced ICT skills.
- Develop multiplier and teacher curricula and certification system
- To prepare the research report about the acceptance of ICT by older people using TAM (Technology acceptance model) and Human Computer Interaction theory
Due to the fact that current research shows that “dealing with art” per se has many benefits we will prepare the research report about affects of virtual art visits to elderly.

The MENRVA project has a multisectoral and inter-generational target population: older people, who live in homes for the elderly, their own homes or sheltered housing, members of self-help group networks, community nurses, nurses in elderly homes, social workers, students, family members, art workers, and volunteers focused on three main target groups namely: older people (acquiring ICT skills by/and using virtual art visits), teachers - students from ICT, arts, health and ICT related fields (acquiring and transferring ICT skills and knowledge about working with older people, art, health benefits) and multipliers (acquiring ICT skills, guidelines how to use virtual art visit portal/network and knowledge about working with older people, art, health benefits promotion and transferring it to multipliers). Learning courses will be designed as offline and online contents and will be executed in blended way of learning (partly online partly face-to-face meetings). They will implement different didactic approaches like problem based learning, enquiry based learning, active learning and experiential learning. The Virtual art visit portal/network will be used for both teaching the elderly basic ICT skills (basic ICT module) and at the same to motivate them to acquire the advanced ICT skills (advanced ICT module).

However, main result of the project will be an ICT supported framework which will enable to socially integrate elderly in the scope of the virtual art visits portal network that will in addition to the health benefits of using them also enable both to access information which will help them to improve their well being and quality of life and to learn advanced ICT skills. At the same time MENRVA will develop wide network of educators and multipliers, which will have the knowledge and experience in working with elderly and also various ICT skills. In that manner we will ensure the continuous growth of the network and thereafter the spread ICT education and use between more and more elderly.

**MENRVA implementation**

The MENRVA project started in Slovenia, Austria, Ireland and UK by basic ICT courses for multipliers and elderly and will continue with advanced courses and virtual museum visits. At the same time the proposal has been developed as an answer for the EU LLP call for proposal.

**References**

