

Department of Intergenerational Issues

We about us: We want to empower older students and we are against agism, racism, sexism, brutality and discrimination of any kind.

Guiding principle: The intergenerational department emphasizes social integration of older people as well as solidarity between the generations.

Symbol – the Elephant:

Elephants are said to attain old age and wisdom. These live in herds with the young ones; when water is scarce the old ones remember more water spots than the young; when water is found the young animals may enjoy the water first. The pace of trotting is so arranged that the aged animals can also keep up with the rest. And when life comes to its end the elephant herd comforts the old dying animal with their trunk.

Target Group: Students all ages

Target: Assistance in all questions concerning issues at the university. Lectures and seminars are organized. Young and old persons meet and may counter steer an already increasing „old age apartheid“

Description of the project: Assistance and advice is offered by older students; lectures seminars and events are organized such as Monday Academy, SiA, International Tea etc.)

Co-operation: Karl-Franzens-University Graz

Success: 1986 there were 490 older students at the University of Graz, today there are 1700. In the meantime many scientific investigations were carried out by senior students in different scientific branches.

Problems: Differing values and life styles of participants can lead to difficulties and must be questioned always anew.

Initiatives, projects and events

Studying at the Karl Franzens University Graz:

Foundation: 1978 the university was opened for older people and persons without university level

Financing: Upto the year 2001 free inscription; starting from winter semester 2001/2002 all students were charged tuition of € 364 per semester. Since 2006 studying is free of charge again unfortunately only for people with a university level.

Target group: Women over 40 years of age; men over 45 years

Aim: The general educational mandate of the university will be extended also to the latter period of people's life; with the passing of a special entrance exam people of all ages can reach university level.

Description of the Project: In some Austrian University cities there is a special advisory office for senior students. In 1986 started the Generations' Department (formerly Dept. for Senior Students) at the Austrian Students Association of Graz University. Older students give advice on issues concerning special problems. Another topic is public relations work and to force the interchange of public life and the sciences.

Co-operation with the Karl Franz University Graz, the Austrian Students Association of Graz University, institutions for adult education, organizations of senior citizens and responsible institutions on the public sector.

Success: Public opinion took note of the manifold meaning of the issues of aging and age.

Problems: Uncertainty and initial anxiety concerning the capability of being able of fulfilling the tasks of a study.

Monday Academy:

Foundation: winter semester 2001/2002

Financing: Karl Franzens

Target group: Younger and older people who want to get to know actual scientific research and do not wish to follow a regular course of studies.

Aim: Providing university level knowledge; increasing general public education

Description of project: Due to the introduction of students' fee many (older) people, who were merely extra-curricula listeners, didn't enroll any more; the Monday Academy is offered (weekly within the university semester).

Topic Set-up: intellectual – cultural and political – social subjects

Summeracademy SiA – Sense in Age:

Foundation: 2000

Financing: Austrian Students Association of Graz University and organizations being member of the Netzwerk Bildung im Alter www.bia-net.org

Target group: Interested older people and students all ages

Aim: Further education for older people

Description of Project: Summer academy provides issues for post-professional studies and takes place at Karl FRanzens University with units at 4 days in July

Topic Set-up: Sense in life and practical know-how; work and leisure time; new technologies; health and personal responsibility

Co-operation: Austrian Students Association of Graz University and Organizations of www.bia-net.org

Success: The Summer Academy lasts by now 11 years

Living for Helping:

Foundation: 1994

Target Group: Older people and students looking for an apartment in Graz

Aim: Intergenerational help; developing the understanding for the world of the other generation

Description of the project: Students can live at the home of older people (1m2 living space is one hour help per month).

Co-operation: Austrian Students Association of Graz University

Success: per year up to 25 interventions

Problems: older people give have to get used to young persons in their home. Mutual prejudices have to be given up.

International Tea:

Foundation: 1990

Financing: The StudentsUnion, Karl-Franzens University Graz and various

Target group: Students from all over the world and older students and older people of Graz

Aim: Assistance in integration; getting to know and understand the foreign culture

Description of the Project: Foreign students are invited and take part in the event. The Tea takes place once in a semester

Co-operation: Karl-Franzens University Graz, Austrian Students Association of Graz University

Success: Approximately 10.000 students took part in 20 years

Problems: none

INPEA – International Prevention of Elder Abuse within families

Target Group: Nursing family members

Aim: Counter measures concerning the taboo on problematic family situations as well as help in case of excessive demand

Description of Project: Upto 85% of nursing cases are done by older women within the family. Excessive demands can lead to difficulties for the nursing and the nursed person. With specific yearly points of emphasis the public was made aware of this problematic situation.

Topic Set-up: Publicity work, adult education, mastering conflicts, burn-out and many others

Changing Track at Third Age:

Foundation: 1996 Project of the European Commission DG V/E of the year 1996

Aim: Attention should be brought to the public that older women have specific problems which also call for a specific treatment.

Description of project: „Changing Track – Change of the perception of ones life and new orientation for, by and with older women“

Topic Set-up: Biography as a resource, corporeal feeling, search for identity, participation as a donation to the society. Topics: Corporeal feeling, biography, identity, participation, empowerment and learning group-dynamic processes

Success: Emancipation of older women was started and is now forced continually with other programs and projects, whereby attention is put to the situation of each participating country.

Equality of Chances for Older Women:

Description of Project: The project being sponsored by the European Commission was aiming at furthering the „Equality of chances for older women“ in Europe. It dealt with the specific pattern of problems of this group of people, the documentation of the current position in science and research, political measures and transferable initiatives. The international research findings are made public via Internet and a handbook in three languages. Several of the described projects can therefore be looked up also under www.sophia-net.org.

Really Getting Older – Women build on their strength:

Foundation: 1997

Target Group: Students of Karl-Franzens University Graz, who wish to deal within their study program with the problems of older women

Aim: Interlinked knowledge – which the students must deal with

Description of Project: This lecture series was carried out by University members and experts from the practical field;

Topics Set-up: Wide range (Law, History, Medicine, Literature etc.)

The Class-room as the meeting place for young and old:

Foundation: 1997

Target group: Pupils aged 10 to 18 and elderly people

Aim: Better understanding of the other generation and the time in which this generation lives

Description of the Project: An educational project where older and younger people sit in class together and learn together. This project can be integrated into all subjects.

Topics Set-up: Values Changing; professions – yesterday and today, environment, generations etc.

Success: In ten years the project was carried out with 20 different school-classes; it had a strong echo in the media; it was awarded the 1st Prize for Intergenerational Communal Work in the year 1999 (United Nations Year in favour of a society for all ages) by the National Ministry for Environment, Youth and Family

Theater and Music for Young and Old:

Foundation: Autumn 1995

Target Group: People of all ages with or without theatrical training

Aim: Fun at play and playing together; raising the social competence and spontaneity in contacts, intergenerational dealings

Description of the Project: People who like to act and/or play gather together; the palette runs from pure improvisation up to scenic representation; public performances take place once a year; rehearsals weekly during the semester

Success: 50 different performances; participants between 8 and 80 years; the well-being of the members could be deepened by this satisfying free time activity

Problems: Integration of varying ways of life and outlooks of participants.

Picnic of Generations:

Description of Project: Marginal groups exist among the younger generation. They exclude themselves or feel excluded. Older people face these younger ones with resentment and animosity. The picnic of generations wants to bridge these groups with very simple doings. Older people invite the younger ones to a ready-made picnic

Success: Despite different outlooks a mutual understanding is possible and a breaking prejudices is possible.

Travel Exchange of Senior Students:

Via city alliances and contacts through EURAG – Federation of the Older Generation of Europe – exchange programmes were able to be realized. These were carried out already successfully with Boston in the US, Darmstadt in Germany, and Prague in Czechoslovakia and Strasbourg in France. The principle is most simple. Travellers pay merely the actual travel costs – all other costs are taken over by the partner, the partner of the inviting city.