



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



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Welcome address

RefugeesIN kick-off meeting

Ljubljana, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> December 2016

Dear partners,

it is my pleasure to welcome you to Slovenia, Ljubljana, the headquarters of Slovenian Third Age University and of course this RefugeesIn kick-off meeting.

I am happy that we will be able to work together on a burning topic, hopefully from the point of view of life transitions and learning in transitions. Namely, becoming a refugee is a dramatic transition in one's life, and an important transition for the host society. Moreover, I am glad that we'll be learning how to produce documentary films, how to express as authentic truth as possible. I underline *as possible*, since as we have recently learned in an interview with a Slovenian film maker "all in all whatever the film you make is, you make it about yourself". This has also become the title of our first article to support our common project, published in *Andragogic Perspectives*.

<http://revije.ff.uni-lj.si/AndragoskaSpoznanja/article/viewFile/7096/6747>

Well, 33 years ago, experts in adult education got aware that in our Yugoslav/Slovenian socialist society, where supposedly citizens had equal rights, there were social groups that had a less easy access to social resources and less possibilities to remain, or to get included in society. In those days the groups we were interested in were those of older people. Our major assumption was that *education can be accessible to the retired older adults as it is to the employed middle aged adults*.

We also found out that there were numerous *stereotypes about older people* preventing society, as well as policy makers, from grasping reality; asking the right questions about older people and reacting by shaping adequate policies and elaborating solutions, both in theory and practice.

Thus in 1984 when the conceptual background of Slovenian Third Age University started to be shaped, this organisation became a place of *collective liberation of older people*; a place for personal growth of older citizens and a place of contribution to social advancement.

In 1984 we thought of older people pretty much as today, in this group, we think of refugees: "They have their own culture which has to be put to personal and social advantage, which has to become visible, recognised and above all included. On the other hand, since the population in the social mainstream also has its own culture, *the two cultures are to be merged into a new one*".

In the case of both older people and refugees, stereotypes are strong, the fear of change is present, policies are to be improved and invented. Finally, we see a strong analogy between *older people and refugees' ability to be socially included on the ground of knowledge, culture and common creativity as well as economic and political activities*.

### **On migrations**

*Voluntary or forced mobility of populations* is undoubtedly an old phenomenon. Nevertheless, over the last 40 years the number of migrants in the world has tripled to account now 3% of the world population. One third of them represent *family migration*, one third are *work migrants* and only one third are *refugees*.

### **Facts about migrants**

These migrants are no more rural illiterates as was the case in massive migrations in 1960 They come from urban areas, are schooled and they originate from the middle class, wanting to achieve better economic, social, political, religious and cultural well being. The nature and the number of *migratory flows* have changed. Consequently, changes in the attitude towards migrations and migrants on the part of the host countries, concepts like the concept of "tolerance threshold" and «migratory risk" have appeared.

### **Issues**

Migration policies concerning security and asylum tend to get mixed up, while the number of judicial, law enforcement international and transnational institutions able to impose on the world social welfare real collective regulations is small. There are new issues requiring a different approach, *a different understanding of the new category of stateless people*.

Will migrations from South to South become more frequent than the traditional ones from South to North since 60 % of the migrants do not leave the southern hemisphere?

RefugeesIn, an Erasmus+ KA2 project Number 2016-1-PT01-KA204-022983, from November the 1st 2016 to December the 31 st 2018

What is the destiny of migrants in the host society?

Finally, what type of social reproduction produces the way of life depending on two or three different cultures?

### **Slovenian Third Age University and migration**

At Slovenian Third Age University we first approached this issue when Bosnian refugees arrive in Slovenia during the war in the Balkan region. Together with Slovenian Philanthropy we designed and co-edited a magazine called Refugees' Times, we participated in psycho-social educational programmes for Bosnian civil organisations leaders, we organised help for refugees.

At Slovenian Third Age University we believe integration, inclusion of migrants is a two-way process. That's why in 2016 we started introducing educational topics concerning art, psychology, religion of migrants. That's why we organised round tables... that's why we are happy to be included in this Refugees project which in Slovene we titled *Begunski časi*.