

## SENIOR IN TODAY'S WORLD

One of many, present challenges for contemporary societies is the issue of the ageing of the population. It takes place in many countries, especially in the developed world. The rising number of the elderly people induces to taking specific activities in favour of this social group. The prolonged life span along with the low birth rate make that senior citizens are becoming the largest group in a given society. Their problems connected with everyday existence indicate the lines of the activities in different fields: economic policy, health care etc. The ageing of the societies affects the majority of the EU countries, and that includes Poland. The characteristic feature of the contemporary world are the steadily growing demands on people. They are present in all areas of life, regardless of the age. This tendency is being also more visible in education. Every change in people's lives imposes on single people and the whole society the necessity to acquire new conduct and values, requires fundamental mental and awareness changes, and at the same time lifelong education. In order to avoid the marginalisation of the contemporary senior citizen in the community he/she lives in, to be singled out and regarded as somebody who hampers technological and social progress, an access to education must be allowed. In all EU countries the seniors may take numerous educational offers, further training and acquire knowledge in different areas. In Poland the universities of the third age are prevalent at present. They include the elderly citizens to the lifelong education system, broaden the knowledge, activate intellectually, mentally and also physically<sup>1</sup>.

One of such universities is **the Bytom University of the Third Age**, under the public educational establishment/school for adults – **Centre for Continuing Education in Bytom**.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES and RESULTS

The main and superior aim of this project '**Senior in the centre of the educational activities**' was the improvement of the quality of the functioning of the Bytom University of the Third Age through obtaining new methods and educational tools used in other European countries in order to educate and activate its students. This objective has been pursued

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<sup>1</sup> Based on: "Senior in the centre of educational impact" - Norbert G. Piłkuła Pedagogical University of National Education Commission, Krakow

through the visit of 8 persons involved in the activity of our University to the Slovenian organisation of a similar nature - Ljudska univerza Ormož.

The composition of the group in the mobility was diverse. Both the staff who organise and manage the Bytom University of the Third Age and the teachers/instructors running courses (foreign language teacher, instructors delivering Art and culinary activities) were included. The participants of the mobility are going to be the staff from the Centre for Continuing Education and the students of the Bytom University of Third Age. The diversified profile of the participants of the mobility enabled them to observe both the functioning of the organization that deals with education in the other country from various perspectives and the needs of the seniors who benefit from being part of the organization, also from different perspectives –the organiser, lecturer, trainer and student.

The project was realized in the form of job shadowing. The participants of the mobility during the short stay in the partner institution in Ormož in Slovenia took part in the training based on accompanying the staff of this organisation in their everyday work and participating in the activities organised for the seniors. It created conditions to the exchange of experiences and good practice between the Polish participants of the mobility and their Slovenian partners.

The expected results for the people taking part in the project (preparing the project, participants of the mobility and the staff and students of the partner institution) were acquiring new or widening the existing professional competences, social and language skills, cultural exchange and developing permanent relations. The effective delivery of the project can in the short span of time bring many profits for both organisations like widening the educational offer and other forms of the activities offered to the students.

The cooperation between the partner organisations affects the quality of their activities in the area of adult education, with special reference to the seniors and the strengthening the international activity of both organisations. The effect of the synergies between actions taken by the organisations during the project is visible in the form of new quality of work as a result of the implemented solutions (new innovative methods of the work with the elderly, mutual activities of the seniors, youth and kids), which have not been used up to now.