**Focus area of the X Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing:** Education, training, life-long learning and capacity- building

It is difficult to describe aspects related to all countries with members of our CeSI, so we describe our conception of the topics and report general answers to the posed questions.

Introduction

Life long learning, education and training play an important role in favoring autonomy, social participation and well being of older people, essentially promoting an active ageing. The educational activities of the elderly are important both from an individual and societal perspective. There is scientific evidence that suggests the continuous participation in non-formal lifelong learning may help sustain older adults’ psychological wellbeing. Very few countries, as example EU and Canada, have inscribed ‘lifelong learning’ in their active ageing policies. Nevertheless, there are scientific demonstrations that adult learning is linked to learners’ subjective wellbeing and health, with evidence showing that these benefits are even greater for vulnerable groups. In fact, it provides even vulnerable elders with a compensatory strategy to strengthen their reserve capacities, allowing them to be autonomous and fulfilled in their everyday life. These studies highlight the value of the strategic promotion of community-based lifelong learning opportunities for developing inclusive, equitable and caring active ageing societies. Some research has provided a helpful conceptualization of psychological resources as the mediators between adult learning and health outcomes. Learning helps adults develop self-esteem and self-efficacy, identity, purpose and hope, competences and communication and social integration. These“psycho-social resources” promote elders’general ‘wellbeing’, ‘mental health’ and ‘effective coping with change and adversity including ill health’. Unfortunately, people participate less and less in further education as they age and this is essentially due to the lack of learning opportunities in different regions. Low standards of living and education and migration backgrounds are the main factors that hinder participation of the elders in adult education programs. In other terms, education, training and life-long learning strengthen elders’capacity building to ameliorate their skills, competencies and abilities so they can overcome the causes of their exclusion and suffering and become active members of their societies.

**Answers to questions**

The right to education, training, life-long learning and capacity building are present only in some developed countries, while in developing regions there are no active policies on the matters. In developing countries, migrations worsen the condition of the elderly. In some of those regions education and training of elders are mentioned in some political context and favored by active NGOs, but ineffective. In EU, in particular in Italy there are actually legal and policy frameworks that favor these rights for elders. However, actually ageism is not tolerated even in many developed countries. However, the consistently low birth rates and higher life expectancy is transforming the demographic shape of the entire European Union, and in particular of Italy where people over 65 year of age represent the 35% of the population. The impact of this ageing trend is of major social, political, and economic significance, therefore, we must avoid to exclude older people. Indubitably, lifelong learning, as a key part of adult and community education, will play a vital role in enabling older people to participate in the human, social, economic and cultural development of the Italian society.

As stated in the General Assembly resolution 65/182 of December 2010, “discrimination on the basis of age is often combined with other forms of discriminations, on the grounds of ….. socio-economic conditions, among others negatively affecting the enjoyment of the full range of human rights of older persons”. The recent and already present economic crisis has weighed above all on the most vulnerable population, among them the elderly, many of whom live in Italy with pensions so modest (from 6000 to 9000 € per year) that do not even allow access to essential services, so that the possibility of education is completely frustrated.

At present there is an effort to increase the value of the most modest pensions, hopefully, making elders able to engage in socio-cultural activities. The university of the 3rd age, is a reality in Italy, but attended by a few, not only for the mentioned economic matters, but also because it seems not a priority for the nation.