

Press Release

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Biographical research: Giving the older generation a voice

"Learning from European life stories" is the name of the new research project funded by the EU's Erasmus+ programme, for which five universities from four countries have joined forces. The aim is to develop study modules and build a biographical library of European life stories. The first project meeting took place this week at the Karlsruhe University of Education.



LEuLiv research project launched: Five European partner universities pool their expertise. Photo: Karlsruhe University of Education

The proportion of older people in Europe is increasing. Expertise and systematic understanding of the realities of older people's lives should increase accordingly. The new research project "Learning from European Lives" (LEuLiv) is making a contribution to this. The German Academic Exchange Service is funding the international research project for three years as part of the EU Erasmus+ programme with a total of around 400,000 euros. Five universities from four countries have joined forces to promote biographical research in degree programmes such as gerontology, geragogics and social work, to develop corresponding scientifically sound teaching and learning methods as well as country and degree programme-specific study modules and to make these available as open educational resources (OER). LEuLiv project partners are Karlsruhe University of Education (Germany; project management), Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius/Lithuania),

WSB University (Dabrowa Górnicza/Poland), the University of Lodz (Poland) and Alma Mater Europaea University (Maribor/Slovenia). Experts from the fields of adult education, geragogics, (social) gerontology, conflict management, education, psychology and social sciences are working together on the project

Understanding the needs of older people

The digital biographical library, which is being set up as part of LEuLiv, will include the memoirs of at least 80 older people from Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia. The interviews will be conducted by students. The insights gained from the interviews will then be incorporated into development of teaching and learning methods as part of suitable study modules. "This biographical exploration is essential in order to understand the needs of older people. It also promotes intercultural and intergenerational learning," says Prof Dr Christian Gleser. The LEuLiv project manager is responsible for the Master's degree programme in Geragogics at the Karlsruhe University of Education, which focuses on the education of older people. This PHKA degree programme is the only one of its kind in Germany.

"Until now, biographical research into the life memories of older people has hardly been part of study programmes," says Gleser. This makes it all the more important that LEuLiv now enables students to familiarise themselves with biographical research, carry it out and acquire the relevant scientific expertise. At the same time, Gleser continued, LEuLiv is also enabling an intensive exchange with older people and an examination of their biographies at a European level. "Our project gives older generations a voice and contributes directly to the expansion of intergenerational understanding," emphasises the researcher. This week, ten LEuLiv researchers from the participating universities came together for their first project meeting at the Karlsruhe University of Education (PHKA). The programme included the presentation of various project ideas from the field of research methodology and the discussion of concepts for planning study modules.

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As a university of education with the right to award doctorates and habilitations, the **Karlsruhe University of Education** (KUE) researches and teaches on educational processes in and out of school. Its distinctive profile is characterised by its focus on education in a democratic society, educational processes in the digital world and natural sciences in a culture of sustainability. Around 220 academic staff supervise around 3,400 students. The offered courses include teacher training programmes for primary and lower secondary level as well as Bachelor and Master degree programmes for other fields of education. The programmes for further training are characterised by their particular proximity to research and practice.