



Internationalisation
in Higher Education
for Society

>>> Classes for Senior Citizens (Talks on global issues)

#IHES project

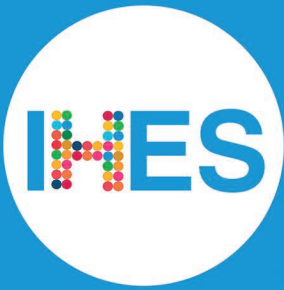
This project organises lectures for senior citizens on current social and international topics such as the Czech Republic in the EU, democracy and the rule of law, sustainability and conflict, or multiculturalism. The lectures are provided by Palacký University in the framework of the so-called University of the Third Age (U3V), a specific university programme for seniors (60+), aiming at supporting the personal development and social integration of the elderly. The project ran in the 2nd semester of the academic year 2021/2022 and the 1st semester of the academic year 2022/2023. The academics of the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the Palacký University Faculty of Law implemented the project.

1 WHAT IS THE GOAL OR REASON FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT?

The aim of this project with respect to the senior citizens is to improve their understanding of topics with international relevance that concern them. It also promotes improving seniors' communication skills and ability to distinguish better between facts and misinformation. One of the key objectives is, therefore, to improve the ability of seniors to formulate informed opinions. With regard to university instructors involved, the project creates opportunities for introducing innovations in their teaching methods and strengthening communication skills with senior audiences. They also want to understand other peoples' realities better and spread the values of internationalisation. Overall, the project strengthens the integration of elderly people in higher education and improves the dimension of internationalisation of university programmes and activities aimed at and involving the elderly.

2 WHO ARE THE BENEFICIARIES?

The target group are elderly (60+) who enrolled in the U3V programme in the city of Olomouc and the wider region of Olomoucký kraj. Seniors represent a specific target group with lower digital and media literacy. This group is vulnerable to misinformation campaigns (e.g. through chain emails). This project aims specifically at equipping the elderly with the knowledge that can help them deal with practical situations. Project's contribution lies mainly in enriching the scope of lectures with topics that have an international dimension but are at the same time relevant to them. The project thus strengthens the internationalisation dimension of the activities planned for the U3V and the university's role in disseminating knowledge and skills to a specific part of society (the elderly).



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3 WHO ARE THE PARTNERS IN YOUR UNIVERSITY?

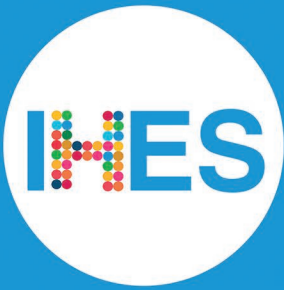
The project's main partner at our university is outgoing academics and instructors who have experience in teaching and researching abroad and are willing to transfer their knowledge to a wider society. Their role was to select relevant topics with international dimensions that affect seniors, give respective lectures, and prepare teaching materials. Another task was to ensure that the SDG's goals are properly reflected in their project activities.

4 HOW DID YOU REALISE THIS PROJECT?

This project was implemented within the framework of the previously existing U3V study programme. The Faculty of Law offers a two-year program for seniors with six lectures per semester. So-called bonus lectures can extend the programme. Lectures on selected topics were included in the regular programme and offered as a bonus to first- and second-year participants. Completing the regular programme and writing a final paper are prerequisites for graduation. A graduation ceremony follows the successful completion of the programme. The project was made possible thanks to the cooperation with the faculty coordinator of U3V. The instructors gave lectures based on interaction and sharing of experiences between them and the participants. The aim was to involve participants to the greatest extent possible, identify misinformation related to the topic, and lead the debate. The lectures were subject to evaluation by the participants at the end of each semester.

5 WHAT ARE THE MOST RELEVANT ENABLERS OF THIS PROJECT AND HOW DID YOU CONVINC THEM TO PARTICIPATE?

The most important enabler was the faculty coordinator of U3V. Generally, the organisation is divided between the central university unit and the faculties. However, the faculty prepares the curriculum content and organises the lectures at the faculty level. One of the important arguments we used to convince the relevant enabler was the constant need to update the curriculum. We base this on the general interest in making the programme as beneficial and interesting as possible and in familiarising seniors with various topics that may concern them. Mutual cooperation also requires good communication, accountability and reliance on responsible actors on both sides – the project and the U3V programme.



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WHAT WERE THE MAIN OBSTACLES YOU ENCOUNTERED AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

During the implementation of the project, we encountered several obstacles. The first one was to convince the faculty coordinator for U3V to allow us to participate in the programme. Part of the study programme is already set; however, we used it to argue that the Law Faculty regularly improves the programme to make it as interesting as possible for potential participants. The second obstacle, or better said, a challenge, is that the activities were aimed at a very specific target group - the elderly, i.e. persons who have different and rich life experiences. Nevertheless, the participants often seemed unaware of the international dimension of the issues that concern them in their everyday life. They also have different learning needs compared to regular students. It is, therefore, necessary for the instructor to take this into account and adapt the instruction methods to their specific needs. Seniors require clear and understandable lectures, examples, and open communication. It is also necessary to provide them with written materials that are well-designed, graphic, and legible.

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WHAT WERE THE KEY "DO'S AND DON'T'S" THAT YOU LEARNED WHILE SETTING UP AND RUNNING THIS PROJECT?

On the part of "Do's", first find out if your university/faculty already organises courses or other activities for seniors. If this is the case, you can integrate your project into a broader framework, as happened with this project. Close cooperation and good communication with the faculty coordinator is then essential for the successful implementation of the project. As far as teaching seniors is concerned, the characteristics of this target group must be taken into account. We have mentioned their specific needs above. We recommend that the instructor adapts the topics and teaching methods to the target group, e.g. avoid monologues but include interactive parts. On the part of "Don't's", it is important not to add obstacles to the seniors in their pursuit of education. For example, high enrolment fees in programmes or other courses/activities organised for them can constitute a problem.