

Galina Lobanova

Project office Institute for International Cooperation Institute of the German Adult Education Association (IIZ/DVV) in RF

Transfer and dissemination of experience of 10 year German-Russian cooperation in the field of elderly people education

Nearly ten years ago IIZ/DVV started supporting educational projects for elderly in Russia. Crucial processes in Russia mostly affected elderly people whose distressful situation was aggravated by lack of educational opportunities drastically needed in the transition period to help adapt to new life conditions and to assist in overcoming social isolation.

Due to cooperation with German colleagues nowadays this field of education almost unknown in Russia became a strong component of adult education.

Educational topics for elderly people include both traditional spheres (health, gardening, folk crafts and culture) and new topics that could be considered as a result of cooperation. Practically all elderly people bureaus offer computer courses, in many towns there are Internet clubs for the elderly. New civil education activities encourage higher social activity of elderly residents: pension legislation lectures, discussions as to topical events of political life, psychological trainings, "young pensioners" meetings, talks on ageing. The subject of finance a kind of "taboo" in soviet times approach is openly discussed within the course "Personal Finance Management". A special place in a wide range of educational opportunities is occupied by biographical learning helping perceive their roles in the history of the country or to define their self-identity.

First workshops for elderly people in Russia were held with support and active participation on part of German colleagues. An important effect was creation of new projects, contracts, ideas and impulses for elderly people education development. The most essential thing for Russian colleagues was participation in educational activities using active methods helping destroy stereotypes. In this aspect joint workshops for elderly people from Russia and Germany are particularly important – open talks with former enemies provide an opportunity to learn to give objective evaluation of the past.

Another important aspect of cooperation is training specialists in the field of elderly people education. Today both terms – moderator and multiplier – became understandable to many elderly people, which is a result of German-Russian cooperation. Volunteers engaged in work with elderly people include social workers, educators, psychologists and elderly people themselves who expressed desire and readiness to study. Training of multipliers is aimed at widening the informative range of educational opportunities to attract more elderly people to active participation in social life. Many elderly participants who followed a course of education became specialists able to use European experience in a creative way and disseminate obtained results of joint work.

Today Russian multipliers participate in European projects as equal partners. As an example we can refer to EC significant project “Improving the Opportunities for the Elderly to Participate in Social and Political Processes for the Development of Democracy in the Russian Federation”: in 2000 – 2003 in five Russia`s regions various model programs were fulfilled in the field of elderly people education with participation of German and Dutch experts. The project was focused on civil education, programs were specially adapted for the target group – the elderly.

Experience in elderly education was several times represented at International meetings, in different countries such as in Serbia, Croatia, Rumania, Central Asia, on Caucasus – which clearly shows that multiplying effects disseminate further.