



Connecting generations through learning,
creativity and community action



CIVIS Open Lab Intergenerational Communities

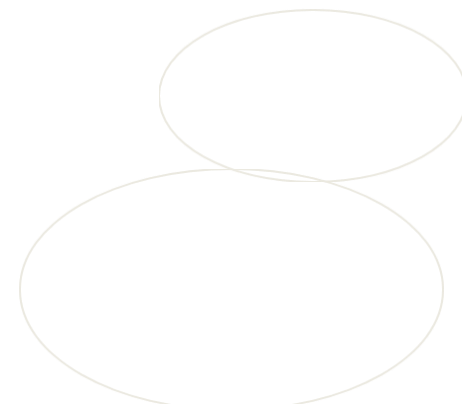
Best Practices Showcase

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents the CIVIS Open Lab’s community-based model for intergenerational learning. It showcases five practices spanning storytelling, volunteering, sport, dance and music, and explains how reciprocal, creative participation can reduce ageism and social isolation, strengthen civic bonds, and inform transferable resources and policy recommendations.

DATE	TYPE
2025-2026	Document
TOPIC	Education • Lifelong Learning • Community Engagement
AUDIENCE	Students, educators, researchers, municipalities, NGOs, community organizations, policymakers and the general public

www.intergenerational-learning.com



CIVIS Open Lab on Intergenerational Learning Communities

Best Practices Showcase



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CIVIS Open Lab — National and Kapodistrian University of Athens 2026

The Open Lab at a glance



Objectives

Bridge generational divides ·
Foster civic participation ·
Reduce ageism and social
isolation · Build sustainable
intergenerational networks



Partners

CIVIS European University
Alliance member universities ·
Local community
organisations in Greece ·
NGO and civic partners



Countries

university connections ·
Cross-border knowledge
exchange



Participants

Older adults · Preschool and
kindergarten children ·
Families and community
volunteers · Researchers
and NGO partners

The challenge we addressed



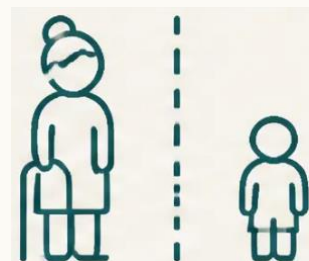
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Europe faces significant intergenerational fragmentation — affecting communities, institutions, and civic life.



Ageism

Persistent negative stereotypes about older adults — in institutions, media, and everyday life



Social Isolation

Both older adults and young children suffer from a lack of meaningful cross-generational contact



Generational Segregation

Separate social worlds — schools, care facilities, leisure spaces — minimise natural encounter

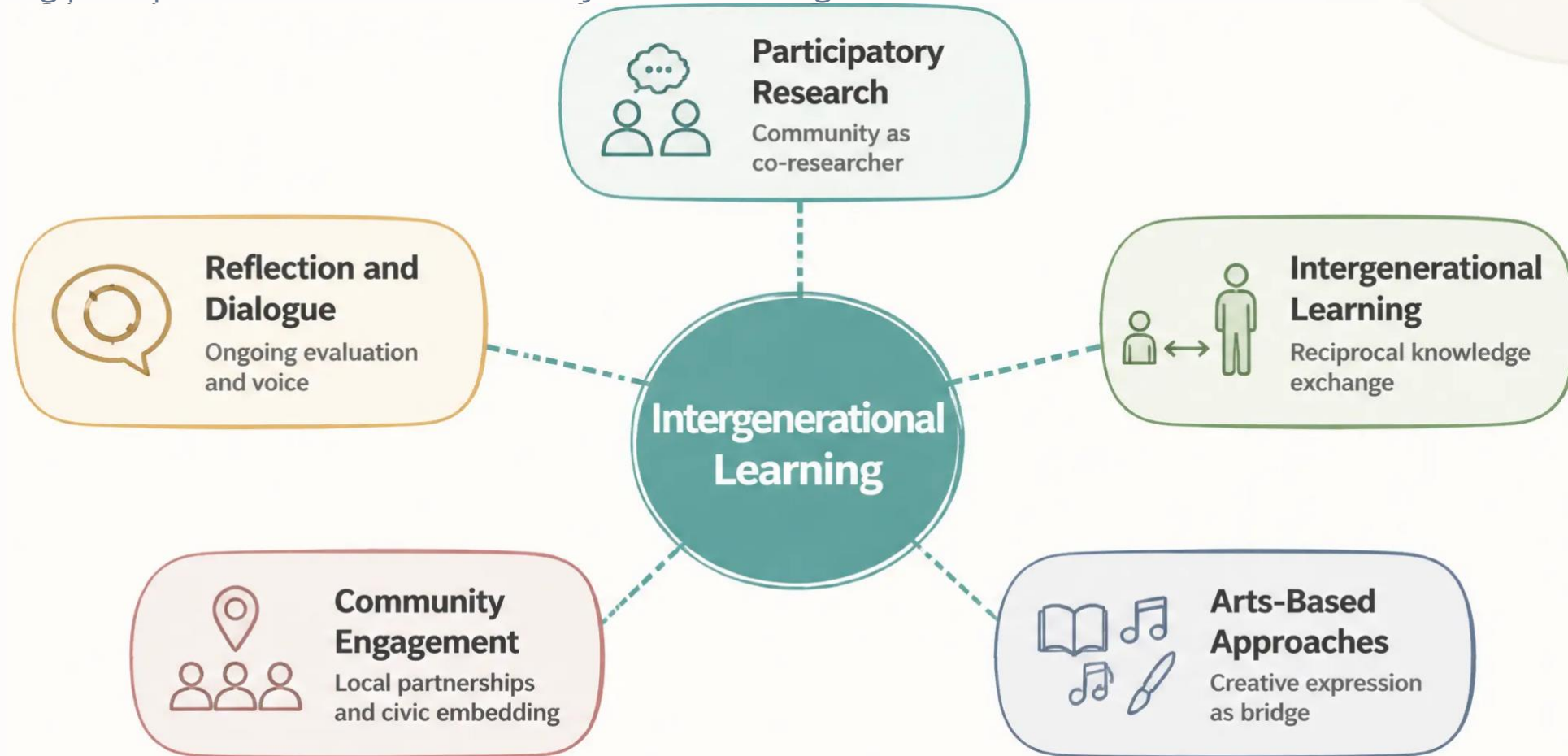


Weakened Civic Life

Erosion of multigenerational community life weakens social cohesion and democratic participation

Our Methodological Approach

Five interlocking principles for authentic community-based learning



Theoretical foundations: Contact Theory · Orff-Schulwerk · Photovoice · Community Dance · Critical Ageing Studies

Older adults and picture books



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A Preschool Intergenerational Intervention



Challenge Age Stereotypes



Develop Empathy in Young Children



Promote Early Intergenerational Contact



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
**National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens**
— EST. 1837 —

Expected Impact based on intergenerational principles



Increased Familiarity

Children develop warm, comfortable relationships with older people.



Positive Attitudinal Change

Measurable reduction in age-related stereotyping.



Shared Storytelling Bonds

Picture books become a shared emotional and imaginative space,



Older Adults: Renewed Purpose

Increased sense of meaning, contribution, and social connection.

Stronger Together & Smile for Life



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Community Partnerships

NGOs, schools, and university



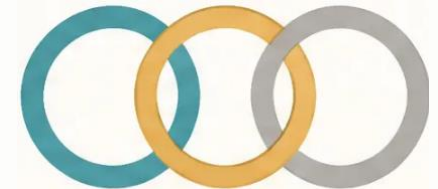
Civic Engagement

Older adults repositioned as
Civic agents
not service recipients.



Volunteer Participation

Intergenerational volunteering
pairs and teams working
together



Sustainable Bonds

Building relationships and
social capital that outlast
the programme itself.

Artistic swimming

Challenging stereotypes in sport through mixed-age training and performances that celebrate age diversity and physical solidarity.

Challenge age stereotypes in sport

Promote inclusive physical activity

Celebrate age diversity



Sport as a site for challenging ageism
the body as a
vehicle for intergenerational belonging



Expected Impact based on intergenerational principles



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01



**Physical Stereotypes
Challenged**

02



**Joy, Pride and
Playfulness**

03



**Strong Sense
of Belonging**

04



**Age as Richness,
Not Barrier**



Dancing with the Other

Community Dance and Music Program



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Theoretical Foundations

- Community Dance — participatory, non-hierarchical, accessible to all
- Orff-Schulwerk — music, movement, and play integrated
- Improvisation and ensemble as shared creative language



Participants & Format

- Mixed-age intergenerational groups
- Regular guided movement and rhythm sessions
- Collaborative choreography and musical improvisation



Objectives

- Build trust through physical co-presence
- Foster creative expression across generations
- Develop empathy through embodied co-creation



Expected Impact based on intergenerational principles

Enhanced communication, creativity, and trust-building through shared movement and musical improvisation across generations.



Increased Communication



Enhanced Creativity



Trust Building



Empathy Development



“

“Moving together broke down walls
I didn't even know were there.”

— Programme Participant

“

For the first time in years, I felt truly present
with young people — and they with me.”

— Programme Participant

Cross-Activity Themes



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These five themes form the foundation for transferable practice and policy recommendations.

Transfer of findings



TIME

How generations experience —
and share — time



RELATIONSHIPS

Bonds, moments, and the
texture of real connection



AGE STEREOTYPES

Challenging assumptions through
images of living, moving life



BELONGING

Places that felt like home
when shared with others



COMMUNITY

The fabric of collective life,
reclaimed and renewed



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Impact

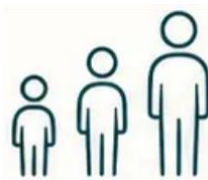


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Community Organisations

Engaged as formal partners



Participants

Across all 5 activities



Community Settings

Preschool, kindergarten, pool,
community centre, dance studio



Intergenerational Networks

Sustained beyond
project end



Public Exhibitions & Events

Generating local visibility
and inspiring replication

Toolkit and Resources Produced

Evidence-based resources for practitioners, educators, and community organisations — designed to replicate and adapt.



Practice Handbook

Evidence-based guide for educators and community practitioners



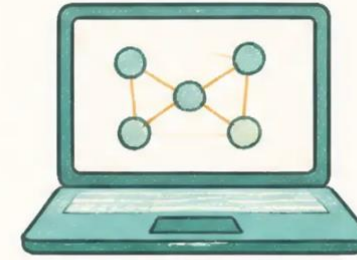
Community Toolkit

Step-by-step activity resources adaptable to diverse community contexts

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Digital Resources

Online platform for sharing, adapting, and disseminating across the CIVIS network



Downloadable Templates

Ready-to-use planning, facilitation, and evaluation materials

All resources will be soon freely available through the CIVIS network — designed to be shared, adapted, and built upon.

Lessons learned & recommendations



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For practitioners, policymakers, and community organisations



01 Focus on Reciprocity

Design for mutual benefit – both generations must perceive genuine value.

02 Design for Participation

Community members as co-creators, not recipients of pre-packaged programmes.

03 Use Creativity and Movement

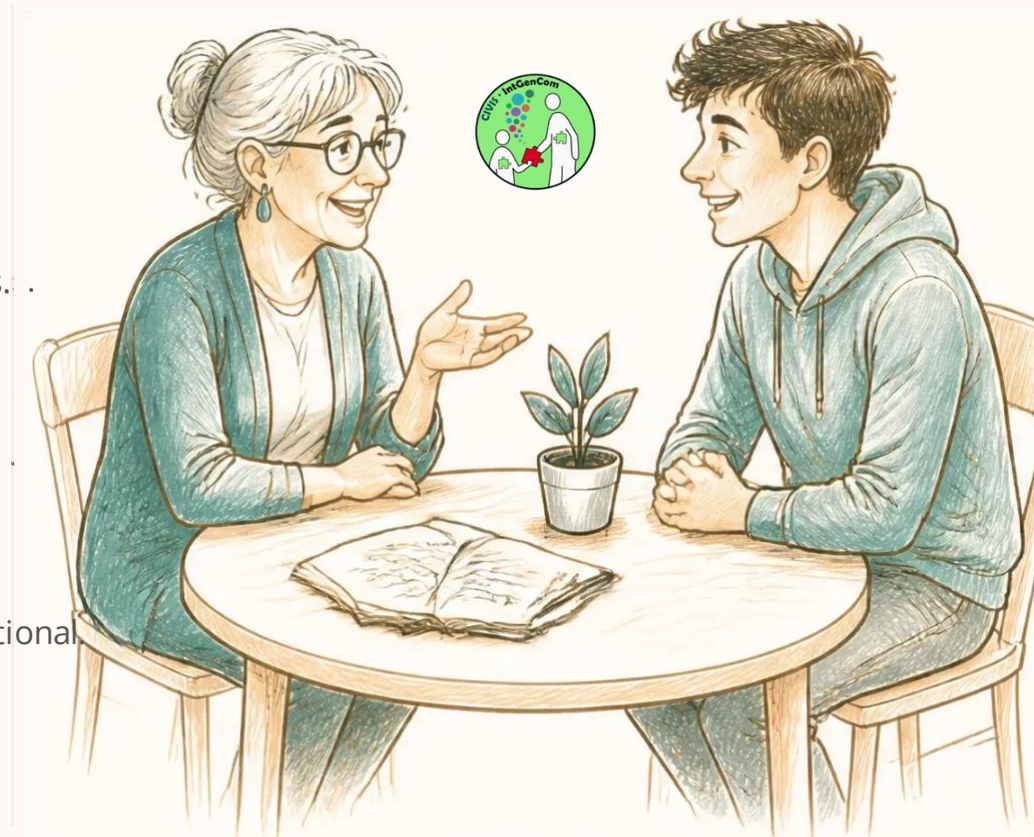
Embodied and arts-based practices break down barriers faster than words alone.

04 Create Space for Reflection

Ongoing dialogue deepens learning and generates evidence – never treat it as optional.

05 Build Sustainable Partnerships

Invest in relationships that survive individual projects and grow over time.





Closing Reflection
From Activities to Community Transformation

“ **The most important outcome of the Open Lab was not the activities themselves, but the relationships, networks, and possibilities that emerged when generations learned, created, and imagined the future together.**

— Aspasia Dania CIVIS Open Lab Coordinator, NKUA



National and Kapodistrian University of Athens — NKUA



CIVIS European University Alliance