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Short version of pre-study Generation Policy – Dialogue of Generations

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Key terms:

Generation policy, intergenerational dialogue, intergenerational relationship, demographic change, demographic development, intergenerational activities, young people and old people, double subject orientation, awareness, promotion of innovation, intergenerational equity, sustainability, variety



1 Background

Social and demographic developments involve a number of social changes. The increase in life expectancy, the decline of birth-rate and the change of family structures alone lead to necessary adaptations e.g. in the education- and social system.¹ Such processes do not only influence the numerical ratio of generations. In addition every generation shares knowledge, values and perspectives with succeeding generations. Families cannot cope with these increasingly complex requirements alone. Places, where generations are able to exchange and meet each other in matured structures, have become rare in everyday life.

Intergenerational meetings and relationships are important not only from an individual perspective but also related to society as a whole. Therefore one has to build up more substituting structures like intergenerational homes and meeting points, as well as providing short-termed activities e.g. like art or culture projects for all age groups.

Advantages of these intergenerational activities outside the family are

- a changing society which overcomes traditional structures works compensating, e.g. in new family structures or neighborhood relationships, effects of the individualization and a changing system of values;
- new forms of relationship of generations can be tested and stabilized;
- together, a future orientated value system can be developed;
- synergies can be used, which result from the combination of practical knowledge of older people as well as new findings and unconventional methods by younger people;
- social solidarity can be stabilized based on mutual esteem, tolerance and empathy

There is given a challenge and simultaneously a good opportunity for generation policy, better not to leave these developments to chance but to pursue and arrange it actively.

¹ A detailed report on the demographic development of the population is provided by the Statistisches Bundesamt (Federal Statistical Office) in its booklet to the press conference on 18 November 2009 in Berlin: Germany's Population by 2060 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2009).



2 Objective and methodology

This pre-study was ordered to contribute to the development of a long-term, comprehensive approach of the policy field "Generation Policy" of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Family, Women and Seniors Baden-Württemberg.² It was carried out by the Zentrum für Allgemeine Wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung (ZAWiW) / Centre for General Scientific Education of the University of Ulm.³

To cope with the complexity of intergenerational work we have tested different approaches of collecting data and information. This way, we could use synergy effects from combining the methodology. Because this is a pre-study we do not claim the results to be representative.

Concluding our literature research we selected the following measures:

- A one-day **expert workshop** with persons from different scopes of projects, who discussed about intergenerational work from the perspective of generation policy or rather intergenerational equity;
- A number of **expert interviews** with persons from promoting institutions, administration, local authorities etc., to throw light on selected basic conditions, which are seen as supportive;
- A **review of intergenerational activities** against the background of subject variety, type of organization and again useful basic conditions. This review was created by a survey as well as online research, and through phone interviews.

Based on results from our review we firstly defined particular *fields of action* (see 3.2.1) to get an impression regarding range of intergenerational activities which could be usefully classified. Secondly, based on all of the different approaches we identified *favourable terms* (see 4) that support intergenerational work on three different levels: the individual one, the project one, and the political one. To conclude we developed *guidelines* intended as recommendations for generation policy (see 5).

² The full version of the pre-study you can find on....

³ The ZAWiW has comprehensive experience in intergenerational work. Main function is the development of innovative education programs for adults, especially seniors, which subsequently are accompanied scientifically. The different programs refer to the interests and wishes of the participants and are intending to improve their autonomy in the sense of learning by research. Development and updating of educational concepts and programs are of special importance. The pre-study was mainly worked out by Marlis Schabacker-Bock, Anja Wegner and Markus Marquard supported by Linda Grieser, Gunde Gassner, and Carmen Stadelhofer as the scientific advisor. It went from December 2012 to September 2013.



3 Results

First, general results are given. They are essentially based on results of the expert workshops, the expert interviews and accompanying discussions during the literature research. Following this, selected results from a review of intergenerational activities in Baden-Württemberg are presented.

3.1 Expert workshops and interviews

3.1.1 Lateral thinking

An important result of this pre-study is that generation policy should act interdisciplinary and across fields of action. The primary goal is a dialogue between the generations, mutual assistance, people experiencing the real life of other people, and to achieve the learning goal "tolerance and understanding".⁴ Activities which aim at improving intergenerational communication structures require interdisciplinary thinking on both, the political as well as at the operational level.

3.1.2 Creation of awareness

Therefore a central task of the generation policy is to develop awareness for the relationship of generations linked to different fields of action and to cope with it as an independent challenge. In addition policy has to offer certain strategies, approaches and methods to support this process. Embedding high-publicity people from politics, sports, and society as role models can be helpful.

3.1.3 Responsibility of the local authority

Through all the selected research approaches it became clear that the local support plays a particular role. The analysis shows that conditions such as local networks, building of support structures, availability of rooms and meeting places as well as material, and financial assistance are central requirements for the success of intergenerational activities. Regional policy should make local authorities aware of the importance of these dialogues, promoting activities, to demonstrate the need for such a setting, and to provide support and advisory services at the local level.

3.1.4 Exploiting participation

This point should be linked to experiences with existing participation opportunities. There are many forms of public participation, which can be promoted and expanded in different ways. Such processes are time consuming, but increase the commitment of the participants with the matter of discussion, and are therefore much more effective than externally controlled activities. Conflict management and an open minded approach regarding the results are part of this process. After planning together the activity it is important to really put the results into practice and to experience necessary support.

⁴ You will find detailed information based on the idea of coming together and interaction of different generations in Marquard, Schabacker-Bock and Stadelhofer (2008), p. 168.



3.1.5 Ensuring knowledge transfer

Although there are numerous intergenerational activities, it is partly difficult to get concrete assistance for building up new ones. It is also rather difficult to get a clear overview of the existing activities. New ways of sharing information and displaying good examples have to be made available, e.g. extended networking services or centre of expertise with certain key subjects.

3.1.6 Individual and collective benefit

Only when intergenerational activities are experienced as beneficial, they have a chance of success and acceptance. The anticipation of benefits is uncontested for both, the participants but also for social policy. It is proved by studies⁵ and reports based on experiences that character-building components and community-building activities which are essential for intergenerational work, have a high potential to strengthen mutual understanding and tolerance between generations. A collective way of looking at the situation opens up the social benefits. On the one hand this may be a concrete contribution to the appropriate care of those in need, or a guarantee for the participation in society. On the other hand intergenerational exchange contributes to the development of identity and values for society, or referring to Lüscher to a "gesellschaftlicher Evolution" (English: social evolution).⁶ The need of work on new spaces for development towards character-building, but especially community-building activities is also supported by neuroscientists. E.g. Gerald Huether attributes an important position to local authorities. His suggestion is that they should track the promotion of a *new culture of relationships* to strengthen the community, to help developing potential and to counteract a decline of the society.⁷

3.1.7 Establishing win-win situations

Participants gain in both situations, as givers and takers as well as in settings that are based on a partnership.⁸ As givers they can meet socially meaningful tasks. They can contribute to the society what they received themselves from it, and in turn pass on practical knowledge. As takers they experience concrete assistance, an improvement of their quality of life, or an extension of their perspective of life. Activities based on partnership give the opportunity to contribute skills and experience and at the same time benefit from those of the other generation. It is important that all planned intergenerational activities are based on a *double subject orientation* that is to include interests and benefits for *all* participants.

⁵ E.g. Hollstein describes the need of building or keeping intergenerational, informal, and social relationships to ensure a sustained and social integration of older people (Hollstein in Motel-Klingebiel, von Kondratowitz und Tesch-Römer, 2002).
⁶ Lüscher (2013).

⁷ Hüther (2013).

⁸ For example Jacobs classifies individual gain as ontogenetic, material, or situational. On the one hand the categories can be distinguished in the temporal dimension. Thus the situational gain includes e.g. direct benefit that results from the intergenerational meeting for the individual. On the other hand, the author distinguishes between immaterial and material gain (cf. Jacobs 2006, p. 70).



3.1.8 Functional and relationship-orientated aspects

All successful, and ongoing intergenerational activities include a functional aspect (that is, they share a common goal) and a relationship-orientated aspect. Last-mentioned contains the particular emotional quality of the activity. Subject and purpose have influence on the distribution of functional and relationship intensity: a course about handcraft can be aligned completely functional, while an "Erzähl-Café" (English: tell café) will always contain personal aspects and elements of dialogue. Therefore activities can only be described as intergenerational if these aspects are combined and mutual learning about the other generation is also intended.

Ideally, functionality and relationship are in balance. In fact, many intergenerational activities are focused on functional aspects, depending on the subject. Dialogue should be paid attention to. A corresponding methodological repertoire that supports dialogue and, in addition, concentrates on building solid relationships can be helpful.

Functional and relationship-orientated aspects of intergenerational activities:



Functionality



3.2 Review of intergenerational activities

Selected results from the collection of particular activities in Baden-Württemberg are presented below.⁹ Central characteristic of all intergenerational activities is the *variety* in their characteristics. Therefore, by evaluating the data we distinguished between

- different fields of action,
- tested and innovative activities,
- type of organization,
- level of participation,
- cooperation-partner

The activities could be assigned to different fields of action, which may illustrate the focus of their content. In addition, it made sense to distinguish between the form of implementation (e.g. if it is an association or a group of volunteers), the levels of participation of the target groups and project leads (if it is based on partnership or a more hierarchical organization) and the type of organization (e.g. if it is an association, a church, or an educational institution) as well as cooperation partners (yes or no). Details are covered below.

3.2.1 Fields of action

To get familiar with the activities collected and to separate them systematically, six areas of action have been defined:

- Life and living
- Learning and education
- Leisure and sport
- Culture and arts
- Labour, profession, and vocational preparation
- Environment

Life and living

This field of action includes all core functions of intergenerational activities. It covers the wide range of support for older people and those needing care, by providing concrete services e.g. for a very long stay in their own home. These include help in everyday life, such as shopping assistance, transport services, domestic help, and assistance in gardening. These services are in wide use and their relevance is highly accepted. To Life and living we also added activities which improve the quality of living for nursing home residents. Visiting services by adults and/or older people have a long tradition. In recent years one can also observe activities with children visiting nursing home residents.

⁹ All these activities are documented in the full version of the pre-study by a detailed project sheet including information on the field of action, lead partners, co-operation partners, period etc.



Learning and education

Here we address the large number of activities, which aim at supporting children and young people in their performances. Intergenerational learning and educational projects that are offered for older people, in this field are mainly settled in the area of "new media". In addition, activities were recorded here, where children meet older people with Alzheimer or dementia to deal with their differences. By using the categories "learning from each other, with each other and about each other,"¹⁰ these activities can be classified as "learning about each other."

Leisure and sport

This field contents joint leisure activities that are popular for both young *and* elder people. They aim at bringing fun for all participants and contain a high communication potential. Concrete project are game offers e.g. during lunch time or in the afternoon care, joint cooking events and excursions.

Culture and arts

This field of action especially covers intergenerational theatre projects. Meanwhile there are many of them in many places. They are not only designed creatively and bring fun to the participants. They also have a high communication component. Dialogue and relationship play a major role here and are fundamental to a successful project work. However, usually a professional support is necessary in guiding and accompanying the activities.

Labour, profession, and vocational preparation

This field involves activities e.g. when seniors and adults support young people in finding a job. These activities are of high relevance for young and disadvantaged people. In addition we summarized activities here which aim at experienced seniors assisting people who want to become self-employed.

Environment

These intergenerational activities focus on animal or nature protection on the one hand. On the other hand here are activities in which young and old people care for e.g. a school garden.

3.2.1.1 Overview of the results

The introduced fields of action represent global descriptive variables. It makes sense to use a more differentiated view. Below we used two more dimensions to describe them:

- *Area of activity*: How can a field of action be defined precisely and which strategic aims are meant to be pursued?
- *Activity focus:* What exactly is to be done? Which methodology is used to implement the strategic aims?

While the area of activity tries to separate subjects corresponding to a field of action on a general level, the activity focus brings together similar activities. This is illustrated in the following chart:

¹⁰ Cf. Marquard, Schabacker-Bock, and Stadelhofer (2008).



Field of action	Area of activity (aims & strategy)	Activity focus (technique & content)
Life and living	Supporting older people and people in need	 Maintaining independence of older people Visiting services for social integration Improving quality of life in the nursing home
	Supporting families	 Caring for small children like "Oma-/Opa- Service" (English: grandma-/grandpa-service) Assisting in everyday life
	Opening districts for intergenerational offers	 Establishing meeting points for all generations Providing opportunities of intergenerational living
Learning and education	Learning support for children and young people	 Improving of reading and language skills Supporting school activities by e.g. homework assistance or lunch time care Providing "living" natural sciences
	Training for children and young people in social competencies	Coping with people in needDealing with people with Alzheimer's disease
	Learning support for older people	Innovative learning projectsCoping with modern mediaLifelong Learning
	Learning projects with older people (learning "from each other" and "about each other")	 Oral history projects Story-telling cafés Getting to know the life of other people
	Learning projects for all generations	 Virtual reading projects Virtual learning tandems Virtual exchange of ideas and views
Leisure and sport	Leisure projects for all generations	 Playing games Joint travelling Joint cooking Holiday offers
	Sport projects for all generations	 Seniors supervising children in sport activities Intergenerational play grounds
Culture and arts	Young and old people are creative together	Museum projectsTheatre projects



		Painting projects
Labour, profession, and vocational	Supporting adolescents	 Assistance in vocational preparation (partnership, or mentoring projects) Supervising student-run companies
preparation	Supporting adults or young people	 Seniors from the economic sector supervising business start-up persons Mentoring projects job-seekers
	Personnel development for young and old employees and executives ¹¹	 Trainings and workshops about demographic challenges in the own department or in the company, demography consulting Using mixed-age teams Making human resource managers aware of the situation of older employees
Environment	Projects for all generations	Nature protection projectsAnimal protection projectsGardening projects

The categorization presented here is brought out inductively from the collected activities. It is not exhaustive, and should be a basis for illustrating gaps and identifying relevant areas for policy work.

3.2.1.2 Fields of action: Definition and classification

For each field of action there are various activities. The quantitative results are not evenly distributed. Firstly, this is due to the unrepresentative sample that was collected here. Secondly, empirical values indicate that some fields of actions are better established than others.

We assume a lot of engagement for intergenerational activities in the field "Life and living", due to various supporting measures by the public sector, foundations, and associations for older people. But also the field "Learning and education" is well known and includes partnership or mentoring projects which can be found in many locations.

During the data input, the categorization of activities mentioned above turned out to be challenging. In addition the assignment to the fields of action was ambitious, because one activity could be assigned to several fields.

Let's have a look on a project, in which students organize an afternoon program for playing games together with nursing home residents. One the one hand one can assign it to "Learning and education", because students are responsible for realizing the activity. On the other hand one can

¹¹ These activities do not belong to the area of active citizenship. They refer to initiatives in commercial enterprises.



put it to "Leisure and sport", because it focusses on playing games. Considering the perspective of the nursing home residents, one could assign it to "Life and living", because it helps improving quality of life for them. To find a solution, we defined the *activity focus* (content) as the selection criterion, with the following results:



3.2.2 Tested and innovative activities

The analysis showed that there are certain key aspects of tested activities especially in these fields of action, which are generally accepted, like e.g. "Life and living", and visiting services for old people. But there are also innovative activities, which are not that popular. They deal with intergenerational meetings in a very creative way. For example theatre projects, but also learning projects about natural sciences can be counted here. In addition to tested activities it would be useful to work on extended profiles of demand, which promise a more innovative potential and promote dialogue between the generations.

3.2.3 Types of organization

Intergenerational activities do not only vary in terms of content. The results show that there are even different ways how project managers implement their ideas. Determining factors are the local conditions but also individual interests of the participants, support structures and opportunities for co-operation. Often these activities are developed out of citizens' interests. Based on this, for example, associations or working groups are founded. In connection with politically initiated programs local authorities are important cooperation partners. Sometimes they are lead partners for these activities too, e.g. in the context of the "Agenda 21"-process.

In general, intergenerational activities that are implemented in the context of active citizenship - and these are the most of them – should meet the interests of the participating citizens, and not of the policy. Activities are often connected to associations and/or non-profit organizations. In this case, the focus of work arises from the profiles of the sponsoring organizations.

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* Public schools, universities, and adult education centres have been grouped to educational institutions here.

3.2.4 Level of participation

Based on the definition of *intergenerational*, which is "at least two generations, who meet, appreciate, and care for each other, as well as exchange ideas in a respectful manner" all groups of ages are involved in intergenerational activities: from infants, adults, and active seniors up to the elderly. Often it is functionally defined who is the provider and who is user. With regards to the development of dialogue and building relationships, activities based on partnership are promising. Here the participants are on the same level by mutually contributing with their skills.

Basically, the organizational and methodological implementation of intergenerational offers should be addressed to the target groups. According to this, there is still a great scope of action for individual approaches. For example, transport services for immobile, old people can be organized completely by volunteers, or by an established institution. It can be bound to a specific aim (e.g. matinees for seniors, or attendances at church) or include all needs of the participants (e.g. shopping assistance, private services for administrative aspects, visits to the doctor etc.).





Another example is an activity which aims at teaching students in maths. On the one hand it can be a classic private lesson, on the other hand it can be linked to a student-run company.

3.2.5 Cooperation-partner

Depending on the commitment and interest, very different network partners can get together. In some parts of town schools or senior associations are good partners for intergenerational activities. In other parts of town this system doesn't work, but there are other relations as to kindergartens, youth centre, or nursing homes. Some parts are good connected by local conferences others still have the need for structures just to be established.





4 Favourable terms

Analysis of the review as well as the expert interviews, and expert workshop show which conditions are beneficial for intergenerational work. These favourable terms can be separated into three categories: the individual one, the project level, and the political level.

4.1 Individual level

- It is important that all participants benefit from the activities (win-win situation). Further, the benefit has to be visible and easily recognizable to everyone. Tasks should be seen as (socially) satisfactory and achievable.
- The effort for everyone on doing a good job should be appropriate. Tasks should be clearly defined and corresponded to existing resources. No one of the participants should be too highly demanded.
- If necessary, support should be given. This can be both to help with conceptual or organizational issues as well as with pedagogical advice.
- Basic conditions should be beneficial to work (time, space, equipment, etc.). Clear agreements and permanent contact persons can help.
- Continuing education and training should be possible to strengthen the quality of activities, but also as a personal reward.
- If the participants are members of a group, cohesion and feedback from other group members are precious for all people.
- Self-directed or at least participatory work should be self-evident.
- Reimbursement of expenses and recognition for the work done can be expected.

4.2 Project level¹²

- The task has to meet the existing needs and resources.
- Activities have to focus on a particular goal, but at the same time leave enough opportunities for relationship and dialogue.
- Good networking and support by reliable cooperation-partners is essential.
- High-publicity people as role models for intergenerational work can be helpful
- There should be appropriate locations available for the implementation of the activities.
- Working with participatory methodology, e.g. while developing an activity concept might be helpful.
- Every activity has its own dynamics and is unique. There should be an appropriate scope of action for the project managers to meet this individual development.
- If the activity proves to be meaningful and useful, sustainability should be ensured. In addition the idea should be passed on to other project managers who are interested in trying the method.

¹² Cf. Schabacker-Bock: Wichtig für die Planung von Alt-Jung-Projekten, in Marquard, Schabacker-Bock und Stadelhofer: Intergenerationelles Lernen als Teil einer lebendigen Stadtkultur, Ulm 2011.



• Services for consulting, support, training, and if necessary scientific monitoring and evaluation should be available and offered by request.

4.3 Political level

- Local authorities should support intergenerational activities by creating good framework conditions including sufficient financing.
- Intergenerational work should be appreciated by the mayor, and the administration. This should lead to concrete measures for recognition.
- It is the responsibility of the administration to create awareness for the need of intergenerational activities.
- Not only activities based on known requirements should be encouraged. Policy should support especially, innovative, and pioneering approaches. Furthermore, it should promote activities that have a wider impact, e.g. on the communication structure of a district or the whole city.



5 Guidelines

In addition to turning out favourable terms, the results collected are the base for developing guidelines. In the context of promoting intergenerational dialogue and expanding existing activities, they are intended as recommendations for policy and presented below.

5.1 Intergenerational equity

This term can be defined as the fair sharing and distribution of resources between different generations. In practice, it has been shown that the concept of intergenerational justice partially is exploited for political purposes, and is used ideological for certain societal interests. Regarding this, the concept is indeed an important guideline for generation policy, but has also to be reflected for its appropriate use. Does it really describe the main issues of discussion and include all perspectives and needs of the participants? In this context the concept contains much assessment and limitation. A more differentiated view might be needed.

5.2 Intergenerational dialogue

The term intergenerational dialogue as the second guideline in comparison to intergenerational justice is much more open, and focusses on similarities of the generations. It aims in encouraging a wider spectrum of contributions from different points of view, and to improve the relationship between the generations.

5.3 Networking

The idea of networks and cross-linking between generations has already been created in the concept of intergenerational dialogue. In the context of generational politics it refers not only to the relationship between generations, but is also important in terms of political and social actors at different levels. Particular relevant is networking on a local level.

5.4 Creating awareness

The fourth guideline attends to the aspect of awareness and reflection on intergenerational relations, and the necessity to provide meeting places for intergenerational dialogue. There are already many different fields of action for intergenerational activities which are dealing with this issue. But often project managers are not aware of this point. This awareness has to be created about the importance of intergenerational dialogue as well as generation policy.

5.5 Opening all fields of action for intergenerational dialogue

The fifth guideline relates to the fields of action itself. Lateral thinking is necessary. In all areas intergenerational dialogue plays a decisive role. Regardless of the activity focus one has to strengthen this requirement for good intergenerational work across all fields of action.



5.6 Ensuring sustainability

According to this guideline, established activities should be continued to promote sustainability. Grown structures shall not be given up because of short-term (funding) interests or new ideas.

5.7 Promoting innovation

Innovative activities can be characterized as trying new ways, implementing new ideas, using new methodology, and addressing new target groups. Due to globalization, demographic trends and the rapid developments in science and technology, the development of innovative intergenerational approaches is relevant for generation policy. In combination with demand-orientated management tools it is possible, to remain sustainable.

5.8 Using new methodology for intergenerational dialogue

The last guideline concentrates on establishing and using new methodology to encourage and dialogue between generations. It aims at providing new opportunities for generations to meet, to exchange, to work together, and to improve intergenerational equity. Focus here is the development of new methods promoting intergenerational dialogue by implementing a generational policy.



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