

Good practices and models for bridging intergenerational barriers and problems in Norway

Case Norway



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1. Introduction: From mixing of age groups in rural areas, to agent based and professional initiatives in the cities

In Norway, fostering cooperation between different age groups has long been a societal priority. Traditionally, Norway has been an egalitarian society, devoid of nobility, where everyone contributed to the primary industries, such as fishing and farming. Children began working as soon as they were able, taking on tasks like feeding animals, hanging fish to dry, or raking hay. Similarly, older generations played vital roles within society, whether caring for young children, performing lighter tasks on farms, or mending fishermen's nets.

The advent of the Industrial Revolution in Norway ¹, driven by the introduction of hydroelectric resources, rendered many members of society, both young and old, redundant ².

Following the shifts in settlement patterns toward urbanization and types of occupational affiliation, concepts like youth culture and retirement homes emerged, leading to a significant separation between generations. Visits to the elderly were largely confined to holidays and birthdays, resulting in diminished contact between children and grandparents, as well as between parents and the older generations. Child and elder care responsibilities were increasingly transferred to public institutions. As urbanization and industrialization continued, families remained in need of childcare, but this responsibility shifted to daycare centers, while women entered the workforce.

¹ In Norway, the industrialization process occurred from the mid-1800s until the First World War, with the period from 1905 to 1914/1920 regarded as the breakthrough. In contrast, most scholars identify the end of the 1700 century as the breakthrough of industrialism in Europe.

² Please note that in this historical overview, we do not include interest-based organizations such as unions and similar groups, as these are primarily organizations for adults and young people in the workforce, rather than organizations focused on initiatives to bridge different generations. However, during the peak of large social movements and unions, following the effects of the industrial revolution and changing patterns in occupations and workforce participation, they did organize events and activities where young and older people interacted, such as youth camps and sporting events. Nonetheless, these events were more a byproduct of the social movement and a shared sense of belonging or identity linked to a specific socioeconomic group, like "workers," rather than activities specifically intended to foster intergenerational social or cultural/humanistic engagement.

The labor force participation rate for Norwegian women is among the highest in the world. In urban areas, more generation-specific subcultures developed, as critical masses of individuals from the same generation congregated in the same locations. In rural communities, however, intergenerational mixing persisted, both in farm work and during social events, such as village celebrations that included participants ranging from children to pensioners.

Those who could attend these gatherings would participate in games, dancing, and shared cultural activities like amateur theater performances. These activities continue in rural areas today, organized by groups such as "youth associations," BUL, sports clubs (e.g., track and field, cross-country skiing, football), and 4H.

These organizations are non-political and primarily focused on cultural or philanthropic purposes or sport activities with a local anchoring. Additionally, several organizations are dedicated to preserving intergenerational crafts and traditions.

A common feature of these organizations and networks is their open recruitment, low barriers to entry, grassroots nature, and collaboration across generations. Many of these organizations are also supported by Norwegians through the "grasrotandelen" (grassroots share) initiative of Norsk Tipping, a lottery where participants can donate a portion of their winnings to charitable organizations and movements. Furthermore, several of these groups receive funding from the national budget, both through direct transfers and based on membership numbers and regional coverage.

The more recent organisations covering intragenerational cooperation are of a more urban origin and tend to be more issue-focused and professionalized. Several initiatives are also founded and run by semi large and large social entrepreneurs and nonprofit organizations.

In addition, there are several initiatives relating to minority organisations tending to intergenerational activities. Some of them are linked to religious organisations like churches and mosques, while others are linked to more culturally engaged immigrant organisations or immigrant organisations working to promote a common culture and tradition within a defined group based on national origin or ethnicity.

In this report, we will explore both the newer, urban, and issue-oriented organizations and nonprofit initiatives focused on intergenerational cooperation, the initiatives led by the minority organizations as well as the older movements, which are predominantly rural-based but also operate in urban areas of Norway.

2. Presentation of the Initiatives

The initiatives presented below have been pre-categorized for the purpose of communication. The categories used to structure the initiatives are: Health and Sports, Health and Social Career-Building Initiatives, Local Society and Culture, Intergenerational Education, Advocacy Groups, Sensory-Based Initiatives, and Philosophical Initiatives.

Although several initiatives may overlap across multiple categories, this approach has been chosen to streamline the presentation of their intentions and goals, as well as to clarify the diversity and distinctions among them.

Methodology for the Selection of Initiatives: We have selected these initiatives by leveraging our expertise in Norwegian organizations, reviewing relevant research in the field, conducting internet searches, and utilizing both formal and informal channels within the field to identify key informants who guided us in focusing on specific initiatives for exploration.

1. Health and sports

Some of the initiatives pertain to sports, which hold a significant place in Norwegian society. In Norway, mass participation sports are widely embraced, with 491,203 children between the ages of 6 and 12 actively involved in sports organizations in 2022³.

Additionally, many people enjoy watching sports on television. Cross-country skiing competitions and the Olympics are considered national events, with individuals often taking time off work to follow major international sports competitions. Athletes who excel in sports are regarded as heroes in Norway, reflecting a national awareness of the importance of maintaining physical fitness.

Example 1: Generation Games

Objectives of intergenerational activities

The Generation Games is a multi-sport, multi-generational, and multi-purpose approach to intergenerational connection, health and community-building. Specifically:

- Bringing generations together through sports,
- People of all ages having a good time while participating in several sports and activities, in a relaxing, non-competitive atmosphere.
- Learning from each other, inspiring one another. The event also provides an arena for social and educational topics, stimulating a healthy lifestyle and strengthening intergenerational solidarity.

Organizations and institutions involved in intergenerational cooperation

The Centre for an age-friendly Norway, International Generation Games Association is the organizing group, with particular focus on cooperation between volunteers and local municipalities. In addition, participants may be on youth sports teams, clubs, and gyms, company sports teams or senior sports clubs. The generational games can

³ <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/om-nif/rapporter/aarsrapport-2023/breddeidrett-organisasjon-og-utvikling/>

advantageously be held in connection with other activities, such as market day, festivals or other activities in the municipality that bring together people of all ages.

Methods and tools

The Games are organized by volunteers in cooperation with the municipality and other voluntary organizations. The activities are locally adapted, but are mainly ball games or other physical sports. Activities such as chess and quizzes are also allowed. The most important thing is that there should be something for everyone, no matter what physical shape they are in.

Participating teams must have a minimum of two generations, and they do not have to be related (e.g., neighbors, friends, students and teachers). The generational games can easily be held in connection with other activities, such as market days, festivals or other activities in the municipality that bring together people of all ages.

The organization behind it has a practical 8-step guide for organizing a Generation Games, free and accessible to all: <https://generationgames.com/do-it-yourself/>

Results

In 2023, 39 towns across Norway organized Generation Games.

Difficulties

As the games are based solely on volunteer efforts, recruiting may pose a challenge in certain communities.

Sources of information

<https://www.aldersvennlig.no/om-oss/dette-jobber-vi-med/generasjonslekene>

<https://generationgames.com/do-it-yourself/>

2. Health and social, career-building initiatives

Some of the intergenerational initiatives had multiple impact goals, including sparking an interest in working with the elderly and creating a pathway to education in health and social care. In the following section, we will present two of these initiatives: Generasjon M and Livsglede for eldre.

Example 2: Generasjon M

<https://generasjonm.no/aktuelt/sk-helsedirektoratets-tilskuddsordning-for-srbare-eldre>

Objective of intergenerational activities

Generasjon M aims to foster meaningful intergenerational interactions through shared experiences between young and elderly people. main objectives:

- Provide job opportunities for young people aged 14-20.
- Enhance the well-being and engagement of elderly residents in nursing homes.

In addition, Generasjon M aims to:

- Promote the health and care sector as a potential career path for youth.
- Collaborate with innovative municipalities and private organizations to develop new solutions.
- Reinvest any surplus to continue generating positive social impact within the community.

Organizations and institutions involved in intergenerational cooperation

Generasjon M currently has partnerships with the following municipalities: Aurskog-Høland, Holmestrand, Indre Østfold, Moss, Nordre Follo, Ringerike, Våler, Øvre Eiker, as well as nursing homes in Oslo and Asker.

Methods and Tools

In cooperation with Norwegian municipalities, Generasjon M helps young people enter the workforce while simultaneously contributing to reducing loneliness and inactivity among the elderly. Young people between the ages of 14-20 are employed as “M-friends”. M-friends are responsible for organizing activities for the elderly, individually and in groups, in nursing homes and care homes. Each M-friend is assigned a guide, and undergoes training that covers topics such as: communication, dementia, facilitation and appropriate activities. In addition, they receive training in basic infection prevention routines.

Generasjon M uses Impact Management as a management tool to both measure and manage their social results. These inform well-founded strategic and operational decisions that maximize the social effect for the target groups. In addition, regular surveys are carried out among M-friends and nursing home staff in order to ensure impact targets are met.

Results

Results from 2016 onwards have documented that elderly people in nursing homes experience great social value from M-friend visits, at the same time that youth gain valuable work experience and rewarding intergenerational interactions. In 2023, Generasjon M created 237 part time jobs for youth and arranged 24046 intergenerational meetings.

Difficulties

The COVID-19 pandemic presented numerous challenges, as nursing home visitation- the basis of their work- was severely limited or completely restricted.

Sources of information

- Report of Social Results 2023: <https://generasjonm.no/sosiale-resultater2023>
- FERD Social Entrepreneurs Annual Social Results Report 2021-2022: https://resultatrapport-fse-2021-2022.no/?fbclid=IwAR2K3KNPI48-kBIX_kWxcH6mTgtjnp9HZF9J91OE9R-d8iiRYPKLRNeSFwl

Example 3: Livsglede for eldre

Objectives of intergenerational activities

Intergenerational meetings, organized by the foundation Livsglede for Eldre (LFE, which translates to Joy of Life for the Elderly), aim for inclusion and appreciation across generations.

-To encourage young people to choose a career within elderly care, alternatively to engage them in volunteer work within the sector.

Organizations and institutions involved in intergenerational cooperation

The foundation Livsglede for Eldre (LFE, translates Joy of Life for the Elderly) is an independent public health organization, engaged in social innovation within elder care and volunteer work. Carried out in cooperation with kindergartens, schools and high schools and nursing homes around Norway.

Methods and tools

Structured cooperation between schools, kindergartens and nursing homes will encourage young people to choose a career within elderly care, alternatively to engage them in volunteer work within the sector. With emphasis on communication and “golden moments” in a nursing home environment, they are trained in individual care. The programs are adapted to kindergartens, schools and high schools.

By organizing activities through kindergartens and schools, they strive to create a sustainable learning environment, which has a health promoting effect on both young and old. In addition, it gives younger generations a different view of the elderly, so that they see them in the light of who they are, and who they used to be.

This also gives the nursing home residents a chance to be an asset to the children. For students in high school health programs, it is a valuable opportunity to get practical hands-on experience and understanding of elder care practice.

Results

LFE has a network of over 240 participating schools and 600 kindergartens across Norway,

Difficulties

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions surrounding nursing home visitation have presented numerous challenges.

Sources of information

<https://livsgledeforeldre.no/livsglede-for-eldre-engelsk/>

3. Local communities and culture

Several municipalities have taken up the challenge of building bridges between the youngest and the elderly in their local communities. The age pyramid in Norway indicates an aging population, with a reproduction rate of 1.9, which is just sufficient to maintain the population size. The recent increase in population is largely due to immigration and relocation to Norway, along with a higher reproduction rate among these groups.

Many of these initiatives are also grounded in a platform that emphasizes individual democratic participation and dialogue between different age groups and cohorts within society. Over time, this can contribute to trust-building, increased social capital, and reduced conflict levels between various groups. As mentioned in the introduction, the industrial society significantly contributed to creating divides between different age groups and facilitated age group consolidation and the development of distinct cultures, which can create divisions if these groups do not engage in meaningful social exchanges⁴.

It is also the responsibility of municipalities to facilitate meeting places where residents can come together. Many municipalities aim to create spaces that encourage intergenerational interaction and connections among people from diverse cultural backgrounds, with the goal of building trust and fostering strong, vibrant communities where residents can thrive. This is also a public health objective.

⁴ Elements of cultural exchange and the transmission of culture, combined with innovation and the remixing of cultural expressions, work hand in hand. This process ensures that the Norwegian cultural heritage, which has become increasingly diverse and multicultural, is conveyed, shared, and reimagined in a contemporary context.

Example 4. Elderly with Dementia, Disadvantaged Youth Whole-Life Initiative

Objectives of Intergenerational Activities

The initiative aims to provide meaningful intergenerational connections through activities that support both young people facing challenges and elderly individuals, particularly those with dementia. The objective is to combat loneliness, promote social interaction, and enhance the quality of life for both generations.

Organizations and Institutions Involved in Intergenerational Cooperation

The initiative involves a collaboration between Pitstop Sotra, Øygarden Municipality, the Coastal Museum, and other local entities. The project is supported by the Norwegian Directorate of Health and involves public, private, and voluntary sectors working together.

Methods and Tools

Young participants, among other things, engage in the "Spisevenn" program, where they cook and eat with dementia patients at care centers. The program also includes alternative educational activities, such as learning practical skills at the Coastal Museum. The initiative focuses on providing low-threshold services that are tailored to the interests and abilities of both young people and the elderly, facilitating interaction and mutual learning.

Results

The initiative has created positive outcomes for both the young and elderly participants. Young people gain social skills, motivation, and a sense of purpose, while the elderly experience improved well-being, positive memories, and social interaction. The program has also fostered community engagement and collaboration, with a strong emphasis on enabling elderly individuals to live at home longer and providing vulnerable youth with meaningful experiences. The initiative has garnered political support and is seen as a model for addressing the challenges of an aging population.

Difficulties

None are explicitly mentioned, but some potential challenges can be inferred:

Adapting to Dementia Patients: Young participants can find it challenging at first to interact with dementia patients, requiring creativity, patience, and the ability to communicate in different ways.

Expanding and Sustaining Programs: As the population ages, scaling up such initiatives and ensuring consistent engagement from all stakeholders, including public, private, and voluntary sectors, might be challenging.

Resource Limitations: Maintaining such programs is difficult with limited resources, emphasizing the need for collaboration across sectors to handle the increasing demands of an aging population.

Sources of Information:

<https://historier.ks.no/aktivt-fellesskap-uten-aldersgrense>

Example 5. Age-Friendly Local Communities KS

Objectives of Intergenerational Activities

The primary objective is to create age-friendly communities that enable older adults to stay active, participate in society, and avoid loneliness and isolation. This involves a cross-sectoral approach to ensure that society can meet the challenges and opportunities of an aging population. Through close dialogue and cooperation with the municipalities, KS develops tools that will contribute to more age-friendly societies. The aim is for the local community to contribute to meeting the basic needs of the elderly so that they can be active, mobile and social and - not least - a resource.

Organizations and Institutions Involved in Intergenerational Cooperation

- KS, The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) is the organisation for all local governments in Norway. It is leading the effort, collaborating with the local governments under the "Living for Life" initiative.

- The Centre for an age-friendly Norway
- Local municipalities
- Non-profit groups, volunteer organizations

Methods and Tools

KS has developed a model for a national network of age-friendly local communities and several resources and tools to assist municipalities. These include:

- The Handbook for Age-Friendly Local Communities;
- A comprehensive guide with examples of processes, tools and materials that a municipality can use in its efforts to develop an age-friendly local community. Topics include various sectors such as universal design, outdoor areas, physical activity, housing, transportation, community participation, and communication.

Results

The aim is to improve the quality of life and increase participation not only for the elderly but across generations. This age-friendly development is also expected to delay the need for services by making communities more inclusive and supportive for all ages.

Sources of information

<https://www.ks.no/fagomrader/velferd/aldersvennlige-lokalsamfunn/handbok-i-aldersvennlige-lokalsamfunn/>

Example 6. Intergenerational Songs (Generasjonssang)

Objectives of Intergenerational Activities

The project aims to create enriching experiences regardless of age and to provide nursery children with a repertoire of songs they can carry with them throughout life. Krafttak for sang (KFS) have observed a strong desire within institutions to bring together children and the elderly. While there are some local intergenerational singing projects, KFS aim to

systematize this approach and elevate the initiative to a national level. Successful collaborations between institutions will be highlighted as exemplary models, serving as local beacons of inspiration for others.

Organizations and Institutions Involved in Intergenerational Cooperation

- Krafftak for Sang is a collaborative platform comprising 27 partners. They develop research-based courses, conferences, professional development days, resource banks, and programs. KFS is supported by the Ministry of Culture and has bipartisan support for its work in strengthening singing traditions and promoting the joy of singing throughout the country.

- Kindergartens
- Nursing homes

Methods and Tools

Generasjonssang is a three-year initiative that brings together nursery children and elderly residents in care facilities for shared singing sessions. Through observation and active participation, staff members receive training on how to independently organize and lead intergenerational singing activities. In addition, they receive instruction in relevant methodologies and an introduction to research on singing and music as health-promoting activities. The goal is for both nursery and eldercare staff to gain confidence in using their own singing voices and leading communal singing sessions independently. The repertoire include both traditional and contemporary songs.

This three-year project connects a nursery and an eldercare institution for a one-year project period, followed by a two-year follow-up phase. Each year, the institutions will conduct eight singing sessions. During the initial project period, staff will receive training and professional guidance. In the follow-up phase, the institutions will be offered an annual digital refresher course and will gradually take more independent responsibility for continuing the singing sessions. They will also have the option of receiving guidance from the project leader or other staff within the KFS network.

In addition to the courses, staff will have access to recorded singing sessions on video, individual songs as audio files, and online lectures, all available through the portals

skattkammer.no (Singing Nursery) and syngsammen.no (Singing in Elder Care). This digital content is intended to support and inspire their work.

Results

The Generasjonssang project, supported by Sparebankstiftelsen, offers comprehensive practical and theoretical training to nursery and eldercare staff on creating meaningful intergenerational singing sessions. As of December 2023, the project is in its final year, with all 45 participant pairs successfully recruited.

Additionally, the project is developing a manual for kindergartens and nursing homes, detailing how to implement Generasjonssang and foster cooperation between the elderly and children through shared singing activities.

Here are some key insights from the three-year project, along with recommendations for nursing homes and kindergartens interested in adopting the Generasjonssang concept:

1. Ensure an equal number of children and elderly participants (6-15 from each group), preferably the same participants each time to foster relationships and a sense of security.
2. Gradually arrange seating in a mixed circle as participants become more familiar and comfortable with one another.
3. Choose songs that the children know well and the elderly can remember by heart.
4. Feel free to repeat the same song, repeat the first verse several times, vary the volume and tempo, sing in different roles, avoid unfamiliar verses and lyric sheets, and incorporate humming verses.
5. Create fun and engaging movements for the songs that everyone can join in on.
6. Plan for 4-8 songs per session (consider creating a repertoire of 10-15 songs).
7. Allow room for spontaneity and suggestions from both the children and the elderly during the session. Duration: 15-30 minutes.
8. Consider doing something enjoyable together after the singing session, such as playing, drawing, or sharing a snack like fruit.

Difficulties

It is essential for nurses and kindergarten staff to recognize that the primary focus of the sessions is on building social relationships. Mastery of the technical aspects of singing is secondary. The sessions are not intended as performances by the kindergarten children for the elderly. Instead, the children and elderly are the main participants, and they should be afforded the opportunity and space to engage naturally within this social context.

Sources of information

<https://www.krafftakforsang.no/om-oss>

<https://www.krafftakforsang.no/generasjonssang>

4. Intergenerational education

Lifelong learning is crucial, from early childhood through old age. An optimistic beginner's mindset can often enhance learning processes, much like a child experimenting with different ways of walking, falling, getting up, and trying again until success is achieved. Conversely, an experienced mind, enriched with a vast array of references, can effortlessly comprehend new knowledge based on these references or quickly perceive the emotional state of another person. Our research began with the question of whether there are projects that facilitate intergenerational learning and collaboration. In doing so, we discovered an intriguing example from the Pensioners Association.

Additionally, the minority organizations provided compelling examples of intergenerational education, particularly in the teaching of their mother tongue, cultural traditions such as dance and music, and the celebration of significant events. The best practice in this category was exemplified by the Tamil Resource and Guidance Center (TRVS).

Example 7. Digital Skills- The Pensioners' Association

Objectives of Intergenerational Activities

The initiative aims to bridge the digital divide between generations by having young people help the elderly learn how to use smartphones, tablets, and the internet. The goal is to facilitate digital literacy among older adults through engaging and educational intergenerational collaboration.

Organizations and Institutions Involved in Intergenerational Cooperation

The initiative is led by the Pensioners' Association, which collaborates with schools, particularly Borge Secondary School in Fredrikstad. The project involves school youth, teachers, and elderly participants, with an emphasis on family-based digital training as well.

Methods and Tools

The initiative includes the development of an “Inspirational Booklet” available in Bokmål, Nynorsk, and Northern Sami, designed to guide young people and the elderly through digital learning together. Two films have been produced to showcase the project's work, including a version translated into sign language. The program also involves practical sessions where elderly participants meet with students who have chosen the elective "Effort for others" to learn about digital tools.

Results

The project has successfully fostered intergenerational collaboration, helping elderly participants gain digital skills while providing young people with a sense of contribution and community service, and learning pedagogical skills. The initiative has also created educational resources, such as the booklet and films, that can be used to replicate the program in other settings. The success of the project is highlighted by its ability to make digital training accessible and enjoyable for both generations.

Difficulties

- Bridging the Digital Divide: Teaching older adults who may have little to no experience with digital technology can be challenging, requiring patience and tailored approaches to their learning pace and needs.
- Ensuring Engagement: Encouraging consistent participation from both young people and elderly participants might be challenging, especially in maintaining motivation and making the learning process enjoyable and effective for both groups.
- Resource and Accessibility Issues: While the initiative has been successful, ensuring that the materials (booklets and films) are accessible to all, including translations into various languages and sign language, could present logistical and financial challenges.

Sources of Information

<https://www.pensjonistforbundet.no/digitalisering-generasjonssamarbeid>

Example 8. Tamil Resource and Guidance Center (TRVS)

Objectives of Intergenerational Activities

They aspire to be the leading organization dedicated to uniting Tamils in Norway around their cultural identity, guiding them to become resourceful and well-integrated members of Norwegian society.

They intend to guide Tamils in Norway in acquiring knowledge of their language, culture, history, and the social context of Norway.

Methods and Tools

The center's work focus on providing children and young people with a secure foundation where elements of Norwegian and Tamil culture complement and enrich one another. This is achieved through organized gatherings centered around cultural activities.

They offer homework assistance for youth, led by older individuals with a Tamil background, coding and programming courses, seminars on innovation and entrepreneurship, themed seminar days, social gatherings for the elderly, and more.

Results

We could not find any evidence of specific results from these activities in their website, apart from the organisations own appreciation of the activities and a good reputation of the organization and its activities in the minority culture.

However, the social value of the activities organized by TRVS is well-documented in migration research. When educated adults with established positions in society collaborate with children and youth, they serve as role models. Young people from minority backgrounds see that they too can succeed and attain desired positions and status within the majority society.

The older individuals involved in this organization are also firmly rooted in an integration ideal that emphasizes the importance of Tamils integrating into society by participating in various social arenas. Thus, they serve not only as role models in education and employment but also in fostering civic engagement within the majority society.

Interestingly, a master thesis researching the mathematical teaching in the tamil organizations on Saturdays, reported this:

Learning mathematics was often a secondary reason why parents in the practice community chose to send their children to Saturday schools. The primary reason was for the children to practice their mother tongue. (<https://oda.oslomet.no/oda-xmlui/handle/10642/9151>)

This clearly supports the organization's aim as a promoter of cultural traditions and language, as well as the belief that children with a secure foundation in their own culture (the Tamil minority culture) are better equipped for successful integration and, consequently, for achieving socioeconomic success in the host country.

Sources of Information

<https://trvs.no>

<https://oda.oslomet.no/oda-xmlui/handle/10642/9151>

5. Advocacy groups

As outlined in the introduction, numerous organizations in Norway are dedicated to advocacy across various causes. These include organizations focused on health and well-being, such as user associations, as well as those addressing sustainability and climate change. A notable example of an advocacy group is the Norwegian Grandparents Climate Campaign. This organization is particularly distinctive in its focus on the future of subsequent generations, including their grandchildren.

Example 9. The Norwegian Grandparents Climate Campaign (GCC) [Besteforeldrenes klimaaksjon -BKA]

Objectives of intergenerational activities

GCC is a non-partisan organization that prioritizes the future of children and young people. Their mission is to support young people in their fight action on climate and environmental issues.

GCC has proved a significant voice in the public debate on the state of Norway's climate policy at home and abroad.

Organizations and institutions involved in intergenerational cooperation

GCC collaborates with a wide range of like-minded partners, such as environmental, youth and religious organizations, as well as trade unions. In addition, they actively cooperate with political parties and various government ministries.

Methods and tools

As March 2023, GCC has well over 7000 members, with regional groups across Norway. GCC has been very active in raising awareness surrounding climate and environmental issues through their involvement in political campaigns, demonstrations and community meetings.

In addition, they submit feedback to various government ministries and participate in political hearings, with the aim of influencing public opinion and policy decision-making on local and national levels.

Results

In 2014, an effort raise awareness of the Eco-Article of the Norwegian Constitution, GCC and their partner Eco-Agents (organization of Norwegian children) produced a four-page pamphlet entitled "Yours, mine and Nature's Law". Funded by UNESCO, it was presented to all members of Norwegian Parliament, and distributed to primary schools and public libraries across the country. <https://www.besteforeldreaksjonen.no/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Folder-Article-112-ENGLISH.pdf>

A series of short videos about children and the elderly participating in nature experiences: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10180511>. ‘

A nature-oriented course for grandparents, organized in Vestfold municipality. The overarching objective of the project is to learn to "wander with grandchildren" as a means to encourage and engage in conversations about nature, the environment, and climate issues.

Difficulties

GCC has met challenges in terms of levels of engagement among "regular" members and their roles in organizing initiatives and activities. As a result much of the organizing work is carried out by board members, which presents a fairly heavy burden at times.

Sources of information

Annual Results Report: <https://www.besteforeldreaksjonen.no/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Arsmelding-2023-1.pdf>

"Children and Youth" <https://www.besteforeldreaksjonen.no/category/barn-og-unge/>

Nature-oriented course: <https://www.besteforeldreaksjonen.no/2024/06/pa-kurs-i-naturplede>

6. Sensory based initiatives

While humans naturally engage with the world through their senses, adult life often limits the breadth and value of these sensory experiences. Modern work environments typically emphasize intellectual capabilities and verbal and written communication, often neglecting the rich information provided by sensory experiences in daily life. One initiative we investigated, Matjungelen, addresses this undervaluation of sensory input by creating a project that celebrates the impressions and associations elicited through the collective preparation, sensory engagement, and consumption of food.

Example 10. Matjungelen

Objectives of intergenerational activities

-Facilitate Intergenerational Connections Through Food: The primary goal is to create meaningful and joyful interactions between children and the elderly important role food plays as a cultural and social connector: Food serves as a common reference point for discussions, cultural heritage and traditions.

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-Enhance Well-being: The activities are designed to improve the social, spiritual, and cultural well-being of the elderly.

Organizations and institutions involved in intergenerational cooperation

-Livsglede for Eldre (Joy of Life for the Elderly): This organization operates the overall initiative, including developing the e-learning course and generational meeting model.

-Joy of Life Kindergartens and Schools: These institutions across Norway participate in the intergenerational meetings, involving children in activities with the elderly.

-Local Elderly Institutions and Meeting Places: Nursing homes, care homes, day centers, and other community spaces host the intergenerational activities.

Methods and tools

-E-Learning Courses: Livsglede for Eldre developed specific e-learning courses, including “How to facilitate good intergenerational meetings” and courses with Matjungelen activities suited for these interactions.

-Food-Based Activities: Activities like sensory trails, Kim's play, berry picking, and window sill gardening are used to engage both generations. These activities are chosen for their ability to include all participants, allowing them to share knowledge and experiences.

-Collaboration and Planning: Meetings between kindergartens, schools, and elderly institutions are essential to plan activities, clarify expectations, and distribute responsibilities.

Results

-Widespread Participation: Currently, there are 550 joy-of-life kindergartens and 235 joy-of-life schools involved in creating intergenerational meetings across Norway.

-Enhanced Social Interaction: The activities have helped build bridges between generations, creating inclusive local environments where both young and old feel valued and connected.

-Increased Well-being: The focus on food and shared meals has positively impacted the appetite, mealtime enjoyment, and overall well-being of the elderly participants.

Difficulties

Inclusivity in Activities: The activities chosen need to be simple and accessible so that all participants, regardless of age or ability, can feel included and experience a sense of mastery. This can be challenging, especially when dealing with a wide range of abilities and preferences among the elderly.

Sources of information

Matjungelen

<https://barnehage.matjungelen.no/hvordan-mat-kan-skape-gode-generasjonsmoter/>

Livsglede for Eldre: <https://livsgledeforeldre.no/>

7. Philosophical initiatives

The final category of organizations we examined in our research on intergenerational initiatives was philosophical organizations. By their nature, these organizations play a significant role in many people's lives, often serving as crucial points of reference in various life situations and providing a secure environment for celebrating and marking rituals associated with important life transitions. Within this category, we identified initiatives both within majority populations and minority groups. However, the majority initiative possessed the most comprehensive and accessible documentation, and therefore, we will present this example here.

Example 11. Young people meeting the elderly- Church of Norway

Objectives of Intergenerational Activities

The initiative aims to create meaningful connections between generations by having secondary school students visit elderly residents in nursing homes. The objective is to foster integration, cohesion, and togetherness across cultures and age groups.

Organizations and Institutions Involved in Intergenerational Cooperation:

The program involves collaboration between local churches, schools, and district institutions in Oslo, particularly in the Groruddalen borough. The initiative was spearheaded by the deacon Liv Bergh from Høybråten, Fossum, and Stovner parish. It has since expanded to other parishes in Oslo, such as Ellingsrud-Furuset, Grorud, Nordberg, Grefsen, Hauketo-Prinsdal, and Mortensrud.

Methods and Tools

Through the elective school subject "Effort for others," groups of six to eight students regularly visit elderly care homes. They are accompanied by an adult volunteer who supervises and supports their activities. The activities include playing games, singing, and having conversations, creating an informal setting for interaction between young and old.

Results

The initiative has been well-received, with positive feedback from students, elderly residents, staff, and relatives. Students report learning about the emotional complexities and life experiences of the elderly, while the elderly enjoy the company and feel they are contributing to the younger generation. The program has strengthened ties between the church, schools, and the local community, and it has been highlighted by national figures like Prime Minister Erna Solberg as an exemplary model of intergenerational engagement.

Difficulties

Specific difficulties encountered in the initiative have not been mentioned. However, common challenges in such programs might include coordinating schedules between schools and care homes, ensuring consistent participation from students.

Sources of information

<https://www.kirken.no/nn-NO/bispedommer/Oslo/diakoni-og-samfunnssporsmal/buss--og-trikkekampanje/unge-moter-eldre/>

3. Successes and challenges in intergenerational activities

Several positive dimensions were observed in the intergenerational activities, which can be analytically divided into individual effects on the two primary target groups: children/youth and the elderly. Initially, it is important to consider the effects that were commonly shared across both groups.

These shared effects emerged primarily from the social interactions facilitated between the young and elderly participants. Both cohorts reported an enhanced understanding of one another, gaining insight into the life experiences of individuals from different age groups and life stages. The willingness to engage in and the actual development of social understanding across life-course differences constitute a foundational element for fostering dialogue within democratic processes, particularly in the context of negotiating the distribution of societal resources and responsibilities.

Additionally, participants from both groups indicated that the projects contributed to increased social contact and played a role in mitigating loneliness—an issue that is recognized as prevalent among both young people and the elderly in Norwegian society.

In terms of individual effects, particularly those that reflect a more reciprocal dynamic, projects with a specific focus on activities such as running merit particular attention. For example, in the digital competence project organized by the Pensioners' Association, older adults reported benefits such as acquiring digital literacy skills and enhancing their social engagement with younger individuals. Conversely, the youth involved gained valuable pedagogical experience in teaching digital tools to an older population.

Within the minority-focused project spearheaded by TRVS, younger participants acquired career-relevant skills in coding and innovation, while the older participants received recognition for their experiences with mobility and were able to reflect on the complexities of holding a minority status as a young person in contemporary Norway. This reflection process allowed them to better understand and articulate their own experiences of inclusion.

In the BKA project, the elderly participants, specifically grandparents, were able to impart a cause they were passionate about to the younger generation, providing them with historical context and receiving acknowledgment for their accumulated experience and expertise. Meanwhile, the younger participants broadened their understanding of climate-related issues and received guidance on how to effectively engage in advocacy within appropriate channels.

Furthermore, older adults involved in various projects reported improvements in their overall well-being, with positive health outcomes such as increased appetite—a crucial factor in maintaining health in advanced age, as demonstrated in the "Matjungelen" project. In municipal projects, reports highlighted several health benefits for the elderly, including increased physical activity and enhanced well-being, which contributed to their ability to remain in their own homes for longer periods. This outcome has the potential to alleviate pressures on public care services by postponing the need for institutional care, thereby enabling municipalities to realize cost savings.

Finally, a number of younger participants expressed a heightened interest in pursuing careers in health and care professions, as well as in engaging in volunteer work. This shift is particularly significant given the growing demand for healthcare professionals in Norway in the years to come.

There were also some challenges in the projects, which could partly be observed in the form of dilemmas or tensions.

In several of the projects, both professional actors and volunteer helpers were involved. Experience showed that professionals sometimes became so focused on achieving strong outcomes in specific thematic areas that they underestimated the importance of spontaneous social interactions between generations. This was a learning experience, particularly in the Singing Project. In some of their sub-projects, they discovered that the communal singing had shifted into a performance by children for the elderly, rather than an intended collaborative singing or humming together. This realization led the project leaders to develop guidelines for how future sessions should be conducted, making it a significant learning experience.

This underscores the critical importance of effective project management and continuous follow-up in intergenerational projects, as it allows for the identification of key lessons and the establishment of improved practices for future initiatives.

Additional dilemmas or challenges are associated with the level of engagement within volunteer organizations that implement intergenerational projects. Often, a small number of highly dedicated individuals carry out much of the work. If these organizations are unable to attract more assistance from other members or secure professional resources, it can become challenging to lead and execute such projects effectively. This is a persistent challenge for organizations like BKA.

In the municipal projects, it was also noted that intergenerational initiatives require a high degree of interdisciplinary collaboration. Therefore, it is essential to have conscious strategies in place to avoid siloed thinking, which could hinder the project's success. A recurring challenge across multiple projects is funding. Many projects rely on annual funding applications, and inconsistent financing can negatively impact the competence and stability of project management and implementation.

Unforeseen events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, also affect the ability to work intergenerationally. However, this situation provided a learning opportunity for structuring collaboration between different vulnerable groups. The final challenge worth mentioning is the accessibility of venues available for ensuring that all target groups can participate in the planned activities.

4. Social impact

There are several ways to assess and measure social impact. If one has access to quantifiable and high-quality indicators, as well as opportunities to document the initiative as it develops, it is possible to track and measure results throughout the project or upon its completion.

However, there are often various challenges in measuring social impact. It can be difficult to isolate the specific changes brought about by the project from those that might have occurred independently or due to other factors, and it can be challenging to identify reliable quantifiable indicators.

There is also intriguing recent research on the psychological factors of social entrepreneurship (MIA - POLISH PROJECT, 2022-2023), which has demonstrated that the positive effects of engaging in social entrepreneurship have been underestimated. In this report, we therefore choose to establish a framework for estimating social value.

Social value can be defined as a lasting, measurable, and positive effect on the lives of the target group for the social project (Sandvik, Arvesen, & Hasselknippe, 2021, p. 20). In our case, we are focusing on projects involving intergenerational cooperation. To measure social value, it is necessary to utilize the project's theory of change—formulating what the project aims to positively influence and identifying indicators that demonstrate this change has occurred.

Aligning this with the projects mentioned in this report, we can construct the following table to clarify the analysis ⁵:

⁵ The table is based on the table for measuring social value in (Sandvik, Arvesen, & Hasselknippe, 2021: Håndbok i sosialt entreprenørskap. Fra idé til levebrød, p. 21)

	Resources: What resources and personnel are needed to carry out the work in the project?	Activities: What is the main activity that will contribute to the social outcome?	Outputs: What are the measurable results of the activity?	Outcomes: How do these results impact the individuals in the target group?	Impact: What long-term effect does this have on society?
Generation games	Sports equipment and facilities, competent trainers and volunteers, organizing and marketing resources	Activities like ball games, chess for everyone, organized in festivals, market days etc.	39 towns participated in 2023	Bringing people from different generations together, socializing and learning from each other, stimulating a healthy lifestyle	A more physically active population and better social contact between the youngest and the elderly, potentially leading to better mental and physical health
Generasjon M	Administration and organizing recruitment of youth, training and recruitment and matching with institutions for the elderly	Intergenerational activities in nursing homes, led by young people 14-20.	2023: 237 part time jobs for youth, 24046 intergenerational meetings	Enhancing the week being and engagement elderly residents in nursing homes, provide job opportunities for youth, and engagement for jobs in the healthcare sector	Promote the healthcare sector as an attractive career path for youth, enhance well being for residents in nursing homes bringing positive effects for their psychological and physical health
Joy of Life for the Elderly	Organization of meetings and matching youth with institutions, administration	Training young people in individual care, encouraging careers in elderly care, collaborating with kindergartens and schools	240 participating schools and 600 kindergartens	Youth more motivated to work in the health and care sector, elderly people meeting engaged young people	Promoting the healthcare sector as an attractive career path for youth

	Resources: What resources and personnel are needed to carry out the work in the project?	Activities: What is the main activity that will contribute to the social outcome?	Outputs: What are the measurable results of the activity?	Outcomes: How do these results impact the individuals in the target group?	Impact: What long-term effect does this have on society?
Elderly with dementia , Disadvantaged Youth Whole - Life Initiative	Organizing resources from communities, trainers for young people	Educational activities related to museums, shared meals, etc.	Less reported loneliness in target groups, enhanced well-being	Young people gain social skills, motivation, and a sense of purpose; the elderly improve their well-being, gain positive memories and social interaction	Enhancing quality of life, combating loneliness, enabling elderly individuals to live longer at home, and providing youth with meaningful experiences leading to engagement in education and work
Age-Friendly Local Communities KS	Depending on the project - competence in universal design, physical activity, communication , etc.	Social planning in municipalities	Indicators may vary by project	More active elderly adults, less loneliness, more social contact	Enabling older adults to stay active, participate in society, avoid loneliness and isolation; delayed need for services by making communities more inclusive and supportive for all ages, resulting in lower budget spending
Intergenerational Songs	Organizers with knowledge and competence in singing and organizing social meetings	Children in kindergartens and the elderly in care institutions meet and sing together	45 pairs of elderly care institutions and kindergartens matched in 2023, training of nursery and eldercare staff	Children and the elderly meet and build social relationships; children learn culturally important songs, generations meet and socialize	Greater understanding between generations, joy for the elderly, children learn the collective heritage of song culture

	Resources: What resources and personnel are needed to carry out the work in the project?	Activities: What is the main activity that will contribute to the social outcome?	Outputs: What are the measurable results of the activity?	Outcomes: How do these results impact the individuals in the target group?	Impact: What long-term effect does this have on society?
Digital Skills - The Pensioners` Association	Teachers and youth interested in sharing digital competence, digital infrastructure	Young people guide the elderly through digital learning	Inspirational booklet, two films, youth in the projects gained pedagogical expertise	The elderly improved their digital skills, the youth improved their pedagogical skills	Making digital training accessible and enjoyable for both generations
Tamil Resource and Guidance Center	Resources for organizing activities, meeting spaces, some funding for food and marketing etc.	Seminars and gatherings about selected topics building inclusion and integration in the majority culture while acknowledging minority culture	Empowerment of minority youth and adults, motivation for integration, education, and work	Motivation and inspiration to continue education and work, potentially less inner tension and conflict between minority and majority culture values	An expectedly larger proportion of youth from minority cultures succeeding in the educational system and career advancement in the majority society
The Norwegian Grandparents Climate Campaign	Resources for organizing campaigns, events, etc., and some funding for marketing	Political campaigns, demonstrations , community meetings, and cultural events - theatre and song performances with children, etc.	7,000 members in Norway, raising awareness campaigns locally, nationally, and internationally	Raising awareness for children, grandparents, and society at large through media coverage and social media	Awareness raising, building alliances between children and grandparents; potential influence on policy priorities related to climate issues
Matjungelen	Competence in food culture and traditions, social interaction between children and the elderly, funding for food	Preparing and/ or sharing food - children and the elderly	550 Kindergartens and 235 schools	Enhanced social interactions between children and the elderly, feeling valued and connected, increased well-being and appetite in elderly participants	Greater understanding between generations, appreciation of food culture and heritage, increased well-being and health for elderly participants

	Resources: What resources and personnel are needed to carry out the work in the project?	Activities: What is the main activity that will contribute to the social outcome?	Outputs: What are the measurable results of the activity?	Outcomes: How do these results impact the individuals in the target group?	Impact: What long-term effect does this have on society?
Young people meet the elderly - Church of Norway	Organising resources	Volunteer students visited elderly care homes, supported by adult volunteers, playing games, singing, having conversations, etc.	Positive feedback from all parties, reporting gains from the project	Students learn about the emotional complexities and life experiences of the elderly; the elderly enjoy social enrichment and feel acknowledged	Greater understanding between generations and people in different life situations, combating loneliness and detachment among elderly people from society at large

5. Trends and developments

In the introduction to this report, we described the development of organizations and initiatives for intergenerational cooperation and how this has evolved from the industrial era to the present day. Based on the relatively limited selection of initiatives presented in this report, which is by no means exhaustive but chosen based on available documentation, diversity in design, and variety among participants, we have identified certain recurring trends.

This field is characterized by a significant degree of volunteer work and passionate individuals committed to fostering greater contact between generations, promoting values associated with life fulfillment, joy, and unity across social groups. However, this reliance on volunteerism also makes the work vulnerable, as most initiatives depend on attracting enough volunteers. They also require key individuals who are skilled at organizing volunteer efforts, recruiting participants, and providing ongoing support.

At the same time, the voluntary nature of these initiatives can facilitate broader support for the projects, as volunteerism is generally associated with positive contributions to society, and information about these efforts tends to spread more easily across established social and professional networks. This reduces siloed thinking and promotes more holistic work within, for example, local communities. While this is not entirely new, as it also characterizes many traditional intergenerational organizations, it remains a challenge in today's society, where increased demands for time at work and other social arenas can make it difficult to mobilize volunteers.

Another interesting recent development is the connection between career development for younger people and initiatives for the elderly, particularly exemplified by Generasjon M and Livsglede for Eldre, as well as within municipally-based programs. This differs from earlier connections focused more on leisure activities such as dance, music, and sports. This new trend highlights a link to socioeconomic value, as young people are drawn to careers that society needs to fill (e.g., the anticipated shortage of healthcare workers—ref. statistics), fostering a positive interest in these professions from an early age.

The career focus is also evident in initiatives organized by minority communities, represented in this report by TRVS, where the organization promotes activities that

develop skills with clear positive effects on education and career prospects for younger individuals. These are typical examples from the migration field, where older generations help younger members of their ethnic groups establish careers in society. This project also emphasizes the importance of integration, contributing to the broader society from a secure cultural foundation.

The climate-focused perspective of Besteforeldrenes Klimaaksjon reflects the relevance and urgency of climate issues in our society today, and the emphasis on sensory experiences through Matjungelen can also be seen as an offshoot of the focus on sensory and culinary experiences in today's affluent society, combined with a commitment to fostering positive social interactions between generations.

6. Conclusion

Summary

In Norway, fostering intergenerational cooperation has been a long-standing societal priority within its historically egalitarian framework, where both children and older adults contributed significantly to primary industries. The Industrial Revolution and subsequent urbanization, however, led to a reduced role for many in traditional tasks and the emergence of youth culture and retirement homes, creating a generational divide. As urbanization advanced, child and elder care increasingly shifted to public institutions, while rural areas maintained intergenerational interactions through communal activities and organizations.

Today, rural communities continue to engage in traditional, intergenerational activities facilitated by local organizations, while urban initiatives are more issue-focused and professionalized. This report will examine both the traditional rural-based organizations and the newer urban and minority-led initiatives that promote intergenerational cooperation in Norway.

The 11 intergenerational activities studied in this report revealed several positive outcomes, which can be categorized into individual effects on the primary target groups: children/youth and the elderly. These outcomes primarily stemmed from the social interactions facilitated between these groups, leading to enhanced mutual understanding of life experiences across different age stages. This cross-generational understanding is crucial for fostering dialogue in democratic processes, particularly regarding the equitable distribution of societal resources.

Both groups reported that the projects increased social contact and mitigated loneliness, a significant issue in Norwegian society. For example, in the Pensioners' Association's digital competence project, older adults gained digital literacy and social engagement, while younger participants developed pedagogical skills. In minority-focused initiatives, younger individuals acquired career-relevant skills, and older participants reflected on their minority experiences, enhancing their understanding of inclusion.

Projects like those in the BKA allowed elderly participants to impart knowledge on climate issues, providing historical context and advocacy guidance to younger participants.

Additionally, health benefits such as increased physical activity and appetite were reported among older adults, demonstrating the potential for intergenerational projects to improve well-being and reduce the need for institutional care.

However, challenges were also observed, including tensions between professional goals and the importance of spontaneous interactions. Effective project management is crucial to balance these elements and ensure successful outcomes. Further challenges include the sustainability of volunteer engagement, funding inconsistencies, and the need for interdisciplinary collaboration. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of adaptable strategies, while accessibility issues underscore the need for inclusive venues. These insights are critical for refining future intergenerational initiatives and maximizing their social impact.

Recommendations

To enhance the success of intergenerational projects, several key recommendations should be considered. Firstly, increased funding is essential to ensure these initiatives are well-resourced and sustainable. This financial support will enable the development of organized programs that facilitate meaningful interactions between children, youth, and the elderly.

The importance of creating meeting places where these groups can engage in spontaneous social contact cannot be overstated. Short, well-organized, and frequent encounters should be prioritized, as they foster genuine connections and mutual understanding. Such interactions should not be left to chance but should be deliberately structured within kindergartens, schools, and elderly care homes. Allocating time and resources to prioritize these engagements is crucial, as they contribute significantly to the social fabric of society.

Moreover, these intergenerational meetings have a profound social impact, particularly on youth. Exposure to elderly care and health-related professions during these interactions can spark an interest in these fields, addressing the current workforce shortage. From an economic perspective, encouraging young people to pursue careers in health and care professions is of immense value to society. Additionally, fostering understanding and

respect between different age groups contributes to a well-functioning, democratic society.

The vitality of initiatives led by advocacy groups, pensioners' organizations, and minority organizations that organize activities for youth and the elderly represents an important tradition of learning and renewal, fostering the co-creation of culture and dialogue on societal development across various domains. These initiatives also contribute to a greater understanding of the situations faced by people at different life stages and facilitate meeting places where the elderly can share their experiences and receive recognition for them. In turn, young people can gain ideas and confidence in selecting and developing the aspects they wish to carry forward.

In today's society, where children and young people often have limited contact with the elderly, it is vital to facilitate these interactions intentionally. The frequency of direct contact is of huge importance, as regular engagement helps bridge generational gaps, creating a more cohesive and empathetic community.

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