



EFOS

European Federation of Older Students in Universities
Europäische Vereinigung älterer Studierender an den Universitäten
Fédération Européenne des Etudiants Âgés aux Universités



NGO with Consultative Status at the U.N.

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Board

President:

PhDr. Nadežda Hrapková, PhD, Bratislava, Slovakia
Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, Univerzita tretieho veku
e-mail: nadezda.hrapkova@uniba.sk

Vice-president:

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Otto-von-Guericke Universität, Lehrstuhl für Erwachsenenbildung

Vice-president:

Dr. Marian Alesón-Carbonell, Alicante, Spain
Universidad Permanente, Alicante

General Secretary:

Dr. Katarina Grunwald, Bratislava, Slovakia
Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, Univerzita tretieho veku
e-mail: katarinagrunwald@gmail.com

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Dresdner Seniorenakademie Wissenschaft und Kunst

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e-mail: evirudolph@gmx.de

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Dr. Ana Majurič, POUZ, Zagreb, Croatia

Members from:

Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland

Contact address:

Dr. Katarina Grunwald
Červeňáková 19
84101 Bratislava, Slovakia
Mobil (00421) 904800472
e-mail: katarinagrunwald@gmail.com

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From the editor:

In this edition, I will say goodbye to the old year 2024 and welcome the new year 2025.

I hope that our cooperation will continue to be successful and fruitful. Let's embrace a pleasant atmosphere, driven by the will to create new ideas for ourselves and educational opportunities for seniors. We should enjoy our work and nurture mutual understanding.

Words of the EFOS President – *Nadezda Hrapkova*

Katarina Grunwald gave us a Report on the work of the NGO Committee on Ageing in the UN, Vienna

European Association of Older Students at Universities - A Review about 20 years DSA in cooperation with EFOS - *Evi Rudolph*

University Senior Program in Culture, Science, and Society UIC Barcelona. *Jordi Miralbell and the team* have selected two activities, the Achilles Program and Hybrid live lessons, that may interest us.

Mobility for seniors from the University of the Third Age (**U3V**) at the Technical University of Liberec (**TUL**) and their trip to Jelenia Gora in Poland. The workshops will focus on the topics related to ecology and sustainable practices. *Jitka Pacltova*

Pieces of information about a study on the Universidad de Murcia, Aula Sénior

In the article from Uppsala described *Eva Carlestål* and *Anders Fredholm* important aims of courses of lectures, about study circles, international activities and more.

Gallery of deserving members – Katarina Grunwald

We thank all authors for their contributions and for allowing us to share their experiences.

February 2025

Katarina Grunwald

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Editor:

Katarína Grunwald

Červeňáková 19

841 01 Bratislava

Slovakia

Tel.: +421904800472

E-mail:

katarinagrunwald@gmail.com

EFOS-Website:

<https://efos-europa.eu>

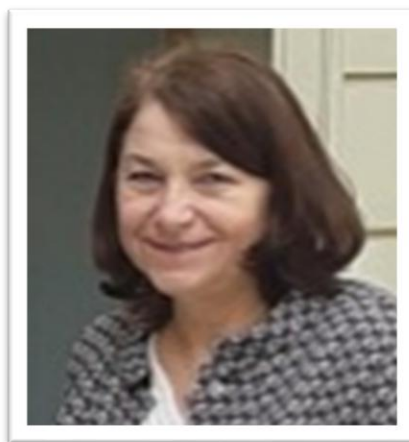
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**NGO with consultative
status at the U.N.**

Words of the EFOS President.

PhDr. Nadežda Hrapková, PhD., EFOS president



The General Assembly, which took place in October 2024 in Alicante, evaluated the initiatives and activities of the last three years. During the difficult period of the pandemic, we maintained active contact with EFOS members without a break and in 2022 successfully finalise the common project SeLiD (Seniors' Learning in the Digital Society), which was aimed at developing the digital skills of seniors and active use of online tools. We launched online meetings in all institutions to fulfil the project tasks and expand online education with seniors. In 2023 and 2024 we chose the new project partnership Erasmus+ Genedu in Enviro, the main interest in preparing a methodology for the educational programs on environmental topics, as well as supporting the ecological behaviour of seniors, exploring natural attractions and developing environmental care in intergenerational activities. Unfortunately, the application for this new Erasmus+ project was not approved.

The EFOS Action Plan for 2024-2030 gives us space to use the EFOS plans and goals by the individual members and in the common work. The Action plan available on the website: <https://efos-europa.eu> supports the educational, cultural, social and political initiatives of EFOS and its members. Currently is the website under reconstruction and updates to a new technical system with the support of Michal Vojkuvka, our new webmaster. Thanks for his very important and not easy work.

The Erasmus+ Accreditation in the field of adult education, which many members have applied for and successfully obtained it, gives us new space for the development of concrete collaboration within the membership institutions. With this financial and personal support, we can actively continue to meet in person and regularly develop cooperation on the topics of digital skills of seniors, environmental learning, or intercultural and methodological issues of senior education. Mobilities of the staff and mobility visits realised by older students can support a deeper understanding of the programs within the partnership, sharing experiences and good practices.

We regularly present the **political opinions, initiatives** and proposals of our members as part of our **membership in the UN Commission on Ageing**, where we focus on human rights, women's rights and the support for active ageing and the live of older people. We actively

participated in the initiative of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People by signing the **EFOS Declaration** during the meeting in April 2024 in Liberec, Czech Republic, which has been sent to the politicians and the national bodies of the involved countries.

The General Assembly elected a **new EFOS Governing board** and supported the previous EFOS president, PhDr. Nadežda Hrapková, PhD., as well as the general secretary, PhDr. Katarína Grunwald, for another three years on the committee. There was an exchange in the positions of the treasurer and his deputy between Evi Rudolf and Hans Schröter. The members approved the new vice presidents Dr. Marian Aleson and Dr. Antonio Roselli. These changes will gradually contribute to the preparation of an intergenerational exchange in the positions of GB members.

This year, EFOS is celebrating its **35th anniversary**. On this occasion, we are planning to hold a European conference in conjunction with the meeting of the Spanish Association of Senior Universities. The event will be an opportunity to present and evaluate EFOS activities, which will open a space for discussions, and comparisons of options from the past to create initiatives for the future and for further education of seniors.

Allow me to thank to all member organizations and long-standing committee members who regularly support the activities carried out and contribute in supporting the position of EFOS within Europe and beyond. I thank the important members who are no longer involved in our activities, but who significantly supported our work, such as Stanley Miller and Peter Hug. I also thank those who significantly enriched our work and are actively involved according to their own capabilities, such as Bjorn Odin, Rosemarie Kurz, Herta and Wolfgang Spitaler and Ana Gozdowski. Allow me to highlight the cooperation with members who have been regularly and actively participating in our activities for more than 20 years, such as Lenka Shromáždilová, Olaf Freymark and Eveline Rudolph. Finally, my thanks go to the Secretary-General Katarína Grunwald not only for holding and care of the agenda but also for working on the EFOS News magazine, which we publish annually in cooperation with the members.

I usually say that an organization is as good as its members and how well they cooperate. If we had not been a good team and passionate members, we would not have achieved as much success as we did in recent years. I am happy about the acquirement of new members and member institutions. Only new ideas, new experiences and information move us forward, and therefore we look forward to their decisions and new proposals.

In the year of the 35th anniversary of the founding of EFOS, let us wish each other further success, fruitful cooperation and friendly relations within our membership.

2025, February

PhDr. Nadežda Hrapková, PhD.



NGO Committee on Ageing Vienna
Conference of NGOs in consultative status with the United Nations



Report on the work of the NGO Committee on Ageing in the UN, Vienna

Dr. Katarína Grunwald

was constituted in 1981 as a Substantive Committee at the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO). The members of the Committee are international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) interested in multifaceted issues related to ageing an older person. The Committee collaborates with similar NGO Committees on Ageing in the United Nations in New York and Geneva.

1) In May 2024 the Task Force of our NGO Committee on Ageing organized a side event during the Crime Commission meeting in May.

The title and the content of the envisaged side event read as follows

“New forms of criminal acts against (and abuse of) older persons - a rapidly growing threat to vulnerable persons using ordinary and advanced communication tools”:

This event aimed to raise awareness of criminal acts against older persons through modern technologies. How can they protect themselves from criminal acts? How can older persons be made aware of the dangers?

At ECOSOC at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, **our mission is to contribute** to the work of the United Nations. Now the occasion was the crime prevention and criminal justice meeting. The people listening to us – it was a very good meeting in UN. Also, crime and justice ministry we got a couple of proposals.

The topic selected for this side event is only one of the many relevant topics addressed by the Committee. Other topics discussed by the Committee in monthly meetings at the UN in the “Decade of Healthy Ageing” (2020 – 2030) include Human Rights issues, intergenerational perspectives, the impact of digitalisation, lifelong learning, as well as cultural aspects of ageing.

2) The International Day of Older People is celebrated all over the world in different ways. Each year it has been dedicated to a theme related to ageing.

A special topical conference was organized for the UN’s International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) on 30 September 2024.

“Marginalization of Older Persons in Society – A Significant Health Risk”

“Leave no one behind” is a key principle of the United Nations’ Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development”, as proclaimed under Goal No. 3: “to ensure healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages”. A particular group threatened by the risk of not having full chances to live

a healthy life and enjoy well-being are older persons who are marginalized or excluded by society. The IDOP 2024 conference addressed specific forms of marginalisation of older persons and its possible influence on their health.

To prevent and counteract the negative effects of marginalisation and associated health risks, interventions have been found effective that involve group sessions, active participation, and opportunities for interaction with others. Tailoring these interventions to individual needs and incorporating learned practices and behaviours for community connection into one's lifestyle can lead to sustained effectiveness. Additionally, creating age-friendly communities, improving access to transportation and information, and addressing marginalization through laws and policies can foster greater social connections.

3) NGO Committee on Ageing, UN Vienna, met at the Comenius University in Bratislava, 22nd November 2024

The members of the NGO Committee on Ageing, UN Vienna, had the privilege of holding for the first time ever a meeting outside Vienna – in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, on Friday, 22nd November 2024.

Dr. Nadežda Hrapková and Dr. Katarina Grunwald – both Slovak members of the NGO Committee on Ageing – had organised this event in the best possible way. The meeting took place in the prestigious „Scientific Board Room“ of the Comenius University, decorated with paintings of the former rectors of the University and a bronze statue of J.A. Comenius. Vice-Rector, PhDr. Radomír Masaryk, PhD, welcomed the members of the NGO Committee on Ageing Vienna and some Slovak guests very warmly.

After the introductory speeches followed a visit of the impressive Ceremonial Hall of Comenius University.

The Comenius University in Bratislava is the oldest and biggest national university in the Slovak Republic, dedicated to the famous *Johann Amos Comenius*. It comprises presently thirteen faculties with approximately 21.000 full-time students, has a large network of international research cooperation and enjoys great popularity with students from 80 countries worldwide.

The meeting of the NGO Committee on Ageing in the “Scientific Board Room”, dealt with the preparation of the Committee’s main activities planned for 2025. Especially proposals for the content of events were discussed – for two side events at UN Commission meetings as well as for the important conference to celebrate the United Nation’s International Day of Older Persons, IDOP 2025, at the beginning of October 2025.

After a socialising lunch in a typical Slovak restaurant, the group was invited to a most interesting guided historical and sightseeing tour of Bratislava.

The opportunity to visit Comenius University in Bratislava was very important for the members of the Committee on Ageing, as it enlarged the understanding of the way of thinking, the traditions and the customs of our Slovakian members and friends.

We are very grateful to our colleagues in Bratislava for having given to us this great opportunity!



European Federation of Older Students at Universities

A look back – Eveline Rudolph, member for 20 years

In 2004, the DSA joined the European federation because the goals of the EFOS also correspond to our ideas of the education of older people.

Cooperation with other international organisations working for "lifelong learning" led to the exchange of experiences and work on joint projects.

The EFOS Board of Directors is also represented in other European committees and disseminates our concern for the education of older people in politics and the public.

EFOS has 24 institutional and 16 individual members from Germany, England, France, Ireland, Croatia, the Netherlands, Austria, the Netherlands Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the Czech Republic.

During our membership, we have worked on 3 international European projects that were funded by Grundtvig, and later ERASMUS and formed learning partnerships.

From 2008 to 2010 it worked on the VECU project "Virtual European Cultural Centre"

From 2014 to 2017 on the EduSenNet "Educational Senior Network" project

From 2019 to 2022 on the SELID project "Seniors Learning in the Digital Society".

By participating in the projects, money also flowed into the working groups and other funds benefited the DSA for the purchase of equipment, etc.

Each EFOS member organises a conference at intervals. So far, we have organized four conferences in Dresden:

April 2005, April 2011, October 2013, September 2021

Each conference (twice a year) has a specific current topic, on which all participants express their national point of view. In 2011, the topic "The role of education in the democracy of an ageing society" was for us very interesting.

Voluntarily, conference participants can take part in a cultural excursion organised by the hosts. In the process, special features of the city, culture or landscape are brought closer.

Through the EFOS, there were also realised some visits by groups of senior citizens to our partners. A senior group from Rennes visited us 2x in Dresden and in return, a group from the DSA flew to Rennes. There was funding from the regional council for this purpose.

Another exchange took place with seniors from Uppsala. 12 seniors came to us and 10 of us visited Uppsala. Lasting friendships were also formed at these meetings.

It should be mentioned that we Dresdeners have been represented on the board of EFOS since 2012 and are responsible for the finances - treasurer and deputy treasurer. This year we were re-elected to the board.

EFOS News is published twice a year with news from the countries.

I hope I could give you a little insight into the activities of our students involved in EFOS initiatives. I have a wish that the DSA can have conditions to continue and actively participate in the EFOS future activities.

University Senior Program in Culture, Science, and Society UIC Barcelona

We have selected two activities that may interest you.

We started just six years ago and have since grown to 500 students. While this is smaller than most of your institutions, we follow a unique model. Our students complete a three-year program, followed by a two-year continuation program. Currently, we offer two such programs: “Our Europe: Heritage and Challenges” and “Our World: Roots and Destiny.” In addition to these courses, we organize a variety of related activities.

Achilles Program

The first activity I’d like to explain is not original, but it’s an important part of our offerings. For third-year students in the basic program, we offer Erasmus+ mobilities, called the *Achilles Program*. These are short stays of five days: students travel on Monday and return on Friday.

In 2021, we were accredited by the Erasmus+ agency. In the first year, 2022-2023, we applied for mobilities for managers and teachers, who visited the selected universities. In the second year, we requested 36 mobilities for both students and staff, to universities such as the Università della Terza Età Paolo Naliato in Udine, Italy; the University of Wroclaw in Poland; and Dublin City University in Dublin, Ireland.

This year, we have 60 student mobilities planned. Our students will travel to Dublin, Marseille, Udine, and other universities, some of which are represented here at the Meeting of EFOS. We appreciate your support.

We still haven’t hosted students from other universities, but we are hopeful that we can achieve this soon, thanks to the conversations we’ve had at this meeting. We also extend our thanks to EFOS for facilitating these connections.

In the photos you can see how happy our students are after completing their Erasmus mobilities.

Hybrid Live Lessons

The second experience I want to share is called *Hybrid Live Lessons*. This is a benefit we gained during the Covid-19 pandemic. When we first started with a single course, the pandemic hit. We quickly adapted to continue online. During this time, some citizens of Andorra - a small country in the Pyrenees, and relatives of young students from our university - asked us to offer online registration, and we agreed.

However, UIC Barcelona is primarily a face-to-face university. After the pandemic, in collaboration with an Andorran foundation, we began offering *Hybrid Live Lessons* to students in Andorra.

It takes over three hours by car to travel from Barcelona to Andorra. Once a month, a taxi is sent from Andorra to bring two teachers to Barcelona. These teachers then teach two classes in the morning and two in the afternoon face-to-face. Afterwards, each week, one afternoon of the week is dedicated to online classes from Barcelona, where the teachers interact with

students in Andorra via a special camera. The students gather together in a classroom, where they can see and hear the teacher and their presentations.

We are now in our third year of offering this service in Andorra, with a fully enrolled class of 60 students. There are even 30 students on a waiting list, as there is no more room.

Last year, we expanded this model to Calonge, a beautiful village on the Costa Brava. There, we now have 65 students enrolled, attending classes in a charming local castle.

Finally, four weeks ago, we launched another section of this program in the beautiful Pyrenean valley of La Cerdanya, spanning Spain and France. This course now serves 45 students, providing education to areas where access to cultural offerings is limited, making this service even more essential.

Jordi Miralbell, Director



ULC
barcelona

MANY GREETINGS FROM POLAND!

Mobility for seniors from the University of the Third Age (U3V) at the Technical University of Liberec (TUL)

Mgr. Jitka Pačtová

The project “*Mobility for Seniors from U3V TUL*” is being implemented within the Erasmus+ Adult Education program, Key Action 1 - Short-Term Mobility Projects, Call 2024.

This project involves two five-day trips for 10 students of the University of the Third Age at TUL, each accompanied by an organizer, to Jelenia Góra, Poland. During the mobility, participants will attend seminars and workshops organized by the receiving institution, the PCKK Foundation in Poland. The workshops will focus on topics related to ecology and sustainable practices.

A key part of the program will include a comparison of environmentally friendly behaviours between the inhabitants of Poland and the Czech Republic, which will help participants understand the need to promote pro-ecological thinking in our own communities and recognize how to influence this behaviour.

During the mobility, participants will also have the opportunity to present their own group's activities and share examples of their environmentally conscious actions. The educational activities will aim to raise awareness of ecological issues and encourage changes in behaviour and habits, such as energy, heat, and water conservation, and reduce the amount of waste produced.

The mobility will also introduce participants to digital tools that can help promote pro-ecological thinking. Trainers from Poland will bring valuable experience from their cooperation with institutions in Finland and Lithuania to enhance the workshops and ensure an international perspective on the issue.

In September 2024, a preparatory visit was held in Jelenia Góra to finalize the details of the project, including the program, schedule, and preparations before the mobility.

In January 2025, participants were introduced to lectures on environmental issues presented by Dr. Anděl. Additionally, they had also the opportunity to learn basic Polish, which will help them during the mobility.

Participants in the mobility were selected based on a motivational letter. The first five-day trip in February 2025 is ready now and participants can look forward to a varied program that includes workshops such as *Renewable Energy Sources*, *Sustainable Energy Management at Home*, and *Joint Workshops of Czech and Polish Groups* on topics like *Reduce*, *Reuse*, *Recycle*, along with many other activities. The second five-day trip is planned to take place in June 2025.

The ultimate goal of the project is to increase the ecological awareness of senior participants, empowering them to adopt and spread sustainable practices both in their personal lives and in

the broader community. Through this exchange, seniors will be better equipped to contribute to environmental conservation efforts, fostering a greater sense of responsibility towards the planet.



<https://ccv.tul.cz/mobilita-pro-seniory-z-u3v-tul/> - Mobility photo diary





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Aula Sénior

What is Aula Sénior?

Aula Sénior of the University of Murcia is a space for education, training, dissemination, participation, meeting, and coexistence aimed at people over 50 who, for various reasons, could not access the University at the time or wish to return to the classroom. It provides the opportunity to join university training programmes and scientific, humanistic, technological, political, and social training.

Who can study in Aula Sénior?

Anyone over 50 years old, with or without previous qualifications.

Who are the members of Aula Sénior?

Currently, Aula Sénior has a director and a deputy director, two administrative staff, fifty coordinators and two hundred teachers, two hundred of them belonging to the teaching staff of the University of Murcia and two hundred professionals of recognised prestige who teach one thousand students at its headquarters in Murcia. It also has two university student associations, the Rector Sabater Association and Saavedra Fajardo Association, with a total of seven hundred members.

What are the objectives of Aula Sénior?

Promote the access of people over 50 years old to a permanent and comprehensive university education that favours active ageing, updating their knowledge to improve their quality of life and promoting creative use of leisure.

Facilitate the learning and training of new languages and tools that allow them to incorporate actively themselves into the latest requirements of the knowledge and information society, promoting their autonomy.

What does Aula Sénior offer?

With a track record of over twenty-five years, fifty subject coordinators and a strong identity, Aula Sénior can organise training and complementary activities on any subject of study specifically aimed at students over the age of 50.



It can set up continuity activities such as study plans or training certificates, or specific activities such as seminars, conferences, lectures, cultural outings or guided visits, on any subject or area of knowledge that is included in university studies. To this end, it can receive students at its headquarters at the University of Murcia or send teaching staff to other locations.

Which organisations does Aula Sénior participate in?

AEPUM. The State Association of University Programmes for Senior Students brings together most of the university programmes for senior adults in Spanish universities. The essence of AEPUM is the promotion of educational programmes for the elderly in the university environment, actively contributing to the educational and cultural development of the elderly. (<https://www.aepum.es/>)

EFOS. The European Federation of Older Students is a European association of students and universities whose aim is to promote and ensure access of senior people to education at the highest level. They also represent the interests of the academic education of senior people in politics and society. (<https://www.efos-europa.eu/>)



IAUTA. The International Association of Universities of the Third Age brings together Universities of the Third Age from all continents to contribute to the cause of senior people through lifelong learning, inter-university exchanges and innovations in teaching and scientific research. (<https://www.aiu3a.org/>)

What activities does Aula Sénior carry out?

Aula Sénior currently offers various types of training programmes and other activities:

- 1) Aula Sénior Certificate is a four-year programme in which the student chooses eight subjects per year from among the ten offered, covering all areas of knowledge.
- 2) Certificate of Advanced Studies is an annual programme for which a previous qualification is required (the Senior Training Certificate is valid) in which the student can choose new subjects each academic year, which are renewed periodically.

- 3) Workshops about languages (English, French and Italian), poetry, painting or photography.
- 4) Cycles of lectures, seminars and conferences on any subject.

How does Aula Sénior promote mobility for senior students?

The value of tourism has been included in studies on active ageing and its implications for the physical and mental health of the elderly. Aula Sénior works on the mobility of seniors as a tool to fight against ageism contribute to the integration of all students and build bridges between different cultures. This favours the acquisition of social and linguistic skills of the students, as well as cultural enrichment. To achieve this objective, an approach that encompasses historical, artistic and cultural heritage, contact with nature, and health and wellness tourism is proposed. All of this is carried out at three levels: regional, national and international.

Aula Sénior is currently in the process of developing the Erasmus + Adult Education programme, which will enable it to promote exchanges with other senior students from other parts of Europe in the coming academic years.

How are the activities of Aula Sénior funded?

The tuition fees for the activities finance Aula Sénior, as it does not receive any subsidy or external aid. For each activity outside the UMU, a budget is drawn up which must be assumed by the organisers.

What are the benefits of doing activities in Aula Sénior?

The training activities of Aula Sénior favour a space for cultural and scientific debate, facilitating generational and intergenerational relations. It generates the participation of senior people as dynamisers within their social context. It contributes to the access of senior people to socio-cultural activities.

It facilitates access to knowledge of new technologies by fighting against the digital divide. It includes the gender perspective to promote equality inside and outside the classroom and promotes personal development in skills and values of the over 50s, from the perspective of lifelong learning.



<https://www.um.es/web/aula-senior>

Senior studies and international activities at USU in Uppsala

Eva Carlestål, chairman of the International Working Group
Anders Fredholm, member of the International Working Group

Uppsala Senior University (USU) was founded in 1979 as a non-profit, politically and religiously independent organization. Today, we have almost 4,300 members and are the second largest in Sweden. USU is not connected to any other university. The revenue comes from membership fees and from fees for participation in different activities. There is no paid staff, but around 100 volunteers work daily in planning and administration.

Important aims are arranging **courses of lectures** as multidisciplinary lectures and seminar series, e.g. in current themes of today, history, music, health and environment, some of them filmed to be watched elsewhere. USU aims to introduce recent research results to the members and to be a natural meeting point for scientific knowledge and life experiences. In Uppsala, we can profit by having two well-known universities, Uppsala University and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Study circles are offered in e.g. natural and social sciences, medicine, philosophy, religion and languages (Arabic, English, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Latin, Polish, Russian, Sami, Spanish, Ukrainian). Other activities are **study tours** in Sweden and abroad, trips to cultural activities as opera, theatre, concerts, museums, exhibitions etc.

Research and development projects

USU has participated in **research and development projects** with other European Senior universities, supported mainly by the Erasmus+ programme, e.g. EduSenNet and SeLiD. The EU-funded EFOS project Senior's Learning in the Digital Society (SeLiD) was carried out with seven other universities (Alicante, Bratislava, Brno, Chemnitz, Dresden, Magdeburg and Wrocław). This project aimed to investigate how to reduce the exclusion of seniors in the digital society. More info: <https://selid.efos-europa.eu> The SeLiD project was finished at the EFOS meeting in Magdeburg 2021.

In recent years we have carried out **exchange programmes** with Groningen 2009, Hamburg 2010 and 2022, Dresden 2011, Alicante 2012, Orléans 2013, Fetcham 2014, Reykjavik 2016, Vannes 2018 and Lignano 2018. The members exchange trips aim to give a deeper insight into how our European friends live.

Today's international activities

USU's volunteers are divided into seven working groups, one of which is the International Working Group. Our senior university has long been one of EFOS' members. According to

our statutes, USU should engage in international activities believed to be important to our members, not the least important in the troubled times the world is facing today.

Therefore, in the autumn of 2024, USU applied for accreditation to an Erasmus+ project for seniors. Such a project will contribute to the dialogue across cultural and national borders. Furthermore, we believe that such a project may attract new members to our organization like younger seniors, people with non-Swedish backgrounds and more men. Today only 37% of USU's members are men.

Our international group is also currently planning for a lecture series on the European Union to be carried out in the autumn of 2025. Soon we are very much looking forward to receiving a group from Universidad Permanente de la Universidad de Alicante, Spain, in Uppsala. For a few days, they will get to know our city and its variety of culture, history, academic research and much more.

Gallery of distinguished EFOS members



In the section "Gallery of distinguished EFOS members", a long-standing member is presented in each issue of EFOS-News, who has made special contributions to the continued existence of EFOS. In this issue, we finally want to honour our long-time general secretary.

I have a close relationship with Katarina. We have worked together very well over the years, keeping each other informed and exchanging ideas. She has often had to translate texts for me from English into German. The many years of cooperation have also developed into an intense friendship, for which I am very grateful.

Now I have asked Katja to tell us something about her life.

Her life path

Katarina Grunwald was born on 26 November 1949 in Bratislava, Slovakia. She completed her schooling in the city of her birth. After graduating from a high school, she studied Slovak linguistics and history at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. With the topic of her doctoral thesis "The Codification of the Slovak Language", earned her the title of Dr. phil.

With the advent of computer technology, a new area of interest was awakened in her and she studied for another 3 years at the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, graduating as an IT specialist with a focus on programming.

Katja lived with her 2 children in Munich, due to her husband's job in Bendorf near Koblenz until she moved back to Munich. There she worked as a programmer in an agency that realised orders from BMW, Telekom, etc. She also worked as a translator.

In 2003, after 36 years in Germany, she returned to Bratislava, where her mother and other family members live and have lived. It's her home.

Path to EFOS in her memories

When I returned to Bratislava, I heard from a friend about the University of the Third Age with its many study opportunities, but also about the long waiting periods for admission. As I was taking care of my mother, this was not an important topic for me. After my mother's death in May 2005, I again started to be interested in the studies at U3A. I read in the U3A programme that an English conversation course is going to be on offer in the autumn. So I enrolled to the U3A of Comenius University in Bratislava.

Through what contacts or information?

One day during the class the door has opened and Nadja Hrapkova came in. Nadja was the head of U3V at that time and has been working within EFOS for some time. She told us about EFOS and explained the EFOSEC European project which she was coordinating. She was looking for 2 interested people with English skills for a meeting in the Netherlands-

So it happened and I arrived in Groningen by plane and train on a beautiful spring day. There my "first encounter with EFOS" awaited me. I was warmly welcomed by the EFOS members. I felt as if I had known them all for a long time. Especially Peter Hug and Horst Leonhard contributed to this. Later, when Nadja noticed that I speak fluently German, due to my many years of living in Germany, she invited me to continue in our common collaboration.

What interested you so much about EFOS?

The topics such as lifelong learning, active ageing, feedback and the like were new to me at first. However, I realised the surveys for the project with the presentation during the meeting at the University in Groningen. It wasn't easy for me, because so far, my working life has only revolved around the computer with which I corresponded, it was a dialogue between a machine and me. In Groningen, suddenly I was faced with people who asked something about the project, with whom I had to talk. But despite the beginner's fears, it was nice.

Since that time, a close friendship began to develop between Nadja and me, based on mutual trust, reliability and helpfulness. We can both talk about everything in private, laugh and understand each other.

When have you been elected as a General Secretary of EFOS? What are the main tasks in this position?

In November 2011 at the EFOS meeting in Vienna, I was elected to the EFOS Governing Board as a general secretary and Herta Spitaler as my deputy.

The tasks of a general secretary are very extensive. She brings together all the information, such as contacts with the members, taking minutes, preparation of the meetings, etc with the contributions to the project work. However, a general secretary is also a proper EFOS member who works on the projects, makes evaluations, participates in discussions, and is active in many other tasks.

Participation in the projects that particularly appealed to you and were successful.

It is difficult for me to say which project particularly appealed to me. In the EduSenNet and SELID projects, I was able to contribute by my experience with the technologies. Differently, as a doctor in linguistic, project VECU, 2008-2010, with the proverbs, was particularly close to

me. Especially in this project subject on music, which I worked out with Horst Leonhard in Vienna, already genetically determined, was my favourite topic. All projects have given me new insights and comprehensive knowledge. I enjoyed the teamwork on the projects which very much enriched me.

How many meetings have you organized in Bratislava?

The project and EFOS meetings are usually organised by the members from the home university. Nadja and I organized and attended EFOS meetings in Bratislava in 2010, 2013 and 2018. This work is always very extensive and varied and requires organizational talent.

What about your intensive cooperation with some members?

Intensive cooperation has been developed with all members mainly in the context of the projects within the working groups. As a secretary general I have close cooperation with the president, the vice presidents and the treasurer. I am happy about the good cooperation with all those responsible persons.

How has started your membership in the Commission on Ageing at the United Nations (UN) in Vienna?

In 2007, I was invited to the meeting of the Commission on Ageing at the UN in Vienna as a representative of EFOS, at that time together with Ingrid Dummer and Horst Leonhard, who were already members. After this event I became a member too and currently I am a general secretary in the Executive board. I constantly participate in the meetings, where we represent EFOS together with Nadja, our EFOS president. I work closely with the Committee to support UN action on ageing and share information and knowledge on ageing issues.

Information about the activities of the Vienna Committee on Ageing and the work of the UN bodies is regularly on the agenda of the EFOS meetings.

What are the goals and wishes which do you still have?

Learn Spanish. Since the EFOS currently has 4 Spanish universities as the members, I would like to be able to "talk" to the Spanish friends a "bit" in the local language.

I hope to continue working at EFOS for the foreseeable future and to participate in upcoming projects, which have always been enriching and enjoyable for the team.

I am not worried about the future of EFOS, because in recent times the membership of EFOS became younger, so the goal of providing education for older people and designing programmes and projects will continue. This is an honourable task that will be passed on to the younger generation.

I am happy to be a part of this international community.

On behalf of all EFOS members, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Katja for her extensive work and contributions to our federation. She is an enrichment to our well-functioning federation. Above all, we wish you good health and continued strength to fulfil your tasks.

Eveline Rudolph

Long-standing EFOS member