

Connecting generations through fairy tales: Older people volunteering in kindergartens

<u>Organisation(s):</u>	Fabijoniškės Social Services Home	
<u>Country:</u>	Lithuania	
<u>Contact:</u>	info@fabijoniskiuspn.lt policy@esn-eu.org (we will function as an intermediary between you and interested organisations who want to learn more about the practice)	
<u>Theme:</u> Choose at least one option	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ageing & Care <input type="checkbox"/> Asylum & Migration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Young People <input type="checkbox"/> Support for Children & Families <input type="checkbox"/> Community Care <input type="checkbox"/> Integrated Care & Support <input type="checkbox"/> Co-Production <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Artificial Intelligence <input type="checkbox"/> Digitalisation <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Labour Market Inclusion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Inclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce and Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Social Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> EU Funding <input type="checkbox"/> Social Services' Resilience <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health <input type="checkbox"/> Person-Centred Care <input type="checkbox"/> Research & Use of Evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Management & Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:
<u>Principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights:</u> Which principles does your practice cover? Check the 20 principles here .	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1. Education, training, life-long learning <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Gender equality <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Equal opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Active support to employment <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Secure and adaptable employment <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Fair Wages <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Transparent employment conditions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 8. Social dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Work-life balance <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Healthy, safe work environment	<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Childcare and child support <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Social protection <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Unemployment benefits <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Minimum income <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Old age income and pensions <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Health care <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18. Long-term care <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Housing and assistance to homeless <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Access to essential services
<u>Current status of the practice:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Concept and Design Phase <input type="checkbox"/> Testing or pilot phase <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary practice that has terminated <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary practice that is ongoing and has a termination date <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Established and ongoing practice <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Up and Transformation Phase <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	
<u>Summary:</u> Please summarise the practice in maximum 3 sentences. This	The project "Connecting Generations Through Fairy Tales: Older People Volunteering in Kindergartens" fosters meaningful intergenerational bonds by bringing together older people, youth volunteers, and preschool children. Through regular storytelling visits, older people share life experiences and fairy tales,	

<p><i>will be the disclaimer of your project on our website. Example here.</i></p>	<p>sparking imagination, empathy, and respect among children. The initiative promotes emotional connection, reduces social isolation, and strengthens community ties, offering all participants a sense of belonging and purpose.</p>
<p><u>Context/ Social issues addressed</u> <i>Please explain the problem you attempt to solve with your practice.</i></p>	<p>This project reduces loneliness and social exclusion among older people by involving them in meaningful intergenerational activities. It empowers people with dementia through storytelling, enhancing their self-worth and cognitive engagement. Older people connect with children, share wisdom, and rediscover purpose, while young volunteers gain valuable social experience and empathy. Children, in turn, learn to appreciate aging individuals, developing emotional intelligence and respect. By portraying older people as active, creative community members rather than passive care recipients, the project fosters a positive image of aging and strengthens bonds between generations—promoting empathy, dignity, and inclusion across all age groups.</p>
<p><u>Objectives:</u> <i>Please provide a maximum of three objectives in bullet points.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To strengthen intergenerational connections and reduce social exclusion by bringing together older people, youth volunteers, and preschool children in creative, shared activities that foster empathy, understanding, and mutual respect. 2. To provide meaningful self-realisation opportunities for older people, helping them remain active members of the community while reducing loneliness and social isolation through storytelling and volunteer engagement. 3. To develop children's emotional intelligence, language, and social skills by encouraging creativity, curiosity, and a positive attitude toward aging and older people.
<p><u>Activities:</u> <i>Please describe the activities put in place to achieve the objectives (maximum 400 words).</i></p>	<p>The project implements a series of intergenerational activities that bring older people, youth volunteers, and preschool children together in meaningful ways. Older people, often accompanied by youth volunteers, regularly visiting kindergartens to tell fairy tales and share personal life stories, inspiring children to listen, imagine, and express themselves through questions and storytelling. After these sessions, participants engage in creative workshops such as drawing, acting out fairy tales, or crafting story-related items, which helps strengthen emotional bonds and mutual understanding across generations. Youth volunteers play a key supporting role by assisting older people during visits, facilitating communication, and ensuring that activities run smoothly. Regular reflection meetings are held with older people, volunteers, and kindergarten teachers to discuss experiences, assess emotional and developmental outcomes, and continuously improve the programme. The project is coordinated in collaboration with social service institutions, youth organisations, and preschool institutions, which together ensure inclusive participation, logistical support, and the sustainability of this community-driven initiative.</p>
<p><u>Outcomes:</u> <i>Please explain what the results were/are so far and how you evaluated this (i.e. statistics, a study, or feedback)</i></p>	<p>Qualitative Data from Children: After each storytelling session, children are invited to express their emotional response by choosing one of three coloured face icons (smiling, neutral, or sad). Over 90% of children choose the smiling face, and some spontaneously express joy through hugs or drawings for older people. This confirms their satisfaction, emotional safety, and the creation of a positive bond. If a child chooses a neutral or sad face, they are gently asked about the reason—most often, their mood is related to personal experiences from the day rather than the older people's visit.</p> <p>Feedback from Educators:</p>

	<p>During online meetings, educators share observations of children's emotional openness, increased attentiveness, verbal engagement, and respectful communication. In some groups, children began creating their own stories or initiating games inspired by the sessions. Educators also reported extensive feedback from parents, as children enthusiastically shared their impressions at home.</p> <p>Reflections and Surveys from Older People: Older people complete questionnaires describing their well-being before, during, and after kindergarten visits. Most report feeling inspired, energised, curious, and motivated beforehand. After visits, they feel valued and emotionally fulfilled, eagerly anticipating each session. Many describe the project as a “breath of life” in their daily routine. Some participants are individuals with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease. Their emotional state is assessed indirectly through behavioural observation during activities. Additional insights are provided by social workers and occupational specialists who engage with them daily. This approach has revealed increased involvement, relaxation, and positive emotional reactions.</p> <p>Insights from Youth Volunteers: Youth volunteers reflect verbally after kindergarten visits. They often note that participation helps them better understand the value of older adults in society and develops their social sensitivity, sense of responsibility, and communication skills.</p> <p>Indicators and Results: Key indicators include children’s emotional evaluations (face icon method), educators’ insights into behavioral and language development, and older people and youth volunteers’ reflections on well-being, engagement, and sense of purpose. Adaptability and Transferability The project is flexible, low-cost, and based on principles of volunteerism, collaboration, and mutual trust. A well-developed activity model is available, making it easily adaptable to various contexts across Lithuania or other European countries.</p>
<p><u>Funding Source</u></p>	<p>EU Funds: ESF+ <input type="checkbox"/> INTERREG <input type="checkbox"/> ERDF <input type="checkbox"/> ERASMUS <input type="checkbox"/> RRF <input type="checkbox"/> other <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> National Government Funds</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Regional Government Funds</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Government Funds</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Private Sponsorship / Public-Private Partnership</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Financial contribution of People using Services</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please define:</p>
<p><u>Links to supporting documents:</u> <i>e.g. project website or report of the practice, articles</i></p>	<p>https://vilnius.lt/naujienos/vilniaus-seniorai-emesi-naujos-savanoriskos-veiklos-lankosi-sostines-darzeliuose-ir-seka-pasakas-vaikams</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtyocWfABOQ</p> <p>https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/laisvalaikis/13/2593596/i-darzeli-kaip-i-svente-eina-ir-seniorai-sostines-darzeliuose-seka-pasakas-vaikams</p> <p>https://lnk.lt/straipsniai/Gyvenimas/kaip-sudominti-vaikus-ir-itraukti-artimuju-neturincius-senolius/321001</p> <p>https://www.tv3.lt/naujiena/lietuva/vilniaus-darzelyje-isskirtine-iniciatyva-noretume-kad-dar-viena-karta-atvaziuotu-n1429843</p>

<p><u>Comments and tips</u> <i>i.e. for people willing to implement your Practice in their service</i></p>	<p>For those wishing to implement this practice, it is crucial to view it not merely as a volunteering project, but as a transformational social process. Begin by mapping the strengths and stories of older people—identify those whose life experiences, dialects, or professions can enrich the storytelling sessions with authenticity and cultural depth. Don't rely only on well-known fairy tales; instead, encourage older people to tell personal or local community stories, turning them into living archives of collective memory.</p> <p>Invest time in co-creation with educators and psychologists to design activities that connect stories with children's developmental goals (e.g. empathy, imagination, language). Use storytelling not as entertainment, but as a pedagogical bridge—for example, ask children to recreate stories through drawings, theatre, or music to deepen emotional understanding.</p> <p>For sustainability, develop a “story mentor” system, where experienced older people mentor new participants, thus strengthening ownership and continuity. Document stories, children's reactions, and reflections in short videos or journals—this not only amplifies the project's visibility but also gives older people a tangible sense of legacy. Finally, nurture an atmosphere of equality: make sure older people are not “helpers,” but co-creators and cultural ambassadors, shaping a community that values experience as much as energy.</p>
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