AIUTA: Foundations, Recent Past & The Future

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THE FOUNDATIONS

The International Association of Universities of Third Age (AIUTA/IAUTA) is a federation of Universities of Third Age (U3As) including national federations and other partner institutions. It was founded in 1973 by Professor Pierre Vellas from the University of Toulouse, France with the objective of promoting networking among different Universities of Third Age in Europe and around the world and to develop the following areas:

- Teaching, through conferences, courses, workshops and study visits;
- Research;
- Services to the community.
From 1976 to 1980, the development of AIUTA continued with the production of the Constitution and the promotion of annual conferences covering different topics approved by a Research Committee.

Those conferences put the different European U3As into contact allowing them to share both their specific interests and the main activities taking place in each university. Until 1990, each U3A member of AIUTA developed its own research projects with one or more partner universities under bilateral or multilateral partnerships.

The resulting knowledge transfer allowed the development of a consensus among different partner universities regarding the need to further develop common projects and it brought a new group dynamic to AIUTA.
The following is a list of AIUTA Congresses with their respective themes:

1976  Charleroi, Belgium
- Development of U3As & AIUTA

1977  Toulouse, France
- Development of U3As & AIUTA

1978  Namur, Belgium
- Human Resources of Third Age at the Service of the Community

1979  Nancy, France
- Healthy ageing and the prevention of the ageing pathology related to the functioning and the pedagogy of third age
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The following is a list of AIUTA Congresses with their respective themes:

- **1980**
  Sherbrooke, Canada
  - Continuing Education & the Third Age

- **1981**
  Madrid, Spain
  - Culture in the Third Age

- **1982**
  Nice, France
  - The Role of U3As in Contemporary Society

- **1983**
  Riva del Garda, Italy
  - The Decentralization of U3As: Pathways to Promote Cultural Diffusion
The following is a list of AIUTA Congresses with their respective themes:

- **1984** Neuchâtel, Switzerland
  - Research With & For Third Agers

- **1986** Tournai, Belgium
  - U3As in the World: Openness & Dialogue

- **1987** Warsaw, Poland
  - Education & Health

- **1988** Toulouse, France
  - In Favour of a More Humane Society
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After 1990 AIUTA Congresses took place every two years:

- **1990** Hull, Canada
  - The U3As: Sources of Development

- **1992** Barcelona, Spain
  - Physical Exercise & Ageing

- **1994** Jyväskylä, Finland
  - Preparation for Ageing

- **1996** Nantes, France
  - Generations in Dialogue?
After 1990 AIUTA Congresses took place every two years:

1998  Schwäbisch-Gmünd, Germany
• Learning in the Third Age: Why & How?

2000  Quebec, Canada
• The Impact of New Technologies on Third Agers

2002  Geneva, Switzerland
• Age & Experience for the Benefit of Future Generations

2004  Shanghai, China
• Lifelong Learning for Third Agers: from Tradition to Innovation
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After 1990 AIUTA Congresses took place every two years:

- **2006** Reims, France
  - U3A Thirty Years on: Who are we & What have we done?

- **2010** San Jose, Costa Rica
  - Gerontology & Human Development in the 21st Century

- **2012** Lisbon, Portugal
  - Tourism, Universities & the Third Age

- **2014** Toulouse, France
  - International Cooperation & U3As: Celebrating Forty Years

* The 2008 Congress planned for Turin was cancelled because of the Crash
In 2007, the bilateral partnerships between AIUTA member universities have been replaced by enlarged networking with projects developed by at least three European U3As from three different European countries. Those common projects were funded by European programs, mainly the Grundtvig Program.

The **Grundtvig Program** was a European funded program integrated in the European Commission’s Lifelong Learning Program 2007-2013 and aimed at strengthening the European dimension in adult education and lifelong learning across Europe.
The Erasmus Program, a European Union (EU) student exchange program, was established in 1987.

The Erasmus Program, together with a number of other independent programs, was incorporated into the Socrates program established by the European Commission in 1994. The Socrates program ended on 31 December 1999 and was replaced with the Socrates II Program on 24 January 2000, which in turn was replaced by the Lifelong Learning Program 2007–2013 on 1 January 2007.

Erasmus+ (2014-2020), also called Erasmus Plus, is the new 14.7 billion euro catch-all framework program for education, training, youth and sport. The new Erasmus+ program combines all the EU's current schemes for education, training, youth and sport, including the Lifelong Learning Program (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Grundtvig).

Therefore, since 2007 those different European programs opened up new opportunities for research projects involving several U3As members of AIUTA. In the future the Erasmus+ program brings a new challenge for the U3A research projects.

Concluding, the foundation period was a process of:

- clarification
- unification
- stimulation for the future
In January 2011 Professor François Vellas, University of Toulouse, was elected President of AIUTA for a four-year mandate from 2011 to 2014. During this mandate, he reorganized AIUTA and pursued with both international conferences and the research project goals.
In 2014 Professor François Vellas was re-elected President of AIUTA for a new four-year mandate from 2014 to 2018. The election took place during the meeting of the AIUTA Governing Board in Iguacu, Brazil in November 2014.

During his second mandate AIUTA will be focusing on the following strategic actions and proposals:

• **Education** → Setting up the AIUTA Education Committee to promote lifelong education;

• **Research** → Setting up the AIUTA Research Committee;

• **Networking** → Promoting more networking among AIUTA member U3As and other institutions;

• **Expansion** → Attracting new U3As to join AIUTA.
Main Actions Proposed by the AIUTA Education Committee: Training

AIUTA Training Seminar I – “How to Set Up, Improve & Monitor U3As”

- Legal Aspects & Constitution;
- Academic & Pedagogical Issues;
- Technical & Operational Issues;
- Monitoring & Educational Standards.
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Main Actions Proposed by the AIUTA Research Committee: Research

AIUTA Training Seminar II – How to design research projects and how to fill the application forms to be submitted for EU funding

Research cooperation programmes - EU programmes and others.
Main Actions Proposed by the AIUTA Research Committee: Research

AIUTA Research Seminars

Seminar nº 1

How to develop international cooperation, under common research programmes - Funded by the EU & other international organizations.
Main Actions Proposed by the AIUTA Research Committee: Research

AIUTA Research Seminars

How to develop international cooperation, under common research programmes - Funded by the EU and other international organizations

For example, Paule Vidal, AIUTA Assistant Treasurer, promoted at Vannes U3A an annual research program with the following outputs:

- Publications;
- Exhibitions with demonstrations about innovation and new practices with real research labs.

For example, Nadezda Hrapkova, AIUTA Secretary-General, promotes research at Comenius University in Bratislava about learning processes among seniors and she has participated in international conferences about Intergenerational Cooperation and U3As.

Comenius University “Senior Educational Network” Project has recently been approved by Erasmus+
Main action proposed by the AIUTA Research Committee: Encourage Research by and between Members

AIUTA Research Seminars

How to develop international cooperation under common research programmes

For example – In the UK the Third Age Trust has recently revived its Research Committee. The aim is to identify all the research activities in U3As and to encourage research. Papers on “Gender Balance in U3As”, “Size Distribution of U3As” and “Market and Geographic Take Up Comparisons between Different Countries” have been produced. A recent publication has also been noted:- “Four Decades of Universities of the Third Age”- Marvin Formosa, August 2012.

For example - The “Be Active in Later Life Project (BALL)” is a collaboration of U3As in Reykjavik, Lublin & Alicante with the Evris Foundation in Iceland. It aims to develop guidelines on how to prepare individuals at an early stage for the Third Age putting emphasis on learning, cultural environment and ambiance, and the sharing of knowledge.
Main Actions Developed by the AIUTA Research Committee:
Examples or Working Papers
Senior tourism is growing worldwide and this is due to many reasons, namely: a higher life expectancy, more leisure time and the fact that seniors remain active after retirement.

The trend is evolving from “Group holidays for seniors” to “highly customized senior holidays”.

This study analyzes the travel behaviour of seniors who are still professionally active as well as seniors who are retired.

The paper “Senior Tourism” concludes that seniors expect holidays involving all the senses, allowing them to enjoy the destination’s heritage, nature/landscape, culture, museums, gardens, etc.
All forms of arts play an important role in the portfolio of activities proposed by U3A in different countries. The arts represent both a liberation and an invitation to personal escape.

In reality art courses do not play a central role in most school curricula and in schools where they are compulsory they do not capture much enthusiasm among young students. Many elderly people recognize their lack of interest in art courses that were not part of their core education needs when they were young. The same applies to history and philosophy.
Ageing and maturity brings a new interest in culture. Article No.7 of the U3A Charter mentions that it is necessary to give seniors the keys to better understand both the present, the past and the future.

Besides, the seniors’ extra spare time facilitates reading, visits to museums and exhibitions, cultural trips, and artistic practices, undertaken either collectively or independently. The freedom brought by creative energy, which was for a long time hindered by professional activities, is an important element of senior’s well-being.
This article analyses Catholic pilgrimages. On the one hand, it focuses on the pilgrims’ motivations and spiritual meaning which can motivate seniors participation in a pilgrimage or in a religious tourism program.

On the other hand, the reader can also find suggestions to participate in pilgrimages within his own environment - without leaving his place of residence.
A retirement home is a collective residence for elderly people. The term “Retirement Home” is itself replaced by other synonymous alternative terms since the majority of elderly people that are retired people in France, for example, are rarely living in retirement homes after they retire.

The ancillary services provided vary a lot depending on standards (from the restaurant to the cafeteria) and on the health condition of elderly people (from the almost hospitalized, to the handicapped and to the case where the elderly live in a residence where a doctor is available, depending on the their care needs). It is also possible to divide the retirement homes using a criteria based on the funding.
AIUTA Working Paper No.5: “World Observatory of Senior Tourism (WOST)”

This working paper presents the strategic context that justifies the creation of a “World Observatory of Senior Tourism” a partnership between AIUTA and the Azores Tourism Observatory (OTA) and describes the project.

- **WOST Legal Status & Founding Members**

WOST is a non-profit private association with the following founding members:

- Azores Tourism Observatory (OTA);
- AIUTA and the U3As and volunteer institutions who are members of AIUTA;
- Acting for Life – Tourism and Development Pole (TED).
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- **WOST’s Mission Statement:**
  To monitor, study and provide on real-time information about senior tourism, including senior tourism of AIUTA’s member universities, in an independent and rigorous way, and give advice to better achieve a sustainable development of senior tourism in tourism destinations worldwide, acting as global institution of reference for the study and promotion of senior tourism in partnership with international, national and regional tourism entities.

- **WOST Funding**
  - Fees paid by member institutions;
  - Fees charged for some specific activities and outputs;
  - Funds of the European Union, World Bank, UNEP, and other international bodies responsible for supporting tourism projects.

- **The Structure of the World Observatory of Senior Tourism (WOST)**
  The World Observatory of Senior Tourism will function with a flexible and decentralized structure implying the close collaboration of U3As members of AIUTA and their students and with both their senior and young researchers.
  The project leaders in each university will work under the coordination of the AIUTA’s Research Committee.
• WOST Strategic Action Vectors

Strategic Action Vector I: Observe to Monitor

Strategic Action Vector II: Observe to Study

Strategic Action Vector III: Observe to Inform

Strategic Action Vector IV: Observe to Train

Strategic Action Vector V: Observe to Advise
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Main Actions Proposed by the AIUTA Education & Research Committees: Networking

Consolidate the International Network of AIUTA

AIUTA has members from Africa, Asia, Europe and North and South America.

The Executive Committee has been contacted by other countries which have had U3As operating for many years or countries which have in recent years started activities and established new U3As including Australia, Cambodia, Iceland and Senegal.
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Main Actions Proposed by the AIUTA Education & Research Committees:
Promote Events Associated with International Conferences & Research

The XXVth Congress and General Assembly of AIUTA took place in Lisbon, Portugal in April 2012.

The events were hosted by the Portuguese Association of U3A, RUTIS.

At that time AIUTA had 51 members - 41 U3As, 5 federations of U3As and 5 individual members.

Today it has 54 members: 42 U3As, 5 federations and 7 individual members.
Main Actions Proposed by the AIUTA Education & Research Committees:
Promote Events Associated with International Conferences & Research

• December 2012 – London - Seminar on “Which Future for Which U3A?”;

• January 2013 – Vannes, France – Executive Board Meeting

• May 2013 – Guangzhou - Conference on “Innovative Development of Third Age Universities, Social Integration of Seniors & Senior Tourism”;

• September 2013 - Uppsala, Sweden- Conference on “Equal Opportunities for Senior Citizens”

• January 2014 – Cascais, Portugal – Executive Board Meeting
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AIUTA Communication Strategy

The new AIUTA website is available in English
In May 2014 the AIUTA Homepage had registered visits from 120 different countries with a total of 7176 visitors - in April 2012 the website had had visits from 61 different countries.

The website was most frequently visited by people from France (38.4%), United Kingdom (10.3%) and the United States (8.1%).
The AIUTA Executive Board has published regular newsletters to keep our members informed about future events and providing highlights of recent activities.

The newsletters are normally published in English and French and sometimes in Chinese.
Our Future Objectives are:

• To implement the previous actions under EU programs;
• To continue to reinforce networking with European U3As;
• To consolidate networking with the Asia Pacific Alliance U3As... Singapore U3A joined AIUTA recently and Osaka U3A will join shortly;
• To set up a “Bank of Knowledge for Seniors and their U3As”, which will be useful to organize symposiums, conferences and bilateral exchanges between U3As internationally.
• To promote lobbying for Third Age education in the EU and UN institutions;
• To extend research programs involving more U3As;
Our Future Objectives are (Cont.):

• To implement the World Observatory of Senior Tourism (WOST) - the Observatory will provide sustainable solutions to keep seniors travelling, which will bring benefits for their health and the social cohesion of their tourism destinations;

• To create centers of interest for research activities with the collaboration of both young and senior researchers from the various U3As, thus promoting intergenerational exchanges.

• To analyze issues related to climate change, in particular in small islands such as the ones located in the Pacific and also in other regions located in coastal areas. U3A could provide help to government and NGOs with experiences from our senior students and teachers. A forum on U3A’s contribution to fighting climate change would be an important target and challenge that could contribute to these issues.
AIUTA: The Future

Our main actions in the near future

The international conferences planned for 2015 through to 2017 include the following:

**APA 27\textsuperscript{th} May 27\textsuperscript{th} to 30\textsuperscript{th} May 2015** – Brisbane, Australia - AIUTA will be represented by Professor Carlos Santos, Deputy Secretary-General. We are pleased that Barbara Lewis, Chairman of the Third Age Trust, which is an AIUTA member, will also be present.
June 2015 – Alicante, Spain

September 2015 – Lublin, Poland

May 2016 – Reims, France

October 2016 – Osaka, Japan – Joint AIUTA/APA event;

May 2017 – Bratislava, Slovakia

November 2017 – Bogotá, Colombia
Working Sessions for 2016 & 2017 include:-

• **Meeting about the World Observatory of Senior Tourism (WOST)** – Azores, Portugal. September 2016 or 2017;

• **Meeting of the Research Committee** – Rodrigues and Mauritius. February 2016;

• **Meeting of the Executive Council about Observatories** - Las Palmas, Canary Islands, Spain. January 2016;

• **Meeting about Seniors, U3As and Climate Change** – Island on the Pacific or Australia. January 2017.
AIUTA will develop new cooperation with International Organisations from the UN Family and from the EU including the following:-

**June 2015** – UNESCO, Paris - Visit and meeting involving Professor François Vellas and Professor A. Pasuramen, who is a member of the AIUTA Governing Board and President of the U3A of Mauritius.

**December 2015** - UN UNEP UNCTAD CoP – International Conference on Climate Change, Paris Le Bourget in cooperation with Acting for Life on Island Case Study and New Policies on senior contribution.
In conclusion we want to promote sound intergenerational applied research and sound teaching and pedagogic practices for the students of U3As as well as promoting networking both within AIUTA among its members and between AIUTA and other U3As associations in the world.

Our ultimate goal is to enhance the well-being of seniors around the world, by improving and transferring knowledge through global productive partnerships with other U3As associations, such as the Asia Pacific Alliance of U3As and the U3A Network Queensland, among many others. The U3A Asia Pacific Alliance (APA) is progressing remarkably well considering it operates informally with U3As in several different countries, which offer to organize annual conferences in return. AIUTA wishes the APA well and looks forward to continuing cooperation.
In order to achieve our final goal we choose a win-win strategy that may be beneficial for all stakeholders, namely: the senior students, the partner institutions, the scientific community, AIUTA and all other partner U3As Associations in the world and finally the regions covered by these networks.

Together we will win in the benefit of all senior citizens of the world!
Thank You for Listening!
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