



# Universitas Ysei

Incontri di cultura

Universitas Ysei was founded in 2000 on the initiative of two trade unions, the Iseo Senior Citizens Association and the Workers' Mutual Aid Society as a cultural opportunity for all senior citizens from Iseo, Lake Iseo and the Franciacorta area. The activities are financed by the Town Council of Iseo and courses are held in the premises of the "G. Antonietti" High School. In 2005 the association was set up with its own charter and regulations. The organs' powers and composition were also defined in order to ensure democracy and participation. Since its establishment, Universitas Ysei's activities have been addressed to the "third age" and to all adults of any age. "Third age" is intended as the chronological definition of a time that comes after a "first age", corresponding to childhood/adolescence, and a "second age" corresponding to adulthood. Individuals find themselves in this "third age" with all their vitality, which means the will to live, not only biologically. The senior citizen is like any other citizen, inserted in a social context to which he/she belongs and of which he/she is an active part. Universities of the Third Age, through culture, support the elderly in the transition from an individualistic anthropology aimed at the defense of individual interests to a personalistic anthropology, in which "we", the "good for everybody" and, therefore, their own good prevails. The large number of people over 65, which has been growing over the past 25 years due to the continuous increase in life expectancy, has caused a series of problems for governments, and many and varied institutional answers have been given. This is why in 2012 Europe focused on the theme of "active aging" in order to promote the elderly as a resource for themselves and for society. Universitas Ysei, going beyond the age/health combination, marries learning, free expression of the individual/community and solidarity.

## **Universitas Ysei:**

promoted by voluntary workers  
open to adults but mainly composed of elderly people  
linked to the territory  
free attendance – no qualification is required to enrol  
the activities it offers meet the users' demands

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## Goals:

- to widen people's cultural horizons, trying to make up for the knowledge that was sacrificed during the working phase or "second age";
- to convey, through the exchange of personal experiences and the participation in the social life of the community, anthropological culture: the country and family culture, which convey a sense of belonging;
- to retrieve the meaning of traditions thanks to history, art and literature;
- to encourage the learning of new communication and knowledge tools, such as IT and foreign languages;
- to open up to people of different ages in order to encourage a generational exchange.

*"The completeness of one's existence does not lie in self-fulfilment but in "self-transcendence", that is going out of oneself to rediscover oneself in "relationship".*

(G. Dal Ferro)

This educational principle is fully realised in the University of the Third Age, which represents, despite its differences on the national territory, the most structured offer both from an organizational point of view and for its educational offer.

The University of the Third Age thus represents an extraordinary opportunity of permanent education for the elderly, able to spur their cultural growth, social development and participation in the community.

The planning of Universitas Ysei's courses allows an organic organisation enabling multidisciplinary activities in order to offer stimulating interest fields as far as methodology and teaching tools are concerned.

Cultural area: literature, history, philosophy, psychology, ethics, IT, foreign languages, art, music, cinema.

External activities: guided tours of exhibitions, "La Scala" Theatre performances, artistic and cultural trips.

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Universitas Ysei has grown and strengthened, going from 136 enrolments on courses in 2000 to 430 in 2013.

The number of enrolments shows that knowledge is a core value, a primary asset for the “person”, all the more so if carried out with heed to cultural diversity.

I would like to conclude with the words of Schopenhauer who, comparing youth and old age, carefully weighs the pros and cons of both of them and states that life is like “*a piece of embroidery, of which, during the first half of his time, a man gets a sight of the right side, and during the second half, of the wrong. The wrong side is not so pretty as the right, but it is more instructive; it shows the way in which the threads have been worked together.*”

Thank you for your attention and a happy life to you all.

The Chairperson

Laura Piglionica

Coniston (UK), 11 April 2014