**The Intergenerational Department**

**Background:** 1978 Austrian Universities were opened for older people with or without university level. In some Austrian Universities special advisory offices for older students were installed. In 1986 the Department of Intergenerational Issues (formerly Department for Senior Students) was founded at the Austrian Students Association Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz. It is the only department for intergenerational affairs at Austrian Universities. Dr. Rosemarie Kurz has been elected director since 1988.

**Guiding principle:** The intergenerational department emphasizes social integration of older people as well as solidarity between the generations. We want to empower older students and want to tackle against ageism, racism, sexism, brutality and discrimination of any kind.

**Tasks:** Assistance will be offered in all questions concerning issues of the university. Special assistance and advice is offered for newcomers by older and experienced students on issues concerning special problems on behalf of difficulties arousing at the university. Lectures, seminars and events are organized such as Monday Academy, SiA – Summer – Academie, International Tea etc. Another topic is public relations work and forcing the interchange of public life and sciences. In 2014 there are1800 40plus students enrolled in regular studies, which amount to 6% of the total number of students of Karl-Franzens-University Graz. Young and old persons meet and may counter steer an already increasing „old age apartheid“.

**Co-operation is aimed with organizations of senior citizens, institutions of the public sector and institutions being interested in learning in later life and in the issues concerning the solidarity of generations on behalf of installing a 55plus University.**

**Success:** 1986 there were 490 40plus students at the University of Graz – today there are 1800. In the meantime many scientific investigations were carried out by older students in different scientific branches. Public opinion took notice of the manifold issues of aging and the importance of solidarity among generations.

**Problems:** Differing values and life styles of young and older students may lead to misunderstanding and these issues must be questioned always anew.

**Symbol – the Elephant:**  
Elephants are said to attain old age and wisdom. These live in herds with the young ones; when water is scarce the old ones remember more water spots than the young; when water ist found the young animals may enjoy the water first. The pace of trotting is so arranged that the aged animals can also keep up with the rest. And when life comes to its end the elephant herd comforts the old dying animal with their trunk.