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FINAL REPORT

free publication



EDUCATION
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Title: Educational Needs and Best Practices for People Aged 55+ in Germany, Poland and in Europe

Subtitle: A Comparative Analysis in the Context of Europe



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Action KA210-ADU - Small-scale partnerships in adult education

Educational counselling to improve the quality of life for people 55+ ("EDUCATIONforFUTURE")

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PARTNERS:



SCHWERPUNKT ZENTRUM GMBH – a German company located in Dusseldorf that organizes training in the areas of training and mobility, training in work centres, employability, professional training, entrepreneurship, and the development of digital and transversal competencies aimed at students and teachers from all over Europe



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Fundacja „Fundusz Inicjatyw” (Poland) – a non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion of the idea of lifelong learning, creating and providing conditions for the promotion and propagation of humanistic, pro-social, entrepreneurial and patriotic attitudes.



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INTRODUCTION BACKGROUND

The project aims to address the educational needs of individuals aged 55 and above through the development and implementation of an innovative service: non-vocational "educational counselling for people aged 55+". This service is designed to provide tailored guidance and support to older adults seeking educational opportunities and personal development.

Key Objectives:

- Development of Innovative Service
- Creation of a Guide for Adult Education Staff
- Capacity Building
- Testing and Support Phase
- Expansion of Educational Offerings

The project will culminate in the delivery of an innovative non-vocational educational counselling service tailored specifically to individuals aged 55 and above. This will be complemented by a comprehensive guide for adult education staff, equipping them with the necessary tools and recommendations to effectively implement the counselling service. Additionally, the project will facilitate the capacity building of at least 6 staff members from partner institutions, enhancing their knowledge and competences in adult education and counselling. Furthermore, partner institutions will experience institutional development, boosting their staff and institutional potential. Finally, the project will contribute to the expansion of educational offerings for older adults in partner countries, fostering increased access to adult education and promoting lifelong learning.



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Final report



PART 1

GERMANY



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OBJECTIVES

This report aims to analyse the educational needs of individuals aged 55 and older in Germany, and Europe as a whole. The report will also identify and discuss best practices in education and educational counselling for this demographic in these regions. The report will be part of a broader final report that will support the development of an appropriate program of educational counselling for people aged 55+.

METHODOLOGY

Desk Research conducted to gather information from existing academic literature, policy documents, and reports related to the educational needs and best practices for individuals aged 55 and above. This included a review of demographic trends, educational programs, and successful initiatives.

Secondary data collected from reputable sources, including government reports, academic journals, and international organizations' publications. This data provided insights into the current educational landscape, challenges, and gaps for the 55+ demographic.

Case studies of successful educational programs and initiatives targeting the 55+ demographic. These case studies provided in-depth insights into the design, implementation, and outcomes of these programs.

A comparative analysis conducted to compare the educational needs and best practices in Germany with those in other European countries. This involved reviewing relevant literature and reports from these countries to identify similarities and differences.

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. All sources were properly cited, and the research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines and standards.

The study had several limitations, including the reliance on secondary data, which may be subject to bias or inaccuracies. Additionally, the scope of the research was limited to existing literature and reports, and primary data collection was not conducted.





EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF PEOPLE AGED 55+ IN GERMANY

The educational landscape for individuals aged 55 and above in Germany is undergoing a transformation, marked by a notable increase in participation in the workforce and a burgeoning interest in lifelong learning. This demographic, characterized by its diverse needs and aspirations, is increasingly seeking opportunities for personal and professional development, signaling a shift towards a more inclusive and adaptive educational framework.

The surge in labor force participation among those aged 65 to 69 underscores a broader societal trend: the desire for active engagement and meaningful contribution does not wane with age. Older adults are not only seeking to extend their careers but are also embracing the digital revolution, participating in online communities, and contributing to society through voluntary work. This shift reflects a growing recognition of the value of lifelong learning and the potential of older adults to continue playing a significant role in the economy and society.

Germany, like many European nations, is facing the challenges and opportunities presented by an ageing population. The demographic shift towards a larger proportion of older individuals necessitates a reevaluation of educational strategies to ensure they cater to this group's unique needs. Traditional educational paradigms, primarily focused on younger age groups, must evolve to embrace the concept of education as a lifelong pursuit, transcending age barriers.



The increasing longevity of the population, coupled with improved living conditions, presents a compelling case for expanding educational opportunities for older adults. Addressing the educational needs of this demographic is not merely a matter of providing access to learning; it involves a comprehensive approach that encompasses health, well-being, digital literacy, and social inclusion. As the baby boomer generation transitions into retirement, there is a significant opportunity to harness their experience, knowledge, and skills for the benefit of society.

However, the path to reintegration into the workforce or engagement in meaningful educational pursuits is fraught with challenges for many older individuals. The prevalence of long-term unemployment among those aged 55 to 64 highlights systemic barriers that impede their full participation in the labor market. These challenges underscore the necessity for targeted initiatives aimed at enhancing employability, updating skills, and facilitating the transition to new roles or careers.

Educational attainment among the older population in Germany reveals stark disparities, particularly in terms of vocational qualifications and higher education degrees. While younger generations show promising trends in closing the educational gap, older adults often find themselves at a disadvantage, lacking the formal qualifications that could enhance their employability and personal development. This situation calls for innovative solutions that recognize and validate informal and non-formal learning, offering pathways to accreditation and certification that reflect the diverse learning experiences of older adults.

Adult education centers have emerged as pivotal institutions in addressing the educational needs of older adults, offering a range of courses that cater to varied interests, from health and wellness to languages and the arts. These centers play a crucial role in fostering social engagement and continuous learning, yet the emphasis on leisure activities over formal education highlights the need for a more structured approach to lifelong learning. Creating opportunities for older adults to attain recognized qualifications or credentials through these programs could significantly enhance their value and impact.



The trend towards lifelong learning among older adults is not merely a reflection of individual aspirations but a societal imperative. As the proportion of older individuals in the population increases, their active participation in educational, economic, and social spheres becomes essential for sustainable development. By providing tailored training programs, expanding access to lifelong learning opportunities, and promoting gender parity in education, Germany can leverage the wealth of experience and knowledge inherent in its ageing population.



In crafting policies and programs to meet the educational needs of individuals aged 55 and above, it is crucial to adopt a holistic perspective that considers the multifaceted nature of learning in later life. Education for older adults should not be confined to vocational training or professional development; it should encompass a broad spectrum of disciplines and modalities, from digital literacy to cultural studies, fostering a rich and engaging learning environment that caters to the intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions of ageing.

As Germany navigates the complexities of an ageing society, the educational needs of older adults must be placed at the forefront of policy discussions. By embracing a model of lifelong learning that values diversity, inclusivity, and adaptability, Germany can not only address the immediate needs of its older population but also lay the foundation for a society that thrives on the contributions of individuals at every stage of life. In doing so, Germany will not only enhance the well-being of its ageing citizens but also bolster its societal progress and economic growth, ensuring a future that is vibrant, inclusive, and resilient.



EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF PEOPLE AGED 55+ IN EUROPE

The demographic landscape of Europe is undergoing significant changes, characterized by an ageing population and the emergence of new challenges in addressing the educational needs of older adults. This analysis delves into the multifaceted aspects of educational requirements for individuals aged 55 and above in Europe, considering various factors such as demographic shifts, access to learning opportunities, digital inclusion, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Demographic Evolution and Its Educational Implications

Europe's demographic composition is undergoing a profound transformation, with a marked increase in the population of individuals aged 55 and above. This shift not only presents unique challenges but also opens up new avenues for education and training tailored to the needs of older adults. Although there has been a gradual rise in the participation of adults in educational and training programs across the continent, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted this progress, leading to diminished participation rates. The prevailing educational policies and funding mechanisms, which predominantly emphasize formal education aimed at vocational training and qualifications, often fail to adequately address the learning needs of the older demographic.

Bridging the Digital Divide

One of the significant barriers exacerbating educational inequality among older Europeans is digital exclusion. According to the Eurydice Report, approximately 40% of adults in the EU are at risk of being digitally marginalized due to insufficient digital skills or limited access to the internet. The pandemic has further highlighted this issue, with an increased dependence on technology for educational purposes sidelining those with minimal digital literacy. The trend towards "ageing in place," accelerated by the pandemic, has necessitated the expansion of personalized learning services delivered at home, mirroring a broader trend towards merging educational and social support for the elderly.



Navigating Challenges and Seizing Opportunities

The educational terrain for those aged 55 and above in Europe is fraught with obstacles, including the entrenchment of the low-skills trap and a scarcity of informal learning opportunities specifically designed for older adults. Despite widespread advocacy for lifelong learning, there is a conspicuous lack of targeted data and policies that cater to the educational needs of this age group, contributing to their continued marginalization. This oversight underscores the imperative for a more inclusive and holistic approach to adult education that transcends mere vocational training.



Towards a More Inclusive and Empowering Approach

Towards a More Inclusive and Empowering Approach In light of the difficulties wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the pivotal role lifelong learning plays in fostering resilience and empowerment among older individuals. The crisis has underlined the necessity of integrating educational initiatives with broader social support systems, advocating for a shift from a dependency model to one that emphasizes autonomy and empowerment. Older adults are increasingly being seen as proactive participants in their own learning journeys, capable of adapting to and navigating through the uncertainties of the pandemic.

Crafting Pathways for Resilient Futures

The quest to meet the educational needs of Europeans aged 55 and above demands a multifaceted and integrative strategy that acknowledges the heterogeneity of this demographic and their evolving preferences for learning. Initiatives aimed at enhancing digital literacy, broadening access to informal educational programs, and fostering a synergy between educational and social support mechanisms are critical in building resilience and empowerment among older adults.



Expanding the Horizon of Learning Opportunities

To truly cater to the educational aspirations of older adults in Europe, there is a need to diversify the range of learning opportunities available. This entails not only the provision of courses and programs that align with their interests and life experiences but also the creation of platforms that facilitate intergenerational learning and exchange. Such environments can enrich the learning experience for older adults, providing them with fresh perspectives and insights.

Fostering Community and Connectivity

An often overlooked aspect of education for older adults is the role of community and social connectivity. Educational programs should be designed to foster a sense of community among participants, encouraging collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and experiences. This not only enhances the learning process but also combats isolation, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support among learners.

Embracing the Potential of Older Learners

Recognizing and leveraging the wealth of experience, knowledge, and skills that older adults bring to the educational table can significantly enrich the learning ecosystem. Educational initiatives should be designed to not only impart new knowledge and skills but also to validate and integrate the existing competencies of older learners, thereby creating a more reciprocal and dynamic learning environment.

By adopting a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to the education of older adults, Europe can harness the potential of its ageing population, creating inclusive and vibrant educational ecosystems that empower individuals to continue growing, contributing, and thriving well into their later years.





BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING FOR PEOPLE AGED 55+ IN GERMANY

As societies across Germany and Europe continue to undergo demographic shifts towards ageing populations, there arises an urgent need to address the educational needs and promote lifelong learning among older adults. Recognizing the importance of empowering older individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for active engagement in society, various initiatives and best practices have emerged to cater specifically to the educational and counselling needs of people aged 55 and above.

The following compilation highlights exemplary initiatives from Germany and Europe that serve as beacons of innovation and excellence in promoting education and digital literacy among older adults:

GRANDEXPERTS: START OF A NEW LEARNING PROGRAMME FOR SENIORS IN GERMANY



During the last weeks of January 2019 BAGSO, the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations, started a series of face to face meetings for older people in Gelsenkirchen.

The meetings are part of the project „GrandExpertS“ aiming to empower older adults with specific knowledge and experience to develop digital learning content by themselves.

Key success factors of the "GrandExpertS" project include effective collaboration between BAGSO, the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations, ILI (Innovation in Learning Institute Fürth), and local partners such as the "Generationennetz Gelsenkirchen". The project's success is also attributed to its emphasis on empowering older adults by providing them with specific knowledge and experience to develop digital learning content. Furthermore, the high motivation demonstrated by participants from five countries (Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Poland, and the Netherlands) during the face-to-face meetings indicates a strong commitment to the project's objectives. The blended learning program, developed by the University Erlangen-Nuremberg, ensures a comprehensive and engaging learning experience for participants, contributing to the project's overall success.



WISSENSDURSTIG.DE: A GERMAN ONLINE PORTAL TO PROMOTE LEARNING IN OLD AGE

Created in 2017 with the support of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), the portal provides nationwide information and resources to promote learning and education in old age and specifically in the context of digitalisation.



Key success factors of the Wissensdurstig.de project include its establishment as a comprehensive internet portal by BAGSO, supported by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). Since its creation in 2017, the portal has played a pivotal role in promoting lifelong learning and education for older adults in Germany, particularly in the context of digitalization.

By providing nationwide information and resources, including educational opportunities, digitization tips, materials, and good practice examples, Wissensdurstig.de has become a valuable resource for both older learners and education providers. The platform's user-friendly interface allows education providers to easily register and showcase their offerings, fostering a collaborative and accessible learning environment.

Additionally, the emphasis on affordability and the inclusion of non-profit organizations as providers further enhances the project's accessibility and impact within the senior citizen community.



DIGITALE ENGEL (DIGITAL ANGELS)

The initiative addressed a challenge, already identified within the German skills landscape: the lack of digital understanding and interest in learning about digital technologies by older adults, and the purposes they use the Internet for: to communicate with their children and close ones and find information online.



Key success factors of the Digital Angels initiative include its proactive approach to addressing the digital understanding and interest gap among older adults in Germany. By deploying mobile buses equipped with digital advisors, the initiative brings accessible digital education directly to where older adults frequent, such as markets, local meetings, and senior citizens' clubs. The practical and on-site teaching methodology empowers older adults to learn specific digital skills tailored to their everyday needs, such as communication with family and friends, accessing information online, and utilizing digital applications to simplify daily tasks. The initiative's coverage of rural regions ensures inclusivity and accessibility for older adults residing outside urban centers. Additionally, the diverse range of services offered, from staying connected online to energy-saving tips for smart homes, reflects the initiative's adaptability to meet the evolving digital needs of older adults in various aspects of their lives.





BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE AGED 55+ IN EUROPE

WELL-BEING AND HEALTHY CHOICES FOR OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR CARERS – WHOLE

WHOLE project's main objective was to promote active and healthy ageing through physical training for frail seniors and elderly people at home, using as a mean the personalized home care services provided to them by formal and informal carers. At the same time, WHOLE project equally emphasized on the effect of the physical training on wellbeing and relief of formal and especially informal carers.



WHOLE

Germany, like many European nations, is facing the challenges and opportunities presented by an ageing population. The demographic shift towards a larger proportion of older individuals necessitates a reevaluation of educational strategies to ensure they cater to this group's unique needs. Traditional educational paradigms, primarily focused on younger age groups, must evolve to embrace the concept of education as a lifelong pursuit, transcending age barriers.

SEELERNETZ

The objective is to support life-long learning through social networks and show how it can lead to active participation of seniors in society, promote intergenerational solidarity and increase older people's well-being.



Key success factors of the SEELERNETZ project include its comprehensive approach to improving the quality of life for older people through lifelong learning facilitated by social networks. By involving seniors in the initial stage to understand their living conditions and desires for enhancing daily life, the project ensures a tailored and community-driven approach. The subsequent development of pilot projects in five participating countries fosters innovation and adaptation to diverse cultural contexts. Furthermore, the collaboration between academic institutions, research organizations, and member organizations like 50plus Hellas demonstrates a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to addressing the needs of older adults. The project's focus on generating practical recommendations and a standardized EU model enhances its potential for long-term impact and scalability beyond the project duration.

“CULTURE ON PRESCRIPTION IN EUROPE” (COPE)

This is where the “Culture on Prescription” approach comes in. Building on the concept of social prescribing, already well established in the UK and Ireland, “Culture on prescription in Europe” (COPE) project examines how newly developed cultural activities in adult education can address the loneliness and social isolation of older people.



Key success factors of the COPE project include its collaborative approach among partners from various European countries, facilitated by the Erasmus+ funding programme. Led by Germany's Institute for Applied Social Research, Social Planning, and Policy Advice (ISIS) in Frankfurt am Main, the project aims to combine cultural activities and mental health promotion for older people. By implementing COPE pilot courses, the project will assess the effectiveness of this combination and offer personalized "Cultural Prescriptions" to encourage participation in tailored activities. The involvement of professional facilitators with expertise in arts and culture ensures the development of high-quality and engaging pilot activities that cater to the diverse needs of older adults across different localities.



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH EUROPE

As societies across Germany and Europe confront the challenges posed by ageing populations, it becomes imperative to delve into a comparative analysis to understand the educational needs and initiatives for individuals aged 55 and above. This analysis will explore similarities and differences between Germany and other European countries, highlighting lessons learned and best practices that could inform educational policies and programs across the continent.



One notable similarity across Europe lies in the demographic trend of an ageing population. Countries across the continent are experiencing a gradual increase in the proportion of individuals aged 55 and above, necessitating a concerted effort to address their educational needs. This demographic shift underscores the importance of promoting lifelong learning and providing tailored educational opportunities for older adults to remain active contributors to society.

However, despite this overarching similarity, there are notable differences in the educational landscapes of different European countries. For instance, while Germany has witnessed a surge in the labour force participation of older adults and a growing appetite for knowledge among this demographic, other countries may exhibit varying levels of engagement in education and training among older populations. Factors such as economic conditions, cultural attitudes towards ageing, and the availability of educational resources can significantly influence the educational trajectories of older adults in different European nations.

Moreover, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced additional complexities to the educational landscape of older adults in Europe. Digital exclusion has emerged as a significant challenge, particularly among older populations with limited digital literacy. While initiatives such as the Digital Angels in Germany have sought to bridge this gap by providing accessible digital education, the extent of digital exclusion may vary across European countries, necessitating tailored approaches to address this issue.

In terms of best practices, Germany serves as a beacon of innovation with initiatives such as GRANDEXPERTS and WISSENSDURSTIG.DE, which have demonstrated success in promoting education and digital literacy among older adults. These initiatives emphasize collaboration between various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions, to create comprehensive and accessible learning platforms for older learners.

Furthermore, projects like WHOLE and SEELERNETZ showcase the potential of interdisciplinary collaboration and community engagement in promoting active ageing and lifelong learning. By integrating physical activity, social networks, and cultural activities into educational programs, these initiatives offer holistic approaches to addressing the diverse needs of older adults and fostering resilience in the face of societal challenges.

In conclusion, a comparative analysis of educational initiatives for individuals aged 55 and above in Germany and Europe reveals both commonalities and distinctions that can inform future policy and program development. By sharing best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches, European countries can collaborate to create inclusive educational ecosystems that empower older adults to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives.



PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE PROJECT

As the project aimed at addressing the educational needs of individuals aged 55 and above progresses, it becomes essential to outline comprehensive recommendations and practical strategies for effective implementation. These recommendations and strategies encompass various facets of the project, from the development of innovative services to capacity building and the expansion of educational offerings. By delineating clear pathways for action, stakeholders can navigate the complexities of the project and maximize its impact on older adults' education and personal development.

1. Development of Innovative Service

The cornerstone of the project lies in the development of an innovative non-vocational educational counselling service tailored specifically to individuals aged 55 and above. To ensure the success of this endeavour, several recommendations and strategies can be put forth:

- **Conduct thorough needs assessment:** Before designing the educational counselling service, it is crucial to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the specific educational requirements, preferences, and challenges faced by older adults. This assessment should encompass diverse demographic groups and consider factors such as educational attainment, digital literacy, and socio-economic status.
- **Foster collaboration and co-creation:** Engage older adults as active participants in the co-creation process of the educational counselling service. Solicit their input, feedback, and suggestions to ensure that the service is tailored to their unique needs and preferences. Collaborate with community organizations, academic institutions, and relevant stakeholders to leverage expertise and resources in service development.
- **Embrace innovative technologies:** Utilize innovative technologies, such as online platforms, mobile applications, and virtual counselling sessions, to enhance the accessibility and reach of the educational counselling service. Leverage digital tools to provide personalized guidance, interactive resources, and remote support to older adults, thereby overcoming barriers related to mobility and geographical location.

2. Creation of a Guide for Adult Education Staff

A comprehensive guide for adult education staff is instrumental in equipping them with the necessary tools and recommendations to effectively implement the counselling service. The following recommendations and strategies can facilitate the creation and dissemination of this guide:

- **Conduct training and capacity building:** Provide training sessions and workshops for adult education staff to familiarize them with the objectives, methodologies, and best practices of the counselling service. Equip staff with essential skills in counselling techniques, adult learning principles, and cultural competence to effectively engage with older adult learners.
- **Develop user-friendly resources:** Design the guide for adult education staff in a user-friendly format, incorporating clear instructions, practical examples, and case studies. Include actionable recommendations, templates, and checklists to facilitate the implementation process and support staff in navigating diverse educational contexts and learner needs.
- **Foster a community of practice:** Establish a community of practice or online forum where adult education staff can collaborate, share experiences, and exchange insights related to the implementation of the counselling service. Encourage peer learning, mentorship, and continuous professional development to enhance staff confidence and competence in supporting older adult learners.





3.Capacity Building

Capacity building of staff members from partner institutions is essential for enhancing their knowledge and competencies in adult education and counselling. The following recommendations and strategies can guide capacity-building efforts:

- **Tailor training programs:** Customize training programs and workshops to address the specific learning needs and skill gaps of staff members from partner institutions. Offer a blend of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and experiential learning opportunities to ensure relevance and applicability to their roles and responsibilities.
- **Provide ongoing support and mentorship:** Offer ongoing support, mentorship, and coaching to staff members as they navigate the implementation of the counselling service in their respective contexts. Foster a supportive learning environment where staff feel empowered to seek guidance, share challenges, and celebrate successes throughout the project lifecycle.
- **Foster cross-cultural exchange:** Facilitate opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and collaboration among staff members from partner institutions, allowing them to learn from each other's experiences, perspectives, and best practices. Encourage inter-institutional partnerships, joint projects, and collaborative initiatives to promote mutual learning and collective impact.

4. Testing and Support Phase

The testing and support phase of the project plays a pivotal role in refining the educational counselling service, addressing implementation challenges, and optimizing outcomes for older adult learners. The following recommendations and strategies can inform this phase:

- **Conduct pilot testing:** Implement small-scale pilot tests of the educational counselling service in diverse settings and communities to assess its feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness. Gather feedback from older adult learners, education staff, and other stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and refinement.
- **Iterate and adapt:** Continuously iterate and adapt the educational counselling service based on insights gleaned from pilot testing, stakeholder feedback, and evaluation data. Embrace a flexible and iterative approach to service delivery, allowing for rapid prototyping, experimentation, and adjustment in response to evolving needs and contexts.
- **Provide tailored support:** Offer tailored support and assistance to partner institutions and education staff during the testing phase, addressing implementation challenges, troubleshooting issues, and providing guidance on best practices. Foster a collaborative problem-solving mindset, where stakeholders work together to overcome barriers and maximize the impact of the counselling service.





5. Expansion of Educational Offerings

The expansion of educational offerings for older adults in partner countries is integral to fostering increased access to adult education and promoting lifelong learning. The following recommendations and strategies can facilitate the expansion phase:

- **Scale-up successful initiatives:** Identify successful educational programs and initiatives from pilot testing and scale them up to reach a broader audience of older adult learners. Leverage lessons learned, best practices, and evidence-based approaches to inform the expansion of educational offerings in partner countries.
- **Foster sustainability and scalability:** Design educational programs and interventions with sustainability and scalability in mind, ensuring that they can be effectively replicated and adapted in diverse contexts. Explore opportunities for partnership, funding, and resource mobilization to support the long-term viability and growth of educational initiatives for older adults.
- **Promote community engagement and participation:** Engage older adult learners, community organizations, and other stakeholders in the co-design and implementation of educational offerings, ensuring their relevance, cultural appropriateness, and responsiveness to local needs and preferences. Foster a sense of ownership, pride, and belonging among older adults, empowering them as active participants in their lifelong learning journey.



In conclusion, the successful realization of a project dedicated to enhancing the educational landscape for individuals aged 55 and above demands a nuanced, collaborative, and dynamic approach. This project, pivotal in addressing the evolving needs of an ageing population, stands as a beacon for transformative change in adult education. It underscores the imperative to move beyond traditional paradigms and embrace innovative, inclusive, and adaptable strategies that resonate with the unique aspirations and challenges of older learners.

At the heart of this initiative is the recognition of older adults not merely as beneficiaries but as active co-creators of their educational journey. This paradigm shift calls for a robust framework that integrates the development of pioneering services, comprehensive capacity building, iterative testing phases, and the strategic expansion of educational offerings. Such a multifaceted approach ensures that the project remains responsive, impactful, and aligned with the real-world needs of its target demographic.

The foundation of this project lies in the development of an innovative educational counselling service, designed with the direct involvement of older adults to ensure it meets their diverse needs. This service is not an end in itself but a gateway to empowering older adults to navigate their educational paths with confidence and autonomy. By fostering a participatory design process, the project taps into the rich tapestry of experiences, insights, and preferences of older learners, ensuring that the services offered are not only relevant but deeply resonant with their aspirations.

Capacity building emerges as a critical pillar in this endeavor, emphasizing the need for continuous learning and adaptation among educators and facilitators. The landscape of adult education is perpetually evolving, and as such, those at the forefront of delivering these services must be equipped with the latest pedagogical strategies, technological tools, and empathetic approaches to engage effectively with older learners. This capacity building extends beyond technical skills to encompass a deep understanding of the social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of learning in later life.





The iterative testing and support phase represents the project's commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness. Pilot testing in diverse settings offers invaluable insights into the practicalities of implementing the educational counselling service, allowing for real-time adjustments and refinements. This phase is not merely about troubleshooting but about embracing an ethos of experimentation and innovation to enhance the quality, accessibility, and impact of educational services for older adults.



Finally, the strategic expansion of educational offerings is crucial for broadening the reach and depth of the project's impact. Scaling up successful initiatives ensures that a wider audience of older learners can benefit from enriched educational opportunities, fostering a culture of lifelong learning that transcends geographical, social, and economic boundaries. This expansion is not just about quantity but about enriching the quality and diversity of educational experiences available to older adults, enabling them to explore new horizons of knowledge, creativity, and personal growth.

In essence, this project embodies a forward-thinking approach to adult education, one that champions the rights, needs, and potentials of older adults as integral members of the educational community. By weaving together innovative service development, comprehensive capacity building, iterative testing, and strategic expansion, the project sets a new benchmark for adult education. It paves the way for a future where education is a lifelong journey, accessible, engaging, and enriching for individuals at every stage of life, ensuring that older adults are not only learners but also contributors to a vibrant, inclusive, and ever-evolving educational ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the project dedicated to addressing the educational needs of individuals aged 55 and above offers a thoroughly devised and meticulously structured strategy designed to meet the varied needs of this demographic across both Germany and the broader European landscape. The project's well-defined objectives, methodical approaches, and insightful findings deliver critical perspectives that are instrumental in shaping the development of tailored educational programs and services for the senior population.

The project's in-depth analysis of Germany's educational landscape uncovers a notable surge in the desire for knowledge among the older generations, alongside a pronounced trend towards digital integration and a robust inclination towards volunteerism. As the baby boomer generation approaches retirement, and with the demographic tilt towards an aging populace becoming more pronounced, the project aptly stresses the critical need for educational endeavors to be specifically crafted to accommodate the wide-ranging needs of those aged 55 and above. The project's meticulous evaluation of factors such as unemployment rates, educational achievements, and gender disparities within this age group illuminates the particular challenges that must be surmounted to ensure fair and open access to educational opportunities.

Educational Needs of People Aged 55+ in Germany

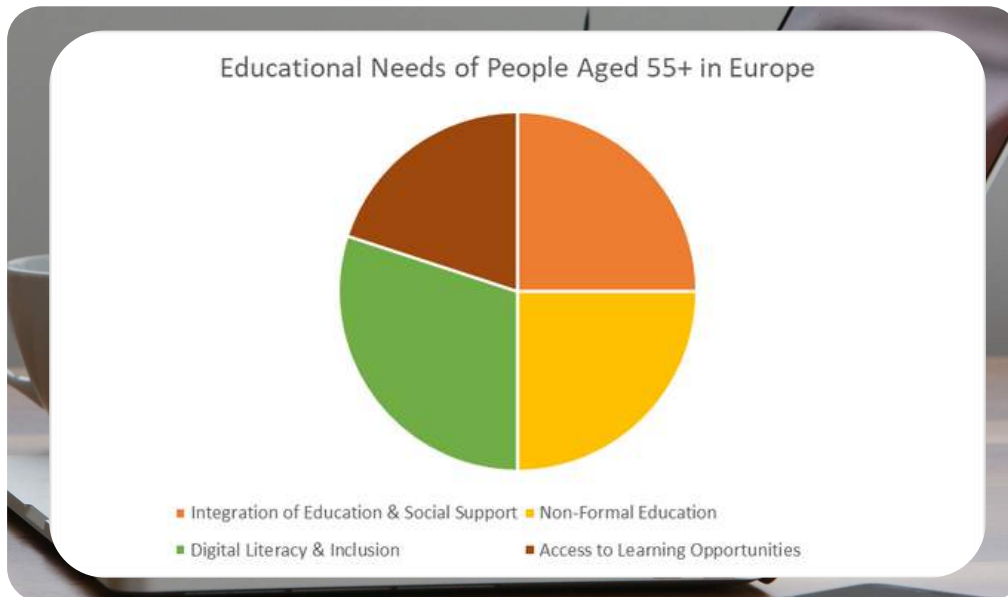


Leisure & Social Engagement Digital Literacy Higher Education Vocational Training Needs

Furthermore, the project acknowledges the rising phenomenon of lifelong learning among the senior demographic in Germany, signifying a transformative shift in the educational paradigm. The focus on the integration of occasional learners within higher education realms and the pivotal role played by adult education centers in offering diverse course options underscore the essentiality of nurturing an ethos of perpetual learning.

Nevertheless, the report astutely indicates that current educational offerings tend to prioritize social integration above formal education, pointing towards a necessity for a more assertive stance in motivating older adults to seize and value these educational avenues.

Expanding its scope beyond the German borders, the analysis ventures into the broader European context, where unique challenges such as demographic changes, digital exclusion, and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic emerge distinctly. The report underscores the criticality of addressing the entrapment in low-skill scenarios and the scarcity of informal educational opportunities specifically designed for the senior cohort in Europe. It advocates for a more encompassing and empathetic approach towards adult education, perceiving older learners as pivotal agents in the drive towards recovery and resilience, especially in confronting persistent hurdles like the digital divide.



The project's integration of exemplary practices from both Germany and the broader European context furnishes invaluable insights into successful initiatives that champion education and digital proficiency among older adults. Innovations such as GRAND EXPERTS, WISSENSDURSTIG.DE, Digitale Engel, WHOLE, SEELERNETZ, and COPE exemplify impactful strategies that have proven effective in empowering the senior populace, advocating for active aging, and weaving education into comprehensive well-being schemes. These examples illustrate the immense potential for collaborative efforts among diverse stakeholders, encompassing governmental bodies, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and community groups.

The project's comparative scrutiny of educational frameworks in Germany vis-à-vis other European nations reveals both shared challenges and distinct nuances. Although the demographic trend towards an aging society is a commonality, disparities in participation rates, economic conditions, and cultural mindsets necessitate customized solutions for different regions. The COVID-19 pandemic's exacerbation of digital exclusion further accentuates the demand for agile and adaptable methodologies to cater to the variegated needs of the older demographic across Europe.



The report culminates with actionable recommendations and strategies to ensure the efficacious execution of the project, touching upon vital elements such as the innovation of services, the formulation of a guide for adult education personnel, enhancement of capacities, phases of testing and support, and the broadening of educational portfolios. These guidelines offer a strategic blueprint for stakeholders to navigate the project's intricacies and amplify its beneficial impact on the educational journeys and personal growth of individuals aged 55 and above.

Ultimately, this project stands as a pivotal initiative towards the establishment of inclusive and transformative educational ecosystems that empower older adults to lead enriched and purposeful lives through the pursuit of lifelong learning. By recognizing the distinctive requirements of this demographic, embracing cutting-edge methodologies, and cultivating collaborative synergies, the project holds the promise of making a substantial contribution to societal advancement and economic prosperity, ensuring that older adults continue to be vibrant participants in the ever-evolving educational landscape.





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**Final
report**



PART 2

POLAND



EDUCATION
FOR FUTURE



OBJECTIVES

This report aims to analyse the educational needs of individuals aged 55 and older in Poland and Europe. The report will also identify and discuss best practices in education and academic counselling for this demographic in these regions. The report will be part of a broader final report that will support the development of an appropriate educational counselling program for people aged 55+.

As Poland's society ages, there is a growing need to pay attention to the educational requirements of people aged 55 and over. This age group, often referred to as seniors or older adults, constitutes a significant segment of the population whose educational needs are gaining recognition as necessary in supporting lifelong learning and well-being. As social structures evolve and technology advances, understanding and adapting to the educational needs of this group becomes crucial to ensuring their continued engagement, social integration and adaptation in an ever-changing world.

The educational needs of people aged 55 and over in Poland are diverse and multi-faceted, covering various areas such as digital skills, health and financial education, and personal and professional development opportunities. Once considered a segment with limited educational aspirations, this age group is now actively seeking ways to develop skills, remain mentally sharp and participate in society.

In this context, this exploration delves into the unique educational needs of people aged 55 and over in Poland, analyzing the challenges they face, "emerging trends" in adult education and the potential benefits of meeting these needs. Recognizing the importance of providing tailored educational opportunities for seniors is a matter of social responsibility and strategic investment in this group's overall well-being and continued contribution to society.





METHODOLOGY

Desk Research was conducted to gather information from existing academic literature, policy documents, and reports on educational needs and best practices for individuals aged 55 and above. This included a review of demographic trends, educational programs, and successful initiatives.

Secondary data was collected from reputable sources, including government reports, academic journals, and international organizations' publications. This data provided insights into the current educational landscape, challenges, and gaps for the 55+ demographic.

Case studies of successful educational programs and initiatives targeting the 55+ demographic. These case studies provided in-depth insights into these programs' design, implementation, and outcomes.

A comparative analysis compared Poland's educational needs and best practices with those of other European countries. This involved reviewing relevant literature and reports from these countries to identify similarities and differences.

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. All sources were cited correctly, and the research was conducted according to ethical guidelines and standards.

The study had several limitations, including the reliance on secondary data, which may be subject to bias or inaccuracies. Additionally, the scope of the research was limited to existing literature and reports, and primary data collection needed to be conducted.





EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF PEOPLE AGED 55+ IN POLAND

Poland's demographic landscape is undergoing a noticeable metamorphosis characterized by an ageing society. The latest statistics show that the proportion of people aged 55 and over steadily increases, reflecting a significant change in the country's age structure. This dynamic demographic trend results from several critical factors, including increasing life expectancy and decreasing birth rates. Understanding the composition and distribution of this age group becomes crucial in tailoring educational initiatives to their specific needs.

In a biological context, ageing challenges the body's adaptation to changing conditions, leading to a loss of the adaptive response to stress and an increased risk of age-related diseases. This process includes both revolutionary and acquired changes. As the body ages, catabolic processes prevail over anabolic ones, leading to regressive changes, and physiological indicators deteriorate regarding the functioning of all systems and organs. [1]

In the central nervous system, a decrease in brain mass, volume, and number of neurons and synapses is observed. These changes affect the ability to learn, cognitive processes, senses and personality sphere. In addition, hormonal changes occur, related to, among others, a decrease in the level of thyroid hormones, growth hormone, and testosterone, which affects the endocrine system's response to environmental changes.



These biological changes result in a decrease in the speed of brain operations, with deterioration of the functions of the frontal lobes, especially concentration, and a reduction in the effectiveness of perception, capacity and shifting of attention. Working memory capacity and mental flexibility also deteriorate, although the efficacy of procedural memory and routine activities increases. In terms of the senses, vision and hearing deteriorate, which may affect perceptual processes.[2]

In the psychological dimension, ageing is manifested by a tendency to avoid risk, reluctance to change, emotional impoverishment, changes in emotional sensitivity and limitation of creative abilities. Older people often have a retrospective attitude, fear of new things, limited interests and existential fears. In the social context, ageing leads to a gradual withdrawal from social and professional life, especially after crossing the retirement age. This phenomenon is mainly due to social factors, such as the views on old age expressed by family and society. Modern old age is becoming an important social issue, and education for old age should be the primary trend of social gerontology, aimed at shaping appropriate attitudes of society towards the ageing process.[3]

The population of older people is characterized by great diversity in terms of education, family and economic situation, which directly affects their diverse educational needs. This diversity results from the wealth of life experiences, habits, and expectations regarding approaching or already experiencing old age. In late adulthood and early old age, opportunities to expand competencies are limited, which may generate feelings of rejection, isolation and uselessness. Therefore, creating an educational offer for seniors that considers their resources and individual needs is essential. It is necessary to design educational activities adapted to the changes taking place in the lives of older people. Older people increasingly see education as a source of intellectual and cultural entertainment and mental training that enables constant development and maintaining independence and independence for as long as possible. The concept of lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important, emphasizing development's open and endless nature. This way of perceiving education includes various forms of learning undertaken throughout life to deepen knowledge and develop skills and competencies in individual and social contexts.[4]



Factors influencing learning of people aged 50+

Internal factors

Health

Cognitive activity (memory problems, lower intellectual ability, problems with concentration)

Social functioning (loneliness or too much sociability)

Psychological functioning (poorer attention span, slower decision-making, depression, impaired self-perception)

External factors

Stereotypes about older people and their lack of willingness to participate in training and acquire new knowledge

There are no training offers for this group
Costly training, which is a burden on the budget for this group
Inability to verify progress,

independent learning and inability to ask about various issues
Ineffective personnel policy

Fig. 8. Predictors of learning in people aged 50 and over. Source: Szczurek, 2013, own work using the graphic program <https://www.visme.co/>

Source: K. Pawłowska-Cypriasiak Predykatory uczenia się osób w wieku 50 lat i więcej, Warszawa 2019, s. 22

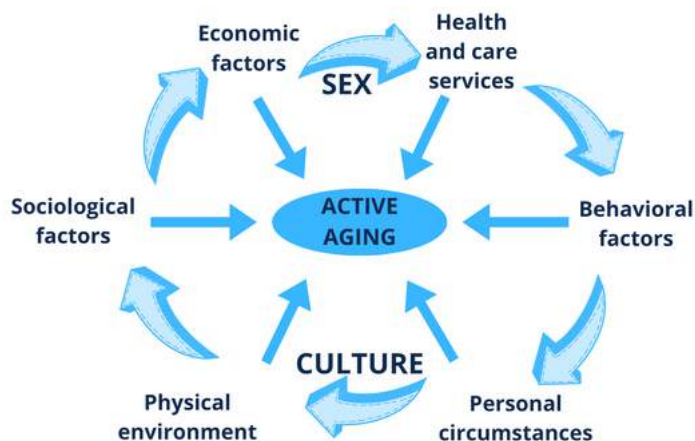
Promoting the idea of lifelong learning serves to support active and productive ageing. In the context of active ageing, it is emphasized that human life is a process that requires appropriate preparation for old age. Various forms of activity are crucial for meeting the needs of an individual, fulfilling social roles, and functioning in a group and society. Lack of activity may lead to a loss of acceptance from the environment and even to isolation and social exclusion, resulting in loneliness. The activity theory is a natural counterbalance to the withdrawal theory, which suggests that older people give up previous forms of activity as they age. Long-term implementation of various forms of activity is a condition for successful and satisfying old age, which translates into the quality of life of seniors and their self-esteem. All forms of activity are an essential element of mental and physical needs at all ages, and the lack of patterns of active leisure time is often due to a standard and passive lifestyle.[5]

The World Health Organization has indicated the key determinants of this process, where gender and cultural conditions are considered the most important. Norms, values and customs in force in the family environment and local community, with social acceptance of individual phases of life, especially those related to old age, shape the ageing pattern. Gender has also been identified as an essential determinant of this process, defining male and female roles. Women are often more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion in old age because of their greater involvement in running a household, which usually requires caring for the family. Men, however, are more exposed to diseases, occupational risks and poor health related to stimulants or lack of preventive health care.[6]



Source: M. Kawińska, Aktywność edukacyjna seniorów a koncepcja aktywnego starzenia się, w Studia Socialia Cracoviensia, 1 (2018), nr 18, s. 53

Fig. 1. Determinants of active aging according to the World Health Organization



Source: own compilation based on WHO (2002), Active aging: a policy framework, Geneva, World

In the social aspect, the ageing process is often associated with gradual withdrawal from social and professional life, especially when crossing retirement age. An interesting aspect is that the adoption of a passive approach after the end of a professional career by many seniors is mainly due to social, not biological, factors. An individual's beliefs about ageing, formulated by family and society, play an essential role in this context.[7] The environment often labels seniors as infirm despite their generally high fitness level. Due to the growing ageism, reluctance and tendency to exclude older people, the modern age is becoming an important social issue. In the context of social gerontology, education about ageing should be mainstream. The priority goal of this approach, apart from promoting a healthy lifestyle and developing preventive habits, is to take actions aimed at shaping appropriate attitudes of society towards the ageing process.[8]

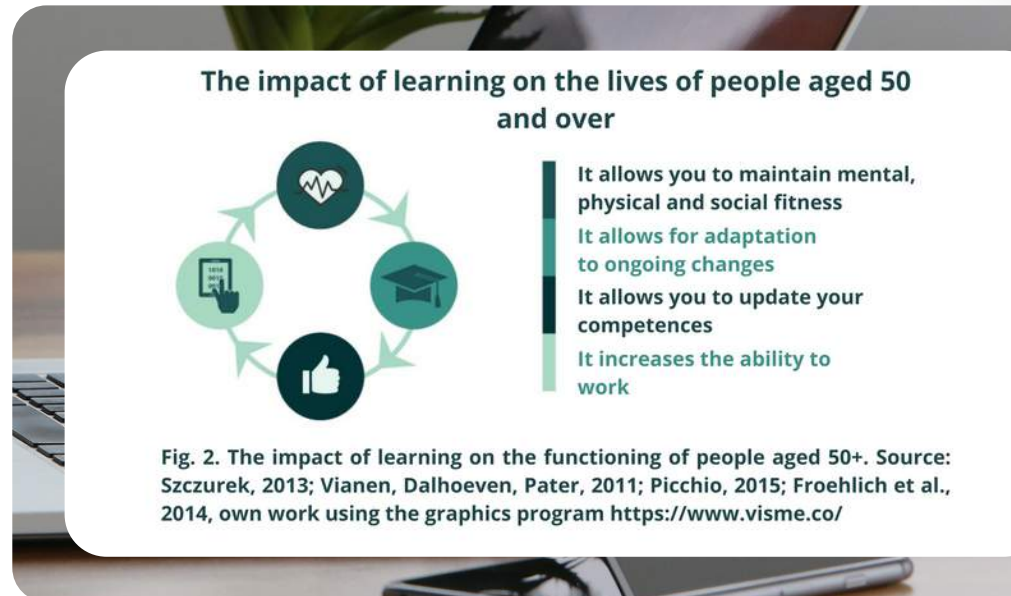
When considering issues relating to older people in Poland, it should be noted that providing them with appropriate material conditions and care is one of the primary forms of help and support. However, it is equally important to understand and respond to their higher needs. The priorities of these needs include maintaining family relationships, fulfilling free time, being involved in social work, intellectual development and self-expression, religious activity, and support in situations of illness and suffering.

Unfortunately, senior age is often associated with a list of social problems, such as loneliness - considered to be the biggest of them, diseases and disabilities, living in poverty, lack of security, feelings of inadequacy, gradual exclusion from life and intolerance towards the cult of youth. However, older people experience needs and difficulties and have valuable potential that often goes unnoticed. This includes having time, wisdom, rich life experience, strengthened faith, less addiction to consumption, and influence on their families by acting as supports and wise advisors. Discovering and appreciating these strengths is essential both for those concerned and for society as a whole.[9]

Participation in educational activities significantly supports an individual's adaptation to various stages of life. In the context of older people, such involvement contributes to eliminating stereotypes related to old age, reducing social marginalization, and positively impacting self-esteem. It enables the establishment of new social relationships. However, older people must be more interested in participating in educational activities. It is worth emphasizing that in the case of this age group, educational activity not only serves to acquire knowledge but also shapes a positive approach to life and enables the development of skills that positively impact the quality of everyday functioning. [10]



Source: K. Pawłowska-Cypriasiak Predykatory uczenia się osób w wieku 50 lat i więcej, Warszawa 2019, s. 22



The educational needs of people aged 55+ in Poland are an essential area of interest, affecting the development of society and the quality of life of seniors. In recent years, dynamic demographic changes have been observed, resulting in the group of people aged 55 and older becoming more and more numerous. Therefore, understanding their educational needs is crucial to adapting the academic and social system to the specific requirements of this age group.[11]

The education of people 55+ should take into account individual needs and preferences. Therefore, it is essential to create flexible educational programs that enable seniors to choose a development path consistent with their interests and capabilities.



EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF PEOPLE AGED 55+ IN EUROPE

As Europe's population ages, the educational needs of people aged 55 and over are becoming increasingly important. This demographic change creates both challenges and opportunities for education systems and society as a whole. Understanding and meeting the learning needs of this age group is crucial to promoting active ageing, increasing employability and supporting social inclusion. [12]

Participation rates in education and training in the 55-64 age group are lower than in other age groups and vary widely across the Baltic Sea region. The European Pillar of Social Rights aims to increase adult participation in training, assuming that by 2030, 60% of all adults (aged 25-64) in EU countries will participate in educational activities annually. In 2016, this percentage was 44.6%. The research covers various forms of education: formal, non-formal and informal. Data collected as part of the EU Adult Education Survey shows that the participation of people aged 55-64 in training was 12% lower compared to other age groups, reaching an average of 32.4%. [13]

Figure 1. Participation rate in education and training by age, 2016

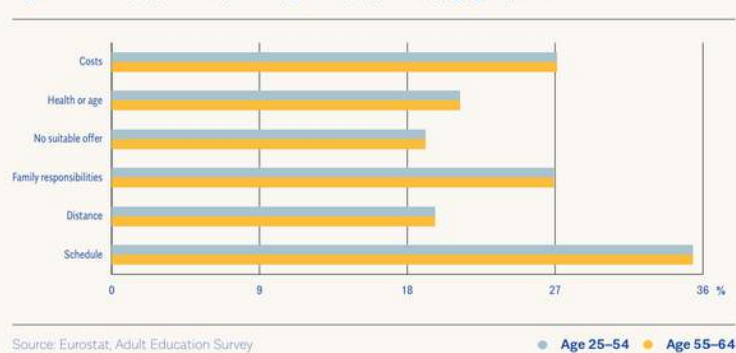


Source: Baltic Sea Labour Forum for Sustainable Working Life (2020). "Promoting Lifelong Learning for Extended Working Lives in the Baltic Sea Region, s.3; https://www.bslf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Policy-Brief-9_Educational-Needs.pdf

Extending working life through lifelong learning is essential for economic prosperity and social well-being, especially in the Baltic Sea region. By eliminating barriers to education and learning for people aged 55 and over, we can unlock their full potential, promote active ageing and build a more inclusive and sustainable workforce for the future. Barriers to access to continuing education among older people, especially those aged 55–64, are a complex problem that can be analyzed in terms of various factors. There are dispositional, situational and institutional barriers that significantly hinder the participation of these people in the lifelong learning process.[14]

Dispositional barriers related to attitudes and self-perception are significant. Research shows that older, low-educated adults and lower-skilled workers often face more substantial obstacles of this type. At 55+, many people believe they are too old to study and be educated, leading to a lack of self-confidence and motivation. Additionally, previous negative educational experiences may exacerbate these barriers.[15]

Figure 4. Self-employment as percentage of employment, by age groups, 2020



Source: Baltic Sea Labour Forum for Sustainable Working Life (2020). "Promoting Lifelong Learning for Extended Working Lives in the Baltic Sea Region., s.6" https://www.bslf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Policy-Brief-9_Educational-Needs.pdf

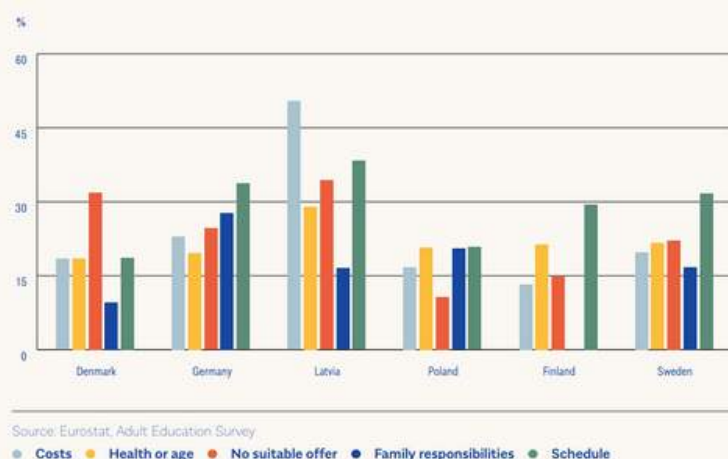
Statistics confirm that the level of education plays a vital role in the decision to participate in training and education later in life. People with higher education are more likely to continue their education, which is reflected in the higher rates of participation in education in this age group. This is an important observation and suggests that policy efforts to increase adult participation in learning should focus on groups with lower levels of education. It is also worth paying attention to institutional and situational barriers, which may include the availability of educational programs, flexibility of class hours, costs and general availability of educational institutions for older people.



Solving these problems requires a comprehensive approach that considers the various needs and limitations of older people who are participating in the learning process. Employers' negative attitudes towards older employees may also be a dispositional barrier. Participation in training and education is an investment in the future, both for employers and employees. For older people, a shorter payback period for this investment may be perceived as an obstacle to participation in learning (Martin, 2018). This can be seen as a barrier at both the organizational and individual levels. However, as working life lengthens, the investment period also increases. Therefore, employers must change their attitudes towards older workers and their right to training and education.

What situations may older workers find themselves in that hinder their participation in learning and education? Family responsibilities, such as caring for children and elders, represent a gendered barrier and are, therefore, more prevalent among women than men. Other situational barriers relate to time allocated to work and factors such as income, employment, and length of service. A lack of digital skills may also negatively impact older people's participation in educational activities as more courses and training occur online. Lack of access to technology or the ability to use it is a significant barrier for this group.[16]

Figure 5. Main reasons for not participating in education and training, 55–64, 2016



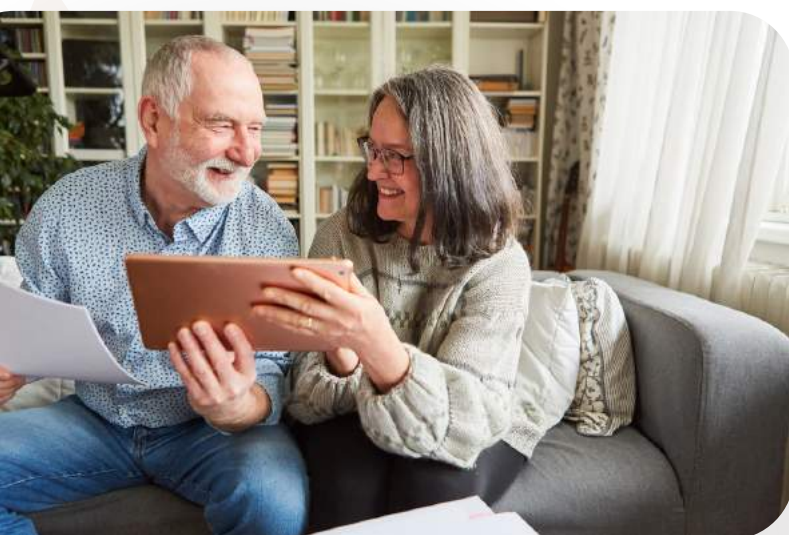
Source: Baltic Sea Labour Forum for Sustainable Working Life (2020). "Promoting Lifelong Learning for Extended Working Lives in the Baltic Sea Region. s.6; https://www.bslf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Policy-Brief-9_Educational-Needs.pdf

Population ageing is expected to become a significant threat to macroeconomic performance and competitiveness in European countries, and the pace of change will accelerate in the coming years. The group of people over 60 is growing, already exceeding 25% of the population in Poland, Italy and Japan, which have the highest median age in the world. By 2060, the median age of Europe's population is projected to increase to 49.3 years from 40 years in 2010. At the same time, due to the ageing of society, the number of people working age (15-64 years) is expected to decrease, which started in 2013/2014. By 2050, the population over 65 is projected to decline by approximately 50 million, representing 56% of the total population, while the population over 65 will increase by over 60 million to 30%. At the same time, many baby boomers will leave the workforce, creating critical labour shortages, especially in high-skill occupations. This trend is observed not only in Europe but also globally.[17]

In response to these challenges, many European countries are introducing reforms to extend working lives and counter labour shortages. In some cases, such as in Poland, pension reforms encourage older workers to continue working into old age by supporting them financially. Many older people are also forced to continue working for financial reasons. Therefore, employers and society face new challenges and opportunities related to an ageing population. Many experts recommend increasing the involvement of older people in volunteering and other forms of civic activity to use their experience and knowledge for the good of society.[18]

However, it is necessary to change the standard view of older people to achieve this. They are often perceived as a passive group, taking the place of the young. Older adults can provide excellent value to society through their participation in volunteering and other civic activities.[19]

The conclusion is that there is a need not only to eliminate dispositional and situational barriers at the individual level but also to strive to change organizational policies that favour younger students at the expense of older ones. Investments in training and education should not depend only on age or work experience but should be available to everyone, regardless of age, gender or life situation. Only then will it be possible to fully exploit older people's educational potential and create equal professional and personal development opportunities for all social groups?[20]





BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING FOR PEOPLE AGED 55+ IN POLAND

One of the theories widely known from the 1950s and 1960s depicting the potential of ageing is activity theory, which, despite being criticized as a disengagement theory, became the subject of reflection in political-economic gerontology and critical gerontology in the late 1990s 70.[21] The authors of this theory, Bernice L. Neugarten, Robert J. Havighurst, Sheldon S. Tobin and William E. Henry, emphasize that ageing people change their behaviour and social roles as they age (Powell, 2006). Activity theory assumes that individuals base their identity on their activities and social roles, which leads to the transformation of these roles over time. However, critics point out that this theory ignores power, social inequality, and inter-age conflict that influence the relationships between race, class, and gender in the ageing process (Powell, 2006).

As for whether volunteering is intended only for active seniors, it is worth defining volunteering as giving time and energy to the community, the environment or people outside the family without expecting financial reward.[22] There are three primary forms of volunteering: informal, non-formal and formal. Informal volunteering, so common in everyday life, includes activities such as helping neighbours or being active in the church. Research by Fabiś and Kędziora (2006) indicates that hospices are a popular place for seniors to volunteer, although informal. Non-formal volunteering, like activity at Universities of the Third Age, although organized, is not always defined as volunteering. Formal volunteering, which has a formal structure and involves signing a contract and regular involvement, often occurs in non-governmental organizations such as PAH, CARITAS or PCK.[23]



According to various research reports and evaluation studies, project-oriented learning, which has a common goal beyond the learning process itself, is an effective tool for intergenerational learning. Working together between different generations in a project can make participants reflect on their own experiences and stimulate their interest in the experiences of others. [24] Such projects are often called "intergenerational service learning," although most activities are not reciprocal. Intergenerational service-learning usually means one generation providing support to another, which can lead to the reduction of stereotypes and the accumulation of experiential knowledge.[25] Many studies show the positive impact of such learning on the image of ageing and the psychological well-being of older people.[26]



The "Seniors in Action" project run by the "ę" Society for Creative Initiatives is an excellent example of an initiative supporting intergenerational education. This project is celebrating its 10th anniversary and is considered worthy of imitation. As part of the "Seniors in Action" project, grants are offered, and training for people over 60 years of age is provided, which enables seniors to participate actively in social life and implement their pro-social activities. However, what distinguishes this project is the promotion of cooperation between different generations. Seniors have the opportunity to implement their projects on their own but often establish cooperation with younger people. This intergenerational cooperation promotes lasting social relationships and enables the exchange of experiences and knowledge between different age groups. Such initiatives are significant for building social cohesion and promoting an active and whole life for older people. By engaging seniors in social activities and education, the "Seniors in Action" project strengthens intergenerational bonds and creates a more inclusive society.[27]

A similar initiative dealing with the activation of older people and using the potential of seniors for social inclusion is the SEPOR Group project. This project aims to create a meeting space for seniors from various backgrounds, both those who are active and those who are less independent, more withdrawn and lonely. The main element of the project is an interactive performance prepared by active seniors who comprise the SEPOR group. The performance is dedicated to their peers living in social welfare homes and people who do not venture out of local senior clubs. The uniqueness of this performance is that seniors not only act as actors but also create a script for the performance based on their memories and reflections. The project's basic assumption is to use seniors' potential for their peers' activation and social inclusion. Active seniors act as animators for dependent and withdrawn seniors, helping them in more complex situations.



Moreover, seniors are treated as experts in their field and have the opportunity to create events that they find interesting and valuable. An additional value of the project is its therapeutic nature. The SEPOR Group's improvised performances have a culture-creating effect contributing to seniors' well-being and social integration. Introducing this activity into cultural institutions can benefit older people and the entire society, promoting active ageing and intergenerational integration.[28]

The main goal of the project "Together we create senior space" conducted by the State Higher Vocational School in Tarnów and the Universities of the Third Age was to create an integration platform for local U3A communities and the surroundings, through the exchange of experiences to intellectually and socially activate seniors. The project also aimed to increase participants' educational and cultural activity and mobility and expand and deepen their general and specialist knowledge, using older people's intellectual and social potential.

The implementation of this goal was to contribute to building intergenerational solidarity, improving the quality of life of seniors and deepening the social integration of this group. The project enabled seniors' intellectual and social activation by organizing various educational, cultural and social activities, which expanded their knowledge, interests and passions.



Support was directed to existing and active universities of the third age from various regions of Małopolska, which increased the integration of seniors from multiple U3A. The project included numerous scientific lectures, practical workshops, language classes developing intellectual skills, integration meetings, and trips and meetings to expand knowledge.

The basis of the teaching process was educational dialogue, which promoted the idea of personalism and the affirmation of man. The project also included study trips that allowed seniors to gain knowledge through personal experience and deepen their understanding of culture, art and history. The project's activities were aimed at increasing the quality of life of seniors and preventing social exclusion through the experience of trips and intergenerational meetings.

The focus of senior activities around the PWSZ in Tarnów was aimed at promoting higher education and popularizing the cult of development regardless of age. The measurable effect of the project was the number of lectures, workshops, language classes, cultural meetings and study trips.



Implementing this aspect of the project required commitment from the organizers and participants of the classes. The workshops were organized with representatives of all universities of the third age participating in the project. The assessment of the quality of participation in the workshops was varied. The students of the U3A at the State Higher Vocational School in Tarnów showed the slightest interest in this form of education. However, this formula was appreciated by U3A students in Dąbrowa Tarnowska and Brzesko. These towns' teachers and high school students also enthusiastically participated in the workshops. The joint work was crowned with a public Oxford Debate, which took place at the end of the project, with the participation of students and seniors.[29]





Intergenerational education in Poland is developing dynamically, encompassing various forms of activity that integrate people from different age groups. An example is intergenerational volunteering initiatives, which allow the exchange of experiences and skills between different generations. More and more specially designed forms of intergenerational education, such as meetings, joint book readings, theatre, art, computer classes and culinary workshops, are taking place in Poland. These formal classes take place in kindergartens and various types of schools. The European Day of Intergenerational Solidarity, celebrated on April 29, involves schools organizing intergenerational meetings. Intergenerational educational forms are also being created at universities, such as the Intergenerational University "Omega" in Kujawy and the Pomeranian University of Applied Sciences in Bydgoszcz, or the University of All Generations at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn.

There is also an Academic Circle of Gerontologists, organizing integration educational meetings for seniors and intergenerational seminars on gerontological problems. The increase in the number of initiatives related to intergenerational education in Poland can be attributed to, among others, the formulation and implementation of senior policy, activities undertaken within the Year of Active Aging and Solidarity between Generations announced by the European Union in 2012, and financing activities for older people under various projects. Striving to personalize adult education and emphasizing the role of individual choices of potential recipients are characteristics of intergenerational education in Poland. Its goal is to create stable community foundations based on social justice, equality, solidarity, activity and the right to a dignified life at all stages. The activity of older people, aimed at preventing social marginalization, improves the quality of life and cooperation with society and improves the psychophysical condition of individuals.[30]





BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE AGED 55+ IN EUROPE

The principle of integration promotes the idea that older people should not be treated as a separate social group but should be included in the community while considering their needs and interests. Over the past few decades, many educational programs for older adults have been successful, gaining tremendous popularity among this age group.[31] The best results are achieved by programs that offer the opportunity to learn "for older people, by older people" - initiatives that actively encourage seniors to participate. Examples of such programs include Universities of the Third Age inspired by the British model, pre-retirement education programs in the Netherlands and Ireland, science clubs, initiatives promoting active ageing through science and projects identifying seniors as experts. For example, in Bulgaria, there are "Chitalista" - cultural and educational institutions that offer a wide range of activities and courses, including concerts, films, foreign language lessons and music classes. Another promising development is the Open Centers for Older Persons, known as KAPI in Greece, where there are approximately 300 such community centres for people over 60 years of age, most of them located in Athens. Although competence development is probably the most desired goal, the programs offered by these centres vary depending on members' interests, and their general nature includes social, educational and recreational aspects.[32]

In European societies, demographic, social and economic changes, such as the decline in the number of extended families, increased life expectancy and population ageing, urbanization, increased geographical mobility, the development of information and communication technologies and the Internet, have contributed to greater distance and segregation of different generations. This phenomenon may lead to the formation of intergenerational stereotypes and reduce positive social exchange between them.

However, other generations may have valuable resources to complement and share, leading to mutual learning. Intergenerational learning can respond to these demographic changes by engaging people from different age groups to learn from each other and gain knowledge, skills and experiences together. This can also increase intergenerational solidarity and social cohesion in ageing societies.[33]





Older people can engage in intergenerational learning practices to increase solidarity between different age groups. These practices are increasingly included in policy documents and programs at various levels, from European to local. They aim to organize activities that promote mutual communication and exchange of knowledge, skills and experiences between different generations. An example of such activities was the 2012 European Year dedicated to active ageing and intergenerational solidarity. [34]

When describing the topic of intergenerational learning, it is worth paying attention to its importance in modern societies, especially those affected by demographic, social and economic changes. Intergenerational learning is the process by which different generations learn from each other by exchanging knowledge, skills and life experiences. It is a way to pass on knowledge from generation to generation and build social bonds, solidarity and mutual respect.

In today's societies, where different age groups are increasingly separated, intergenerational learning is vital for creating social bonds and breaking down stereotypes about different generations. Through interactions between young and older people, it is possible to transfer not only academic knowledge but also practical life skills and values that are important for the functioning of society. It is worth noting that intergenerational learning is more comprehensive than formal educational institutions. It can occur in various contexts, such as communal gardening, volunteering, clubs or associations.

These non-formal and informal forms of learning allow for the free exchange of knowledge and experiences and for building relationships between different generations. Urban gardens are an exciting place to observe and promote intergenerational learning. In addition to growing plants, these gardens serve as a social space where residents of different age groups can meet, talk, share experiences and learn from each other. You can observe specific activities in such places to build social bonds and strengthen the local community. As societies age and change, intergenerational learning becomes increasingly essential for maintaining social cohesion and the social inclusion of older people. Therefore, it is necessary to promote and support initiatives that enable different generations to learn from each other and work together for the good of society.[35]





Joint education of young and older people broadened the scope of discussion and opened the possibility of comparing different experiences. According to Beata Bugajska's observation, conducting such activities enables mutual learning and exchange of teacher/mentor roles, in which young and older people participate. The result of these initiatives is the extraction of mutual potential - older people benefiting from the benefits for their development and the education of young people. [36]

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH EUROPE

The EUROPE 2020 Strategy emphasizes education and lifelong learning from childhood to old age, and the development of comprehensive lifelong learning strategies was considered crucial in each Member State, including Poland and Germany.

The EU's Skills Agenda has set the target that by 2025, 50% of the population (and 60% by 2030) of adults in the EU participate in a learning process every year. As of 2019, less than a third of European countries had reached the EU 2020 benchmark of 15% adult participation in education and training.

According to Eurostat data for 2020, in Poland, only 4.8% of people aged 25-64 participated in education and training; in Germany, only 7.7%, with the EU average of 10.8%, and e.g. in Finland, 29% and Sweden, 28%.

People in the age groups 25-34 and 35-44 have a higher level of education than the older population (people aged 54+). 45% of Poles and 29% of Germans aged 54+ declare they do not know at least one foreign language.

Only 41% of Poles aged 50-74 are economically active. Among Germans, it is 58%.

According to Eurostat data, in Poland, in 2020, the group of people aged 60+ accounted for over 25% of the population. With current trends, in 2060, Polish society will be one of the oldest in the EU. Germany already has one of the oldest societies in Europe.

In the lubelskie voivodship, where FFI mainly works in education sector, the percentage of people not participating in any form of education was as much as 55%, i.e. above the average for Poland (54.1%) (data: Central Statistical Office), which justifies support for the target groups of people 55+.

Lublin, where FFI has an office, has approx. 340 000 inhabitants, people aged 55+ constitute over 70,000 people. Women predominate - they constitute approx. 51%. The average life expectancy for a man in Lublin is 71.2 years, and for women, it is 81 years. (Central Statistical Office, 2021).

According to data from the Federal Statistical Office in Germany, the life expectancy for a newborn girl in Germany today is 83.2 years, and for a boy - 78.2 years (data for 2021).

This means that the persons to whom the educational counselling within the project is addressed (people over 55 years of age in Poland and in Germany) have statistically several dozen years of life ahead of them, which period they can diversify by participating in non-vocational education, developing their passions and educational interests. More excellent educational, cultural or social activity of people aged 55+ will translate into an improvement in the physical and mental well-being of farewell counselling participants.





For people over 50, education and training are the most essential tools to counteract exclusion or marginalization in society and the state. Non-formal education serves to equalize life chances and social integration (Central Statistical Office, Adult Education, 2018).

In Poland and the entire EU, educational activity decreases with age. In Poland, the 50-59/64 age group is below 10% (B. Worek, K. Turek, Lifelong learning - development accelerator).

In 2017, at 18-69, only 21.4% of surveyed Poles declared participation in non-formal education. At the age of 25 to 44 it was over 25% of people, but at 65-69 - only 5%. According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland, in 2016, only one in five people aged 18-69 (5.8 million people) completed training courses.

The Study of the Population Balance of Human Capital Report (2014) indicates that in 2010-2014, between 12% and 14% of Poles aged 25-59/64 participated in non-mandatory courses and training. Most often, the training participants were well-educated working people. The least often in the course took part professionally inactive people and pensioners.

In Germany, 22% of adults characterize low levels of basic literacy and numeracy competencies, and 25% have low digital skills (Eurydice Report, 2021). Thirty-two per cent of adult Germans in the last year before the survey did not participate in training and education due to the high costs of education (Eurostat, 2022).

According to the Polish Central Statistical Office survey, only 5.5% of respondents in the 60-64 age group declared that they had received information about education opportunities from the outside, and only 3.5% in the 65-69 age group.



PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE PROJECT

Mercken (2010) emphasizes that effective practices in educating older people are based on four fundamental principles: empowerment, competence development, social participation and integration, and how these principles are implemented in the learning process. In recent years, there has been a noticeable emergence and development of an alternative, optimistic view of ageing, which treats it as an achievement and alleviates the stereotypical belief in the need for care for older people. However, achieving an "active ageing" society requires developing appropriate public participation and engagement channels through policy. Education plays a vital role in this process and has excellent potential to help increase seniors' independence. Educational programs for older adults can act as tools for higher social and personal transformation levels.[37]

A cooperative learning strategy is a situation in which two or more people learn or try to acquire new knowledge together. Research on this approach identified five main subtopics. The first is engagement, which can be observed in technology-enabled learning in small and large groups and intergenerational interactions, where older adults learn with younger colleagues. Research has shown that various methods, such as online quizzes, tutorials, blogs and chats, promote student engagement and knowledge exchange.[38]



The second sub-theme is participation, which emphasizes the importance of collective interactions in the learning process. Research shows that when learning digital technologies, older adults prefer environments that enable them to share information and express opinions, leading to better social understanding and connections with other participants in the educational process. The third sub-theme is collaborative learning, which involves engaging teachers and peers in the learning process, which helps older adults gain knowledge and skills. Research shows that older adults learn better when they can work together and gain support from others. Participants in the educational process. The fourth sub-theme concerns intergenerational learning, which occurs when people from different ages learn together.

Research shows that these interactions can help older people overcome uncertainty about technology, increase their self-confidence, and foster the exchange of insights between generations. The last subtopic is mentoring, i.e. providing support and assistance to older people in learning to use digital technologies. Older adult students often need the help of mentors to acquire digital skills and overcome the associated difficulties. Together, these sub-themes highlight the importance of collaboration, participation and support between participants in the learning process, especially in the context of older adult learners using digital technologies.[39]



Older people are increasingly willing to learn foreign languages for various reasons. According to Wawrzyniak and Świdorska (2011), the motivations for undertaking this type of learning may be varied but usually include the desire to maintain intellectual skills, expand the circle of friends, pursue intellectual passions, interestingly spend free time, as well as the desire to travel abroad in a more independent way and fascination with the target language and the culture with which it is associated. The authors distinguish three main types of motivation for learning languages: social, practical and intellectual. According to research, planning activities for older people can be divided into two stages. The first stage involves the teacher's planning.





In contrast, the second involves the participants' involvement in making educational decisions, which makes them partially responsible for the learning outcomes. The critical issue in the planning process is getting to know the course participants, which allows you to set goals and teaching methods based on their needs, capabilities and interests. The selection of educational materials and the type of classes should be carefully considered and not accidental. Giving participants enough time to complete tasks and considering individual learning rates is also important. It is worth noting that the fast pace of learning is not beneficial for older people, so it is essential to remain flexible and allow learning at your own pace. Additionally, when planning classes, you should consider various teaching methods, such as role-playing, translation and the use of social interactions, to increase participants' engagement and help them acquire new skills. [40]

To sum up, learning foreign languages by older people requires an individual approach, considering their needs, abilities and interests. The process should be based on cooperation between the teacher and students, maintaining flexibility and adapting to changing conditions and educational needs. It is also vital to provide comfortable learning conditions and the opportunity to assess participants' progress to motivate them to further language development.[41].

Various teaching aids can significantly improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and expand the scope of student's knowledge and skills. This is particularly important for older people, who may benefit from various methods such as audiovisual materials, reading materials and game-based aids. In the context of audiovisual materials, it is essential to use instructional videos to maintain older adult students' attention. Additionally, live video conferencing can be helpful in discussions between instructors and students. Ensuring legible text and clear iconography in videos is worth increasing their transparency.

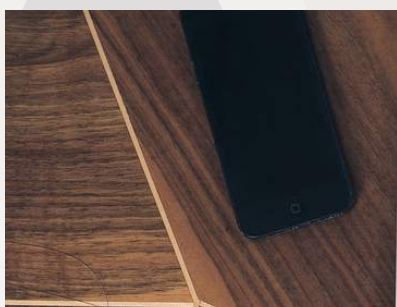


Reading materials should include simple graphics and easy-to-understand documents to support older adult students' learning. Bold characters, colours and images can help motivate students and facilitate their learning. Avoiding excessive text and irrelevant content that may distract students is essential. Game-based aids are seen as an effective strategy for older adults learning digital technologies. Games can keep students engaged and relaxed, which helps them learn digital skills faster.

Additionally, positive gaming experiences can improve students' well-being. When designing a lesson, the instructor should consider students' needs and adapt teaching methods to their time preferences and individual characteristics. Repetition strategies and time preferences can positively impact the learning efficiency of older adults. Additionally, obtaining and providing feedback is essential for monitoring students' progress and adapting the teaching process to their needs. In conclusion, a diversified approach to the use of teaching aids and taking into account the individual characteristics of students may contribute to more effective learning for older people. It is also worth remembering the importance of obtaining and providing feedback, which can support the learning process and motivate students to continue to develop.[42]



Source: Ahmad, N.A., Abd Rauf, M.F., Mohd Zaid, N.N. et al. Effectiveness of Instructional Strategies Designed for Older Adults in Learning Digital Technologies: A Systematic Literature Review. SN COMPUT. SCI. 3, 130 (2022).



The topics of the classes are derived from the participants' defined learning goals and preferences. Even with education focused on professional development and acquiring specific skills, issues regularly arise during group activities with older people. These topics, more severe than recreational, are essential for integrating the learning process with the participants' life experiences and actual needs. Additionally, educational preferences differ between the genders, with women more often choosing humanities and men choosing natural sciences (Halicki, 2000).

These include connecting with the past, understanding the modern world, health and disability issues, issues related to death, family, loneliness, finances, religious beliefs, free time management and areas of interest. In learning the content, using a structure that leads from urgent to distant issues, from known to unknown, from easy to difficult, from examples to abstractions is recommended. It is also necessary to provide content in an understandable language, without unnecessary terminology, and to focus on simple, understandable instructions and examples close to the participants' experiences. It is essential for older adults who may use less effective learning methods, such as mnemonics, to repeat and pace information appropriately. Assessment of the learning outcomes of older people should be based on the subjective perception of learning progress, avoiding formal assessments.

It is worth using various feedback forms, such as reviews, peer assessment and feedback from the instructor and fellow participants. Older people may have difficulty with traditional tests, and assessment methods should, therefore, be adapted accordingly. The education of older people should be flexible and consider the specific needs and skills that result from the ageing process and the historical and cultural context. It is necessary to adapt the environment and teaching aids to the possible disabilities of participants and to provide a safe and comfortable meeting place. The methodology of teaching older people should consider the constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of linking new information with the experience and knowledge of the learner. Learning in older age should be life-oriented and consider the needs of participants, engaging them in the learning process through dialogue and asking questions that lead to independent discovery of knowledge.

Additionally, older people's motivation to learn results from the belief that they can achieve success, influence the learning process, learn things that are valuable for their lives and derive pleasure from learning.[43]

Training methods preferred by employees 50+

31% Problem methods
based on solving specific problems

26% Activating methods
based on participants' activity
(e.g. staging, discussion)

20% Feeding methods
based on the words and passivity of
participants (e.g. lecture, talk)



Fig. 11. How would older workers like to learn? Source: own research results (N = 544), own study using the graphic program <https://www.visme.co/>



Source: K. Pawłowska-Cypriasiak, *Predykatory uczenia się osób w wieku 50 lat i więcej*, Warszawa 2019, s. 22

In the context of training for older people, flexibility is a crucial element. According to them, the duration of training and the number of breaks should be adapted to the current needs and capabilities of participants. For training to be practical, it cannot be a one-off event. They should constitute a cycle and respond to the specific needs of employees. Older workers should have the opportunity to assess acquired skills after training. This allows you to determine the usefulness of the training and increases the sense of its usefulness in everyday work. It is essential to provide the possibility of contact with the trainer after the training, enabling individual consultations and problem-solving. Monitoring the ongoing training needs of people 55+ is crucial. This allows us to adapt the topics, delivery methods and place of training to the needs of people 55+ and compensate for the observed deficits. The training material should be explicit, grouped thematically and consider the participants' experiences. Training methods and topics should consider the participants' sensory limitations and interests. The organization of the training should be flexible, and the characteristics and skills of the person conducting the training should include, among others, problem-solving skills, the ability to listen and observe and provide clear feedback. To sum up, people learn more effectively in a friendly environment, using various learning methods and through motivation and commitment. [44]



Source: K. Pawłowska-Cypriasiak, *Predykatory uczenia się osób w wieku 50 lat i więcej*, Warszawa 2019, s. 44

Skills and abilities of the trainer

indicated by employees 50+

- Shows ways to solve the problem
- It refers to the experiences of training participants
- Asks about participants' expectations
- He can create a group from different people and personalities and work with it
- He listens and observes



Dmitriy Shironosov/Bigstockphoto

Fig. 13. What should a person conducting training be like in the opinion of 50+ employees? Source: own research results (N = 544), own study using the graphic program <https://www.visme.co/>

CONCLUSION

Educating older people is essential to adapt teaching methods to the preferences of the generation that grew up mainly on the written and spoken word. Word-based methods (such as lectures) are popular, but older people need help remembering what they hear than what they see. Decreased visual and hearing abilities may require larger text fonts, avoidance of decorative fonts, and complex sentence syntax. Older people need help understanding lectures with complex syntax, so it is essential to use simple sentences. Discussions after lectures can be helpful, but older people need more time to process the information and understand the content. Practical methods, such as hands-on tasks, may be more effective for older people. Problems with visual and auditory abilities may make it challenging to use observation-based methods.[45]

Teaching resources should be adapted to the limitations related to decreasing eyesight and hearing. Noise should be avoided, and adequate lighting should be provided in classrooms. In educating seniors, it is necessary to consider the extension of reaction time and plan more time to perform tasks. People 55+ should be treated seriously as students, and education should be adapted to their needs. It is worth following the principles of high-quality education and considering individual needs. [46]



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Final
report



PART 3

CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
FURTHER WORK ON THE
RESULTS



EDUCATION
FOR FUTURE



INTRODUCTION

This part of the Final Report is based on two national reports and the proposal. Both Partners conducted desk research in their countries to increase the knowledge of their staff on two main topics:

- educational needs of people aged 55+ in Poland, Germany and in Europe,
- best practices in education and educational counselling for people aged 55+ in Poland, Germany and Europe.

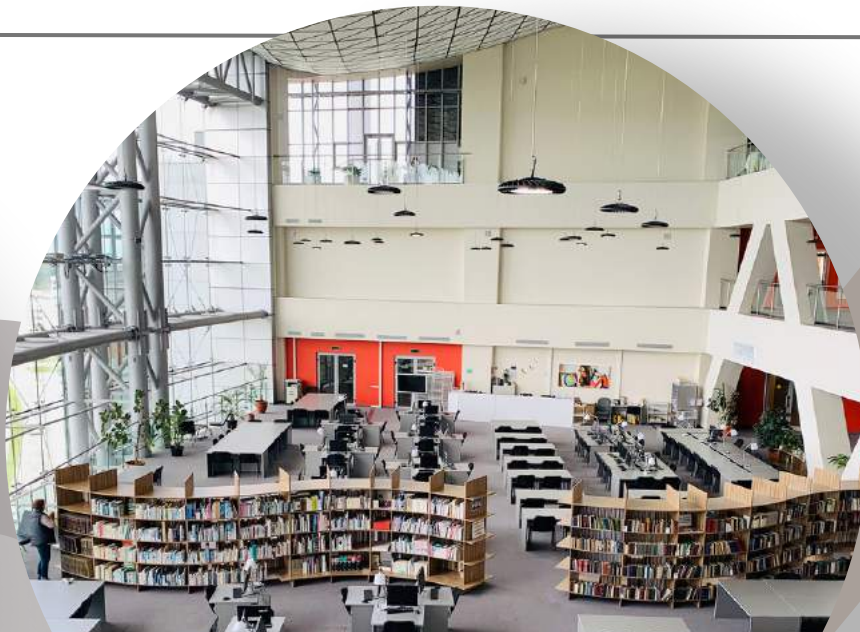
The partners prepared the national research reports from the above-mentioned research, which constitute the first and second part of the Final Report.

This part of the Final Report aims to summarise the conducted national research in Germany and Poland and provide the partnership with conclusions and recommendations for further work on the project results (within all activities: from 1 to 4).

Within the project, the German and Polish partners plan to develop, test and disseminate an innovative service called "educational counselling" tailored to people 55 plus.

Educational counselling is planned as a non-vocational educational service to support people aged 55+ in Germany, Poland, and Europe in lifelong learning.

We aim to engage people 55+ in education by helping them to choose adequate forms of education tailored to their current needs, expectations, life situation, and access to ICT tools, taking into account their past in the personal and professional sphere. To do this, the partnership must carefully plan future works to develop a practical and valuable educational counselling service for people 55+.



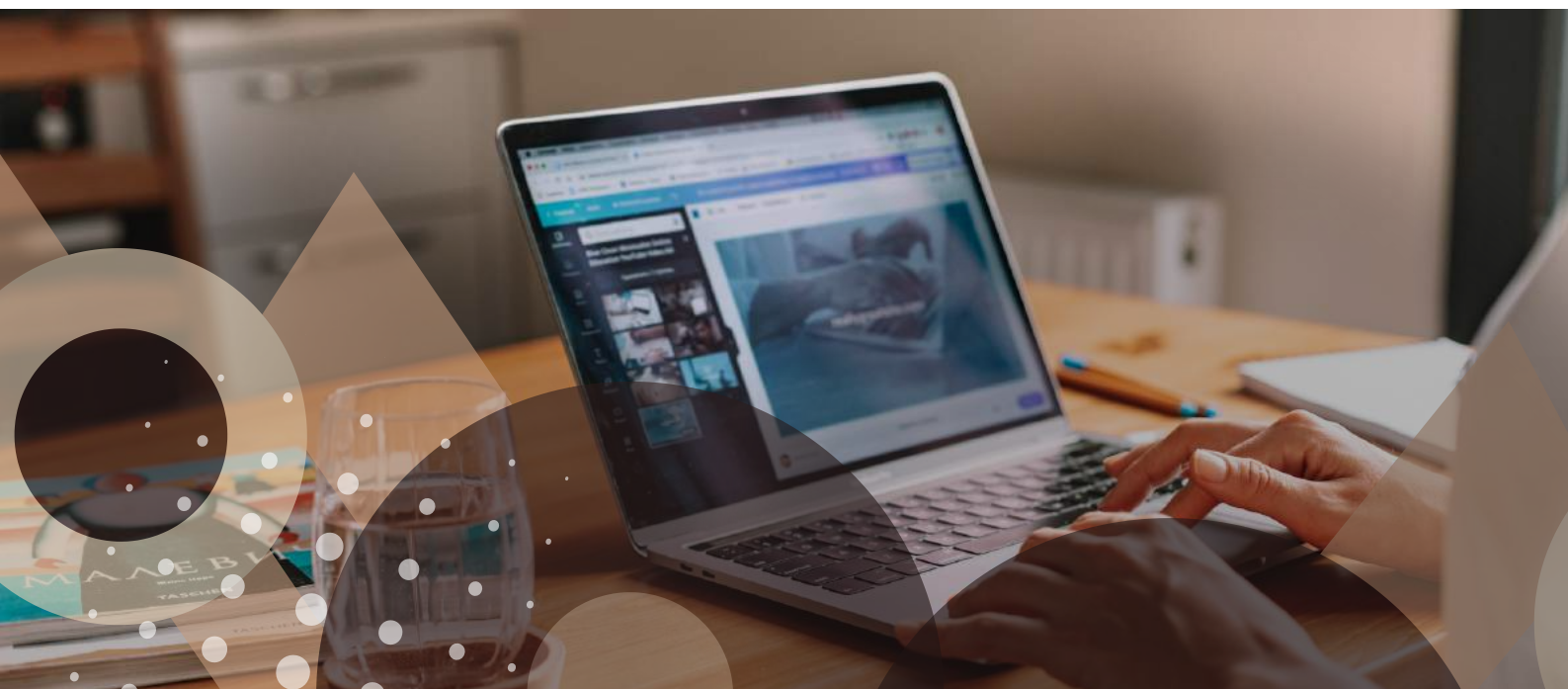


The main planned project result is an innovative service of non-vocational "educational counselling for people aged 55+", which will be developed as a "guide" for adult education staff with guidelines and recommendations on preparing and running the service. It will include templates of documents needed to conduct the counselling for learners 55+.



The educational counselling will be targeted at several groups who constitute the potential future users of the results and future participants of the developed counselling, which are:

- at least three people from the staff of each partner institution involved in project works;
- at least five adult learners aged 55+ from Germany and Poland participating in the testing phase;
- at least two adult education staff participating in the testing phase;
- adult education staff from institutions that are not part of the consortium, both administrative and adult educators (e.g. trainers, lecturers, advisors, evaluators) who will receive information about the project results;
- all educational and training institutions, as well as other organizations providing educational and consulting services for adults, interested in implementing educational counselling for people 55+ to their offer, including Third Age Universities and senior clubs;
- all adults in Germany, Poland and the EU, especially those aged 55+, who will be able to use the developed educational counselling service in the future as learners.





CONCLUSIONS:

The broad geopolitical context indicates the importance of implementing EU policy in supporting lifelong learning among adults, especially those 55 plus, e.g. through the development and promotion of educational counselling. Lifelong learning is a key policy across the European Union, including Poland and Germany. Apart from issues related to the labour market and employment, the personal development of adults, the development of their interests, and the improvement of the well-being among people 55+ is crucial.

In no partner countries (Germany and Poland), non-vocational educational counselling services are widely available to people aged 55+ in the education market. Educational guidance and vocational counselling in EU countries are mainly addressed to people of pre-working age and working age, such as school pupils, students, unemployed, and job seekers. People aged 55+ who approach the end of their professional life or are already retired need open and universal access to educational counselling services for personal, cultural or social development.

All those benefits can be obtained by increasing the number of adults 55+ participating in lifelong learning, which is an inseparable element of today's reality and a necessary condition for being part of a modern society in connection with the development of modern technologies. Additionally, through project implementation, it will be possible to disseminate and promote common EU values to the partners.





Adults 55+ in both countries are deprived of access to non-professional educational counselling services, the purpose of which is not professional activation or employment but personal development, social integration, and greater activity in social life. Numerous studies show that the primary barrier to starting education for older people is the lack of access to information on educational opportunities. This is due to the more significant digital exclusion of people aged 55+ and limited use of internet resources.



None of the partner institutions presently offer a non-vocational educational counselling service tailored to people 55 plus, also including seniors as participants. In daily work, our staff see a demand for this type of service among the local and regional community.

To start their educational journey, people 55+ in Germany and Poland need concrete and adjusted to their actual needs and life situation information about possible educational services available in their city, region or country (online services). Without knowledge about educational opportunities and without profiling the educational offer in terms of needs and possibilities, people aged 55+ will not undertake education.

Addressing counselling for people aged 55 plus in Poland and Germany within the project is justified for several reasons.

First of all, because of the low level of participation of people aged 55+ in those countries in non-formal education, compared to the EU average.

Secondly, there is a lack of availability of non-vocational educational counselling for people 55+ in the educational markets in both countries. People aged 55+ who have either completed the period of professional activity or will do so soon have fewer chances and opportunities to develop educationally and socially than employees

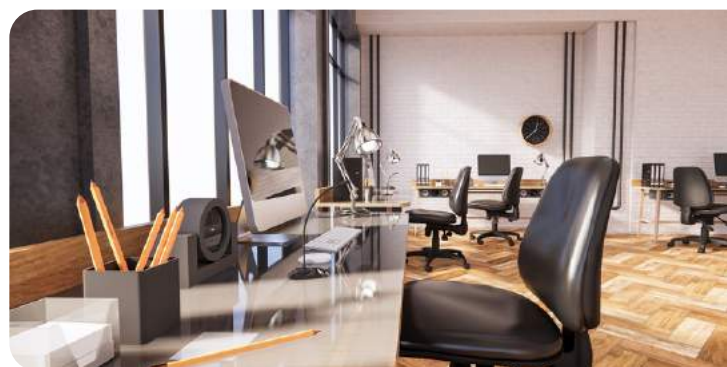


Thirdly, the social isolation of people aged 55+ resulted from the coronavirus pandemic. Covid restrictions limited many social contacts and leisure opportunities for older people. Supporting 55+ groups in both countries by increasing their access to educational counselling with a long-term goal - increasing the number of older people participating in education and training is extremely important in the post-pandemic period, during which the elderly were locked in four walls and socially isolated.



Fourthly, the increasing lifespan makes it necessary to offer people 55+ interesting and tailored to their needs educational activities. Thanks to profiled educational counselling, older learners in Poland and Germany will be able to spend their lives actively, creatively and in an interesting way on the retirement. People aged 55+, in Germany and especially Poland, are often professionally inactive and have a lot of free time, which they could spend in engaging, creative ways, developing personally and integrating socially. Such opportunities are provided by non-formal education and lifelong learning. Thanks to educational counselling, adults 55+ will raise their knowledge and awareness of available educational activities targeted at personal development, development of their interests and hobbies, and creative and valuable spending of free time with other people and self-realization.

It is essential that each partner institution involves at least two people in the development of the guide and testing phase. The project results will be of better quality thanks to the practical knowledge and professional experience of several authors, not only a single person in each partner institution. During the testing stage, the partners can cooperate with external adult educators to provide an external overview of the project results.





The Partners should profile the testing phase in the project on several people aged 55+ from their local community and at least two educators and disseminate counselling to specific groups of people (e.g. members of Universities of the Third Age, senior clubs, readers of local libraries). Thanks to that, they may reach people willing to take up lifelong learning initiatives.

During project work and development of the project results, the partners and their staff should remember the importance of exchanging experiences and good practices in the field of lifelong learning or in teaching methods in working with people 55+. This dimension of transnational cooperation is also essential to achieving project objectives and improving lifelong learning opportunities for people 55+ in Poland and Germany.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Educational counselling should aim to identify the needs, expectations and educational possibilities of people aged 55+. That is why, during the development of the results, the partners have to take into account the following aspects:

- learning specifics of people aged 55+,
- conditions of educational and consulting work with people 55 plus,
- methodological workshop adapted to people 55+.

The educational counsellor (person running the service) should select for the client (learner 55+) more than one proposal from the adult education services available on the market and offer them to an adult.

Educational offers for learners may include both stationary and remote services.

The offer may include free or paid services, depending on the participant's financial capabilities.

Educational counselling services should be profiled to people who are already finishing or have finished their professional activity and are no longer interested in vocational education and training. That's why the counselling can be tailored to people of pre-retirement age, people on pre-retirement benefits, pensioners, and retirees.





ACTION PLAN:

To achieve project objectives and develop high-quality, valuable and accessible results, the partners should follow the steps indicated in the proposal and detailed in this part of the Report.

Within activity No. 1, the consortium has to conduct several tasks, which include conducting desk research in Poland and Germany and preparation of 2 national reports; development of a Final Report; development of the goals and a program of educational counselling for people aged 55+; preparation of 4 diagnostic tools; development of 2 monitoring/evaluation tools; preparation of the templates of advisory cards; development of a card template with educational offers for a learner.

Within activity No. 2, the partners must develop a Guide for staff and conduct the piloting phase of the developed service on its target groups. There are several tasks which need to be performed in the following months, which are: development of a description of the counselling target group; preparation of requirements for staff who will provide a service in the future; creation of instruction for the staff; development of organizational recommendations and logistical and technical requirements for the counselling; preparation of promotional/motivational material targeted at learners 55+; creation of a Guide for Staff containing all developed tools; testing phase on two target groups (learners 55+ and adult staff); development of analysis report from testing; preparation of the final version of the Guide and translations into Polish and German languages.





EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING GUIDE CONCEPT:

When working on the Guide as part of this project, the partners should keep in mind the functions that the Manuals and Guides should perform in the education system. For example, in Piskorz's classification, the Handbook should have such functions as: informational, motivational, research, transformation, self-education, integrating, coordinating and educational (Piskorz S., Dobór i układ treści w nauczaniu geografii. [w:] S. Piskorz (ed.), Zarys dydaktyki geografii. Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1997, s. 61-71).

Another typology indicates functions such as: information, research, transformation, self-education, motivation, control and correction (Stawiński W., ed., Dydaktyka biologii i ochrony środowiska. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006)

The planned within the project Guide will have several functions. The most important ones include:

- information function (it will provide educators/counsellors with the knowledge, e.g. about the aims and program of the educational counselling, as well as with the necessary diagnostic tools and organizational requirements of the service),
- research function (will enable learning about the learners 55+'s needs/capabilities/expectations regarding the service and lifelong learning),
- ordering/structuring function (the Guide containing several parts/chapters in an orderly manner will allow counsellors to use the materials/tools contained therein and will enable them to conduct the counselling service correctly),
- self-education function (the Guide will be available to anyone, not only professional counsellors and educators, thanks to which each person who reads it will gain new knowledge/skills in the field of adult education / educational counselling for people 55+),
- motivational function (thanks to the motivational materials, the Guide should also have a function encouraging people 55 plus to take up lifelong learning).



When developing a project Guide, the partners should define its requirements. The most important include:

- selection of appropriate content,
- appropriate, orderly, clear and transparent layout of content,
- requirements for illustrative material,
- editorial requirements,
- technical requirements for the Guide.



CONTENT LAYOUT OF THE GUIDE:

The selection of the content of the Guide results primarily from the proposal's provisions. It will be developed at the stage of developing the initial version of educational counselling and its testing. At this stage, it is possible to suggest content.

The content layout should be clear and orderly to ensure that the project guide is easy to use. It is recommended that the Guide be divided into several chapters/parts. The possible division of the content:

1. Chapter 1 may contain: goals and program of counselling, a description of the target group, requirements for people providing counselling;
2. Chapter 2 may contain: guidelines for counsellors on how to design and conduct the service, organizational procedures, premises and equipment requirements for running the service;
3. Chapter 3 may contain: four diagnostic questionnaires;
4. Chapter 4 may contain: two monitoring surveys, two advisory cards and two motivational materials.



THE CONTENT OF THE DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONNAIRES:

Below are some recommended topics/elements which the partners may consider while working on the diagnostic questionnaires. The final decision regarding the components included in each tool will be made by the partner responsible for developing those questionnaires. The below-mentioned elements are just some open tips and propositions. The partners are not obliged to follow them.



1.The “Questionnaire of the learner's educational background” may include parts/questions referring to:

- Educational history: Inquire about the learner's 55+ years of formal education, including school attendance, degrees obtained, and any vocational training.
- Lifelong learning activities: assess the learner's participation in continuing education programs, workshops, seminars, or self-directed learning experiences throughout their life.
- Technological proficiency: determine learner's familiarity and comfort level with modern technologies, such as computers, the internet, and digital devices, relevant to their educational pursuits.
- Skills and competencies: assess the learner's skill set, encompassing technical skills, soft skills, and any certifications or qualifications obtained in the past.
- Professional development: determine the learner's engagement in professional development activities, such as training programs, workshops, conferences, or memberships in professional associations, aimed at enhancing their career trajectory and skill set.



2. The “Questionnaire of the professional past” may include questions referring to:

- Career history: request details about the learner’s 55+ professional journey, including past employment positions, job responsibilities, and notable achievements.
- Industry experience: explore the sectors or fields they've worked in, highlighting any specialized knowledge or expertise acquired throughout their career.
- Leadership and management roles: inquire about any leadership positions held, managerial responsibilities undertaken, or team management experiences.
- Career transitions: investigate any career shifts, transitions, or significant changes in employment status they've undergone, along with the factors motivating these transitions.

3. The “Questionnaire of the learner's current life situation” may include parts referring to:

- Health and well-being: inquire about the learner’s 55+ current physical health status, any medical conditions, disabilities, or limitations that may impact their daily life, and their overall mental well-being.
- Living arrangements: gather information about the learner’s current living situation, including whether they live independently, with family, in assisted living facilities, or in retirement communities.
- Social support network: explore the extent of the learner’s social connections and support system, including relationships with family, friends, and community involvement.
- Financial situation: assess learner’s financial stability, including sources of income, savings, investments, and any concerns or challenges related to economic security in their later years.
- Daily activities and routine: understand the learner’s typical daily activities, hobbies, interests, and how they spend their time during retirement or semi-retirement.
- Life satisfaction: identify the learner’s personal aspirations, and overall satisfaction with their current life situation, including any areas they may want to improve or change.



4. “Questionnaire of the learner's educational needs and expectations” may include questions referring to:

- Learning objectives: inquire about the specific educational goals and objectives the learner 55+ hopes to achieve, considering both short-term and long-term aspirations.
- Preferred learning modalities: explore the learner’s preferences regarding how they best learn, whether through traditional classroom settings, online courses, workshops, one-on-one tutoring, or self-paced study.
- Subject areas of interest: identify the specific subjects or topics they are interested in learning about, including academic disciplines, practical skills, or personal enrichment areas.
- Supportive resources: identify the resources and support learners may require to facilitate their learning journey, such as access to educational materials, technology assistance, or mentorship opportunities.
- Educational goals and aspirations: identify the learner's 55+ current educational interests, objectives, and any specific skills or knowledge they wish to acquire in their later years.
- Expectations and challenges: understand the learner’s expectations regarding the learning process, potential challenges they anticipate encountering, and any concerns they may have about embarking on educational endeavours at this stage of life
- Learning preferences: understand the learners' preferred learning styles, whether visual, auditory, kinaesthetic or a combination, to tailor educational approaches effectively.



EDITORIAL AND VISUAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE GUIDE:

The Guide should maintain the best possible substantive, teaching and editorial standards to fulfil its role. Of course, the planned budget in the proposal is a natural limitation when developing and testing the Guide.

It is recommended that the content of the Guide will be enriched/diversified with graphic elements/illustrative material. Thanks to this, the Guide will be more visually attractive for future users and make it easier to read the content or move from one part of the Guide to the other. Therefore, it is recommended that the final version of the Guide (pdf) be prepared using a graphic program, e.g. Canva. Additionally, the Guide will be available as a doc file. The doc. file does not need all graphical/visual elements, which will be in the PDF (Canva) version.

TESTING PHASE:

To provide educational institutions and learners 55+ with high-quality and practical final results, the partners, during future works, have to emphasize such aspects of the developed Guide as:

- completeness of the content and materials,
- comprehensibility, accessibility and assimilability,
- time of single counselling service,
- level of learners' satisfaction.

The partners should assess all the above-mentioned aspects during the testing phase in Germany and Poland.

Thanks to the evaluation, it will also be checked from the point of view of people 55+ whether the developed educational counselling service is interesting and attractive to them. Are people 55+ willing to use the service, are they satisfied with it after its implementation, and do they undertake any form of education from those proposed by the counsellor.





During the testing phase, the partners have to engage two separate target groups in both countries. The first group constitute five learners aged 55+. The second group will be two adult educators (permanent staff or associates).

It is crucial that during the project, all developed materials constituting the "educational counselling", such as: goals, programme, organizational recommendations, card templates, diagnostic tools, monitoring tools, and motivational materials, are verified whether they are understandable to the adult education's staff, are they complete, are they allow the service to be carried out in accordance with the applicable market standards for consulting/education.

That's why the testing phase in both countries has to include several steps.

First of all, during the piloting phase, the partners have to conduct with at least five testing learners aged 55+ all four diagnostic questionnaires developed in activity 1 to identify their needs, possibilities, expectations and interests.

In the next step, the testing staff must analyse the filled diagnostic questionnaires and specify each learner's educational goals.

In the third step, the testing staff has to analyse the educational services available on the market. The counsellors should do this based on the market research, e.g. via internet and their knowledge. Depending on the participant's preferences and capabilities identified during the first and second stages of the service, the educational offer may include a concrete territory (e.g. a city, a voivodeship) - in the case of face-to-face classes or can be considered without geographical restrictions - in the case of remote learning. Depending on the learner's financial situation and preferences, the counsellor may analyse free and commercial services.

The fourth step of the testing phase should be a counsellor's presentation of the educational proposals to a learner. To raise the chances that the learner enrolls in a course or training, the counsellors should present at least two different educational offers to each participant. They should encourage them to choose one of them and start their educational journey.

The last step in the testing framework will be monitoring whether the participant has started some form of education and, if possible, tracking the client's educational journey.



The testing phase of the educational counselling should be conducted in the form of 2 meetings between the counsellor and the participant. It is estimated that each meeting should last an average of 45 minutes.

Between the two meetings, the counsellor needs some time:

- to analyse the questionnaires filled by the learner,
- to specify the learner's educational goals,
- to analyse the offer of educational institutions / the adult education market,
- to contact directly (via phone, e-mail) with concrete educational institutions, while searching for the most adequate educational offers for the learner (if needed).

The testing phase is planned as two face-to-face meetings, but depending on the pandemic situation, place of residence or health situation of the participant, the counselling can be partially or completely carried out remotely (e.g. phone conversation, an online meeting via Zoom, Ms Teams, WhatsApp). Nevertheless, the most desirable form is the stationary formula, during which it is easier to establish the necessary relationship between the counsellor and the participant. Then, the face-to-face form will provide the participant with a sense of peace, security, and comfort, thus translating into greater sincerity in the answers.

The testing service for one participant should last around 4,5 clock hours. The whole process includes two meetings between the counsellor and a learner 55+, as well as the individual work of the counsellor without the participant.

Taking into account that the project is implemented in the adult sector of the Erasmus+ Programme, it is essential that the partners and their staff, while working and testing the educational counselling, keep in mind that the service should be considered as non-vocational counselling. It aims to support people 55+ in terms of overall well-being, personal development, and the development of passions, hobbies, and interests. Educational counselling should support adults 55+ in the process of gaining the knowledge and skills to raise their quality of life. The counselling should not emphasize spheres directly connected with the labour market or employment.



Participants recruitment process:

The partners should ensure an equal and open recruitment process of learners 55+ in their regional environment. To do this, the partners should develop the following documents:

- Regulations for participation in counselling,
- Participant's application form,
- Statement on the processing of the Participant's personal data (GDPR).

The partners should inform about the recruitment process within their institutions and outside, using tools such as websites, social media posts, and newsletters. Thanks to that, a bigger number of possible participants will get knowledge about the project and the testing phase and will be able to apply.

It is recommended that the partners enrol more than only five people 55+ in case of participants' withdrawal or other issues, which may not allow some enrolled people to take part in the service or finish it according to the piloting plan.

During the testing process, it is recommended that the partners create recruitment criteria for learners 55+, which will prefer people in a worse situation/people from disadvantaged groups. It is up to the partners to choose which preference criteria they consider important in their regional community/country.

Besides the testing process with adult learners aged 55+, both partners should test the developed materials on at least two adult educators. They can be permanent staff members of partners or co-workers.

The testing of the educational service by two educators in Poland and Germany should be performed so that each testing counsellor reads the whole developed documentation and submits





The partners should create and use during the testing phase a template of the testing card for counsellors, in which the counsellors will assess the below-mentioned elements of the Guide:

- the documentation completeness,
- the comprehensibility of the content,
- the suggestions for improvements.

Finally, the effectiveness of the planned information and motivational materials and actions will also be checked in the context of encouraging people 55+ to participate in educational counselling (during the testing phase) and undertaking post-service education.

After the testing phase, the partners should develop short evaluation reports with suggestions for corrections and revise the Guide if needed. Thanks to that, the final project result will be complete, practical and valuable for future users and learners 55 plus.

The final results should be accessible in open licence in two formats: a pdf file (for downloading, printing, reading) and a doc. file – which will allow future users to modify the materials and update them to the current needs of the users and learners.

To maximize the exploitation of the project results, the partners should upload them not only on the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform but also on their institutional websites. The project results should be additionally distributed (as a document in e-mail or a link to the project results in the e-mail or in the newsletter) by the partners via e-mails to at least 100 training / educational/adult institutions in each partner country. What's more, the partners should widely disseminate the information about the EU funds, the Erasmus+ Programme, the project and its results, using wide range of stationary and virtual tools, such as: face-to-face seminars, newsletters, social media, posts, EPALC articles.





EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, NON-DISCRIMINATION AND OPEN ACCESS TO THE RESULTS:

While developing the educational counselling, the partners' staff must emphasise that results ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

The implementation of the project and work on the Guide should consider the needs of participants/users based on the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination - equal rights of all people using counselling and open access to the results via the websites.

When working on the results, attention should be paid to clear, simple and understandable language. Partners' staff should avoid too complicated, professional language so that the results can be used not only by professional educators/advisors but also by every adult, e.g. leaders of senior groups or other people without special pedagogical or professional preparation.

During the testing phase, the partners should ensure an equal and fair process of recruiting participants. The target group within the testing should be at least five people aged 55+ from each partner country - primarily from the local or regional environment. Recruitment should be open and non-discriminatory. Both men and women should be able to participate in the piloting phase. The employed and the unemployed people should be encouraged to enrol for the testing phase. In the case of people with disabilities and their significant health problems, the counselling can be conducted in remote form.



The educational counselling service should be developed in such a way that ensures that people with disabilities can benefit from it, as learners, on the same conditions as others, e.g. in terms of access to information on counselling, access to the educational and promotional materials, a wide range of communication method (face-to-face, online calls, phone, e-mail), diverse implementation methods (e.g. possible stationary as well as a remote form).





The testing phase, in the aspect of running the face-to-face service with participants, should take place in a building adapted to the needs of disabled people (e.g. a building with elevators).

If participants have vision problems, the materials can be printed in a larger font (from the doc file), or an advisor can read the questions.

The educational counselling should be designed to allow transferability to any geographical area, including the other EU countries (English version).



IMPACT:

Thanks to the project implementation, the testing counselling service in both countries and the number of people aged 55+ in Poland and Germany participating in non-vocational education will increase.

The project Guide - educational counselling for people 55 plus - will be available to all educational institutions and their staff, e.g. educators, people working in the professions of trainers, lecturers, advisors, coaches, evaluators, facilitators, administrative and management staff of education institutions, both adults and other sectors of the Programme.



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