

« Older students in universities, learning needs, motivation, barriers and requirements »

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Introduction

In my presentation I will focus on

- general information about learning activities for the elderly in Slovakia;
- results gained from the research on seniors and older students at the universities

a/ in the European context with experience in Slovakia.

b/ in the Slovak framework



Lifelong learning

- is a means of socialization and coping with ageing;
- is understood as preventing the social isolation of seniors, the possibility of carrying out one's own life goals.

Education and participation in programs designed for seniors give participants:

- the chance of integration into society,
- the opportunity to pass on their own experiences,
- the ability to use them for society and in their own environment within the family, with friends, in clubs or between pensioners.
- opportunities for self-realization and participation in the life of society.



Who are the students at the UTAs

At the beginning (in 1990), the UTAs in Slovakia started their courses especially for retirees.

At present, UTAs are organized not only for retired people, but also for people who have been medically retired (physically handicapped) without the age limit and also for people before retirement – generally for people of 50+.

Currently, from a population of 5 m. inhabitants, there are about 7200 senior students at 16 UTAs across Slovakia.

The Association of Universities of the Third Age (ASUTV) of Slovakia was established as an initiative of Slovak universities on 1st of December 1994: www.asutv.sk



Study possibilities

The systematic learning of older people in Slovakia offers mainly segregation models of education – special programs for older students at universities

Other learning and free-time activities are offered by the Academies of the Third Age and by the Union of pensioners and its clubs for seniors.

UTA at Comenius University offers participants three-year study programs in 39 study subjects – separated from young students; 2000 senior students in 4 towns / places



What are the main subjects offered to seniors ?

- Archaeology
- Assertiveness training
- Astronomy
- Business skills for seniors
- Computers and Information
- Environmental science
- Ethnology
- Expressive therapies
- General history
- General medicine
- Gerontology
- History of religions
- History of fine art
- History of Literature
- History of Opera
- History of Bratislava
- Law
- UNESCO
- Financial learning
- Horticulture and gardening
- Creative writing
- Journalism
- Latin and ancient Roman history
- Medicine
- Museology
- Pharmacology
- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Regeneration of the strength of Seniors
- Slovak History
- Social work
- Spas
- Theatre and Music through the ages
- Tourism and services
- Yoga



Reality and changes in society

Changes in the age limit for retirement and extension of the active working age bring changes also in adult education

Retiring age in Slovakia – 55/60 : 62

Older students at UTAs in active working age:

Y:1998 -more than 10% at UTA

Y:2014 less than 5%.

People in age 50 – 62 appreciate their job more, learn in a company concerning their job, have lack of free time, help their children



Reality and changes in society

Extension of life expectancy :

Slovakia: **2001** – F: 77,7 M: 69,5; **2012**- F: 79,9 M: 72,5

Poland : **2001** – F: 78,4 M: 70; **2012**- F: 81,1 M: 72,7

It brings **intergenerational learning** into the environment of UTA – middle age and older age (50-75) = **third age**; **fourth age** (75+). Older students do not leave university – they realise the study circle – continue to choose new subjects.

The oldest student in Bratislava graduated at age 94.

Comparison in the **number of males and females** in Slovak UTAs: **1999** - Female only 76% out of 100% (the best situation)

2006 - Female: 91%

2014 – 85%



Investigating the types of motivation at UTA in Bratislava (T: 414 UTA students, in 1998)

Type of motivation	No.	%
an interest to expand knowledge in other fields	265	64
the need for a valuable use of their spare time	187	45
the fulfilment of a desire to undertake a university study	119	29
the need for social contacts	114	27,5
the need for innovating and expanding knowledge	86	20
an interest in expanding knowledge in one's own field	71	17
a desire to equal a partner, a friend, ssurrounding	19	4,6

What motivated you for the study at the university? (T: 841, Project Grundtvig: EFOSEC, 2008)

a/ enlargement of knowledge in a different subject than my profession 601 71,5%

b/ need to have better quality of life after retirement 434 51,6%

c/ meeting people and social contacts 319 38%

d/ fulfilment of my desire to study at the university/academy 124 14,7%

e/ enlargement of knowledge in my own professional subject 95 11,3%

f/ necessity to innovate knowledge for the present profession and work 47 5,6%

g/ effort to be equal to my partner and my environment 21 2,5%

h/ another reason 32 3,8%



Changes in motivation

Influenced by the level of education of new students

Fulfilling the wish for study at the university is no longer important: half of our older students (enrolled in the last 5 years) have graduated from universities.

In 1990 about 20 %.

After 25 years of UTAs existence we noticed that:

- study at UTA became the life style of Slovak older intelligence;
- UTA is fulfilling the needs of active ageing by the highest age
- Retirees have preferences in learning for one's own interest, benefit of those around and one's own family.



Reasons for the absence or the abandonment from study

Which would be a valid reason to stop studying?

a/ my own illness	661	78,5%
b/ illness of my partner	264	31%
c/ not good enough programme for study	186	22%
d/ cancelling of study	174	20,5%
e/ no good teachers (well educated)	169	20%
f/ no good transport possibilities	75	9%
g/ my own financial problems	75	9%
h/ bad relationships in a course	50	6%
i/ others:	18	2%

(T: 841, Project Grundtvig: EFOSEC, 2008)



Which are the most important barriers (in your opinion) for taking part in learning activities?

a/ other commitments, e.g. caring for and visiting family members	241	28,5%
b/ the venue, too far away	210	25%
c/ course fees too high	138	16,5%
d/ the venue, difficult to be reached by public transport	134	16%
e/ reluctance/fear to go unaccompanied	42	5%
f/ others:	76	9%
g/ no answers	91	11%

(T: 841, Project Grundtvig: EFOSEC, 2008)



Other barriers (mentioned by seniors)

- Low self-confidence;
- lack of time;
- financial reasons;
- apathy, tiredness;
- too many people around, noise;
- the elderly are seen as a burden;
- preferences of society and focus on finances;
- lack of interest in society in education;
- education is not recognised as one of the values of human life;
- focus on work and family problems.



Barriers

Opinion on why people do not participate in adult learning.

Outside elements

- not enough UTAs
- limit of places at UTA
- lack of information about the possibilities - not enough advertising
- lack of public transport to get to UTA
- no one prepares us for retirement and to take advantage of free time
- low pensions / income
- they are busy with housework or family (taking care of grandchildren)
- non acceptance by the family



Barriers

Opinion on why people do not participate in adult learning.

Inside elements

- laziness
- bad health, illnesses
- duties
- lack of time
- lack of interest and motivation
- they don't know the value which lifelong learning gives
- they think that learning belongs to the younger people and adults shouldn't learn



Intergenerational research monitored by Slovak UTAs

T: 1447 (28% Male 72% Female), Y: 62,9%, O: 37,1%

Would you prefer to join educational programs for youth and seniors /all generations together

Possibilities	Young students of the universities	Elderly university students of UTA
Yes	46,2 %	42,9 %
No	22,5 %	20,3 %
I do not know	31,3 %	36,8 %

Research of ASUTV, 2013



If yes in which subjects could they study?

Study subjects	Young students	Elderly students
Healthy lifestyle	42,2%	24,9%
History and ethnology	27,0%	15,3%
Information technologies	35,4%	20,1%
Language learning	36,4%	14,4%
Law	9,1%	4,8%
Theology	18,5%	10,9%
Civic education	27,4%	12,5%
Gardening, housing, family economy	27,0%	8,1%
Other	0,2%	2,0%

What do you gain from the attendance of university/academy/study courses?

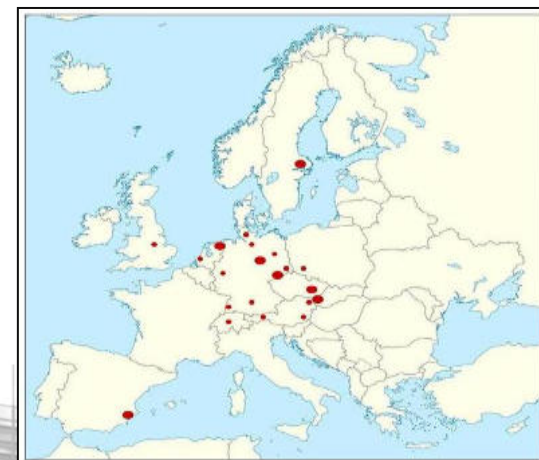
a/ new knowledge	88%
b/ social contacts and meeting people	53%
c/ better understanding of changes in a society	23%
d/ different view on the world	23%
e/ knowledge of new technologies	20%
f/ stronger personality	18%
g/ better handling of problems	15%
h/ others:	3%

Source: EFOSEC project 2008



The project Educational Senior Network (EduSenNet):

- seeks to identify both the specific needs of older learners aged over 50 and the conditions under which they learn;
- examines the extent of possible innovation of learning programs, how it may be undertaken and for whom;
- focuses on programme innovation not only in urban situations but also in specific communities in rural areas;
- tries to encourage older people through senior students to take part in learning activities



<http://edusennet.efos-europa.eu/>

Older students are happy to have possibilities to study in later life!

After 25 years they have:

- different opinions, wider needs and interests in many different learning activities;

They are more flexible, more demanding with higher requirements.

Able to use their knowledge for society, other seniors, in the family as a good example

Learning needs are always changing



We modify study offer each study year



Thank you for your attention

