



**EU project “Educational Senior Network”
Edu-Sen-Net**

Learning in later life for people 50+

Survey among Non-Students

Progress Report, May 2016

Technische Universität Chemnitz

Institut für Pädagogik und Seniorenkolleg

Germany



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www.edusenet.efos-europa.eu

INTRODUCTION

The European project *Educational Senior Network (EduSenNet)* will gather information to exchange knowledge and will provide information about learning possibilities for older persons.

This *EduSenNet project* seeks to identify both the specific needs of older learners aged over 50 and the conditions under which they learn. The project examines the extent of possible innovation, how it may be undertaken and for whom. Identification of the learning environment can assist us in program innovation not only in urban situations but also in specific communities in rural areas.

Objectives, needs and outcomes are catered for in various ways by:

- summarizing experiences;
- encouraging older people to take part in learning activities;
- developing interest in learning through participation in activities designed to promote and extend knowledge and skills.

It will be necessary to examine the objectives, motivation and barriers to learning of the older persons who take part in the programs as well as of those who do not. The introduction of new programs and the upgrading of old ones will involve older people in activities more suited to their needs.

The *EduSenNet project* is designed that the seven European partner institutions

- gather and share information
- make wider and better use of all these rich experiences
- disseminating research evidence
- creating a network for future cooperation.

The *Cooperation partners* of the EduSenNet project are

1. Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, CĎV UK – UTV Bratislava, Slovakia (coordinator)
2. Technische Universität Chemnitz, Seniorenkolleg, Chemnitz, Germany
3. Universidad Permanente de la Universidad de Alicante, UPUA, Alicante, Spain
4. Senioren Academie Groningen-Friesland-Drenthe, Groningen, Netherlands
5. Vysoké učení technické v Brně, Brno, Czech Republic
6. Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg Studieren ab 50, Magdeburg, Germany
7. Uppsala Senioruniversitet Uppsala, Sweden

EduSenNet is split up in three phases:

Phase 1

Study about the present learning possibilities at the member institutions of EFOS.

Result: Review Table

Phase 2

Survey among Non-Students:

Survey among target groups of Elderly who haven't yet found the way to higher education for seniors or have lost the contact to it. For this a questionnaire is developed.

Survey among present Students:

Survey among present students about their motivation and wishes.

Phase 3

Qualitative and quantitative Analysis of the survey. Proposing innovations to meet the needs of the elderly who don't yet or no longer participate in education.

SURVEY among Non-Students

People over 50 – especially those, who are in retirement - run the risk of social exclusion and of losing touch with information and knowledge (also in new media) in general. Our society needs people who are well informed and who participate in further education. Very often it is the elderly with special needs who have to be encouraged to be more active in order to overcome their barriers and extend their abilities and knowledge. Therefore we have to recognize their needs so as to offer them appropriate learning programs, study materials and literature and an improved learning environment.

In common with the project partners we developed a questionnaire designed for older persons not involved in learning. Questionnaire surveys and interviews of older people aimed to get knowledge about learning in later life, especially of person 50+. We researched into older people's motives, barriers and needs regarding learning in U3A, especially in rural areas.

When choosing non-students, we focused on the city of Chemnitz and the small urban and rural surrounding in a radius of 50 km. We did so, because the region of Chemnitz has the oldest average population living in Germany. These demographic trends will continue. According to extrapolations Chemnitz will have the oldest city population of Europe by 2025. The result is a special responsibility of the city and the University to enhance and develop training facilities for the elderly. The experience gained should be made available for other regions in which such a development will occur later.

Age structure in Chemnitz (as of 31.07.2015):

Population: 246.143, including 50+: 118.903 = 48.3%

(50-59 years old: 13,74%, 60-69 years old: 13.41%, 70 - 79 years old: 13,84%, 80 and more years old: 7.31%)

In the city of Chemnitz 48.3% of the population is over 50 years old!

In the survey we concentrated on elderly over 50 who, as we assume, do not have easy access to the different types of education in their area or who have other limits and barriers:

1. Elderly who live rather isolated with limited sources of information
2. Elderly who are limited in their mobility
3. Elderly with other physical restrictions
4. Elderly with financial restrictions
5. Elderly who live at a long distance from places where education is offered, with limited or no public transport.

In order to achieve as much as possible from these older groups, we contacted on the various institutions and organizations in Chemnitz and the region to be visited or used by seniors. We especially focused on meeting places for communication, which are offering little or no training.

In total we have 109 respondents in urban and rural areas.

Chemnitz (Urban area ≤ 50.000 inhabitants):

- Soziokulturelles Zentrum (Socio-cultural Center) Querbeet, Chemnitz (12 respondents)
- Bürgerzentrum (Citizens Center) Leipziger Straße, Chemnitz (5)
- Bürgertreff (Citizens Meeting Point) Gleis 1, Chemnitz (9)
- ICE e.V., association for professional integration, personal development and cultural exchange, Chemnitz (5)

District Zwickau and Mittelsachsen (Urban areas ≥ 50.000):

- Sozialstation (Social Center) Glauchau (1)
- Sozialstation (Social Center) Burgstädt (0)

These welfare centers offer care, meals and events for senior citizens. The elderly, mostly aged 80+, unfortunately were not interested in the survey participation.

District Erzgebirgskreis (Urban areas ≥ 50.000 and Rural areas ≥ 10.000 inhabitants):

- Bürgerhaus (Citizens House) Drebach, Erzgebirge (19) - 25km south-east of Chemnitz (events, meeting place for women)
- AWO Arbeiterwohlfahrt Annaberg, Erzgebirge (4) - 35 km south of Chemnitz
- Bürgerakademie (Citizens Academy) Breitenbrunn Erzgebirge and Bildungsverein (Education Association) Westerbirge e.V. Breitenbrunn (22) - 55km south-west of Chemnitz

In addition, we held interviews with other non-students (individual elder, acquaintances, neighbors, contacts of Seniors Students and many more) (32 respondents).

Our team slightly expanded the questionnaire of the partnership by a few issues that we consider important for our project work on Seniors College in Chemnitz. In order to facilitate the reading and the answering for the older respondents, we wrote the German translation of the English questionnaire in "simple language".

We avoided too scientific terms and therefore reduced potential barriers for some of the seniors. In addition, we gave up questions that do not apply to German conditions (B3).

(Please note that the term U3A is not used in Germany, therefore the question „Do you know any University of the Third Age?“ was not asked and does not appear in our report.)

RESULTS

Part A: PERSONAL DATA

A.1 The country where you live

All of the 109 participants in the survey (Non-Students) live in Germany.

For further information please see question A.5.

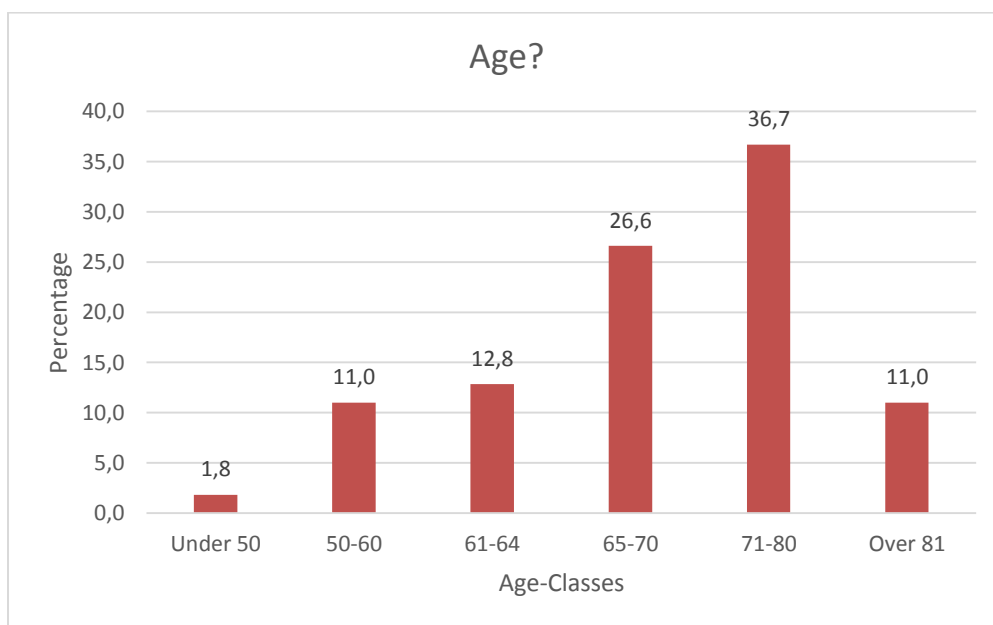
A.2 Your Gender

Male: 37,6 % Female: 62,4 %

There were 62,4 % women and 37,6 % men among the respondents.

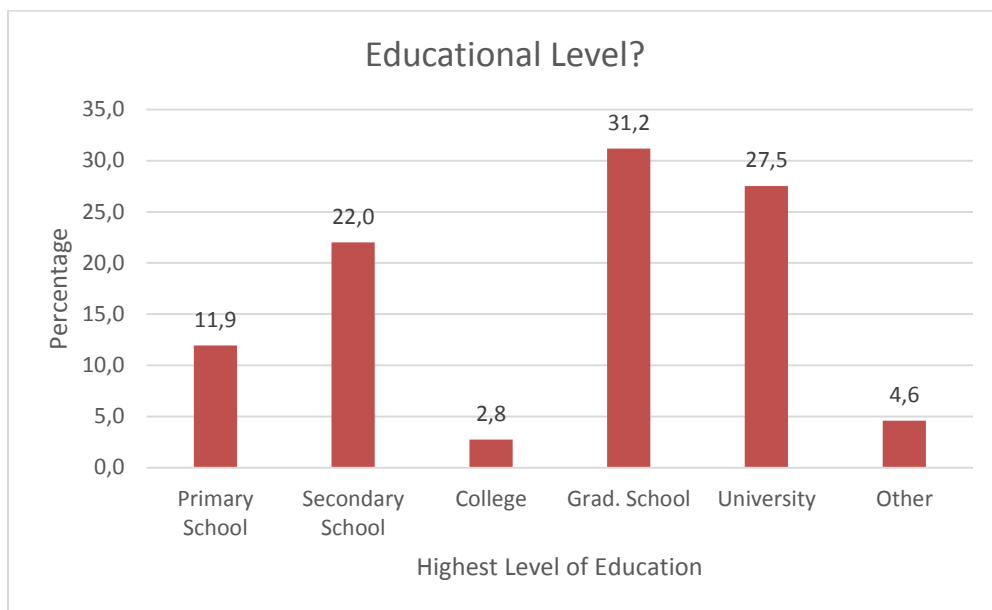
A.3 Your Age

The age distribution among the respondents:



Over 60% of the population is between 65 and 80, only one respondent was under 50.

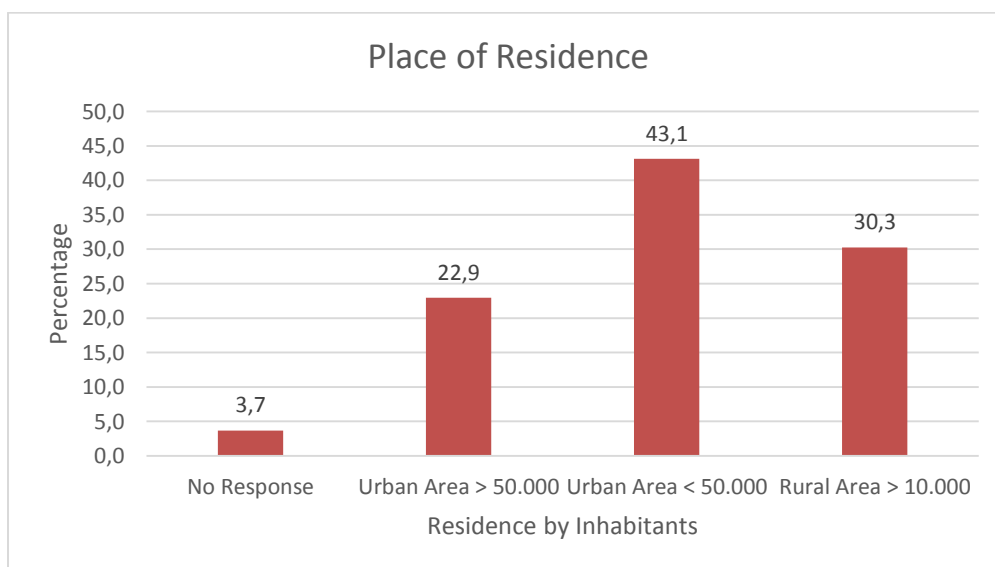
A.4 Your Education



11,9 % of the respondents finished their education after primary school and 22,0 % completed a secondary education. 2,8 % visited College.

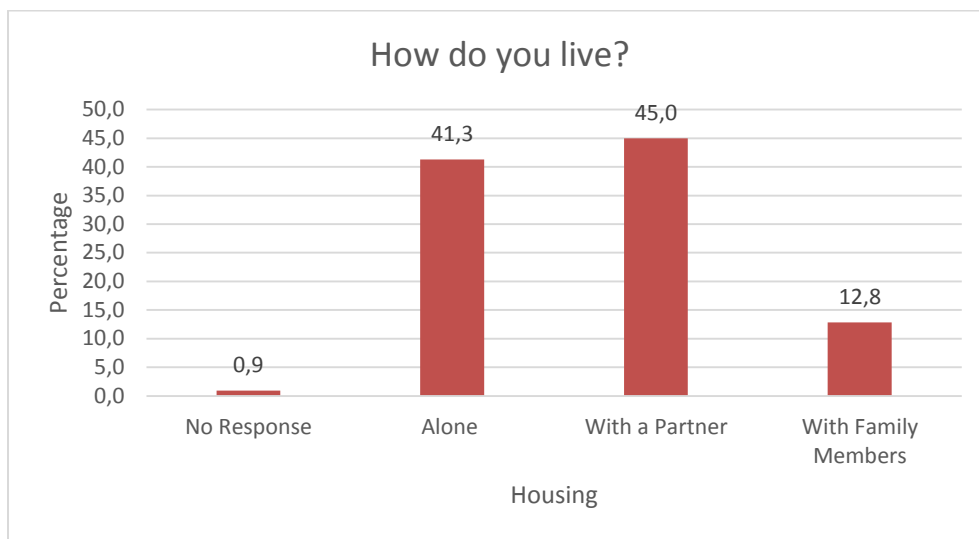
A large number of respondents attended Grad. School (31,2 %) or have a university diploma (27,5%). 4,6 % attended another type of education such as a training for skilled workers.

A.5 Area of living



The geographical distribution of the respondents shows, that 22,9% live in urban areas with > 50.000 inhabitants and 43,1% with < 50.000 inhabitants. 30,3% live in rural areas with villages under 10.000 inhabitants.

A.6 Housing



41,3 % of the respondents live alone or with a partner (45,0 %) in an apartment or house. 12,8 % of the population live with other family members for instance with their children or grandchildren.

A.7 Do you have a physical handicap or health problem that makes it difficult for you to join learning events?

Yes: 2,8 % No: 84,4 % No Response: 12,8 %

2,8% of the respondents state that they have a health problem that makes it difficult for them to attend education while a majority of 84,4 % do not struggle with any physical handicap or health problems in general.

Taking about health issues, the respondents mention:

- Orthopedic illnesses / disabilities / arthritis / osteoporosis
- Heart diseases, shortness of breath
- Deafness, poor eyesight

Part B: LEARNING

B.1 Do you think learning in later life is important and are you interested in taking part in learning activities? (Importance of Learning in Later Life)

Yes: 87,2 % No: 8,3 % No Response: 4,6 %

The percentage of respondents who consider learning in later life important is very high with 84,4 %. The respondents state that learning helps to stay young and healthy. Others claim that learning might have impact on their social life since they meet people in lectures/seminars and on field trips.

Some comments:

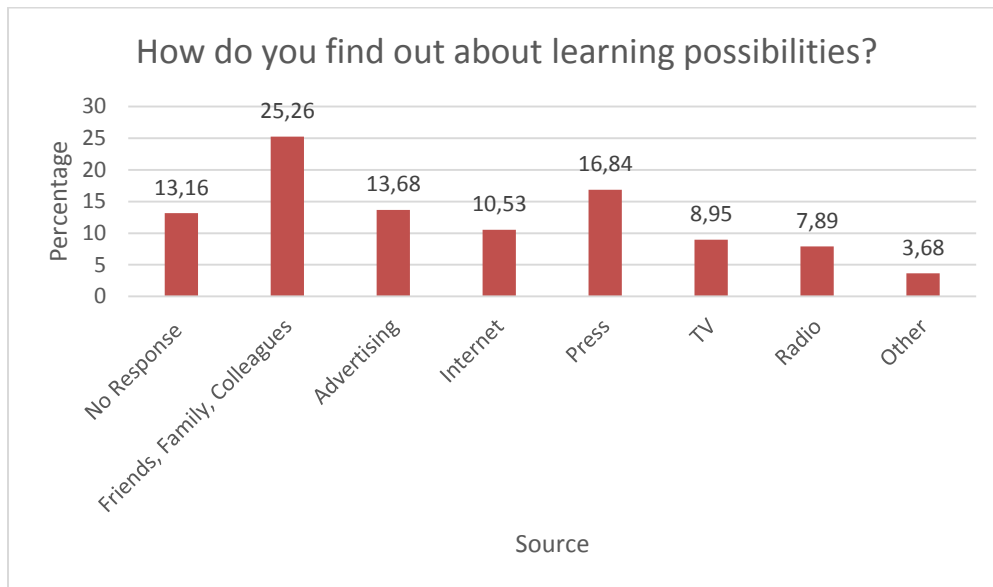
Yes, in order to

- slow down the aging process, stimulate brain activity
- be able to cope better with everyday life
- be able to maintain previous live independently as long as possible
- understand the technical progress (dealing with new appliances and new media, computer, mobile phone ...)
- develop myself, to have joy and fun at new things and topics
- to be actively involved in social life continues
- to have a say, especially with young generation (children, grandchildren and great grandchildren)
- to understand globalization to gain information (especially about politics and society)
- to get my mental health and my curiosity
- maintain exchanges with others, meet interesting people

Single comments:

*"You never stop learning!" "Learning is part of my life." "Learning means joy and fulfillment."
"Learning and mental stimulation keep the body fit and improve the general condition."
"Cognitive training" "I have a say and might be fitter than others in my age class, that my children and grandchildren are proud of me." "Remain active and understanding of the youth. Have fun with the own actions." "Learning is like playing, a certain form of information processing."
"Education is important at any age." "Life without learning is not working." "I appreciate knowledge from younger people"" Learning is important for my foreign correspondence, travel (foreign language), computer usage."*

B.2 How and where do you find out about learning possibilities?



From the interviewed persons 25,26 % mentioned, that personal contacts is essential in order to get information about learning opportunities.

Besides, the information conveyed through advertising (13,68 %) and transmitted via multimedia channels such as Internet (10,53 %), Newspaper (16,84 %), TV (8,95 %) and Radio (7,89 %) play an important role.

B.3 Have you ever heard of learning opportunities for elderly people?

Yes: 76,1 %

No: 19,3 %

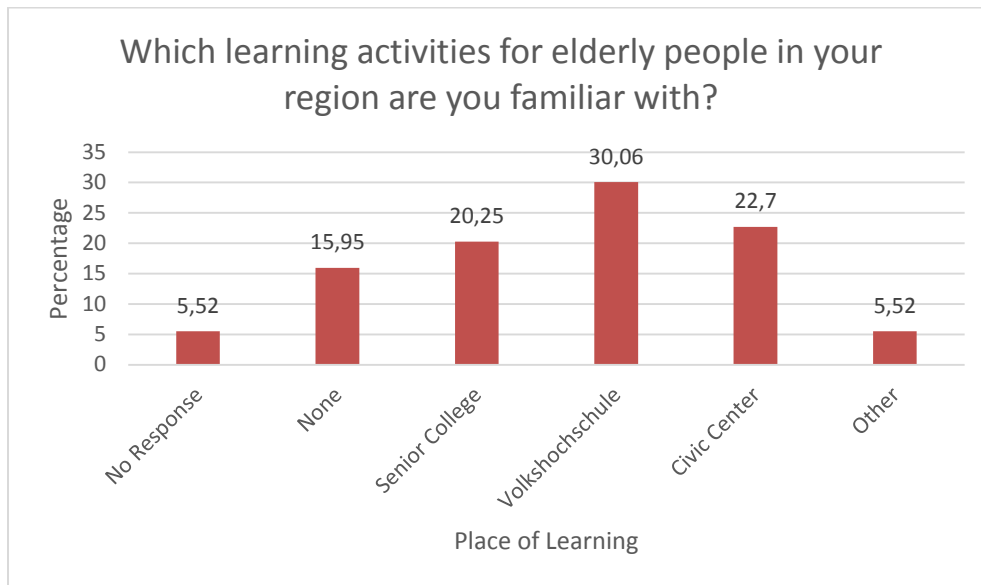
No Response: 4,6 %

The majority of the interviewed persons (76,1 %) is aware of the range of learning opportunities. Though, there are still 19,3 % of the population who is not attending learning programs due to the lack of information.

Please mind:

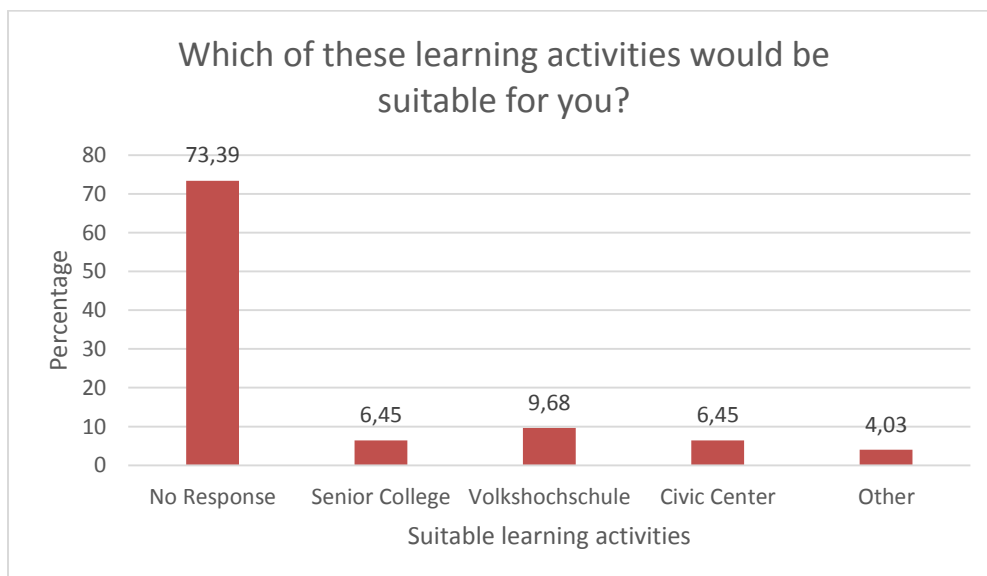
Please note that the term U3A is not used in Germany, therefore the question „Do you know any University of the Third Age?“ was not asked and does not appear in our report.

B.4 Which learning activities for elderly people in your region are you familiar with?



The interviewed people are familiar with a variety of institutions that offer learning programs for elderly people. Especially the "Volkshochschule", a German educational institution that offers seminars for a very wide target group, is popular among the population (30,06 %). However, civic clubs (22,7 %) and university institutions such as the Senior College (20,25 %) are well known, but the last one is not well known in rural areas.

B.5 Which of these learning activities would be suitable for you?



This question has a very high failure rate with 73,39 %. However, among the people who answered that question the "Volkshochschule" is the most popular education institution as well (9,68 %).

B.6 Which of the following do you think are good reasons to take part in learning activities?



The good reasons to take part in formative activities are especially the opportunity to get general information (34,71%) and the possibility to get in touch with other people and to improve the personal social life (23,55 %). These findings go along with the results from question B1.

B.7 Would more information and a wider range of learning activities persuade you to take part?

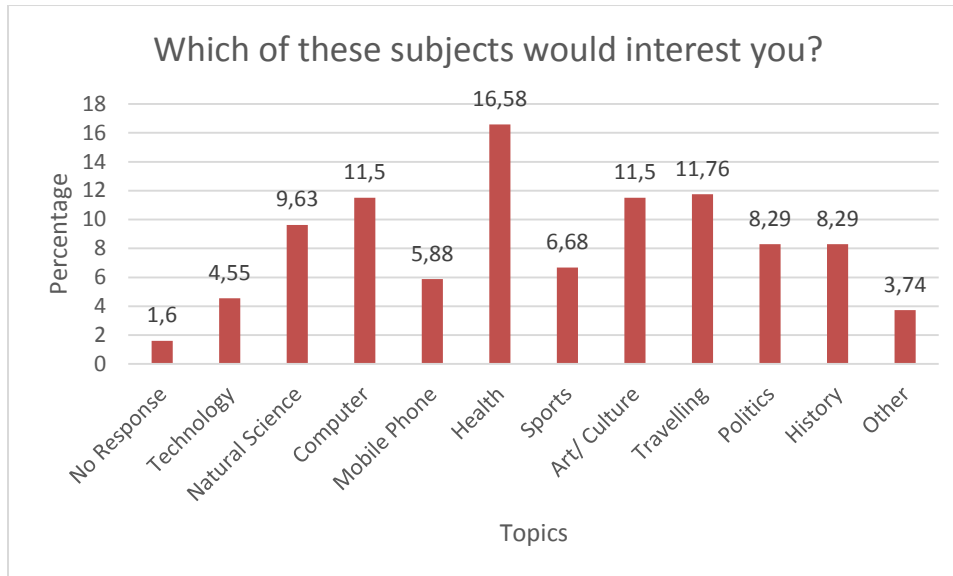
More Information: 45,9 %

Other Topics: 8,3 %

No Response: 45,9 %

In relation to whether the possibility of obtaining more information and the availability of a larger number of formative activities with more thematic topics would encourage them to participate, 45,9 % of the respondents asked for more information while only 8,3 % of the interviewed people want other topics.

B.8 Which of these subjects would interest you?



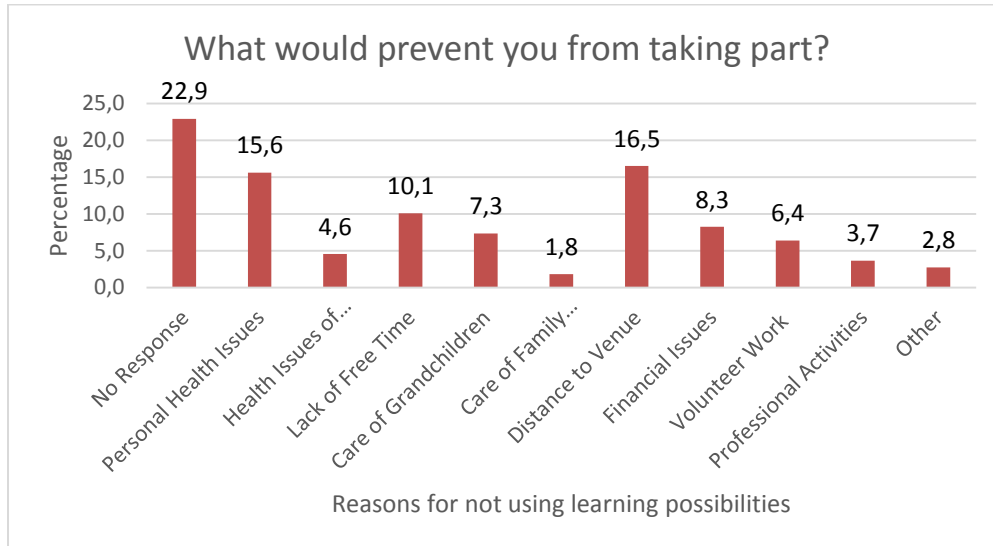
The population was asked to mark their preferred subjects for educational purpose. The interviewed persons were allowed to pick an unlimited number of answer possibilities. The diagram below shows the wide range of interest, though one can see that the health topic is the most popular (16,58 %).

The following topics were mentioned:

- Language
- Usage of s tablets and smartphones (i-Phone)
- Familiarity with Internet
- Politics and society, social development
- Developing of the city and the region
- World religions, philosophy
- Foreign countries and cultures
- Literature
- Technological developments (for example textile technology)
- Gardening, cooking
- Addictions

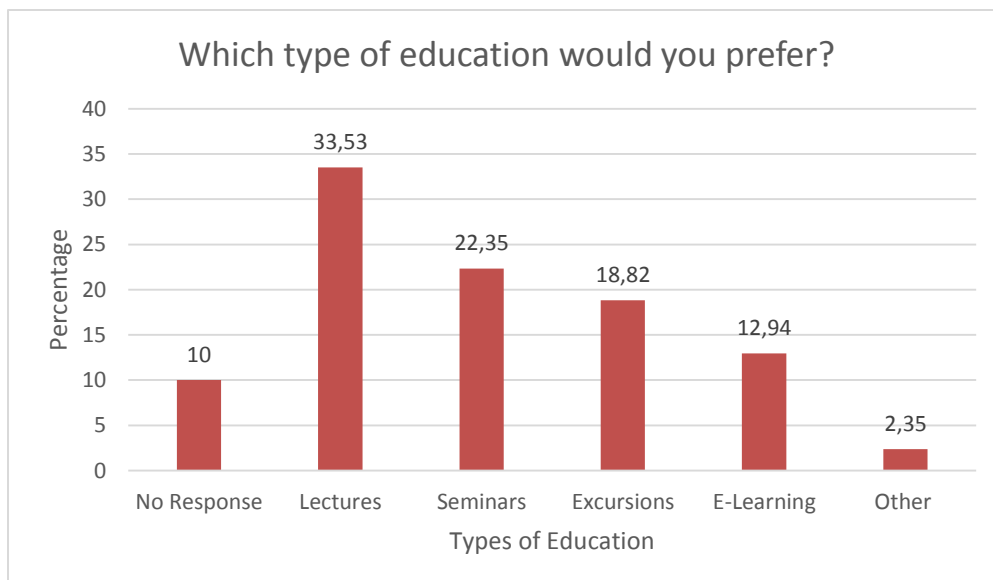
B.9 What would prevent you from taking part?

Percentage of respondents who mention different reasons/problems for not taking part in learning activities:



We can see that for the interviewed seniors the personal health is most significant barrier. Very important to know is, that the distance from the venue is an important argument for the interviewed people. Notwendig: Nahverkehr entwickeln!

B.10 Which type of education would you prefer?

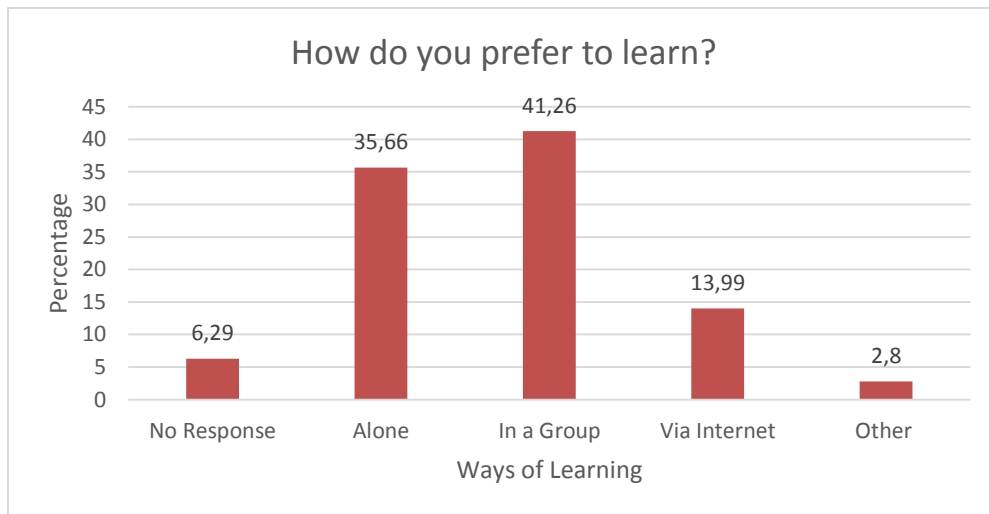


Lectures are the most popular type of education with 33,53 %, followed by classical seminars (22,35 %). However, the respondents are willing to attend excursions as long as they are realized in the regional area.

Explanation on "E-learning": learning on the computer, lectures and courses on the Internet.

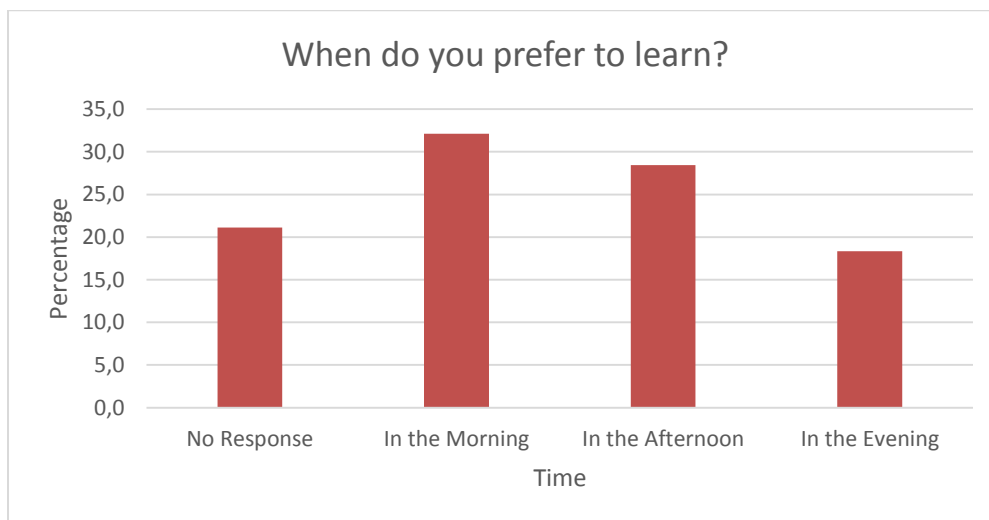
B.11 How do you prefer to learn?

The respondents ask for a wide range of learning ways and there are only very small differences between the answer possibilities:



B.12 When do you prefer to learn?

The population slightly tend to favor learning programs that take place in the morning or in the afternoon. Some respondents state that they do not feel well enough to attend evening programs.



Some single comments:

"In the morning I can absorb new information better." "In the morning, the head yet clear." "I wish for more offers in the morning or early afternoon because of health reasons (amblyopia) and therefore no outgoing in the dark." "Most receptive in the afternoon." "Learning the evening overloads me mentally, I sleep badly afterwards." "I am busy all day, therefore I need offers in the evening." "I'm bounded to no certain time and I learn individually as I like to."

B.13 What sort of measures come to your mind that would make it easier for you to take part in learning?

Some comments:

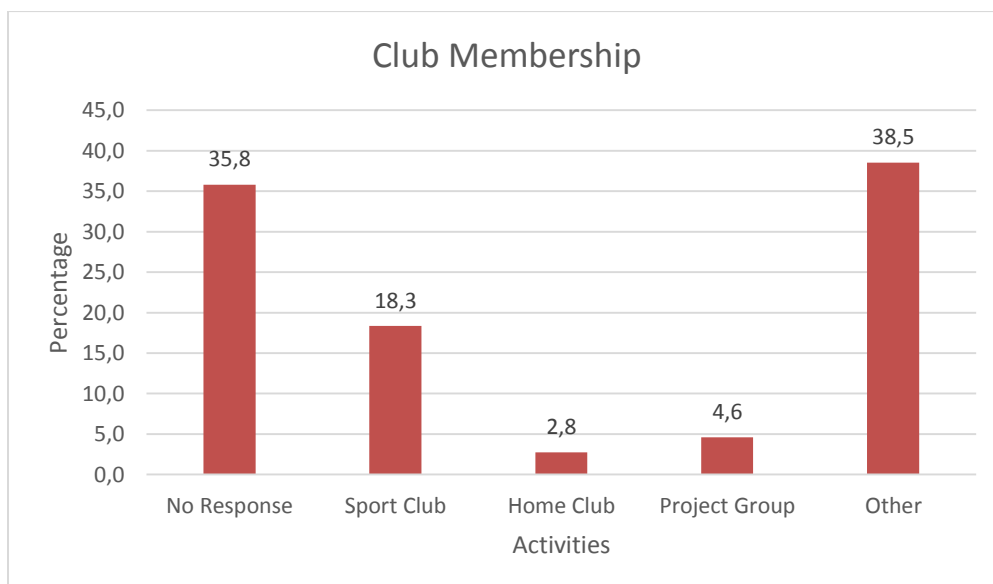
- Free and low-cost learning opportunities
- Attend the lecture with friends together
- Less personal obligations, more free time
- Better health
- Pleasant atmosphere, overcome access barriers
- Senior friendly learning environment
- Accessibility and facilities which match the special needs to disabled persons for lectures and seminar rooms (comfortable seating in case of orthopedic disorders, hearing amplification in the auditorium for better participation in the lecture).

Responses especially from the rural areas:

- Location-based services, learning opportunities in the home town or residential area, more instruction nearby
- Good accessibility of the place of learning
- Learning in groups and organizing of car pools in order to get to the venue

Additional questions Senior College

A.8 Club Membership



64,2 % of the population is a member of a club and especially sport clubs are popular (18,3 %) among the respondents.

The respondents mention:

- Educational Association Westerstal
- School Association, Cultural Association, Friends of Tannenberg / Geyer Seniors Club
- Association for cultural exchange
- Women's Bridge East / West
- Welfare Associations (Workers' Welfare Association, People's Solidarity)
- Socio-cultural Center "Querbeet", section "seniors"
- Nature and hiking club
- Garden club, hunting club, Poultry Club, Rabbit Club
- Art circles, choir, dance group
- Natural History Museum, Museum of Local History

A.9 Volunteer Work

Yes: 41,3 % No: 54,1 % No Response: 4,6 %

41,3 % of the interviewed persons volunteer in their free time. Their sphere of activity are the following: civic clubs, political parties or the youth development. However, the amount of respondents who do not volunteer is quite high with 54,1 %.

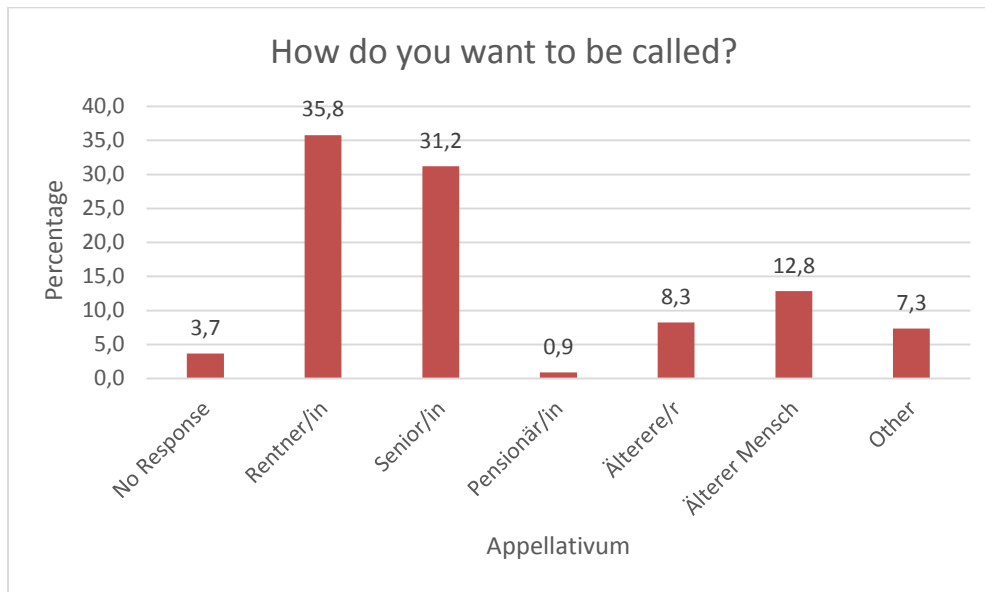
Further mentioned volunteer activities:

- Kinderschutzbund Schwarzenberg and Civic Academy Breitenbrunn
- Spokesman for the Citizens Academy
- Church community (care of sick people and others in need)
- Volunteer work as a judge, a librarian
- Volunteer work as a treasurer, CFO, in office administration, accounting
- Volunteer work in the sport field such as a trainer in a club (Yoga)
- Music lessons (across generations)
- Tutoring for children / teenagers
- Head of 3 circles of friends for English and French in the community center
- Journalist for the city newspaper
- Attending meetings in the social station Glauchau
- Care of wheelchair users
- Work with elderly people in the care business, as an everyday companion
- Organizational work in the office for a party
- Refugee work

Results:

Compared to survey participants from cities over 50,000 inhabitants, there is a higher number of respondents from rural areas (village to 10,000 inhabitants) and from small towns up to 50,000 inhabitants who are member in associations and active in the voluntary work.

A.10 How do you want to be called?



The majority of the interviewed persons prefer to be called “Rentner” (35,8 %) or senior (31,2 %). 7,3 % of the population claimed that appellativum that hint to the age are kind of a discrimination. They prefer to be seen as humans and called Mr. / Mrs.

CONCLUSION

The results of this report we will use for the development of new educational programs for elderly people, to motivate them to take part in learning activities, such as the “Seniors College” at Chemnitz University of Technology.

In urban areas we prepare new seminars for “newcomer” seniors, which start in the field of education in later life. We motivate for useful education and go to meeting points for elderly people. Then we watch together a lecture from the Seniors College by livestream in the meeting point and moderate and discuss together with the seniors. We started with lectures about culture (e.g. music, theater) to pick up them from their interests. In the rural areas we use meetings in the church, clubs and other meeting events and citizens centers.