

**Senior Language**

The Situation  
of  
Geragogic-Pedagogy  
for  
Senior Citizens  
in  
European Countries



Education and Culture

**Socrates**  
Grundtvig





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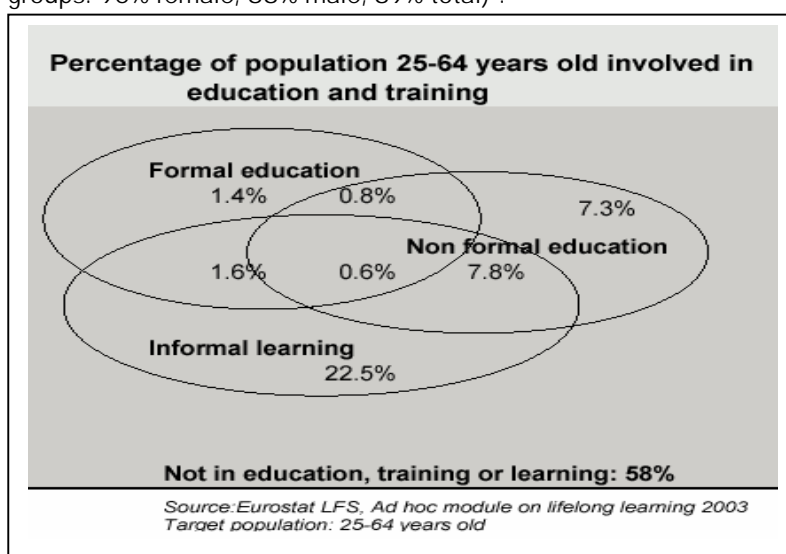
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## Introduction

EU-wide, the participation rates in any kind of learning activity (formal, non-formal or informal)<sup>1</sup> decrease significantly with age (from 50% for 25-34 years old to 30% for the age group 55-64). Younger people are more involved in any kind of learning, because they are still in the formal education system. At the EU level, there is no significant difference between the female (41%) and male (43%) rates, but the figures vary significantly in some countries.

Three groups can be identified:

- participation rate below one third of the reference population: Hungary, Greece, Spain, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Poland and Estonia;
- participation between one and two thirds: Cyprus, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Latvia, Italy, France, Malta and Slovakia;
- countries where education and training covers more than two thirds of the population Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Austria (age group 20-34: 91% female, 88% male 90% total / age group 35 – 44: 89% female, 87% male, 88% total / age group 45 – 54: 88% female, 86% male, 87% total / age group 55 – 64: 94% female, 91% male, 93 % total / all age groups: 90% female, 88% male, 89% total)<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> Formal education corresponds to education and training in the regular system of schools, universities and colleges, non-formal education and training includes all types of taught learning activities which are not part of a formal education programme and informal learning corresponds to self-learning which is not part of either formal or non-formal education and training, by using different methods like books, computers, learning centres or educational broadcasting.

<sup>2</sup> "Statistics in focus" Data extracted on: 10.08.2005 ISSN 1024-4352 Catalogue number: KS-NK-05-008-EN-NEuropean Communities, 2005.

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The “geragogical” approach doesn’t interest only “senior people”, but it concerns all the ages because everyone, slowly but inevitably, will grow old. It concerns adults because they need to prepare the psycho-physical and environmental conditions in order to have a good quality aging. It interests also young people because, in this phase of human development, it is possible to prepare cultural conditions for quality oldness.

Pedagogy has been developed within an evolutionary concept of life in which an human being is considered an “adult” when he is definitively “formed” through a “development age”.

*Pedagogy = a discipline related to education problems.*

In last years the “development age” concept evolved: there is not an unique evolutionary age, but everyone has potentialities to a “lifelong” growth and development.

It’s from this conception that the “Andragogy” concept derived.

*Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn.*

Malcolm Knowles brought popularity to the andragogical approach in the 70’s He based the theory on 4 key concepts:

- Adult’s learners are self-directed- they want their education to be relevant to their jobs and lives.
- Adults learners draw on life experiences in their learning activities
- The learning focuses on problem solving
- Adults in a classroom setting want to be involved in their own educational planning

#### **7 KEY ADVISES FOR ANDRAGOGY**

- Use problems centred focus
- Draw on mean full experiences
- Assess positive and negative past learning experiences
- Focus on immediacy of application
- Leave space for self-direction
- Organize material and resources and provide information
- Encourage role plays

Actually a neologism is developing: Geragogy that means preparation to ageing. The innovation and strength features of this concept consist in adapting education processes to senior people, especially in supplying cognitive tools in order to face the changes, the uneasiness and the difficulties through the various steps of life's evolution.

*Geragogy could be defined as the teaching towards older people accommodating the normal physical, cognitive and psychological changes*

Programs for the elderly are rapidly becoming part of adult education programs. Such programs often use the methods and assumptions associated with andragogy (an approach to adult education advocating that instruction of adults should encourage self-directed learning) and use learning objectives related to life experiences and problems.

Although some of these assumptions might be incorporated into educational programs for the elderly, learners in this age group often have unique assets and liabilities that should be tapped.

Perhaps "geragogy" would be a better approach to use with such learners. Geragogy emphasizes the guided learning of older adults and considers their special needs. The older adult population--for example--has a lower level of formal education than the rest of the population, is composed largely of females, has changing social interaction patterns, and suffers from a number of health problems.

To meet these needs, the geragogy approach would stress instructor-directed learning, supervised decision-making, and person-centred activities. This approach is especially suited for speech communication instruction because the skills of listening, speaking, problem solving, and social interaction are fundamental to the needs of the elderly.

Geragogy aims to teach a new "inner guideline" to the subject, contributing - at the same time - to a cultural evolution of the community.

Elderly training is addressed also to adult and young people. The adult education (as discipline) tries to found bases, through Andragogy and the lifelong education, for a new didactic approach.

For this reason it's necessary to define who is a "senior person": when does a person become old? At what age?

In social sciences, old peoples are divided into three age categories:

- beginners: from 58 to 64 years old;
- young-old: from 65 to 74 years old;
- senior: over 74 years old.

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It's clear that the level of individual aging depends also by many factors different of the age, for example the personal history (one's lived) or from other variables like sex, social class, but also from level of self-esteem, from the amount and quality of relations entertained, from the perception of the one's usefulness and independence.

A didactic methodology based on a "geragogy" approach previews that the structure and the supply of any training path for adults (that pursues also primary prevention goals in terms of bio-psycho-social wellness) has to take its principles from the same of adult education. According to these principles, an adult is able to control himself, use his experience and estimate his own availability to learn and organize such learning on real problems.

In order to do this, an adult must be able to select offers, choosing to learn all that he considers really useful to himself.

An adult-oriented didactic, therefore, faces the needs to reach concretely usable skills, so it has to start from a reflection on adult age. This means that it's necessary to take in account cultural skills already gained by beneficiaries of the formative path.

In other words any "didactic" will have to "adjust" itself (in term of notions to transfer) according to learners' audience; so any further educational programme will be connected with the experiences already matured.

Any training offer has to focus on "learning willingness" of learners; such willingness is influenced by some classic pointers (age, sex, level education, skill) and by various factors connected to life style. An adult-oriented didactic will point at:

- the re-use of the skills;
- the improvement of meta-skills (introspection, construction, creativity);
- the retrieval of notions already acquired;
- the overtaking of inadequate beliefs;
- to court the discovery of different cognitive fields.

To plan training from a geragogic point of view, therefore in considering a slow but constant and continuous change in an evolutionary way, means to structure learning actions in order to facilitate relations and, in general, the well-being of the individuals.

Education policy concerning lifelong learning was set out as late as 2001 in the White Paper – National Programme for the Development of Education in the **Czech Republic**, which then served as a point of departure for the Long-Term Plan for Education and the Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic adopted by the government in 2002. This strategic document of the Ministry of Education, Youth and

Sports identified the priorities for the development of the education system in the medium term, as well as the means of their implementation and promotion.

Regions (established as part of the public administration) have the authority to identify development priorities in the area of education and to co-finance continuing education and training, while taking account of demographic changes and the development of employment.

In **France** we can identify two different senior typologies:

Those from 45 to 55 or 60 years old who are mainly still working and as we will see can or not access easily to continuous training

Those who are over 60 mainly retired and dedicate some of their free time to training because they want to and for personal development .

The aim and access possibilities to training courses of these 2 different types of clients will be different.

From 45 years old access to continuous training is lowering for people employed even more over 45. This situation can be noted for any level of qualification and particularly strong for employees and workers. The part or qualification training courses in order to prepare a diploma, an exam or certificate is also quite weak for aged participants.

In relation with the professional field we can note that aged workers benefit less or more training. In service to individuals sector, building and construction, consumption goods industries, food industries and sale and trade sectors which observe flexible staff management, workers and employees are offered very few training possibilities and face a situation far more disadvantaging than 30-44 years old. In those sectors where young people constitute the main focus group for flexibility, continuous training for aged workers doesn't meet the strategy. On the contrary in financial services, transports or administrations (public services) continues training is much more offered towards 30-44 individuals and also to older ones.

**Sweden** had a population slightly over 9 millions inhabitants and of these approximately 3,4 million is over the age 50+ (1, 8 million women and 1,6 million men)<sup>3</sup>.

In 1998, Swedish statistics conducted a survey of how many individuals participated in some form of adult education during a week (see table 1.), which indicated that it is the Adult Education Associations (see appendix 1) that reaches the most adult students, especially those that are over 50+.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.scb.se/templates/tableOrChart\\_159285.asp](http://www.scb.se/templates/tableOrChart_159285.asp)

Table 1.

Provider	Number of participants during a week in autumn 1998	Proportion of females (%) (1998)
Adult Education Associations	2 815 679	57
Folk high school	104 530	60
Municipal Adult Education	237 510	68
Municipal education for adults with learning disabilities	4 137	44
Swedish Tuition for Immigrants (Sfi)	20 460	61
National Schools for Adults (SSV)	111 862	66
Labour market training	41 899	46
Complementary education	1 914	69
University colleges and universities (undergraduate education)	305 581	58

Source: Statistics Sweden, 1998 (SCB).

## 1. Special courses for senior citizens.

### - Austria.

Differing from the average EU level, participation in any kind of learning activity over the age of 50 increases in Austria. The highest participation rate of senior citizens is among females at the age of 55-64, i.e. 94% (male 91%, total 93%).

Austria shows a participation rate of 25.3% concerning non formal education for all age groups and 12.3% for the age group of 55 – 64, both figures are clearly higher than the European level (8.5% age group 55 – 64 and 16.5% all age groups)<sup>4</sup>.

### - Czech Republic.

In the Czech Republic measures of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, which aim at increasing the rate of participation in education of the adult population, include re-training courses facilitating a change or extension in qualifications, or programmes within the so-called “Third Age University” designed for elderly persons.

Promotion of positive perception of learning in the Czech Republic is part of the strategic documents adopted in recent years<sup>5</sup>. In addition to standard activities implemented at schools and counselling centres, specific projects are designed to support positive perception of learning. They include, for example, the “Week of Adult Education”, in the course of which conferences are held, educational institutions are exhibited etc.

### - Germany.

In Germany there are a lot of courses for senior citizens. Volkshochschule conducted six interviews with trainers and teachers who are teaching older learners. The results of interviews are presented consecutively.

### - Italy.

According to the last census, lead in 2001, there are 56,3 million residents in Italy. Males are about 27 million, females 29 million; of this population about 25% is more

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<sup>4</sup> <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/extraction/retrieve/de/theme3>

<sup>5</sup> White Paper – National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic and the Long-Term Plan for Education and the Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic).

than fifty years old. Education level among adults (from 25 to 64 years) is the lowest in European Union: about 25% of the population has only the primary certificate<sup>6</sup>.

Hence fifty years, the main objective of adult training was to defeat the phenomenon of the illiteracy, that is very diffused in the Country. Popular schools, founded in 1947 and suppressed in 1982, was substituted with courses for a primary school title and courses for workers (150 hours) for a secondary school title.

In Sixties an evening class for worker-students was instituted in technical institutes (Ministerial Circular 8 n.140) and, in the successive decade, this course was adapted to the specific needs of the adults.

The most important changes in adult training emerged in nineties, with the creation of Permanent Territorial Centres (CTP) and a more spread of evening courses in all secondary schools, with the relative dispositions of adaptation and transformation<sup>7</sup>. Permanent Territorial Centres (CTP) were created to guarantee a more extensive formative offer, able to satisfy the new needs and requests of the population. In fact, five years after was promoted a SIRIO plan in order to modulate ordinary programs of technical institutes on the specific requirements of adult students. The main idea of this plan was to introduce some changes in teaching methodologies: integration between competences of general and professional cultures, development of existing cultural and working experiences of the students.

The role of CTPs as element of excellence in adult training was remarked in the Unified Conference State/Regions in March 2000. In this conference was specified the need to assure "a formative offer integrated between University, schools and professional agencies that finds a point of reference in the territorial Centres for adult training".

With this Agreement, Government, Regions, Provinces and Municipalities, in order to reorganize adult training (integrating educational programs with work activities) have established different new actions. The document, attached to the agreement, finds the requirement to integrate the different institutional levels with contents and education methodologies tracing the architecture of the EdA system (Education & School). It represents the change from a closed-system organization to another developed with a network logic.

In this way adult training is composed by the formal educational opportunities (education and professional training certified), and not formal education (culture,

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of the foreign of the Italian Republic.

<sup>7</sup> With Decree of the Ministry of Education, n. 455 of the 29 July 1997, have been instituted Permanent Territorial Centres (CTP) for the education and the formation of the adult.

sanitary and social education, training in the associative life) in order to make an educational path pointing to different field objectives, transferable and certifiable<sup>8</sup>.

Both CTP and evening courses are geographical distributed on the whole national ground, as follows:

CTP			Evening courses			Tot. Learners involved			
	Northern Italy	Central Italy	Southern Italy		Northern Italy	Central Italy	Southern Italy	CTP	
	204	93	243		280	126	269	Evening courses	65.073
Total	540			Total	675			Total	468.285

Source Italian Unit of Eurydice 2006

In detail, the region with the greater number of CTP is Campania (69), while the region with the smaller number is Molise (3). Regions with more evening courses are Lombardia and Puglia (respective 77), while the small number belong to Molise (3) again. Both CTP and evening courses have developed a lot of relationships with other organizations engaged in adult training, in percentage: 63.5% of the CTP and 27.6% of evening courses<sup>9</sup>.

In 2006 the CTP have supplied the following courses:

Total courses supplied	Objectives of the courses
2.966	Obtainment of study title
3.169	Linguistic and social integration for foreign people
13.371	Functional literacy
Tot. courses 19.356	

Source Italian Unit of Eurydice 2006

<sup>8</sup> Law 53/2003 of reform of the school has inserted, between the principles that defined the educational system, a principle of "Life Long Learning". For the realization of this purpose the same law has previewed a program plan of financial participations also to support some interventions for development of the education of the adults.

<sup>9</sup> Italian Unit of Eurydice: Report 2006 on the Italian educational system.

Training activities can be provided also by private people/institutes. Enterprises, for example, can turn into private institutes in order to organize training programmes for their employers. Initiatives are assumed also by training agencies, professional associations and category associations. Finally, about not-formal offers, there are popular universities, recreational-cultural universities of the third age, associations of voluntaries, libraries, museums and theatres.

**- Sweden.**

First of all, it's important to elucidate the classification to be a senior citizen. For the purpose of this synopsis a senior citizen will be any individual over 50 years of age. The reason for this type of classification is when you examine what kind of courses targets senior citizens in adult education there is a special category called 50+ that includes all individual over 50 years of age, needless to say any individual over 50 years of age can participate in all other adult education courses, there is no real age limit. The only limit, in most cases is that you have to be at least 18 years of age.

## 2. Typologies of courses.

### - Austria.

Accordingly, a variety of courses targeted at senior citizens have been established in Austrian adult education centres (Volkshochschulen, Bildungswerke) in the last few years. Austrian adult education centres, for example, offer 409 courses targeted especially at senior citizens (ICT, languages, sports, senior counselling, using mobile phones, dance etc.)

At the same time the promotion of positive perception of learning and facilitating access to educational opportunities were emphasized by the national report on adult education<sup>10</sup>.

Therefore, in May 2004, the social partners arranged the conference “Altersgerechte Arbeitswelt“ (world of work adjusted to age) which dealt with the issue of supporting positive conditions for training elderly people and established a virtual platform<sup>11</sup> and management consultancy, working on reorganizing enterprises and bearing in mind factors that are based on age and ageing.

Furthermore, there are specific information campaigns and projects designed to support a positive perception of learning and of special courses for senior citizens<sup>12</sup>.

The participation of senior citizens in trainings is especially funded by AMS, the Austrian labour market service organization (for women in general and for men aged 45 and older).

Examples of organizations that provide 50+ language courses:

- VHS Floridsdorf, English, Spanish.
- VHS Brigittenau, English.
- VHS Polycollege, French, Italian [www.polycollege.ac.at](http://www.polycollege.ac.at)
- etc. all [www.vhs.at](http://www.vhs.at)

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<sup>10</sup> Allgemeine und berufliche Bildung 2010, Österreichischer Zwischenbericht über die erzielten Fortschritte bei der Umsetzung des EU-Arbeitsprogramms, Wien 10/2005.

<sup>11</sup> [www.arbeitundalter.at](http://www.arbeitundalter.at)

<sup>12</sup> [www.arbeitundalter.at/lv.php](http://www.arbeitundalter.at/lv.php)

**- Czech Republic.**

Language teaching, for a lot of reasons, has been of marginal importance in seniors' learning programmes in the Czech Republic. Despite that, there are some organizations that provide lifelong learning courses for senior citizens:

*University of West Bohemia*

Lifelong Learning targeted at Senior Citizens

Pilsen Institute of Lifelong Learning – ÚCV > Accredited educational programmes in full-time and distance form

University of the Third Age

Institute of Lifelong Education Cheb Pilsen (Centre for Lifelong Education) > History of Arts, Geography, Philosophy, Physics, Literature, Drawing - no Language

International Summer Language School (not specially targeted at Senior Citizens)

Specialized courses for professionals and foreigners living in the Czech Republic

*Czech Technical University in Prague*

Third Age University (U3) for senior citizens

The department of Computer Science and Engineering offers, within the frame of U3, courses on basic use of computers. Within its framework the "Portál pro Seniory" was established [http://sen.felk.cvut.cz/sen/index\\_cz.html](http://sen.felk.cvut.cz/sen/index_cz.html)

*NGOs*

ATHENA Association for Education and Development of Women, CZ - 709 00 Ostrava

This association cooperates with different organisations in the region of Moravia-Silesia, in the network of adult education

Czech Society for Memory Training & Brain Jogging, CZ-170 00 Praha 1

European project (partner) Učení v post-produktivním věku LENA – Learning in Post-professional Phase, Third Age curriculum on investigating the internet

Svaz Duchodcu České Republiky, CZ-160 00 Praha 6 and House of the active seniors „Portus“, CZ-110 00 Praha 1

EURAG member organisations. EURAG represents the interests of the older generation in Europe, sets up working groups and committees on topical issues and launches proposals and motions to the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Organization, World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization, as well as other organisations concerning the older generation. EURAG is a member of the Platform of European Social NGOs in Brussels. <http://www.socialplatform.org/anim/anim.htm>

#### - France.

##### *Universities for all ages*

“The willing for learning has no age” could be the advert of Universities for all ages previously named “3Third Age universities” today called “Interage universities or Free time universities”. For the last years development of this kind of training, that develops initial or improvement courses, has keeping on rising due to the explosion of seniors number. Since early 70’ intellectual skills, physical form and seniors involvement whether they are retired or not have been developing and seniors live longer time and want to keep active once their professional life is achieved. Today they’ve more time and focus their personal development as it became easier with free time, at the age when professional and family obligations have decreased even disappeared.

Attending these courses allow seniors to exchange with others sharing the same interests, to fight loneliness especially for women who live 7 years more than men. These courses will also offer a possibility to travel through history or geopolitics courses when travelling from home is getting difficult.

The main specificity of these courses is that they’re nearly free of charge and accessible for all what ever their education level could be. They don’t lead to exams, the atmosphere is friendly, opened and there is no age limit for teachers and trainers

We can note that 2/3 of participants are women that often come on their own the first year and then bring their husband along.

##### *No profit organisations*

As well in town as in rural areas some organisations are providing courses or activities for seniors or for all clients including seniors. We can find photo clubs and courses,

cooking courses, dance and Gym courses, and other kinds of leisure activities and trainings.

#### *Private training organisation provision*

Until now, in most training centres there is no particular offer dedicated to seniors. According to their status, objectives and financial possibilities seniors will attend specific kinds of courses.

Now with the National Plan of reform towards seniors employment training centres and employment policy are asked to consider and provide specific measures and training to facilitate senior's employability. Nevertheless more recently we can note a particular interest for seniors towards ICT and languages. and some good experiences can be observed. If we consider statistics, France counts around 4 Millions of individual over 50 years old connected to Internet over 24 millions. These clients load music (For FNAC 34% of their clients are over 45years old- 15% over 55 and 9% are retired).

Seniors are becoming a target for ITC industry what we can check through the advert campaign ran by Darty in 2004 which was a photo of a senior sheep keeper in his mountain, a laptop on his knees with the sentence » Welcome in a world where technology doesn't forget anyone »

#### *On line courses*

Due to the interest towards ICT seniors can attend training courses on line through public or private organisations websites.

#### **- Germany.**

The first courses for senior learners started to be offered at the end of 70s, the education was offered by higher education, and currently more than 50 of such institutions offer an education programme for older people, which have many different forms. "Also the name of these programmes greatly varies: Seniors´ Studies, Scientific/Academic Continuing Education for Older Adults, General Scientific/Academic Continuing Education, Opening of the Institutions of Higher Education. Also the term "senior students", is understood in different ways: in the narrower sense, from the 50 years of age, in the wider sense, all in the second and third age who are interested in scientific/academic knowledge." *Carmen Stadelhofer "Continuing Education for Older Adults at German Universities".*

Besides, courses offered by higher education, other institutions also direct own offers to older learners as a target group, ones of the biggest are centres for adult educations Volkshochschulen in Germany. In course offers there are courses concern mostly foreign languages e.g. English, computing, how to use a mobile phone, gymnastic, dancing courses and aqua aerobic. According to the statistic data of Deutsches

Institut für Erwachsenenbildung participation of persons between 50 and 65 years old in courses offered by Volkshochschulen in Germany currently is stagnated: in 2005 and 2004 was 21,7 %, 2003 21,2%, 2002 21,0%, 2001 21,1%, 2000 20,4%. Above 65: 2005: 10,4%, 2004: 9,4%, 2003: 8,5%, 2002: 7,6, 2001:7,5%, 2000: 6,8%.

Participation of older learners in specific courses is following: Health – Wellness (22,7%, 2004: 22,5%, 2003: 22,9 %), languages (30,5%, 2004: 30,3%, 2003: 31,9%) vocational training (31,1%, 2004: 30,0%, 2003: 27,3%).<sup>13</sup>

Another type of institutions, which offer e.g. language courses for older learners are language schools and travel agencies, most of them in own offers have courses designed for older people. Those courses are connected with tourist trips e.g. to Italy or Spain.

#### - Italy.

Senior citizens are encouraged to participate in courses, workshops, seminars and discussions that focus on intellectual stimulation, health and wellness. Most of the courses are, above all, about English as second language and computer skills. To such purpose, we illustrate some examples of courses for senior citizens:

- <http://www.madrelinguabologna.com/corsi03.html>.

The courses "Third Age" are expressly created for pensioners; they are organized in morning once a week.

Groups are composed by a maximum of 10 student of homogenous level. Courses lasts 10 weeks for 15 hours of lessons.

A communicative methodology is used in order to let learners immediately discuss – in English - about their interests. However, lessons are structured with grammar explanations, terms widening and listening/reading practice.

- [http://www.emagister.it/corso\\_corso\\_di\\_lingua\\_inglese\\_per\\_adulti\\_principiant\\_i-ec2317713.htm#temario](http://www.emagister.it/corso_corso_di_lingua_inglese_per_adulti_principiant_i-ec2317713.htm#temario)

The school organizes language courses for peoples without any English language knowledge. These courses aim to develop four linguistics abilities (to listen, to speak, to read and to write) especially the ability to comprise and to express. The students will know the structure of language through practical activities. Classes are made up of 8 pupils per time.

- [http://www.new-english-teaching.it/corsi\\_inglese\\_adulti.htm](http://www.new-english-teaching.it/corsi_inglese_adulti.htm)

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<sup>13</sup> Die Pehl/Reichart/Zabal 27.9.2006 VHS – Statistik 2005.

English language courses for senior citizens are developed on 12 levels, divided in three cycles: *Beginner*, *Basic* and *Communicating*.

*Beginner*: this cycle is directed to anyone who wants to acquire a “survival” language skill in few months. The courses propose a learning approach of the English language through real communicative situations, in this way learners develop the basic linguistic and lexical functions.

*Basic*: this cycle deepens contents learned in the Beginner cycle or already acquired by the learner. The educational methodology proposes complex communicative situations in order to improve the grammatical and lexical functions. At the end of the Basic cycle, learners will have a discreet knowledge of the studied language.

*Communicating*: this cycle is for experts learners (citizens who already know English) who wish to improve language knowledge through an enrichment of contents on topical subjects.

- <http://www.studium-bz.com/content.asp?L=1&IdMen=447>

The school foresees different typologies of language courses:

- 60 hours courses (40 gather): the program foresees an introduction to the language, lessons of grammar and elementary communication. The groups are composed from 5 to 12 learners, frequency is of 2 lesson per week;
  - 30 hours courses (20 gather): the course covers the 7 linguistic levels foresees by European Union with the objective to improve the linguistic knowledge. The frequency is of 2 lessons per week;
  - 40 hours courses (26 gather): the course is directed to citizens who need to improve conversation skills but show some grammatical gaps to fill up. It is indicated for linguistic levels B1-Intermediate. The shrunk number of learners for class, from 5 to 12, grants teacher to follow every learner in the best way during the learning process. The frequency is 2 lessons per week;
  - 60 hours courses (40 gather): the program of the course foresees a general repetition of the grammar and the improvement of the four skills in which the language is structured (reading, writing, speaking, listening). The course foresees 8 linguistic levels. The shrunk number of learners for class, from 5 to 12, grants the teacher to follow every learner in the best way during the learning process. The frequency is 2 lessons per week.
- Universities of the Third Age <http://www.unitre.net/italia/italia.html>.

It is present in 15 Italian Regions. Teachers and trainers are available for a lot of cultural activities. Learners aren't passive students, they are stimulated, educated and trained to participate to all activities and courses of the University.

- Institute of cultural and social science Nicolò Rezzara.  
<http://www.istitutorezzara.it/default.htm>

The Universities for Adult and Senior citizens was established in the 1980s by groups of volunteers and lately by the Unions. It has various branches in the Province of Vicenza and is organized like a high school. It offers a specific cultural proposal to students, that is: "comparing oneself with the changing world". The University, which is now an autonomous organization, has 2700 students, 60% of whom have a junior high school level of education. The Rezzara Institute provides cultural and didactic guidance to the University. The Institute holds courses of preparation to retirement, and has groups for the study of problems of adult education, in an attempt to try and overcome the social, economic, and cultural problems of middle and old age. Its aim is to realise common programs based on an innovative approach in the field of adult education. Indeed, also adult education is an authentic expression of the right to study, contemplated by the "Costituzione" for people of all ages.

#### - Sweden.

There are special language courses for 50+ in Sweden that are provided by language schools either as regular classes, study circles or learning a language while travelling. Generally though, most of the language courses are tailored to individuals 18+, which include the 50+ individuals.

It has to be mentioned that most of these courses for our target group are tailored to individuals that will be going on trip where they can use their acquired language. It can be generalized that these language course are mostly interested for individuals that have the economical situation that allows them to travel. Examples of organizations that provide these language courses;

- <http://www.dialang.se/Sprakkurseriminigrupp.html>
- <http://www.sprakresa.se/>

There is, however, some organizations that focuses upon learning language and culture without the prospect of travelling for older learners, one example is ChriPU at Folkuniversitetet in Kristianstad, that offer courses for retired individuals in order to learn new skills or refresh old skills in combination enjoying social gathering.

- <http://www.folkuniversitetet.se/templates/Page.aspx?id=19758>

There is another group as well of individuals 50+ that receive language training, which are the immigrants. In Sweden it is a right for individual to receive basic knowledge of Swedish and of Swedish society if they lack this knowledge. There are however, to our knowledge, not any specific training courses for immigrants 50+.

### 3. Courses: methods and techniques.

#### - Austria.

The main methods and techniques used in educational courses for senior citizens are:

- “language training based on real life experience”: learning by integrating practical aspects of life experience is of high importance for the target group 50+;
- examples, theoretical inputs and explanations should represent and match the workplace experiences of the participants;
- self-organized learning groups are established within the framework of language courses. Supporting students individually is regarded as a basis of their motivation and development of self-confidence and self-esteem;
- a particularly open atmosphere among participants allows reflection within the group on behavioural patterns and prior aspects of learning (learning experience). this serves as a basis for making new, positive learning experience and developing a step-by-step procedure of individual and personal further education;
- generally, working on one’s self-esteem and being aware of one’s strengths is a necessary basis of taking responsibility for one’s development in life;
- an atmosphere of “wellbeing“ is created by respectively decorating course rooms (plants, pictures and other elements of decoration that foster motivation and regular attendance of courses);
- in order to establish students’ identification with the learning environment, they are also invited to (re-)design and decorate “their” rooms the way they want to;
- learners are assisted with defining their targets and personal criteria for success. this clear and transparent target definition serves as a basis for further progress and qualification;
- supported by their trainers, learners can permanently check learning progress and, if necessary, change and adapt their ways of qualification.

#### - Czech Republic.

- Educational programmes in full-time and distance form [see also “Typologies of courses“].

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**- Germany.**

According to conducted six questionnaires interviews, teachers, trainers indicated various methods and techniques used during courses e.g. lecture, lecture/ discussions, demonstrations, role plays and ending with assignment, case study, training games, group exercises, programmed learning. Anyway they mentioned about disadvantages of some methods and techniques, which can be not appropriate for older learners for example:

- methods relying primarily on good auditory discrimination for learning. Older learners sometimes have problems with hearing, so this kind of method would be a disadvantage for older learners;
- exercises such as oral drills and memorization, which rely on short-term memory, also discriminate against the adult learner. The adult learns best not by rote, but by integrating new concepts and material into already existing cognitive structures; speed is also a factor that works against the older student, so fast-paced drills and competitive exercises and activities may not be successful with the older learner.

**- Italy.**

According to three questionnaires interviews, teachers and trainers indicate various methods and techniques used during courses:

- Lecture.
- Lecture / discussion.
- Role play.
- Group exercises.
- Programmed learning.
- Other :Brainstorming - Warming up - Problem solving.

The use of these methods aimed to:

- develop comprehension of a text;
- develop ability of speaking, writing, listening;
- develop more sensibility in order to know the way of life of the interested country;
- allow learners to exchange ideas.

Experience shows that senior citizens wish to express their opinion and participate in social life issues: they frequently asks to be more involved with youth-oriented activities.

Older adults use their experience, skills and knowledge to process new information and make decisions. Strategies for encoding, storage and retrieval of information can help them learn effectively. The brains of older adults have a high degree of “plasticity”. Stimulating environments are important to the continued growth of an older brain, learning and memory.

Learning tools for teachers and trainers used during courses are:

- Motion pictures.
- Videos.
- Colour slides.
- Overhead projector transparencies.
- Tape recorder.
- Such instruments are necessary in order to give learners practical and not abstract links to the language they are studying.

The teacher presents a new topic and all the material available to learn it , he tries to stir interest and subsequently discussion, to make the learners train the speaking skill. The language teacher’s task is based upon the need to train four skills: speaking , listening, writing and reading, that’s why he plans skill lessons. While doing the role play , the learner is given the opportunity to speak freely and to feel as if he was experiencing a real communicative situation. Training games are introduced to enliven the lesson because they catch the learner’s attention. The exercises are for individual , pair and group work. The last one is interesting because learners can help each others and overcome difficulties together.

#### **- Sweden.**

When looking into the courses that offer language training to 50+ they generally state that the courses are adapted to their specific needs. However, it is not specified what methods and techniques are used in order to satisfy these needs.

When examine the general language courses that everybody can participate in, it also becomes apparent there is not a specified methodology and pedagogic for 50+. To simplify there is no current approach in language training in how to ensure that individuals 50+ can embrace the learning in the most efficient way. This could lead to that individuals 50+ does not participate in adult education secondary to this barrier that no appropriate methodology and pedagogic exist.

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## 4. Characteristics of (language) teachers for senior citizens.

Language trainer role doesn't consist in transferring knowledge regarding vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar but also about knowing how to be and universal human values.

Their main topic is finding out "how to adapt better the pedagogy to learners demand"? Knowing that the good way is "what works for this learner, at this given time and place" and that there is no "one right way" for teaching.

In this sense the trainer becomes a servant for change in permanent evolution taking into account changes among learners and the environment.

His task consists in:

- Helping learner to acquire communication skills that overcome language skills
- Raising learners interest towards language and culture diversity, providing them keys for others discovering and also opportunity to transfer their own culture.
- Showing their clients how it's important to reconsider their point of views and values to overcome stereotyped and superficial relations and also to fight discrimination.

We all know that adults, regarding training, do appreciate and remember what they will use and practice. Keeping this in mind the trainer needs to identify his learners needs, to help them to formulate them in order to provide a course in which of them will find what he thinks useful for them.

This approach is easier to implement in adult training than in school systems where programmes and institutional requirements don't always match with learners priorities.

In fact, prior questions the trainer has to wonder about are:

How can I do to identify participant's needs?

What does each learner needs to know and to learn in order to use the language for what he's learning it for?

How can I bring enough diversity in order to maintain motivation and be sure that each one, among a group, be able to find what he's looking for?

Considering the evolution of the society and technologies as a whole, trainer should be able to evaluate his own training needs, to follow language didactic evolution and to use ICT in teaching and learning situations.

It's also important for the trainer to bring a critical eye on his own teaching strategies and practices in order to leave space for evolution, innovation and improvement for his own satisfaction and also learner's one.

In the context of adults training, learners are no more passive learners, as children in school might be being very few motivated and convinced of the utility of learning a foreign language.

Current language learning approaches are focusing on developing learners 'communication skills in studied language and their capacity to use it in real communication situations.

In order to communicate in live situations apart from linguistic knowledge learners also need to acquire a certain number of know-how and know-how-to be that will be useful to understand native speakers and to be understood.

Language teacher is supposed to establish good relationship with adult age and to be able to understand their needs and moods which are so different from younger learners.

Language teacher is expected to be flexible because the average of senior learners' works and language courses should be organized in such a way as to encounter their necessities.

The most important pedagogical skills of a language teacher are his/her ability to adjust teaching method to the audience and his /her ability to choose topics that senior learners can easily experience. The teacher eventually has to get them feel at ease.

The language teacher uses whiteboard or overhead projector transparencies when he has to explain some grammar rules, new words etc. The tape recorder and videos are basic tools when he wants to get learners train the listening skill.

#### **- Austria.**

- Trainers, pedagogical experts and administrative staff are confronted with altogether very heterogeneous groups of students, since learners show different biographies and learning biographies. This, of course, results in different learning attitudes, different behavioural patterns and forms of motivation for learning.
- Trainers are sensitized and trained concerning age related preferences on communication and specific habits.
- Trainers and pedagogical experts value the experiences of the target group.

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**- Czech Republic.**

Czech Republic proposes some single statements reported by expert trainers and teachers for the education of the senior citizens.

- We have very good experience with this kind of course.
- Senior learning is not comparable to adult teaching in general.
- This is quite different from "normal" IT courses; teachers need to gain knowledge about their target group.
- 50+ participants link new contents to their wide range of experiences
- The topics of their projects very often derive from their profession.
- This (ICT course) is particularly good when it is based on a cooperation of grand parents and grand children.

**- Germany.**

In case of characteristics of teachers for senior citizens, we can apply all competences or characteristics, which are typical for trainer or teacher in adult education; within confines of it we can provide a following division:

- a. pedagogical skills;
- b. social skills;
- c. administrative / organisational skills.

Some of the characteristic are more emphasized in case of teaching senior learners. According to the conducted structured interviews, trainers mentioned as *important social / basic skills* like:

- a. patience, comprehension, sympathy, sociability. Patience was mentioned the most. Another important social skill is skill of encouragement, "...senior learners need encouragement, especially when they are real beginners, the teacher should not expect or insist on "perfect" English,...the teacher should really love his/her job!!!, he / she should really like elderly people and be interested in them;
- b. "to find a balance between basic skills of teacher: tolerance, patience and performance oriented without demanding too much from learners";
- c. tactful and diplomatic;
- d. to be able to create a relaxed atmosphere in a class, without ingratiating himself with everybody;
- e. to give senior learners a feeling of being respected as personalities and students;
- f. to be able to encourage participants to take a part in all activities.

*Administrative / organisational skills:*

- being flexible: trainer should be willing to change the beginning of the semester or to change the teaching period or time according to the wishes of learners (some of the learners miss classes because of convalescence or rehabilitation);
- being able to find suitable texts, which can be interesting for target group, e.g. concerning life experiences;
- being able to use teaching aids to simplify and explain subject matter;
- good organiser.

*Pedagogical skills:*

- a. basic psychological knowledge;
- b. being able to adjust to the learning needs of individuals;
- c. being creative, it concerns training methods, exercises;
- d. being able to turn course into a "team";
- e. giving participants a feeling of success and security;
- f. not to expect too much, when the participants feel overstretched they get annoyed and complain;
- g. being able to adapt very easily to changing situations;
- h. ability to improvise. Language teaching in this case is not only aimed at learning fast and thoroughly but is more like an event of meeting people and having a good time.

**- Italy.**

The basic skill of a language teacher for senior citizens is to ensure that the level of English is sufficient for them to be able to work effectively. The required level will depend on their duties and responsibilities. The Language Teacher needs to further build up and strengthen the language skills of learners. The main tasks are:

- *social / basic skills:*
  - Perfect Knowledge of the language.
  - Knowledge and use of new didactic, new methodologies, new technologies.
  - Ability of communication.
  - Ability of valuation and monitoring.
  - Consciousness of psychological aspects in the learning-process.

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- Teaching-experience abroad and Refresher-courses.
- *Administrative/ organisational skills:*
  - Preview the development of course in term of: number of learners, hours of lessons, etc.).
  - State lesson objectives (Planning).
  - Model expressions several times. Engage in full class, half-class group and individual repetition of expressions. (Coordination).
  - Use new structures in brief expressions in which all the other words are known to the learners.
  - Engage learners in various guided oral practice.
  - Motivate the teaching of structures by showing how they are needed in real-life communication.
  - control the development of the course.
- *Pedagogical skills.*

The aim of an efficient and brisk teaching method is to develop learners' linguistic ability to cope with a variety of communication situations that arise in daily and professional life. Teaching dispensed has to meet the needs and expectations of each individual learner.

The main tasks are:

- To be able to face social and psychological problems of the learner.
- To be colloquial and friendly.
- To stimulate curiosity and wish to improve it.
- To let the learners exchange their ideas.
- To interact with learners.
- To develop competitiveness among students.

The teacher presents a new topic and all the material available to learn it, he tries to stir interest and subsequently discussion, to make the learners train the speaking skill. The language teacher's task is based upon the need to train four skills: speaking, listening, writing and reading, that's why he plans skill lessons. While doing the role play, the learner is given the opportunity to speak freely and to feel as if he was experiencing a real communicative situation. Training games are introduced to enliven the lesson because they catch the learner's attention. The exercises are for individual, pair and group work. The last one is interesting because learners can help each others and overcome difficulties together.

**- Sweden.**

The characteristics for a language teacher for senior citizens are the same as regular language teachers. As for all language teachers it is the understanding and knowledge about their target group that is the most important factor. When this factor is understood it is significant that resources are allocated to invest in:

- Teaching methods.
- Quality of staff.
- Quality of providers.
- Quality of delivery.

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## 5. Problems of senior learners.

At this stage the selection of topics is very important. Senior learners' interest grows more and more if the topics are close to their world and experience.

If they can read or speak about something they know, they feel confident and ready to learn again.

### - Austria.

Learning how to deal with mistakes and/or frustration is particularly important. In this respect, reflection accompanying the process – in both, face-to-face sessions and group settings - is always necessary and helpful.

### - Czech Republic.

Since 2002 a number of measures have been adopted which are focused on facilitating access to educational opportunities in general. What remains to be a problem is the elimination of barriers caused by insufficient motivation for continuing education among certain groups of the population.

They include, in particular, elderly citizens who are not willing to adapt to changing life and working conditions and to participate in lifelong learning programmes as such<sup>14</sup>. In detail, such measures are aimed to remove some economic and social barriers:

- Financial barriers: in general, re-training courses for unemployed individuals registered at different labour offices, citizens at risk of unemployment and employees attended at retraining courses within investment provisions are funded from the national budget, i.e. from the budget of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Individual applicants may pay for their re-training themselves. Language courses that are financially supported are mainly Czech language courses for adult asylum-seekers (since 2000) and Roman language courses (including Roman history and culture) for Roma children and other children who express interest (EQUAL initiative).
- Socio-cultural barriers: the government of the Czech Republic has repeatedly declared in its resolutions its willingness to improve the overall situation concerning the education of Roma citizens and to achieve equality in educational opportunities. These programmes don't focus on Roma senior citizens, but children (compulsory education) and juveniles (primarily on their motivation for continuing education).

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<sup>14</sup> Progress report on the follow-up to the 2002 Council resolution.

**- Germany.**

During the structured interviews we asked respondents about problems occurring among senior learners, which influence on process of learning. In that case, we also provided a simply typology of problems:

- a. health problems: the sense of hearing and vision, lack of concentration, a sudden and serious disease, time for convalescence and rehabilitation;
- b. emotional problems: discouraging by family members, problems within family, coping with emotional problems, when one of the participant is very ill or died;
- c. social problems: e.g. when the social statuses of the course members are too different, lack of integration as a newcomer, feeling not to be a part of society anymore because of age.

**- Italy.**

Senior citizens, about 55/60 and over (especially up to 65) take much less advantage of further education offers than younger people do.

They avoid most strikingly targeted learning courses that require active involvement and are aimed in improving and measuring learners' performance. This can be seen even in language courses, which adult education centres often provide especially to elderly people. Most difficulties of general nature with further education intensify in old age:

- a. health problems: missing some lesson for a disease;
- b. emotional problems: lack in will to correspond to a certain interest in an education course, uneasiness at the idea of attending school-like lessons in educational programs; adults are encouraged to follow a course if their own educational background is good;
- c. social problems: these can be represented by the stronger orientation of men towards vocational training and continuing education, improvement of career prospects or chances of being promoted, and social recognition. A lesser participation of older adults in further education is not due to a lack of interest. It does not mean that elderly people aren't longer willing or able to learn. Elderly people use different and open learning forms. Coming from educationally and linguistically deprived background, they've particular difficulties in coping with elaborated forms of communication and language, characterising most of educational programs.

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**- Sweden.**

It is not possible to generalize about the problems of senior learners when they are identified as any individual over 50+. In reality an individual approach is required in order to optimize the learning process, however this is not realistic for a teacher to assess each individual in their class room. A solution would be that the teacher is trained in the different factors that can affect the learning process and as result creates a leaning environment that facilitates the needs of the learners. For senior learners a teacher should be aware of the following concepts:

- Life-span psychology :
  - a. physical aspects;
  - b. cognitive aspects;
  - c. Cultural and social aspects;
  - d. Social exclusion aspects;
  - e. Diversity management;
  - f. Gender mainstreaming.

## 6. Principles and characteristic of senior citizens language acquisition.

### *WHY LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES?*

Europe is a multilingual and multicultural continent with citizens' mobility that keeps on rising creating more relationships between them or work or leisure purposes.

Foreign language learning is no longer seen as something, which happens only within school or university curriculum.

Only a better knowledge of languages will allow reinforcing communication and interaction among Europeans with different mother language in order to develop European mobility, good human relationships and understanding, and to fight stereotypes and discrimination.

In early 70' many experts have been asked by European Council to define the European finality for language.

### *Short information about The European common reference frame and European language portfolio.*

The European council regarding language learning has adopted the following measures

- To realize how lifelong learning for all citizens is a mean to promote mutual communication, interactivity, mobility and enrichment of all European citizens
- To adopt a common approach and encourage them to share experiences, ideas and resources
- To promote a methodology centred on the learner integrating aims, teaching, learning and evaluation

The European language Portfolio has been originally developed and piloted by European Council Language Policy department between 1998 and 2000

The portfolio belongs to the learner. It's an open document and it is changing on going the learning. A portfolio usually contains 3 parts

- The language passport, reporting languages competences in reference to common European criteria
- The biography containing experiences in the foreign language
- The folder with examples of personal work

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*PEDAGOGY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING: an approach oriented towards action.*

This approach classifies the requirements into 4 topics:

- Activities and strategies of communication
- Skills required for communicating
- Knowledge and abilities in relation with
- Communication situations and fields

The most important issue in learning languages lies in negotiating and designing individualized language learning path.

One main issue concerns learner self-confidence which is one of the pillar of education itself and not only language learning.

Seniors and more generally adults are motivated and more conscious than young persons or children and want to be involved and to manage their own training. They want to be “empowered” regarding training.

It’s no longer the learner who must adapt himself to the trainer’s pedagogy but the trainer that will adapt his demarche to the different ways of how the learners learn.

Training adults means more supporting, helping, and guiding and counselling learners more and more autonomous and responsible of their learning than providing knowledge.

#### *WHAT TYPES OF SENIOR CITIZENS LEARN FOREIGN LANGUAGES?*

Most of the time individuals who decide to attend foreign language courses have a professional objective and demand.

So checking for their need you notice they want to be able to develop communication activities, oral or written directly linked to their jobs - e.g.: They want to be able to make or answer a phone call from a client, write or answer letters or to welcome and exchange with tourists in they work in tourism sector, explaining a menu if they’ work as waiters or describe and sell houses to foreigners if they work as state agents.

From these particular expectations we can focus their expectations and provide personalized course directly in relation with theses expressed needs.

Senior learners usually choose to follow a language course because they are obliged either socially or by work to learn a new language. The more they feel the need, the more they are interested in the course. On the average a high percentage of senior citizens will be successful.

The second age category is attracted by language courses in order, when travelling, to be able to communicate with native people, to share multicultural experiences, to understand what's happening around them in a foreign country.

Some of them can also decide to learn a foreign language because they've decided to move to a foreign country and to stay there.

In spite of existing in the society stereotypes concerning slow acquiring knowledge and information by older learners, recent research concerning teaching of older learners especially in the area of language learning shows that:

- there is no decline in the ability to learn as people get older;
- except for minor considerations such as hearing and vision loss, the age of the adult learner is not a major factor in language acquisition;
- the context in which adults learn is the major influence on their ability to acquire the new language<sup>15</sup>.

The difficulties older adults often experience in the language classroom can be overcome through adjustments in the learning environment, attention to affective factors, and use of effective teaching methods.

The greatest obstacle to older adult language learning is the doubt in the minds of both learner and teacher that older adults can learn a new language. Most people assume that "the younger the better" applies in language learning. However, many studies have shown that this is not true. Studies comparing the rate of second language acquisition in children and adults have shown that although children may have an advantage in achieving native-like fluency in the long run, adults actually learn languages more quickly than children in the early stages (Krashen, Long, and Scarcella, 1979). These studies indicate that attaining a working ability to communicate in a new language may actually be easier and more rapid for the adult than for the child.

Studies on aging have demonstrated that learning ability does not decline with age. If older people remain healthy, their intellectual abilities and skills do not decline (Ostwald and Williams, 1981). Adults learn differently from children, but no age-related differences in learning ability have been demonstrated for adults of different ages.

Language is an important factor in order to embrace new cultures and understanding, a language is not just the words spoken, it illustrates how individuals view their culture, history, society and their way of life. The European Union consider language is one of the most important factors for its citizens in order to develop and senior learners (50+) is an important category, especially since Europe is facing unprecedented demographic changes that will have a major impact on society and on the economy - and consequently on education and training provision and needs. The European population

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<sup>15</sup> Mary Schleppegrell "The Older Language Learner".

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is ageing: over the next 30 years the number of younger Europeans (up to 24 years) will fall by 15%. One in three Europeans will be over 60 years old, and about one in ten will be over 80<sup>16</sup>.

**- Austria.**

- Repetitions are an important instrument to better memorize new contents.
- Simple memory exercises are integrated on a regular basis.

**- France**

In Irfa Sud most of language course we are running concern continuous training courses.

Staff or company managers addressed to us because they want to acquire language skills that will help them to develop markets, relation with suppliers or clients or to update their language skills in accordance with their jobs requirements.

In this context we have been developing courses for:

- State agents groups due to the increase of English clients
- Company managers of any professional field mainly focusing on professional mails and phone calls and usual communication
- Tourism agencies staff
- Staff working in historical places in charge of guided tours in foreign languages.
- Wine cellars staff
- Restaurant and hotel staff

On the other side we also develop English or Spanish courses though our qualification courses for young and adults unemployed, as a second language is required at different level in most exams and certificates.

We are also running French language courses for foreigners and for illiterate clients group.

One of our priority regarding materials and resources consists in working with authentic documents, adapting contents and methods on going the training according to the trainee's needs, which might have changed from what he's previously asked for.

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<sup>16</sup> Data can be found in: Eurostat Population Projections, 2004 based, Trend scenario, Baseline variant; Green Paper "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations", Communication from the Commission, COM (2005) 94 final, 16.3.2005).

Self directed learning approach allows to leave the participant decide what he wants to learn, assess what he does right, what he knows and still remains to be done is but most of all be considered in a partner relationship and where he is co building the training path.

#### - Germany.

Trainers to make better or easier language acquisition, can make some modification in the programme of teaching. The aims of those modifications are, on the one hand: to encourage older learners to learn languages and on the other hand: to eliminate barriers and obstacles which influenced negatively on language acquisition.

“Affective factors such as motivation and self-confidence are very important in language learning. Many older learners fear failure more than their younger counterparts, maybe because they accept the stereotype of the older person as a poor language learner or because of previous unsuccessful attempts to learn a foreign language. When such learners are faced with a stressful, fast-paced learning situations, fear of failure only increase. The older person may also exhibit greater hesitancy in learning. Thus, teachers must be able to reduce anxiety and build self-confidence in the learner.

Class activities which include large amounts of oral repetition, extensive pronunciation correction, or an expectation of error-free speech will also inhibit the older learner's active participation. On the other hand, providing opportunities for learners to work together, focusing on understanding rather than producing language, and reducing the focus on error correction can build learners' self-confidence and promote language learning. Teachers should emphasize the positive focus on the good progress learners are making and provide opportunities for them to be successful. This success can then be reinforced with more of the same “<sup>17</sup>.

Older adults studying a foreign language are usually learning it for a specific purpose: to be more effective professionally, to be able to survive in an anticipated foreign situation, or for other instrumental reasons. They are not willing to tolerate boring or irrelevant content, or lessons that stress the learning of grammar rules out of context. Adult learners need materials designed to present structures and vocabulary that will be of immediate use to them, in a context which reflects the situations and functions they will encounter when using the new language. Materials and activities that do not incorporate real life experiences will succeed with few older learners.

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17 Mary Schleppegrell The Older Language Learner.

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**- Italy.**

It's important that in each activity learning is stimulating and opportunities will be developed for specific purposes. Learning is usually implied if the successful and qualified implementation of the various projects and services depends on a permanent acquisition of additional knowledge and skills. Knowledge that is needed during these activities may then be regularly exchanged, discussed and reflected in discussion groups meeting. It is necessary to develop more flexible and open learning opportunities which may be stimulating and useful in different learning process.

Trainers may be able to connect the education program to practical tasks, so that people remain active in old age and become committed as citizens.

## 7. Examples of best practice in Europe concerning teaching for senior citizens.

### - Czech Republic.

European projects with participation of Czech Third Age Universities (U3A) designed for the elderly:

- [www.solill.net](http://www.solill.net): the central idea of this project was the initiation of autonomous learning groups of older people in various locations in Europe with the inclusion of ICT. The project focussed especially on older adults who are interested in continuing education. (Project partner U3A Jihoceska Universita in Ceske Budejovice).
- <http://www.uni-ulm.de/uni/fak/zawiw/projektbereiche/en>: "Learning by Research" enables elderly people to address already forgotten, never treated or "uncomfortable" subjects and to work on them. During their work they also encounter topics still unexplored. In all questions of research and research design aspects and experience of senior people are taken into consideration. (Project partner Czech Technical University in Prague, Czech Republic).

### - Italy.

Project website concerning above mentioned subjects:

- *Teaching Sign Language and the Culture of the Deaf for Different Educational Groups (2004)*. <http://www.isoc.siu.no/isocii.nsf/projectlist/113939>

SLATE (Sign Language Teaching) is an international project of adult education focusing both at the Deaf culture and at the pedagogic and theory of Sign Language. The project is funded by Grundtvig 1, a Socrates program funding adult education and other pathways in the EU. Grundtvig seeks to improve the quality and European dimension of adult education in the broadest sense, and to help make life long learning (LLL) opportunities more widely available to Europe's citizens.

- *Europe is a Chance: let's Get it !: EUCHE*.

<http://www.isoc.siu.no/isocii.nsf/projectlist/39271>

The objectives of this project are fourfold: firstly, to improve adult learners competence in the languages of the European Union; secondly, to disseminate knowledge about cultures and traditions in other participating countries; thirdly to enhance adult learners understanding of political, economic and administrative aspects of the Union; and lastly to promote the exchange of experience, innovation and practice in adult education. The project target groups are trainers with experience in language teaching and learning adults. The project will produce a training package for teaching, with

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innovative methods that will utilise the cultural and artistic expressions of theatre and cinema, in the languages of the regions participating in the project. The final documentation which will be in form of videotapes will be produced in English and in the languages of the project partners: Danish, Italian and Spanish. In order to disseminate these products the project intends to publish the multimedia documentation and sell it through multimedia publishers. The prototype of the language course may be proposed as a "model" to other local administrations.

- *INSTAL : Individualising Strategies for Adult Learners in Language and ICT - Learning (2000)*. <http://www.isoc.siu.no/isocii.nsf/projectlist/87400>

The aim of the project is to develop a set of tools on the example of language and ICT-learning, that will help adult learners discover and make use of their individual learning styles and overcome two obstacles in autonomous learning. These are the lack of teachers and the absence of awareness of preferred learning strategies/styles. The 16 partners will make an effort to provide user-friendly support and guidance in these two special fields of learning which, are of increasing importance for lifelong learning in connection with globalisation. The target groups are adult learners especially the geographically and/or socio-economically disadvantaged and providers of adult education within the framework of formal/non-formal education. The main activities planned are learning strategies in partner institutions at national level, the setting up of a website and collection of materials for an interactive CD-ROM. This is hoped to be achieved by the pooling together of resources and expertise.

- *ELTAE - European Lingua Trainer in Adult Education (2004)*. <http://www.isoc.siu.no/isocii.nsf/projectlist/113695>

ELTAE offers a qualification course for language teachers in adult education that aims to bring quality standards of European language teaching on line, supporting the usage of the Common European Framework for Languages and the language portfolio, broadening the knowledge of adult language acquisition process and of modern methodology and approaches, exploring ways on how to increase motivation in the adult language learner and improve the quality of language teaching, developing the language skills of adult learners and facilitating their learning autonomy and fostering intercultural awareness in the language teaching process.

#### - Germany.

Project website concerning subject mentioned in the Report.

1. (The European Older People's Platform AGE) [www.age-platform.org](http://www.age-platform.org)
2. [Online-Kompetenz für die Generation 50plus](http://www.online-kompetenz-fuer-die-generation-50plus.de)
3. <http://www.uni-ulm.de/LiLL/>

- Sweden.

- *ALLEGRO* project (*Access to Language Learning by Extending to Groups Outside*): it is bringing language learning to groups in the community who do not usually regard themselves as language learners or who have only limited opportunities to learn a new language. This can be for reasons of social or economic disadvantage, geographical isolation, or physical or learning disabilities. So far, 30 small but innovative projects have been set up in Denmark, France, Slovenia, Spain and the UK, many of them in outreach community venues. For example, the partners have worked with people recovering from addiction (UK), the long-term unemployed (France), groups of children with Down's Syndrome and autism (Spain), people with severe learning disabilities in residential care (Germany), prisoners (Slovenia, UK), senior citizens with disabilities (Denmark, Slovenia) and those with long term mental health problems (France).  
Website: <http://www.allegro-lingua.net>
- *EUROMAIL.COM* (*EUROpean Adults MAILing to COMmunicate*): it addresses adult language learners in the Czech Republic, Denmark and the Netherlands. It aims to overcome the difficulties that some adults have in traveling abroad by offering them the opportunity to communicate via e-mail with adults in other countries who are learning the same target language. This target language serves as the language of communication Website <http://www.juromail.com>.
- *Join the Club!*: it has established a large network of community-based language clubs which aim to promote the learning of an additional language to one's mother tongue by non-traditional means. The project's main objectives are to increase language learner autonomy and to raise language users' awareness of cultural differences among various countries and nationalities.  
Website <http://www.jointheclub.net>.

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## Appendix: Largest Adult Education Associations in Sweden

1. Adult Educational Association of Swedish Farmers' Union and the Centre and Liberal Parties SV (Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan) is an association for non-formal adult education, training and culture. Operations are divided up into about 270 local branches and 22 districts which act independently on the basis of the needs in each region. SV is rapidly becoming a leading local force in Sweden in areas such as culture, environment, social issues, international co-operation and democratic development. Among SVs members are the Federation of Swedish Farmers, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party and the National Federation of Rural Community Centres. SV was established in 1967 after a merger of two organisations that was active in the non-formal adult education field.
2. The Citizens' Adult Educational Association (Medborgarskolan) was founded in 1940. It is a non-political association based on humanistic ideology. Some of the member organizations are Moderata samlingspartiet (the Conservative Party) Aktiva Seniorer (an organization for senior citizens) and Aktiv Ungdom (a youth organization).
3. Educational Association of NonConformist Churches in Sweden (Frikyrkliga studieförbundet, FS). The member organizations comprise the free churches and their youth organizations, immigrant denominations and ecumenical organizations.
4. Folkuniversitetet (Folkuniversitetet) is a non-profit organisation in the field of adult education. It is an association of the Extramural Departments attached to the Universities of Stockholm, Uppsala, Göteborg, Lund and Umeå.
5. Sobriety Movement's Educational Association (Nykterhetsrörelsens bildningsverksamhet, NBV) has 17 temperance organizations as members and is uncommitted to any religion or political party.
6. Study Promotion Association (Studiefrämjandet). Most of the member organizations are all involved in nature and in environmental, ecological or cultural awareness and have no political, religious or trade union base.
7. Swedish Christian Educational Association (Sveriges kyrkliga studieförbund, SKS). The member organizations are mainly within the Church of Sweden, the Catholic Church and the Scout movement.
8. Swedish Sport Confederation Adult Educational Association (Svenska idrottsrörelsens studieförbund, SISU) is the adult Study Association of the sport movements.

9. The Workers' Educational Association (Arbetarnas bildningsförbund, ABF) has its roots in the Labour movements' organizations. Many organizations for the disabled and the immigrants are also members.
10. The YWCA/YMCA Study Association (KFUK-KFUM:s studieförbund). Most of the work is carried out in co-operation with the member organisations, i.e. the Swedish Evangelical Mission and the different branches of the YWCA –YMCA movement in Sweden.

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