

Feasibility study

“Older Adults’ Learning and ICT Use in the Danube Region”

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION FROM RESULTS OF PARTNERS'
RESEARCH RESULTS**

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INVOLVED INSTITUTIONS

ZAWiW, UNIVERSITÄT ULM, ULM

ERWACHSENENBILDUNGSZENTRUM COMENIUS UNIVERSITY BRATISLAVA

LEHRSTUHL DER PHILOSOPHIE UNIVERSITÄT BELGRAD

POPULAR UNIVERSITY OF TIMIȘOARA, SVEUČILIŠTE ZA TREĆU DOBU (POUZ), ZAGREB

STAATLICHE UNIVERSITÄT FÜR BIBLIOTHEKWISSENSCHAFTEN UND INFORMATIONSTECHNOLOGIE, SOFIA
UNIVERSITÄT DES DRITTEN ALTERS UNIVERSITÄT, LJUBLJANA

THE PROJECT TASK

This feasibility study should identify the fields of action to be taken in the area of Learning in Later Life (LiLL) and the use of ICT in several of Danube Region countries.

The project partners are:

Centre for Continuing education at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia

Faculty of Philosophy of Belgrade University, Serbia

Popular University of Timișoara, Romania

Sveučilište za treću dobu (POUZ), Zagreb, Croatia

State University for Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia, Bulgaria

Third Age University in Ljubljana, Slovenia

Study coordinator: Zentrum für Allgemeine wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung (ZAWiW) der Universität Ulm

In this study the partners conducted a desktop research on the state-of-the-art in Learning in Later Life (LiLL) and the use of UCT by older people in their countries in the current political and social frameworks, made interviews with leaders of organisations which provide LiLL and with experts in this area, conducted SWOT analysis in order to identify the possible fields of action in the education of older adults in their countries and made recommendations for projects based on these findings.

The coordinator ZAWiW had conducted the desktop research to assess the current state-of-the-art in Germany and to serve as a point of reference. The interviews and the SWOT analysis that should help to identify the need for concrete actions in each of the Danube Region countries and to find potential partners in this area were conducted solely by the project partners in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia, where the projects in the area of LiLL and ICT should primarily be implemented.

INTRODUCTION

The population in the Europe of today goes through a transformation whose effect cannot be exactly estimated. Due to progress in medicine, decreased birth rates and other demographic factors the share of old people in all the countries grows. The active life stage of an older person of today is extended and the life periods shift, taking on different meaning.

To deal with this transformation, the governments initiate reforms in the area of length of employment and pension age, health care and services, and also to a lesser or greater extent in education.

Lifelong Learning Policies and related strategies are present in all the project partners' countries. However, the state priorities and the related reforms and policies are determined primarily by the social and economic situation of the country. While in some countries, the state dedicates some attention and funds to the issue of education in older age, in others, mainly the newer EU states, this field is mainly promoted and practiced by bottom-up activities of organisations struggling for survival.

Generally, it can be said that in all project partner countries, Learning in Later Life (LiLL) and especially learning in the post-professional life-period is positioned on a fringe of the education field. The activities are disjointed and lack in transparency and sustainability, umbrella associations and portals that would organise and politically represent the various providers and promote and lobby for LiLL are missing. The concentration of offers is in cities, with rural areas coming short. This situation applies also to digital literacy and the use of ICT amongst older adults. Although the importance of digital literacy for social participation in today's digital world is recognised, with its additional asset of being able to bring social inclusion and education also to older adults living in rural areas or who are no longer mobile, the lack of funds for costs connected with equipment as well as shortage of qualified staff needed for the implementation of ICT-based programs hinders this important education area further.

In the SWOT analysis the project partners identified as *strengths* in the area of LiLL and ICT the already existing infrastructure of LiLL providers and their associations such as for example in Slovakia and Slovenia and the various bottom up initiatives taking place in the other partner countries. As strength was seen also the good networking of education providers with other organisations such as libraries. There is already a number of good practices and expertise concerning LiLL and ICT as well as large engagement of the LiLL management and learners in all the partner countries. In the area of policy and strategy, in the new EU states strengths were anticipated to be rather in the future developments, where however, the concrete outcomes are still not known. International cooperation and networking were noted as strength by all partners.

Amongst the *weaknesses* the non-inclusion of LiLL in the national LLL strategies and the resulting lack of funding for such initiatives were the most important issues mentioned. This relates also to digital literacy and use of ICT by older adults. The lack of cooperation and mutual information amongst relevant decision-makers and organisations on all levels, the unfamiliarity of organisations with national strategies and the lack of powerful bodies uniting and representing them lead to underrepresentation of LiLL in the education policy field. There is a lack of statistical data on education of this target group and LiLL is marginalized. The consequences are weaknesses in the areas of research and methods of LiLL and ICT, low quality of education and low participation of this learner group in education. Older adults' low education level and weak economic status are additional hindering factors. Relating to

ICT, the high cost of equipment and the lack of technical know-how present large barriers for both the learners and the institutions.

Like in “strengths”, the partners anticipate *opportunities* for an improvement coming from new LLL strategies and the participation in the EU policies concerning LLL and the access to EU structural funds and programs. This should bring funds for actions and projects concerning LiLL. Universities are seen as being one of the key actors in the implementation of the strategic actions concerning LiLL as they have the resources and the expertise in this field. The inclusion of stakeholders from different fields of education and business in this process should bring this issue still further and this both in terms of know-how as well as resources such as rooms or technical equipment. National and regional associations and education networks should promote LiLL through bottom up approach from participating organisations. Validation of non-formal learning, quality standards for e-learning projects for older people, training of teachers, widening of thematic scope of the education programs and increasing the role of third age education in the education field are issues amongst the opportunities for LiLL and ICT. Cooperation on national level as well as cross-border cooperation and internationalization of LiLL could further the professionalization of LiLL, taking advantage of experience from other projects. The Danube Strategy is seen as possibility for cooperation. Essential here is the establishment of competent representation bodies. Important is also Web-presence and online platforms for information and cooperation in the field of LiLL as well as other thematic areas of interest to older adults. Opportunity is seen in the field of e-services, e-government – as e-participation is increasingly important for participation in society in general and countries have funds to promote digital literacy needed to use them. Older adults could be trained to pass their ICT competences onto others. They could also carry their know-how as trained volunteers to small towns and villages.

The main *threat* is again financial, economic, low status of LiLL in the political agendas. Instable political and economic situation endanger the existence of institutions providing LiLL. Absence of key reforms and insufficient know-how and information of policy-makers concerning trends and current activities in the field of education of older adults influence their decisions. Social prejudices against this group create a false image of old age. The lack of interest in LiLL on behalf of some of the large associations representing pensioners presents a further threat as they do not challenge the policy-makers. The field of LiLL is not transparent and there are no databases of LiLL providers. Organizational differences and the lack of national coordination bodies in LiLL makes it difficult to take more influence on national level. The threats and barriers on behalf of the learners are similar to those in “weaknesses”: the weak economic situation of older adults, low education and the current digital exclusion and the resulting digital divide. Low education is associated with low ICT literacy and enhances this gap further. On institutional level, the major threats are the lack of financial support in the area of staffing, leading to low salaries, part-time employment and fluctuation of staff. Regarding ICT, the major threats on institutional level are considered to be the updating of equipment, the lack of know-how about the use of ICT in the education of older adults and the lack of e-content in the national languages. The small size of some of the countries such as Slovenia enhances this fact.

On the basis of the research results and the SWOT analysis, the partners made recommendations for actions to be taken. These are on local, regional, national and international level and include structural actions, actions regarding digital literacy, online learning and communities, development and exchange of methodologies for LiLL and ICT, teacher/trainer training. The partners’ recommendations are summarized in the final section of this report.

RESULTS OF DESKTOP RESEARCH

Old age – when does it begin?

There is neither an official definition of the “Third Age” in any of the project partners’ countries, nor is there consensus when seniority in old age begins.

For people who are retired, terminology such as "the elderly", "old people", "senior citizens", "older adults", “pensioners” or "retirees", "seniors" is commonly used. Some of this terminology is controversial, for example the term “the elderly” is considered to bear a negative, discriminating note, so does the term “Senioren” in Germany. For the purpose of this study, the term older adults will preferably be used, referring to people shortly before retirement or already retired.

The demographic developments with longer life and the shift of pension age shift also the classical life stages (education, work, retirement). In the new situation, the third age, a time during which people are free from work and family constraints and can pursue a good quality life according to their interests, will play a smaller role.

The retirement age in all the partner countries is moving upwards, increase is gradual. The age of pension is generally dependent on the number of insured working years and in the most of the partner countries except for Slovakia and Germany, there is a difference of several years in retirement age of men and women, where women may retire earlier.

However, at the same time, because of various factors such as inability to find employment due to reluctance of companies to employ older adults, poor health or state schemes that allow early retirement at good conditions, the factual retirement age is sometime 3-5 years lower.

Poverty and social inclusion

In all the project partner countries, pensioners are economically the most vulnerable group, who are poor or in danger of poverty. Solely in Germany, the income and wealth situation of older people is good in comparison to some of the younger age groups, partly a consequence of the post-war economic boom and accumulation of personal wealth. In all countries the danger of poverty in old age is greatly dependent on the level of education and also the household type in which the person lives. Old people living with one other person are generally in a better situation as a person living alone. Old women who paid lower insurance contributions and live in a single household are the most endangered group. The problem could increase in the future due to the continuing trend of increase of pensioners and the decrease of employed persons. Precarious employment and frequently interrupted employment biographies in the professional life phase can make sufficient pension provision difficult. The rise in prices and living costs not matched by sufficient increase in pensions are also strongly felt by this population group, making them increasingly poorer.

Being in danger of becoming poor, older people are also in danger to become socially excluded by not taking part in education, culture, social connections, lacking informational, emotional, and material support. With the economic crisis new stereotypes about older people are more and more present, overshadowing good intergenerational understanding and cooperation in different settings: at work, in community. Negative attitudes towards older people, ageism, is an element of social exclusion and contributes to it.

Also the rapid technological developments can lead to a digital gap and exclusion from the mainstream of society.

How well are older adults educated?

The WW2 and immediate postwar generations in Europe did not have the chances for education as the generations that followed. The lower education of the older population is particularly seen in countries with large rural populations. The newer generations of seniors are increasingly better educated. They possess competences that are valuable to society and economy that should not be lost. The education programs and offers need to respond to the requirements of this target group in a differentiated way, and also be prepared to involve persons who are not so privileged.

Do mainstreaming policies take older adults and ageing into account?

In all the Danube Region countries, governments address issues related to ageing connected with demographic changes and imbalances, pension reforms. The focus of the policies lies in the areas demanding the most attention at a given time and is determined by economic situation of the state. The economic situation determines also their success. While the German and also the Slovenian pensioners represent a relatively wealthy population group with a significant economic importance, in the countries where poverty is widely spread amongst pensioners, this population group is mainly seen as being dependent and in need of help and care. Here the focus is on securing adequate pension levels and the provision of health care services. Education, digital literacy and other needs are often not, or not sufficiently, taken into consideration.

Due to the pension reform and the postponement of the pension age, the need for the inclusion of older people in LLL is recognised, which could be chance for increased inclusion of this issue in the political agendas of the future.

How are older adults represented and what is considered to be the main interests of older adults?

Parties and associations of pensioners represent older people in the governments of the respective partner countries and take some political action mainly in the areas of social and welfare situation of older adults. Education in older age is included in the programs of the Federation of Pensioners' Associations in Slovenia, the Unit of Seniors in Slovakia and in older adults' representation bodies in Germany such as BAGSO - Die Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Senioren-Organisationen (The federal association of seniors' organisations) and Seniorenräte (Seniors' advisory bodies) on local and individual state policy level. In the other partner countries the pensioners' representation bodies have not taken up education as one of the priority issues. The reports generally state that political actors see the main interests of older people in the areas of adequate pensions, medical services, palliative care and social welfare. Interests concerning education are taken up by NGOs or professional organisations such as in Serbia the Gerontological society.

Stereotyping of older adults is present in various spheres of the society, also amongst the policy-makers. However, at the same time, there seems to be an increasing involvement of the civil society in the decision-making processes and a slow change of culture from seeing older people as dependent and in a need of care to active citizens who have something to contribute to society takes place. This change is more apparent in the more wealthy Danube Region states. Actions supporting this change are needed on all levels. Stronger inclusion is required for older citizens from rural areas and those who are poor.

The Croatian report notes an increased social and political presence of older adults and annotates large importance to the visibility of older people that had been promoted by large public events that contribute to the change of image of older people.

Recognition of importance of digital literacy for social participation

The importance of digital literacy for social participation had been recognised to some extent by the governments, in Germany several large programs promoting it had been, and are, implemented and sponsored or partly sponsored by the government. In the other partner countries digital literacy of older adults is promoted mainly by specialized LiLL providers such as U3As or by NGOs, also libraries, who organize ICT courses and other activities. Such activities are mainly self-financing or supported or co-supported by public funds on local level or by commercial or other sponsors or EU projects. The large interest in ICT from the older adults themselves confirms the actuality of the issue.

ICT access and Internet use

In spite of the potential of ICT for fostering social integration and participation of older adults, for the opening of new fields of constructive activities or extended employment also for those with limited mobility or in rural areas, older people in all the partner countries are experiencing difficulties in accessing and using the new technologies. This is primarily due to high costs connected with the hardware and the Internet access, the lack of technical support, the lack of knowledge about the possible uses of the Internet and concerns about security and privacy. The growing number of bottom up initiatives fostering the use of ICT by older adults, provided mainly by NGOs financed through projects, are still not wide enough to reach a large number of older adults including the rural areas and to respond to the needs of this target group. This issue still does not seem to enjoy the importance it deserves on the action plans of the respective states. Needed are initiatives securing low cost access, barrier-free technologies for older people and also dissemination of good practices demonstrating constructive uses of the Internet. Also needed are sustainable structures supporting such activities. Target oriented methods and information campaigns about the benefits of the current innovations may bring the new ICT uses nearer to the older people.

As the Slovenian report states (and this could be related to all the countries participating in this study), "the current tendencies of Internet use by age groups lead to a conclusion that education is getting very polarized. Those who are already educated are getting more education and low educated are being left out from the educational efforts. Education is an important factor of social mobility, also in the field of ICT skills. More educated ones are being challenged in all fields which are not the case of low educated. Discussion about older people using ICT would require more in-depth research approach to measure the use and methods of application and the interests of this specific group."..." Of course, a group of older people is not a homogeneous group. The younger older people are in more contact with the development of technology through using it at work, etc. This is not the case with the older generations. The field of gerontechnology is engaged in the field of the innovation and technologies that enable older people to improve the quality of their life. Jenko and others (2007) have found that older people are not enthusiastic about new technologies, if this means engaging in too much learning and / or excessive financial cost. Therefore is important to adapt the technology to their expectations, devices must be user friendly. Older people are not aware of importance of ICT and of changes which ICT might bring to their everyday life. At this point we encounter the question of whether the level of development of the information society, e-services and e-content are suitable for older people. Even a superficial look at the e-services and e-content shows that existing services are mainly adjusted to younger generations and employees. This represents a significant barrier to greater participation of older people in learning ICT. A prerequisite for overcoming obstacles is to improve experience of older people in e-services.

Moreover, it would be necessary to investigate the reasons why bigger operators and e-service providers do not address older people, especially given the fact that they are extremely numerous. (E-kompetentni državljani Slovenije danes in jutri 2011).

There is evidence that the older generations are more conservative in the use of the modern ICT applications and after retirement do not acquire the new innovations so readily as the younger ones, in spite of the obvious benefits that these may bring. However, the profile of the older Internet user will continually change in the future, when the younger generations who use the ICTs and the current applications retire. “

Definitions and concepts of Lifelong Learning (LLL), Active Ageing and Learning in Later Life (LiLL)

The definitions of LLL and adult education usually include formal, non-formal and informal learning. LLL is defined as a concept for the adoption of knowledge, skills and abilities throughout the life both in the area of vocational learning but also a way of engagement in the civil society and personality development. LiLL is sometimes considered to be a part of adult education, sometimes part of LLL. While LLL that concentrates on vocational training, second-chance learning and other activities for people of working age is provided by state organisations, LiLL remains in the domain of specialized NGOs and adult education centers that are not supported by state funds. LiLL is a neglected part of education policies and education system. Efforts are made by organisations of experts to include LiLL in the national strategies with varying success.

A chance is seen (Serbia) in having joined the Lifelong Learning Program of the European Commission in 2011 that might provide an access to funds for projects on all levels of education, also LiLL.

There are various definitions of active ageing, with inclusion of concepts such as participation in society, healthy ageing, quality of life, and also lifelong learning and digital literacy. However, in the state policies that form the basis for the allocation of funds, active ageing is in the first place mainly synonymous with employment in older age, postponement of early retirement, increase of economic participation

In Slovenia, Germany and also partly Slovakia, even if on a fringe of the mainstream of education, LiLL has become a part of the education scene. The economic and competence potential of older people and the related education needs seem to be recognized to some extent. The main role in implementation of older adults' education is played by the Universities of the Third age, adult education centers, private foundations, pensioners' associations, specialized NGOs and also the programs of the European Commission. In Germany, LLL is considered to be prerequisite for active ageing and civic engagement by providing knowledge necessary for taking up new tasks in society. LiLL is supported by federal governmental strategies Lifelong Learning Strategy (2004) or "Jedes Alter zählt" (Every age counts) 2012 and political programs on state level. Ministries finance/co-finance educational projects and actions in the area of seniors' education. Also Lifelong Learning program of the EU finances projects in the area of LiLL and digital literacy/ICT.

In Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia, active ageing policies appeared more recently on the political and education scene, although currently rather in theory than in praxis. The state priorities lie rather in the areas of pension and health care reforms. Education is sometimes included in the policy documents related to active ageing, however, without specification of concrete objectives (Romania) or these are part of long-term strategies (Bulgaria). Here the need for LiLL is mainly recognised by experts and educationalists, it is field taken up by non-state organisations, NGOs and the few universities of the third age (Serbia), who are the main players in the provision of education in later life, research and

development of relevant methodologies. Various LiLL actions take place on small scale in organisations such as adult education centers, cultural centers and libraries.

Older people are still subject to stereotyping and are seen as a section of the population associated with illness and decline, unproductiveness and the need of care. The role of education in active ageing is largely marginalized. Special events organised by NGOs aim at changing the image of old people (Serbia, Croatia).

Today, in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia sustainable structures for older adult education are completely lacking. Chance for LiLL is seen in the Lifelong Programs of the European Commission and possible changes in favor of seniors' education in the national policies.

What does LiLL focus on?

The goals of LiLL are not clearly specified, as the outcomes of learning are sometimes interlinked – i.e. the skills gained in offers intended for personal fulfillment can lead to (re)integration into the labour market and/or civic engagement (e.g. ICT skills for acceptance of jobs or of voluntary tasks) and the (re)integration into the labour market following vocational training can result in social participation and personal fulfillment.

On the other hand, a reduced chance of (re)entering the job market seems to determine the definition of the goals of LiLL as being mainly social participation and personal fulfillment.

A targeted research study amongst older adults would show the reality.

The provision of (mainly vocational) education to older adults without differentiating their age, social situation, etc. will not provide solution to the demographic challenges. The decisive issue here seems to be the availability of structures that provide education for older people in a targeted way: in the area of vocational training for (re)entering or remaining in the job market for older people in working age, and the area of general continuing education for social participation, civic engagement and personal fulfillment for persons in post-professional phase.

The extension of the pension age and the subsequent shortening of the “third age” period should not serve as an excuse for removing age and life-period considerations from the planning of education policies.

Policy programs and support. ICT politically encouraged?

While in Slovenia, Slovakia and Germany LiLL is represented by various protagonists on a policy level and also by seniors' representation bodies with political power, in Croatia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania, this support is often only declarative, without financial support or practical policy measures. In the first three countries, LiLL was an issue quite early, in Germany already since the 1960s', in Slovenia the 70s, Slovakia 90s and it could be said to be a part of the education culture of these countries. In the other partner countries this issue is relatively new, in Serbia the development of the University of Third Age at the University of Belgrad started in 1989, in Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania LiLL was introduced in the mid-2000 and was enhanced by various EU strategies. Civic engagement is an issue that is addressed within actions of programs such as the Year of Active Ageing (2012). In these three partner countries the thematic of LiLL is seriously pursued mainly by experts in the field of education and work with older adults and non-state organisations, civil organisations, NGOs, cultural centers - providers who are in immediate contact with the target groups of older people. There are also bottom-up activities. Unfortunately the support they receive is rarely financial.

In the provision of ICT skills, in Bulgaria the state libraries hold an important role in provision of trainings also to older people. Generally, ICT and digital literacy of older persons are not a part of any national strategy and are not largely encouraged even in countries with a long tradition of LiLL, such as Slovakia or Slovenia. In Slovakia, digital literacy is part of the Program of Active Ageing that is in preparation for 2014-2020 and focuses on older adults over 50 years of age. However, at the present time, Germany with its large state programs and projects promoting digital literacy in older persons stands alone here.

Existing structures of LiLL – the reality

In the project partners' countries, education of older adults is associated either with LLL or adult education. While in Slovenia, Slovakia and Germany LiLL became a permanent feature of general adult education and is supported by political strategies and large federations and associations, in Croatia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania it is of marginal importance in the respective governmental programs. The Serbian report mentions, that there is a deep gap between the general social acceptance of the concept of LiLL, the inclusion of older adults in the concept and the willingness to build this concept seriously. The Bulgarian report mentions the poor development of the area of education in a post-professional life stage within the Lifelong Learning Strategy. The Romanian report mentions the absence of LiLL in the current Lifelong Learning Strategy, the Croatian report speaks of relegation of LiLL to a marginal status in adult education that plays already only a marginal role in education policy. The development of LiLL is according to the Slovenian report strongly dependent on social developments and challenges presented by the new generations of seniors - the baby-boomers, who have new expectations of their post-professional period. Volunteering is growing on importance and this requires training. At the same time, the economic crises, existential uncertainties and worsening of financial situation reduce the interest in post-professional education, but the interest in free education has been growing.

While in Slovenia, Slovakia and Germany, large foundations and associations specialize in, or provide support for LiLL, in Croatia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania LiLL is implemented mainly by NGOs and civil society organisations that are not organised in professional associations specializing in older adult education. The activities are sporadic, the absence of platforms representing LiLL leads to lack of transparency and is a barrier to systematic cooperation between providers of LiLL and other actors in this field.

Distribution of LiLL offers

In all the partner countries, education, and with it also education in older age, is centered in and around larger cities. The poorer the region, the less offers are there. There is also relation to the general levels of education in the region. While in Slovenia, Germany and Slovakia, the networks of U3As, adult education centers, study circles and other networked education offers are relatively well distributed, in the other partner countries it is not the case. The most excluded are older people's households in rural areas.

Target groups of LiLL

The target groups of LiLL vary depending on the education offer and the provider. This refers to age and gender of the participants as well as education level. While in some countries certain education level is required for entry to the education program offered by an academic institution (U3As in Slovakia), in other countries this is not a prerequisite (U3As in Germany or Serbia). It can be said however, that generally, older people who live in the

cities, who are in post-professional life period or shortly before and who are better educated take part in education programs of LiLL.

The concentration of educational offers on towns is mentioned by all partners, whereby older adults in the rural areas in low economic status, lower education and reduced mobility, are the most excluded group. Suggestions are made for improvement such as systematic structured education for this target group provided by organisations that are well distributed in the country such as libraries or pensioners' clubs. Also ICT could take on an important role here.

LiLL providers, programs, financing

The various education offers are very differentiated. General academic education seems to be however offered solely by U3As (or similar) in the countries that have them. Except for Germany, ICT plays a small role in the education programs/activities offered.

In Germany and Slovenia, some education programs and activities are financed or co-financed from the state. In the other partner countries, financing comes mainly from fees paid by participants or from projects and from donations. In some cases, co-financing (at least in the form of rooms or equipment) is made by state universities who provide education of the third age (U3As) - Germany, Serbia, Slovakia. State libraries include seniors in their courses on ICT and languages in Bulgaria, Slovakia and Serbia, in Romania some LiLL activities are co-financed by municipalities. The Croatian report states that sometimes institutions use their internal resources to cover the difference in the cost of the program so that the old persons can participate. In the countries where older adults in a post-professional phase belong to the poorest section of the population, the cost of participation in the education programs presents the most significant barrier.

Professional support to LiLL

In Slovenia and Germany, professional support can be obtained from professional associations and networks, from expert bodies and sponsors, depending on the education program. In Slovakia, the Centers for continuing education that are also the carriers of LiLL are given professional support by the universities, office for LLL at the Ministry of education assists with evaluation, etc. In Croatia the support is limited due to the lack of national professional associations or similar bodies, at the universities there is a lack of research and teaching on andragogy. The Croatian report states that support comes mainly from international networks and professionals in related fields. LLL does not play an important role at universities in Croatia and Agency for vocational training and adult education specializes only in vocational training. Also in Serbia and Bulgaria, a system for support in LiLL is not systematically developed. In some cases sponsors or donors provide professional support, but this is rare.

In all the Danube countries, in spite of the political support in some of the economically stronger countries, there are hardly any established structures of LiLL that would secure sustainability of the education programs. Furthermore, besides the programs of the U3As, the programs visited by older people are often designed for adults in general, without specialization on age target groups. This also means that the methodologies used are not always appropriate. Programs, which are especially designed for older people with appropriate methodologies are still rather scarce.

However in the last years, the discipline of Learning in Later Life has been added to the curricula of degrees in education in Germany and also other countries and will bring forth experts and professionals in this field. It could be the beginning of a changing education culture.

RESULTS OF SWOT ANALYSIS FROM PARTNERS

Strengths

Favorable aspects of policy, strategy and existing education scene

There is already some tradition of LiLL in almost all the partner countries that are provided by various initiatives in Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania. Well organized system of LiLL exists in Slovakia and Slovenia.

Concerning strengths in the area of policies and strategies, these are rather directed on future developments. Serbia sees as a strength the newly established sector of Adult Education in the State administration and the adoption and plans for relevant strategies. Slovenia mentions in this context also the national compliance with the European strategy in the field of use and development of the ICT and the existence of national strategic documents emphasizing the priority of ICT use in education, related to general SI2010 strategy on information society development and the strategy of LiLL. Also Slovakia sees a strength in the preparation of a new national program of active ageing 2014-2020, with digital literacy of older people mentioned as one of the main goals. LiLL in general is already mentioned in the Slovak law about further education and Law about Lifelong Learning (LLL). The Slovenian partner mentions also national investment in ICT infrastructure and acquisition of e-skills.

Infrastructure and internal resources for LiLL and ICT

The partners saw as one of the main opportunities the infrastructure for (Learning in Later Life) LiLL and especially for ICT courses, with equipment and rooms available either directly at the education providers such as universities (Bulgaria, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia) or through cooperation partners such as libraries or schools (Bulgaria). They all also mention professional staff with experience of LiLL but also of ICT and in Bulgarian universities also the availability of volunteer trainers for ICT amongst students and technical staff.

Providers of LiLL incl. ICT courses, cooperation and networks

In Slovenia and Slovakia are large Associations of U3As who are the specialized providers of LiLL. The Slovenian partner notes the importance of large organisations such as SFPO (Slovenian Federation of Pensioners Organisations) and ICT Forum 50+. In Serbia are a few U3As attached to Universities and one in Croatia, where U3A is recognised as a "brand". In these two countries, various organisations provide LiLL. In Serbia, the cooperation of the Faculty of Philosophy of Belgrade University with NGOs who work with older people is mentioned. The Bulgarian partner sees a strength in cooperation with the public libraries and their association and with the chitalichtas. Both these providers have experience in giving courses to adults, also to older adults and have staff with the needed know-how. There is a good library network also in small towns and villages, ICT courses can be offered free of charge. Also the Serbian partner sees the libraries as a potential cooperation partner as they have resources for ICT courses. The Slovenian partner mentions the widespread Internet access in public spaces, clubs and associations. The Romanian partner mentions that an integrated system of seniors' education institutions can be created relatively easily and at low cost.

Good practices - LiLL & ICT

The Bulgarian, Croatian, Serbian, Slovakian and Slovenian partners mention as a strength the existence of good practices in their country. Concerning ICT, the Slovenian partner mentions activities presenting benefits of using ICT to older people and the fact that many organisations offer LiLL and ICT courses to older people free of charge.

International cooperation

International cooperation is seen as a strength by Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia - the participation in international projects (Slovenia), networking on international level and memberships in international organisations (Slovakia), the experience of the surveyed organisations in international cooperation (Bulgaria). Also in Serbia international cooperation is clearly recognized as an opportunity.

LiLL management and learners

The most partners mention good and engaged LiLL management. The Croatian partner mentions responsible, innovative and open-minded management of U3A, the Slovakian partner the enthusiasm of people working in the U3As, collaboration, creation of partnerships in seniors' education, the openness to innovative learning supported by all members of the Slovak Association of U3As. Concerning the learners, the Croatian partner mentions motivated, well educated students in most institutions, the Romanian the awareness of importance of ICT in communication and in general and the large potential of the target learner group in terms of their own competences, the Serbian the higher social connection and higher educational needs of the new generations of older adults, the Slovakian partner the interest of seniors in learning, their positive attitude to gaining and enlarging new knowledge and also the fact that LiLL had become a lifestyle of older adults in the bigger cities, the Slovenian partner notes the high interest in the use of ICT tools and e-services, the longer third age period of older adults and the possibility of more professional volunteering for older people.

Other strengths

Good quality of assessment and evaluation as guarantee for sustainable programs and good reputation of LiLL (Croatia), Increasing interest in the need for seniors' education (Romania) and highly raised awareness of the third age needs amongst experts and civil sector and the financing of NGOs from various sources (Serbia).

Weaknesses

Lack of funding, strategic, policy weaknesses and related problems on institutional level - LiLL and ICT

All partners see weaknesses in this area. The Bulgarian Partner points out that training for persons after retiring is not included in the National Strategy for LiLL until 2013 and had not received financial report from the government. The state does not promote the principles of LiLL enough. Since 2007 funding from the European Social Fund through the Operational Program "Human Resources Development" focuses only on improving the quality of education and training in accordance with the needs of the labour market. Also the support

from the local government is still weak. The Croatian partner also points out the lack of funding for education activities. There is lack of resources in organisations and the local authorities do not have resources planned for LiLL in the local or regional budget. There are problems with incomes in households. The Romanian partner mentions the discontinuity and underfunding of seniors' education. Weak implementation of adopted strategies, restrictive financial support and the situation in which most of the organisations are not familiar with national strategies, hinder the field of LiLL in Serbia. The Slovakian partner see as weakness not enough interest in the responsible bodies in the field of seniors' education and weak (if any) financial support, especially related to ICT training - equipment and rooms; poor policy support of LiLL with no concrete measures (e.g. salaries of university staff responsible for U3A activities), lack of homogenous strategy for seniors' education according to the principles of LiLL. The Slovenian partner writes of inefficient use of funds for R&D, low investment in the establishment of a national system of e-learning, lack of strategic priority or information society developments, absence of an ambitious and binding e-learning strategy and related absence of a competent operative body to implement the strategy.

Lack of cooperation and networking amongst relevant institutions

The lack of cooperation amongst the seniors' education organisations and other relevant bodies in the field of education and organisations representing them were noted by several partners. No connection between the institutions, especially the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Care (Bulgaria). Lack of authentic collaboration with higher education institutions, seniors' education institutions are not well integrated in the local institutional system (Romania). Absence of a strong and well-linked network focused on education of seniors (Serbia). Only partial networking of the institutions are taking part in seniors' education –no link between U3As and NGOs (Slovakia).

Weaknesses in the area of research and methods in LiLL and ICT

The Bulgarian partner pointed out the insufficient variety of programs for adult learning meeting individual needs and non-economic interests. Insufficient number of courses developed for LiLL and the absence of e-learning in educational programs for seniors of the contacted organisations was mentioned by the Serbian partner. The Slovakian partner noted the missing conceptual attitude to the identification of the seniors learning needs, the many research institutions or offices at the ministries (Ministry of education, Ministry of the social work and labour market) do not conduct research about educational needs of older adults, the main interest (which is also the interest of the EU) is acceptance in the labour market for people 50+. The Slovenian points out the traditionally designed programs with absence of blended learning, poor use of ICT in the learning process and low knowledge and skills in this area.

Low participation in LLL

Two partners mention this issue in the analysis in two different contexts: the low participation of older adults in LLL (Bulgaria) and uneven distribution of education between town and rural areas (Serbia).

Prejudices against LLL in older age, exclusion of older adults from statistics and marginalization of LiLL seem to be a topic in all partner countries.

The Bulgarian, Serbian and Slovenian partners point out the lack of statistical data for the target group of older adults. LiLL plays still a very small part in education and is marginalized. The Croatian partner notes internal organisation prejudices towards this target group, in

organisations in which LiLL is only part of wider education programs, explanation about importance of such programs is still needed. In Bulgaria, only small groups of older adults are trained mainly through various international projects by public libraries (Global Libraries project 2008-2013), by universities (SULSIT and others) and by NGOs like the Red Crest and others, however, after finishing the projects most of them do not continue. The quality of education and training is insufficient. The adult educators do not have the necessary qualifications to work with older adults and LiLL. The Serbian partner points out lack of training for trainers for LiLL, shortage of standards for educational quality regulation, undefined status of teachers in adult education. In Romania, seniors' education institutions do not have a very well defined status. LiLL is a neglected activity in organisation without stable structural basis for LiLL (separate department, professional staff, long term projects). The Slovenian partner points out the lack of research on the use of ICT amongst older people, the importance of ICT for them and the needs of older in using ICT. There is also insufficient training for mentors, teachers on more sophisticated use of ICT in education and lack of qualified staff for technical and professional support, lack of e-content in the field of e-health, e-learning, e-cultural heritage, e-commerce, etc.

Poverty and social exclusion, low education

Four partners have mentioned this issue as one of the weaknesses. The Bulgarian partner mentions that only a small number of older adults take part in governmental measures for social care or people with disabilities. Students with lower formal education are not motivated for learning and other activities are needed to motivate them (Croatia). Low level of education of older people is seen as hindering factor also by the Slovenian partner. Weak economic status is hindering older people in participating in social activities and their social inclusion (Serbia).

Barriers hindering older people in using ICT

In all countries, the number of older persons using the ICT is smaller than that of other age groups. Their digital skills are weaker than those of their younger counterparts (Romania). Low education, weak economic opportunities and low percentage of older adults who have their own computer and Internet at home and speak English present a barrier for them (Serbia). Also the Slovakian partner mentions the financial inaccessibility of the ICT equipment to seniors and the fact that there are no policy programs supporting companies in giving older people their used ICT equipment as a hindering factor. The Slovenian partner mentions the rare use of Internet for education by older adults and the situation in which almost all interactive courses in virtual learning are closed or commercial. This is also due to the fact that many of the ICT environments are in English. Further barriers are fear of security and privacy and the lack of knowledge about the benefits of ICT on behalf of older people. On behalf of the organisations it is inadequate information about uses and methods in the field of ICT.

Technical, infrastructure, access barriers to using ICT

The partners mention weaknesses in the area of costs of ICT equipment, professional know-how concerning methods and technical support, non-availability of ICT training in important education organisations. The Bulgarian partner mentions that unlike in towns, where it is usual to have computers in the family, in small towns the access is mostly through libraries or Internet clubs. In some public libraries there is not enough staff for ICT training. In Croatia, technological equipment is not updated and there is a lack of sustainable technical assistance in organisations and lack of hotlines which is connected with lack of resources. The Serbian

partner points out that the providers' insufficient technical facilities are limiting the number of potential participants in ICT courses. In Slovenia, schools, universities and adult education centres are poorly equipped with ICT; the Computer literacy project activities declined in the late 1990s and led to corresponding delay in PC equipment for schools; education organisations have lack of work spaces such as PC pools; Pensioners' Associations which are very important organisations in local community for learning of older people do not have all ICT equipment, also adult education centres experience problems in using ICT - equipment, professional support, information about the uses and methods of ICT in education.

Opportunities

Strategies and policies, support from state

Like in "Strengths", the partners see opportunities in the area of policy and strategy in future actions and in participation in EU policy processes. In Bulgaria, the chance for LiLL is seen in the new National Strategy for LLL (2014-2020) where for the first time the area of impact 8 - "Enhancing the quality of life through learning after a career" is developed. The Croatian partner sees cross-border cooperation on regional and European level as an opportunity to start new projects, networks, and sustainable institutions for educational support and training. The Serbian partner sees as an opportunity the adjusting of national policies in education with EU educational policies, funding from European Union, support of municipalities for ICT courses for older adults, the fact that the local government provide e-services, the planned creation of National centre for educational technology. The Slovakian partner mentions developing tools for monitoring and evaluating seniors' education by policy makers, ministerial or research institutions – to be used for the National program of active ageing and also stricter monitoring of EU funds that should be more oriented to the senior citizens also 60+ not only with focus on labour market. The Slovenian partner points out the access to EU Structural Funds and Programs, the increase in the share of economically active population as the potential to increase total employment rate (encouraging the employment of older workers, intergenerational employment and volunteering) and the improvement of social and cultural capital in local community by supporting educational community.

The role and importance of universities and their field of expertise and influence for LiLL

The Bulgarian partner states that universities and libraries should have important role in the implementation of the strategy for active aging, they have potential and the human resources (also student volunteers) to offer senior citizens a variety of opportunities for full participation in life through learning. They should offer training by professional trainers, training of trainers and intergenerational projects. Also the Serbian partner sees the opportunity for enhancing LiLL in universities. For example the Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy at Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade is ready for training of trainers in education of older adults, a faculty partner organization is capable for creating and managing Resource Centre and the Faculty is capable to support it with expertise in the field of education of older adults. The Slovakian partner sees as an opportunity in using the relations with city bodies for the establishment of relationships and contracts for use of the PC rooms at schools (elementary, secondary) by seniors and in cooperation with companies to gain support for ICT equipment for activities with seniors; a further opportunity would be peer teaching by UTA graduates at old peoples' homes. The Croatian partner considers integrating different stakeholders and target groups into planning (development of national and regional cooperation with all stakeholders who can help LiLL, with the same proposal from education institution networks to local authorities, as bottom up approach)The Slovenian partner sees

as an opportunity implementing the validation of non-formal learning (flexible learning pathways) and the development of quality standards for e-learning projects for older people, training of teachers and trainers for more complex use of ICT in the educational process, increasing the role of the third age sector in the field of education and promotion of ICT and other non-formal programs and widening thematic scope of the programs content.

Lobbying and PR work

The Bulgarian partner mentions lobbying, seeking sponsors and other forms of financing/business of specialized NGOs, governmental institutions, the EU/ etc.; the provision of needed information for decision-making to the public, the social and economic structures and university management bodies; raising awareness among the public, social and economic structures to support and facilitate access to new communication and information services. The Serbian partner mentions cooperation with the media and the Slovenian partner the increase of the positive role of the media in the promotion of ICT, e-inclusion of older people; the promotion of self-study of older people in the field of ICT and the promotion of active aging of older people.

National and cross border cooperation and internationalization, EU standards

All partners have seen opportunities in this area. The Bulgarian partner suggests communicating and interacting with similar organizations in the country and abroad, the Croatian in increased cross-border cooperation, using resources from international projects in LiLL (methodologies, translated textbooks, best practices) and the development of national and regional centres which could help professionalization of LiLL, empowered quality and quantity of LiLL. The Romanian partner mentions that European collaboration represents an exceptional stimulus for moral and motivational support of seniors' education and its possible contribution to its further development; the Romanian educational integration in EU is conditioned and determined by ICT use and there are people with expertise in European project management. The Serbian partner focuses on partnerships with other EU institutions interested in seniors' education in the Danube Region and making use of the experience from European projects to build up the educational infrastructure; Organizations recognize Danube strategy as possibility for cooperation. Also the Slovak partner mentions international cooperation, international projects in the field of education for older adults and the application of examples of good practice from abroad. The Slovenian partner highlights collaboration between different organizations (e.g. computer companies, schools, educational organizations) as an opportunity.

Establishments of competent representations bodies

On the national level, the partners recommend encouraging and supporting various forms of cooperation and professional networks: association and cooperation between libraries in higher education institutions in the country (Bulgaria), network-based communication (social networking) and the neglected possibility of advocacy coalitions for better position of intergenerational learning and different dimensions of LiLL (Croatia), the establishment of a competent authority for coordinating the activities in the field of e-learning, Establishment of a Gerontology Centre (Slovenia).

Digital literacy and web presence of LiLL

The Bulgarian partner suggests the opportunity for creating a website with useful practical information, specially designed for health, educational and hobby needs of elder people that

will publish best practices in LiLL and will help some institutions with advice for better teaching programmes. The Croatian partner speaks of increased educational opportunities by distance learning (not only for ICT education) and regional cooperation in developing new programmes, using new methods and tools for education, education for e-government and participation in social and political life (education programmes for new challenges of e-government, which are important for every citizen are missing). In this context the Romanian partner points out that ITC use can rapidly increase the quality of seniors' education. The Serbian partner points out that ICT facilitates use of services in public sector and that there is a great need for ICT among older adults; as the Government develops more e-services they should invest in teaching older adults in ICT; they see digital literacy is basic for developing new educational programs; use of ICT in the education of children opens opportunities for intergenerational approaches including older adults. The Slovak partner mentions that new technologies offer new incentives for education and that the availability of distance and e-learning of seniors can be increased by the support of Telekom company or by using Internet in public places, libraries, at the schools free of charge; seniors' knowledge can be utilized for supervising / mentors in companies (Peer learning). They consider it necessary to convince older adults to use Internet because it will be necessary for daily life when in the project E-Government in Slovakia all the documents will be placed on the websites of the municipalities; to encourage seniors to use ICT and improve the access to ICT in the public places, to improve the skills of those seniors who have already the access to the ICT but not access to the Internet, to enhance opportunities for using Internet, also Internet for E-learning, to improve the courses of ICT in UTA, in NGO, clubs for seniors, etc. Also the Slovenian partner addresses the issue of e-participation. They consider it necessary to promote websites for e-participation (municipal website, the administration office, various associations ...), to improve access to education for older people (acquisition of ICT skills and other non-formal learning) and to initiate more targeted measures of e-literacy of older people accompanied by promotion of digital literacy and improving access to ICT. ICT is an opportunity to modernize social and health services (creation of e-health, e-medical, home e-care), it can increase social inclusion of older people (taking into account their needs and initiatives). Needed is investment in the development of customized hardware and software to the needs of older people and governmental support for the dissemination of ICT skills among older people (the government should see this as an important step both in terms of greater involvement of older people as well as the terms of employment of older people; support should come both on the legislative level (laws, strategies, actions) as well as the promotional level; Slovenian language should be a compulsory e-learning language (design programs, software, materials in the Slovenian language); a system of co-mentors (introducing mentoring schemes, older people as transmission of knowledge) should be established.

The regional distribution of LiLL and ICT

This issue was seen as an opportunity by several partners. The possibility of including LiLL in more small towns and villages was mentioned by Bulgarian partner; the role of older adults in this process who are trained at U3As as carriers of skills by sharing their knowledge and teaching volunteers was mentioned by Slovenia and Slovakia. Slovenia also mentions the opportunity of involving large organisations such as SFPO (Serbian Federation of pensioners' Associations) which could become places of training ICT to older people.

Threats

Financial, economic, political issues, low status of LiLL

The biggest threat for all partners is the lack of funds and the lack of transparency of financial resources for education seniors.

The Bulgarian partner writes that it is not sure that the National Strategy 2014-2010 for learning after career will receive money. That is especially dangerous for the universities, which are budget organizations. Another big threat in Bulgaria is the lack of financial support from the local authorities. It is expected that certain laws for university, vocational education and adult education will change, however, it is yet unsure if the changes will be positive or negative concerning LiLL. Also instable political and economic situation is a problem in Bulgaria. Future developments are difficult to foretell. The negative effect of economic situation on initiatives related to older adults is mentioned also by the Serbian and the Croatian partner.

The Slovenian partner mentions in this context the threat caused by the stop of program financing by the European Social Fund (ICT courses for older people, literacy courses, project studies for young people, study circles ...), as the program for the period 2014-2020 is not ready yet, these programs will not be financed for one year, adult education centres do not have additional funds to support these programs, therefore in 2014 the provision of these programs that represent a large share of all provisions will be stopped. Furthermore, private educational organizations and companies (especially small ones) cannot be financed by Ministry of Education, Science and Sports.

In Croatia, threat is the marginal position of LiLL, which is neglected part of national strategies and policies (local and state authorities accept LiLL without really supporting it). This is also pointed out by the Romanian partner, who mentions also the instability of institutions providing LiLL and by the Serbian partner.

The Slovenian partner mentions absence of key reforms and the insufficient know-how and information of the policy makers concerning trends and current projects in the field of education of older adults that would enable them to make sound decisions. They also mention lack of local authorities support and the low value of e-learning in formal education. The lack of intersectional cooperation horizontally and vertically, the lack of cooperation within the civil sector and the situation in which large seniors' representation bodies such as the political part of pensioners are not interested in LiLL is mentioned by the Serbian partner. The negative effects of this situation on LiLL are further enhanced by lack of knowledge for applying for EU Funds (complicated procedures).

The Slovak partner states that EU resources useful for the development of local and regional authorities will be not used for education and seniors / it happened already for the region of Bratislava and also the failure to develop in the medium term, comprehensive and effective system of education seniors.

Threats and barriers for older learners

The threats concerning the learners identified by all partners were similarly like in "Weaknesses" the weak economic situation of the older adults. The Croatian partner mentions in this context the regional differences, the Serbian and the Slovak partners the negative fact that the fees in the current offers of LiLL have to be paid by the older learners, a threat that is increasing because of the increasing costs of LiLL, the Slovenian partner notes that the risk of poverty applies especially to women and the Romanian partner social and cultural marginalization of older adults, a fact connected with poverty.

Changes in the needs and tastes of the learner target groups and insufficient communication between the older adults and the society is mentioned by the Bulgarian partner, regional economic and social differences and social prejudices against the older population by the Croatian. Serbia see as further threats the fact that there is a high percentage of older adults with low educational attainment combined with the high ranking position amongst countries with the highest % of older population and the increase of trend of aging of the population. Concerning digital literacy and ICT, the Bulgarian partner points out low initial level of digital literacy and the Slovenian a risk of digital divide and also the connection between low ICT literacy of older persons and low education.

Threats and barriers on institutional level

These are often in the staffing situation. The Bulgarian partner notes that only a small number of the interviewed organisations use volunteers for LiLL, the Romanian mentions that wasting the resources of seniors. The Croatian points out that the part-time involved in LiLL loose motivation because of lack of financial support. The Serbian report speaks of fluctuation of the staff involved in education of older adults (most of them are part time, external staff or volunteers) and the low payment of staff for work with older adults.

The threat of import of foreign educational projects is mentioned by the Slovakian and the Slovenian partners.

Due to organisational differences and lack of national cooperation body in LiLL it is difficult to take more influence on national level (Croatia). The educational goals of older adults are narrowed and limited to personal connections - staying in touch with family members - (Serbia).

In terms of ICT on organisational level presents a major problem is the update of technological equipment (Bulgaria), no awareness of use of ICT in the education of older adults (Serbia) and the lack of e-content and e-services in the national language in areas such as science, education, culture, e-commerce, as well as the small size of the country for software and learning content development (Slovenia).

Problems of cooperation and representation

The Bulgarian partner mentions underdeveloped information and consultation on national and local level and the lack of statistical information about training programs for participants in the age group 64 +, the Croatian the lack of social representation and intergenerational trust and cooperation (problem of national and local priorities in period of crisis) and the Serbian partner the lack of "Social map" within Serbian regions, no database of organizations which deal with education of older adults.

RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS

The aim of the interviews was to gather data from different types of organisations and possibly in different regions in order to map out the situation of learning in later life in the respective partner countries. The project partners selected their interview partners according to their programs (representing different LiLL offers), their locations (as distributed in the country as possible) and sometimes also for their potential as network partners in future LiLL projects and activities, national and international.

Serbia: 12 organisations. 3 U3As, 2 NGOs. 2 libraries, 2 schools of computers, 1 gerontology center, 1 foreign cultural center.

Slovakia: 10 institutions. 4 U3As, 1 library, 3 seniors' clubs, 1 university, 1 NGO

Bulgaria: 8 from public libraries (community centers, municipal or regional), 4 from universities and 4 from NGOs (foundations, associations).

Croatia: 13 organisations, open universities, libraries, NGOs, university, local authorities, culture centers.

Romania: 15 organisations, 4 state universities and institutes, 2 culture houses, 1 public library, 3 cultural associations, 2 seniors' associations, 2 adult education providers, 1 charity organisation.

Slovenia - 7 organisations. 2 adult education centers, 1 Developmental education center, 1 Slovenian 1 Federation of pensioner's associations, 1 computer company, 1 U3A.

Germany: conducted were interviews with key persons and institutions in the field of LiLL representing different types of education offers.

SERBIA

Organisations interviewed

1. Academia Educativa
2. American Corner Novi Sad
3. Belgrade City Library
4. Center for Education "Djuro Salaj"
5. International Aid Network
6. Gerontology center Subotica
7. National library Jagodina
8. National library Užice
9. People University "Božidar Adžija"
10. Charity organization "Bred of Life"
11. Computer school "CET"
12. Computer school "Nimiko"

Conclusion

The data gathered show some of the conditions in education of older adults in Serbia, and especially in the ICT area. Various organizations are trying to take a part in the market of LiLL. However, there is no budget for education of older adults, in spite of the need for different skills and knowledge in this target group. Because of that, only small group of older adults can afford to participate in educational programs.

Great need for ICT skills and ICT courses for older adults represent the same conditions as in the whole field of LiLL. Only small group of older adults can afford to participate in ICT courses. Others are waiting to participate in courses which are free. It is clear that great need for ICT skills among older adults exists and because of that lots of providers are trying to provide such a knowledge and skills, but it is not enough to satisfy all demands. Because of that it is not unusual that libraries provide this knowledge, and that different kinds of organization are trying to satisfy the need of "the older adults market".

One of the main reasons for the great need to learn ICT amongst older adults is the need for communication with children and grandchildren who are abroad. ICT become one of the main communicating tools, and they need skills and knowledge to use it. But when they gain basic ICT skills, they discover new possibilities of internet. They start to search for information in different fields (e.g. politics, society, science, health, etc.). Basic ICT skills are only a key to a door of room with new possibilities.

On other hand, there is an increase of awareness in society that digital literacy is necessity of today's life. If we want to use advantages and opportunities of ICT in everyday life (e-library, e-banking, e-services of government, e-commerce, etc.), we have to be digital literate. Government is popularizing digital literacy, and the use of ICT for everyday life. Currently there is lack of promotion of use of ICT among older adults, nevertheless, there are many organizations in Serbia which are trying to offer ICT training to them. These organisations need support, and government, if they want to provide e-service, will have to support them. Every day, awareness of need for ICT in seniors' education is increasing. Organizations dealing with education of older adults will have to promote the use of ICT by older adults and to improve quality of their educational offers. This way, quality of life in older age will become better. Organizing all organizations which deal with education of older adults is one of main solutions of all problems. They could share resources, good practice, knowledge, and take on lobbying for this education field. On an international level, the Danube Strategy and common European space could be great possibility for cooperation. Common space is important for exchanging knowledge and practice, and creating projects.

SLOVAKIA

Organisations interviewed

1. Institute for LLL programs and its UTA at the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava
2. Centre for Continuing education and its UTA at Comenius University in Bratislava
3. Centre for continuing education and its UTA at Zilinska University in Zilina
4. Academy of the Third Age in Pezinok
5. City library in Bratislava
6. House for pensioners and its Club
7. Daily centre for seniors in the village Cierna voda
8. Club of the seniors in the village Cierna voda
9. Faculty of Philosophy at Comenius University in Bratislava
10. Academy of the Armed Forces (AOS) in Liptovsky Mikulas

Conclusion

In Slovakia exists an awareness of the importance of digital literacy in older adults on a governmental level as well as LiLL providers' level. A good network of institutions offers LiLL and also ICT courses. The predominant learning form of LiLL is rather conservative – lectures and discussions. The aim of ICT courses varies – from basics, over communication, to practical application (finances, library use). Some cooperation takes place between organisations in order to gain professional support or to get rooms. Financing is mainly from fees and other sources, the state finances ICT activities in the regions, however omitting towns, in some organisations e.g. U3As at universities, state resources (rooms, staff) are implemented. Some sustainable ICT education activities originate in EU projects. The costs for purchasing up-to-date equipment, for teaching rooms, etc. seem to be the main problem of providing courses fostering digital literacy. The solutions mentioned include lobbying, looking for sponsors and other forms of funding (businesses, specialized NGOs, government institutions, EU), not too strict rules for gaining financial support, or equipment, gaining equipment from the companies, which do not need it longer.

BULGARIA

Organisations Interviewed

1. Society „Education and Technologies“
2. Association of University Libraries (AUB)
3. Folk chitalishte “Nikola Yonkov Vapcarov”
4. Folk chitalishte “Nikola Yonkov Vapcarov”, Dulovo
5. Foundation “SOS CONTRACTORS”
6. Centre for Continuing Education at New Bulgarian University
7. Municipal library “Paisij Hilendarski”
8. Library, New Bulgarian University
9. Regional popular library “Emanuil Popjordanov”
10. Regional library “Sava Dobroplodni”
11. Regional popular library “Pencho Slavejkov”
12. Regional popular library “Petko Rachev Slavejkov”
13. State University for Library Studies and Information Technologies

Conclusion

Without existing structure of education for the target group of people in post-retirement life period such as U3As or specialized clubs and other providers of LiLL, the Bulgarian partner has concentrated on public libraries and a few specialist NGOs. Their education programs are mainly for all age groups with the inclusion of older adults, however, 6 of the interviewed providers include courses designed especially for older participants 60+. Older people take sometimes part in continuing education or vocational training offered for all age groups. In the universities, the training of older adults takes place only within third party funded projects.

The libraries have traditionally an older clientele. They train mainly ICT and languages, also specially designed courses for older people 45+ and older. The library is seen as an organization that enables learning throughout life, depending on the needs and the interest of consumers. Informal learning dominates the offers. Regarding learning objectives, the most frequent answer is that this is a practical training to support daily life of older people.

The technical equipment in the libraries and also the NGOs is generally good. The ICT training concentrates mainly on computer literacy aimed for use in the daily life, aim is mainly the development of skills to search for useful information which they need using the library computer resources. The same is the goal of the university libraries participating in AUL.

The organizational vision concentrates on widening of the field of education activity of the libraries and their offers, to transfer digital literacy, improve networking, to "Raise awareness among the public, social and economic structures need to support and facilitate consumer access to new communication and information services. Through the development of active public communication AUL aims to create a new, modern image of the university libraries in Bulgaria as a public utility institutions" (Association of University Libraries, AUL).

No support for these goals from the state policies replied most of the institutions, all trainings are for people under 65 age. Operational Program "Human Resources Development" 2007-2013 for older workers concentrated on persons between 55-64 years of age. There is a chance in 2014 that adult education for persons in post-professional phase to be included in operational programs, but this has not happened yet.

At the local level support comes for example through participation in initiatives such as "Culture and Tourism", 2011-2015 (Regional Library in Veliko Tarnovo).

Concerning the support by the Danube Strategy, only the Regional Library in Veliko Tarnovo answered this question - indirectly by providing information about current projects and cross-border cooperation through the participation of libraries in Municipality Svishtov, Veliko Tarnovo which is a methodical centre in various programs and initiatives connected with European policy on the Danube Strategy.

Concerning Financing of LiLL and digital literacy trainings, state finances only formal education. However, all universities participating in the survey have rooms and equipment necessary for ICT training, various training programs, materials and professionally trained teachers.

Community centres are funded by the Ministry of Culture (80%) and complementary local funding (about 20%). As a rule, they have 3 to 6 computers that are used for training. Regional libraries receive funds from the state, local authorities and European projects. As a rule, they have up to 25 computers (Sliven more - 50, but this is an exception). They are also equipped with more and better trained librarians.

Support from local governments varies in specific localities and depends on both the mayor and the resources of the municipality and the director of the regional library. The chosen regional libraries receive support from their municipalities.

The problems noted were mainly lack of financial resources of the institution and shortage of staff training. The target learner group 60 + in Bulgaria does not have financial resources. However, lack of qualified personnel for technical assistance only applies to smaller organizations.

Amongst the solutions mentioned were provision of public, social and economic structures and university management information needed for decision making. Communicating and interacting with similar organizations at home and abroad. Encouraging and supporting various forms of associations and cooperation between libraries in higher education institutions in the country. Improving the quality of existing programs through the application of new learning goals, expanding the thematic scope of the activities / programs, expansion of training opportunities through the inclusion of other regions / countries internationalization. (Association of University Libraries - AUL).

CROATIA

Organisations interviewed

1. Sveučilište za treću dob u POUZ
2. Služba za cjeloživotno obrazovanje Sveučilišta u Rijeci
3. Grad Zagreb
4. Pučko otvoreno učilište - Universita' popolare aperta "ANTE BABIĆ"
5. Orr Svi smo protiv
6. Knjižnice grada Zagreba
7. Pučko otvoreno učilište Osijek
8. Hrvatska Zajednica Tehnicke Kulture
9. Udruga umirovljenika hrt-A
10. Ministarstva soc pol i mladih
11. Gradska knjižnica Zadar
12. Centar za kulturu Trešnjevka (CEKATE)
13. Dom za starije i nemoćne osobe Trešnjevka

Conclusion

We can conclude that there is a wide range of different local, regional and national organisations which provide LiLL. They all have their *raison d'être* for different participants but this great diversity is sometimes an obstacle for program development and quality of education. So, there is a great need for institutional support and training provisions for specific form of education for older adults.

Dominant in all institutions is a traditional educational style, but professional education institutions are more open and qualified for new methods, more innovative in program development.

In all organisations the use of ICT-based instructional designs is reduced to ICT courses. They do not have online courses or online learning in LiLL, although a few of them (universities and public universities) have well developed distance learning practice with online learning, online lectures (using Moodle platform), within other educational programs, which are not designed for older adults.

Education is provided mostly by traditional methods so there are underestimated benefits in enabling new fields of activity for the learners (ICT peer teaching, joining online communities, taking part in eLearning courses, extending professional possibilities, etc.).

We could conclude there is still ICT used as a one-way communication channel with neglected potential of development of distance learning as more flexible form of learning.

ROMANIA

Organisations interviewed

1. Popular University of Timișoara (represented by rector Pavel Dehelean);
2. Culture House of the Municipality of Timișoara (represented by rector Pavel Dehelean);
3. Popular University of Bucharest 'I. Dalles' (expert Ileana Boeru);
4. Culture House 'F. Schiller' (rector Mariana Dului and;
5. University of Bucharest (vice-rector Professor Romiță Iucu);
6. Cultural Association 'Constantin Brâncuși' from Timișoara (President Professor Engineer Horia Ciocârlie, PhD);

7. Romanian Writers League, Filiala Timișoara-Banat (President Doina Drăgan);
8. 'Mihai Eminescu' Association (Prof. Mariana Sperlea);
9. Romanian Institute of Adult Education (Professor Simona Sava, PhD);
10. 'V.A. Urechia' County Library from Galați (expert Zamfir Ilie);
11. Orizont Cultural T NGO from Craiova (President Rodica Mială).
12. EDUNET NGO (President Victor Dudău);
13. Board of Seniors and Senior Association from Timișoara (President Nicu Vlad);
14. Seniors Association from Timisoara (Vice-President Ștefan Tat);
15. Princess Margareta of Romania Foundation (President Mugurel Mărgărit).

Conclusion

In Romania, the initiatives for seniors' education are not included in a national or county strategy; rather they are bottom up activities, or the results of actions of local communities which try to offer some educational opportunities for the large number of population of seniors. European projects provide funding to some of those who are skilled in applying for them.

The importance of digital literacy is recognised, however, the high cost of equipment and the lack of financial resources on behalf of the organisations and the learners present a barrier. The organisations are badly equipped, the ICT courses concentrate on basic skills. ICT are not used for teaching other subjects, the possibilities of the Internet for learning or online communities are not explored.

The consensus seem to be that financing is seriously affecting seniors' organizations capacity to properly function, especially when there is a lack of expertise in developing applications for European projects.

SLOVENIA

Organisations interviewed

1. Slovenian Federation of Pensioners' Organization (SFPO)
2. Adult Education Centre (ADC) Ajdovščina
3. Adult Education Centre Krško
4. INFORIA, Robert Babčec S. P.
5. Razvojno izobraževalni center Novo mesto
6. Daily Centres of Activities for Older Adults (DCA)
7. Third Age University in Ljubljana

Conclusion

In Slovenia, numerous organisations are offering LLL with the inclusion of older adults such as the Adult Education centres that are distributed throughout the country. Wide network of u3As is offering LiLL. Also NGOs have LiLL in their program. The LiLL providers have learners aged 65+, with 80% participants being women. The LiLL providers are organised in large and active associations, they have know-how in work with older people, training of trainers and mentors, in the work in projects and applying for them. The teaching approach in most organisations is traditional, with basic use of ICT for teaching. The adult education centres as well as the U3As have some staff but rely strongly on volunteers. The interviewed NGO Inforia focuses on LiLL, offering ICT courses for older adults.

The ICT courses offered have as aim digital literacy for everyday use, independent life and e-services, the ICT courses offered by the adult education centres are financed by the Ministry

of Education, Science and Sport and European Social Fond. DCA, U3 Ljubljana and SFPO do not offer e-learning, they strive for development of e-programs and aware that there is currently lack of such initiatives. U3 Ljubljana offer ICT courses for 7 different levels and have the required equipment. DCA and SFPO do not have it, older people have to bring own equipment to ICT activities. Local APs organise courses in cooperation with schools. Planned are better equipment and the offer of courses ICT for everyday life. Inforia has a web portal, equipment, know-how and offers ICT for 6 different levels. Trials were made in offering e-learning for older people but this was stopped due to lack of interest.

U3 Ljubljana is financed by courses fees, projects are financed by Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and Ministry of Public Administration; DCA is financed by Municipality of Ljubljana; SFPO is financed by Ministry of Labour Market, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Public Administration, NGO, European Social Funds, Lifelong Learning Program and membership fees. INFORIA is financed by courses fees.

Widening of the ICT offer for older adults is the vision of all the interviewed organisations, including inclusion of free e-learning materials and self-learning via virtual environments (RIC Nove mesto). Mediating skills of e-services is the vision of U3 Ljubljana.

Lack of finances, technical equipment and technical and professional support is the common problem for all organisations except for RIC Nove mesto which is a young and e-literate collective. Inadequate information about uses, methods of the use of ICT for education of learners and mentors, lack of interest by older adults to learn ICT is mentioned by U3 Ljubljana, DCA and SFPO.

All the organisations mention multiple benefits for the organisation and learners in teaching and using ICT in LiLL.

Except for Inforia, all interviewed organisations are financed or co-financed from stage and EU funds.

RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS AND PROJECTS FROM PARTNERS

Action type	Content	Resources and Funding	Scope	Results
Structural actions	Connecting existing national and regional policies of adult education, LLL and LiLL, as well as ICT when provided, to actions	Own pre-work	National	Social inclusion and active citizenship, digital literacy, knowledge society, demographic and economic development
	Development of a resource centre on LiLL and ICT with main focus of promotion and lobbying	Network project Funding: network funds of the EU	International with actions of national focus involved: Universities, NGOs, other stakeholders	Website and Good practice database Study on e-literacy of older people Developing a common social-political statement Maximise cooperation with the media Campaign for a change of image of older people of ill, in need of care to active persons possessing competences (resources) Events organised for promoting advantages of ICT for older people
	Connecting EU Strategy 2020 for LiLL and ICT to actions	Own pre-work	International	Social inclusion and active citizenship, digital literacy, knowledge society, demographic and economic development
	Initiation of an association of U3As and other providers of seniors education (60+) Cooperation with NGOs with access to target groups	Own initiative Funding: relevant programs at ministries and/or EU (regional development, etc.), private sponsors	National	Access to LiLL, ICT, active citizenship, social communication, maintenance of health and cognitive abilities, intergenerational topics, public campaigning on national level, national research projects

	Initiation of a network of LiLL providers (Unis, NGOs) with focus on ICT use Cooperation with NGOs with access to target groups	Network project Funding: network funds of the EU	International	Web-based platform for information and exchange, methodological centre for LiLL and ICT, information about good practices, campaigning on EU level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research - Publications - Conferences
Digital literacy, online learning and communities	Information campaign about the benefits of ICT for seniors.	Own initiative Funding: relevant programs at ministries and/or EU (regional development, etc.), private sponsors	National with partners from the government, NGOs, universities and private sector	Social inclusion, active ageing, independence in old age Mobile PC Pool, or PC pools at libraries and schools, lectures and other information actions, short courses, flyers, posters, brochures, etc.
	Initiation of ICT centres for seniors in rural areas (Senior-Internet-helpers)	Multilateral or equivalent Funding: EU funds, national budgets and private sponsors	International with actions on local level (in cooperation with NGOs and potential Cooperation with libraries and schools as access places in the partner countries.	Digital literacy, easier access to Internet, help to self-help Conducting study in the partner countries about the benefits and the use of ICT by seniors, provision of cheap access to the Internet, sharing methodologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website with resources - Conference - Training people (librarians, seniors, young teach old) on location.
	Developing barrier-free virtual learning and communication platform for seniors	Multilateral or equivalent Funding: EU funds, national budgets and private sponsors	International Joint concept with individual national platforms	Digital literacy and access to all, independent old age Establishing a website/communication platform with information and topics

				important and interesting for seniors – health and healthy lifestyle, travel, virtual learning courses, etc.
Methodologies for LiLL and ICT	Development of approaches to older adults who are not motivated to learn	Multilateral or equivalent Funding: EU funds, national budgets and private sponsors	International	Inclusiveness of LiLL, right to education in old age. Demographic and economic issues and developments How to deal with a resistance to learning? How to reach persons with lower education? In rural areas? The very old? Methods and contents. Information campaigns
	Methods on ICT basics – target group related	Multilateral or equivalent Funding: EU funds, national budgets and private sponsors	International	Target group related approaches Study on learning groups Tandem learning (old-old or young-old, using tried and tested methods (SIH, Each one teach one, etc.) Addressing issue of safety as major barrier to using the Internet. Intergenerational topics and approaches
	Development of Learning contents of interest to seniors (for face to face and web-based learning)	Multilateral or equivalent Funding: EU funds, national budgets and private sponsors	International Joint concepts with individual national thematic	Right to learning in all ages. Maintenance and transfer of competences
	Development of methods and contents for the very old (fourth age)	Multilateral or equivalent	International Joint concepts with individual	In third age preparation for the next age takes place

		Funding: EU funds, national budgets and private sponsors	national thematic.	Social inclusion, independence into very old age
	Methods on new developments in ICT.	Multilateral or equivalent Funding: EU funds, national budgets and private sponsors	International. International Joint concepts with individual national thematic.	Web-based social networks and communication Tools Offers in the Internet: eHealth, eGovernment, eBanking, Shopping
	Supporting tandem learning (Model Each one teach one and others) and developing a system of mentoring (ICT mentoring schemes at work)	Multilateral or equivalent Funding: EU funds, national budgets and private sponsors	International with strong national focus	Demographic issues, intergenerational dialogue
	ICT Program for older people with special need –disabled who are at home	Social fond, government, private sponsors	National In cooperation with social services and NGOs on location	Digital and social inclusion, enhancing independence e.g. in Belgrade 2600 disabled people who are at home
	Digital photography exposition - intergenerational	Learning Partnership	International In cooperation of NGOs	Intergenerational dialogue, new technologies
	Learning crafts through online lectures	Learning partnership	International In cooperation with NGOs	Online lecture on method followed by international meetings for testing and exchanges
Teacher/trainer training	Teachers/trainers/multipliers learn methods of LiLL. Certificated course	Multilateral or equivalent or In service training workshop Funding: EU funds, national budgets, private sponsors	International	Development of curricula, implementation of pilot courses
	Teachers/trainers/multipliers learn methods of ICT in older age. Certificated course.	Multilateral or equivalent Or In service training	International	Development of curricula, implementation of pilot courses

		workshop Funding: EU funds, national budgets, private sponsors		
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