



NORDIC+ SENIOR GOLDEN EXAMPLES

**Findings about senior learning from
Finland, Iceland, Lithuania and Norway**



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INTRODUCTION

The methods used in adult education today do not give adequate support to the participation of seniors. Therefore one of the big challenges of adult education is the training of seniors. For this purpose it is important to develop the methods and contents of training. Today education mainly concentrates on "hard" knowledge and the significance of social skills is underestimated. Emphasizing these skills would strengthen the meaning of experience, which would benefit senior employees and help their training. The resources of adult education must be increased, and more attention must be paid to the development of practical learning situations and training material as well as to diversifying training course contents. Seniors may not have the capacity to manage modern methods of learning. Senior learning depends on the organization of the learning event: it needs specific learning strategies, conditions, methods and a pace suitable for seniors. In addition, the learning has to be realized according to their aptitude, learning skills and terms. How are the needs of seniors taken into account when planning the contents of training, choosing the methods of teaching and organizing the events of learning?

The purpose of the Nordic+ Senior Golden Examples -project was to collect existing knowledge of the methods and contents of teaching that the successful senior learning demands.

The methods of education for the aging population have been pondered over on a relatively large scale nationally and

there are statistics available. However, these statistics mainly include information on working age population. The purpose of this project was to get a wider view on this subject, covering the Nordic and even the Baltic countries. Therefore we interviewed 45 seniors over 55 years of age in each project partner country to find out their attitudes towards lifelong learning. We compared and analyzed the results. It was interesting to find that there are a lot of similarities in our societies.

As a result of this project we found out new methods to increase the knowledge and skills of seniors, and reasons for non-participation in training. Also as a result of this project we have produced this report on the statistics concerning the training of seniors divided by countries and ages as well as collected recommendations, good practices and examples of the training of seniors (needs, aims, barriers etc. concerning participation).

This report is meant for anybody who wants to become familiar with the practices in other countries, utilize them and learn from them.

This project conforms to the aim of Nordplus Adult programme to develop the quality of adult education.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The coordinator of the project is Pirkanmaa Westcome, Adult Education Unit from Finland, and there have been four partners from three countries:

Centre for Lifelong Learning in the Westfjords, Iceland

Modern Didactics Center, Lithuania

Norwegian Association for Distance and Flexible Education, Norway

Studieforbundet Folkeuniversitetet, Adult Education Association, Norway

1. The Centre for Lifelong Learning in the Westfjords (www.frmst.is) was established in 1999, by partners of the labour market and some regional based institutions in the Northwestern part of Iceland, called Westfjords. It is one of nine learning centres in the Icelandic countryside which facilitate access to lifelong learning in different regions in the country. All of them are non-governmental but getting some financial support from the government.

Central Aim and Objectives of the Centres are:

- Promote lifelong learning in the Westfjords.
- Reinforce the working sector and the society with lifelong learning.
- Facilitate access to lifelong learning in order to elevate the standard of living in the areas and contribute to the regional development in the areas.
- Develop learning programs for individuals and companies.

2. Folkeuniversitetet www.fu.no is Norway's largest organiser of adult education, with approximately 159 000 participants each year who sign up for one or more of 9 500 courses. It offers practical and theoretical trade-related education, language instruction and courses in cultural and leisure activities and courses preparing for public examinations and certificates from primary school to university level. Their aim is to make leisure courses and further education accessible to all adults, regardless of social or ethnic background. FU's 8 regional offices, local departments and 20 member organizations provide courses in more than 300 of the country's municipalities. The courses can be attended by everybody, including adults who have not yet completed an formal course of study.

3. Norwegian Association for Distance and Flexible Education (NADE) is the umbrella organization for institutions, schools and education centres that apply distance and flexible education. The adult student is the target for most of NADE's members. The Association focuses mainly on web-based studies.

4. Modern Didactics Center in Lithuania (MDC) is a public non-governmental, non-profit organization for non-formal adult education and in-service training. MDC was established in 1999 by the initiative of Vilnius Pedagogical University and Open Society Fund-Lithuania as inter-university centre. The mission of MDC is to initiate the process of looking for and carrying out innovations and to support education reform and the process of integration into European Union by continual monitoring, studying and analyzing the situation in general education and the needs of Lithuanian schools for change and innovations.

The aims of MDC are:

- To promote and to support the initiative of academic community to implement changes in higher education and vocational training and encourage openness for democracy and cooperation
- To encourage and to support communication and cooperation between institutions of higher education and secondary schools
- To develop inter-university links, fostering openness, tolerance and collegial communication between educators.

Activities

- Preparation and dissemination of in-service training programs for different professional groups of adults
- In-service training courses for primary, secondary school and university teachers
- Summer and Winter schools for high school and academic students and teachers
- Workshops and conferences on urgent education problems
- Preparation and implementation of local and international projects
- Expertise, consultation
- Research
- Publishing

5. Pirkanmaa Westcome, Adult Education Unit, Finland, provides adult education in the West Tampere Region for approximately 1000 students every year. It offers a choice of around 100 different courses taking place during the daytime, in the

evening and on weekends. It provides vocational, further education and labour market training courses as well as courses for company personnel. It organises apprenticeship studies in the region and also participates in many national and international projects.



The persons who worked in this project:

Tiina Härmä (on the left)	Finland
Daiva Penkauskienė	Lithuania
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Kerttuli Mattila	Finland
Ingebjørg Gram (on the right)	Norway

Senior educational policy in partner countries

In many OECD countries, social exclusion has been found to be one of the most important problems. In the OECD (1999) report Overcoming exclusion through adult learning, the concept and extent of social exclusion are discussed, as well as the possible effects of adult education or adult learning in preventing social exclusion. The report states that even large groups may be marginalized because of globalization, or because people cannot get to the source of knowledge, or are unable to learn. The report found out that exclusion involves both a lowered income level and the lack of social inclusion as well as the disappearance of the feeling of community. As the society is fragmented further, the influence of studying becomes more and more important, as it creates and maintains communalisation and gives the students shared qualities. Low basic education, unemployment and living in rural areas are things which might increase the possibility of social exclusion. Learning and education are tools for both joining a social community, and a way to beat social exclusion through promoting the acquiring of knowledge and skills. Many services are offered digitally and the persons who can't use computers will not have the service or information.

FINLAND

An average of 12 per cent of the Ministry of Education's main title of expenditure is allocated to adult education. Of this total, about 40 per cent is allocated to vocational adult education and training and apprenticeship training, one fourth goes to adult education provided by institutions for higher education, a fifth to informal adult education, and about 5 per cent to developing adult education and continuing education for teaching staff.

The big challenge now and in the future is the increasing numbers of the aged. The society does not offer meaningful activities and ways to exert influence in society to the aged and others who are not part of the work force. The possibilities of active participation are reduced after reaching 65 years of age. Social development policy is targeted to improvements in working life, and safeguarding the economic requirements. A rather large group of adults are without a direct link to the central activities of the society. According to a study (2006), 52% of Finns aged between 18 and 64 had participated in some formal or non-formal education or training during the preceding year. Most of it related to their work or profession. Although in international terms the adult participation rate is high in Finland, it cannot be considered a sufficient response to changes in working life and the knowledge needs arising from the ageing of the population. The lowest participation rate in education is found among the poorly educated, personnel in small companies and business owners, the unemployed, the rural population, men and people aged over 55.

The question is not of a problem solved only by education, as adults desire independent activities that have a direct effect on the society. Meaningful activities come from people themselves, not from trainers, coaches or other facilitators.

Presently, activities are limited to pensioners' groups or other associations with specific objectives. Therefore, creating these kinds of activities in today's situation demands visible political measures. The creation of favourable conditions, at least, is clearly a task for the political parties and politicians.

The Ministry of Employment has reacted to the need to secure a sound basis for economic growth, employment and the welfare society. They have realised that it will be necessary to improve productivity and the standard of quality of the working environment over the next few decades, with productivity playing an increasingly important part as people are ageing. To increase the availability of labour, steps will be taken to shorten the time required for completing degrees, extend work careers, increase the incentive aspect of social security, and promote work-based immigration.

ICELAND

Iceland has no official policy regarding education made for senior citizens, other than that everyone has equal rights to education regardless of age, status and class. Seniors have an organization called National Association of senior citizens which is a very active organization and has membership units throughout the country. Within these organizations there are productive activities for senior citizens such as seminars, hobbies, theatre, walking groups and much more. To join these organizations people have to have reached 65 years of age.

In Iceland, people generally tend not to stop working until they're at least 67 years old, unless illness or other things prevent them. Better health and longer life expectancy has led to people staying on longer in the labor market. Therefore the emphasis has been on research with the aim of strengthening the status of middle-aged and older people in the labour market.

The government's focus has been that the initiative of continuing education in economic activities is in the hands of social partners, enterprises and individuals. They believe, however, that its role is to support those who are less well off or find it difficult to attend continuing education e.g. are unemployed, lacking formal education or are disabled. Various councils and committees for the government aim to promote cooperation between the labour market and the government. The development of vocational education and training sector in Iceland also demands increased commitment from the economic sector. A total of nine centres for lifelong learning have been established in the rural areas, and regional employment offices and economic development agencies are now providing services for the economic sector.

Partners in labour market are on the boards, committees and councils set up by the government and are involved in educational policy. They operate a number of education centres for specific target groups such as Education and Training Service Centre, Mimir-lifelong learning, Idan educational centre of industry and Social Affairs and People's School.

Many studies have shown that people with high education are more likely to engage in lifelong learning than those with less education. Furthermore, the employment rate of people with high educational level is higher than of those who have not completed secondary school.

Today most seniors have no higher education as it was not common in their day, but this will change in about 20 years or so. Education is continually developing and is today more accessible for everyone than before. Iceland's educational level has been rising and because of that, in 20 years senior citizens would be more active in continuing education and economic life.

LITHUANIA

In Lithuania, adult education is described in all documents as an integral part of the whole education system. The Ministry of

Education and Science has the Department of Professional and Continuous learning, which is responsible for professional teachers' improvement and initial training, professional schools, formal and non-formal adult education. The Ministry has established the Centre for Adult Education and Information (LCAEI). It is the state institution working under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. The Lithuanian Centre for Adult Education and Information was established by the Ministry as one of the main institutions assisting in the coordination and implementation of the means of national Lifelong Learning strategy. But in fact, adult education is separated and treated as not so important (with the exception of professional education). Even the well written documents and really true and correct statements are more declarative than real. Priorities are given to general, secondary, higher and professional education. Non formal education is not recognized officially, has quite low prestige and lacks financial support. Adult education is very poorly developed in comparison with other European countries. Adults in lifelong process mostly participate as secondary or professional school pupils.

According to statistics Lithuania has about 50% people at work at about 50 % of Lithuania's work force is of the age of 55 to 64. Unfortunately, there are no statistics about elder people, so it could be claimed that older people are less active in the labour market or occupation of seniors is not an interesting area for the state.

The most common reason of seniors' passivity in the labour market could be the problems of health and qualification, because research shows that seniors would like to stay employed if the work conditions were better. Education is one of the components, which could keep elder people active in the labour market and the community. For this reason more attention should be paid to the furthering of knowledge and developing skills and competencies needed for the working person to stay active and employed for longer. To develop all the needed skills, seniors should be involved in the education process.

Some of them are studying at the Third Age Universities, others participate in the courses/training or learn different things in non-formal way (participation in various associations, clubs etc.)

There are no precise statistics of how many seniors participate in non-formal, lifelong learning process by separate age groups, by education, by interests or by courses attended. It shows that some aspects of senior educational policy in Lithuania need more attention.

NORWAY

In Norway the government's starting point is that society needs an educated work force in order to ensure economic growth and increased welfare. The chance of being unemployed or living on disability insurance is a lot higher for persons who have not completed upper secondary school, and this is still the situation for more than 660 000 persons between the ages of 22 and 66. To promote adults getting more formal education, they have got individual legal rights.

Adult education is offered by many municipalities (in Adult learning centres), counties, Adult education associations (of which there are 20, covering 600 member organisations) and programmes at the work place or for unemployed through the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration.

In 2000 adults were given an **individual legal right** to adapted secondary education and in 2002 to primary/lower secondary education. The education shall be adapted to the individuals' needs and situation as most adults will – or can – not attend ordinary daytime classes together with children or youths. Their total qualification (formal, non-formal and informal competences) shall be taken into consideration when planning the learning program, so that they could take condensed courses. Unfortunately, the municipalities and counties do not always fulfil their responsibility; information about

the legal rights is sometimes scarce – and lack of interest is then again used as a reason for not offering classes for adults.


In 2008-2009 only 60% of the municipalities offered **primary and lower secondary school** for adults. Approximately 4 000 adults participated, and of these 73% were immigrants, whose education was often combined with learning Norwegian as a foreign language.

At the same time an additional 9 500 adults started at **upper secondary school**. 25% were immigrants. In addition 5 000 adults prepared for upper secondary examinations in the Adult Study Associations even if they then usually had to pay the course fees themselves. (Course fees are sometimes covered by the counties).

Vox, Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning, is an agency of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research which amongst others works to improve basic skills in the adult population and administer governmental funding directed towards educational non-governmental organizations and open and distance learning institutions.

The 20 adult education associations, covering 400 different member organizations, offer formal and non-formal courses and training within a vast number of subject and on all levels with as many as 470 000 participants in 2009. The majority (84%) attended non-formal courses while the rest prepared for acknowledged exams or for certificates that were outside the general education system, often work-related.

The "Basic competence skills in Work life" is a program aiming at reaching basic competence skills in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT and was started due to the fact that quite a high number of adults do not have these skills, and that an increasing number of jobs now require the ability to write reports, read manuals and instructions etc.



Motivating the Aged to participate in Lifelong Learning

The baby boomers are in retirement age. They are fitter and more eager to learn than earlier generations were, and thus a challenging group for educational organizations. They have more money to spend on interesting hobbies, including studying. Studying is no longer something new. Information technology is part of any profession, and learning has to be continual through the working years. In several professions employees have to take mandatory further studies.

More and more Finns are retiring before the official legal retiring age. Only one in 10 stays in their job until retirement age. One reason for early retirement is the fear they have of learning in the increasingly demanding work market. As the age structure is changing in the whole of Europe, we have to take care of the working capacity and skills of the ageing employees. Everyone's input is required, and it is important to hold on to all employees.

In Iceland more people want to work after retiring age, which is 67 years. The reason for them to work later is that people at the age of 67 and older are still fit and are fully functional. People live longer. Times have changed.

50 years ago times were different, people did not live as long as they do today and learning was only for younger people. Today in Iceland, people of all ages have the same opportunity to learn. For seniors it is more in the form of courses but they may also graduate from university. There are centres for lifelong learning all over the country, they all have educational and vocational counselors in their service and it is for free. Seniors are not always willing to use this service but they have the opportunity, and should be more efficient in doing so.

Aging society is a big issue in Lithuania as well. Almost a fifth of all population in Lithuania is elderly people, who are of retirement age. Not all of them would like to retire, as they still have the will, capacities and health to stay in the work market, but due to the unfavourable economical situation and growing unemployment they are pushed to retire. There are seniors who are happy to finish their active working life and enjoy retirement - spend more time with their families, get involved in personal hobbies. The others that belong to disadvantaged or economically or socially poor groups need assistance and help from state and have fewer possibilities to have a happy retirement and to continue their personal development.

Norway has relatively many older people who are active in the workplace, compared with many other countries. More than 66% at age 55 to 66 are working, and almost 20% of those who are 67 to 70 years old. During the next few years the proportion of people in the workforce who are in the age group of 55 to 66 years will grow sharply, and if they retire too early there will be a lack of manpower in the years ahead. It is important for the welfare development to facilitate as many as possible of the seniors staying in working life longer. Senior policy shall not be restricted to a fixed age, and there should no longer be a 'general limit'; those who have or may obtain a good job, and are capable of doing it, could choose to work until they are at

least 70 years of age, although it is highly unusual now. At the same time there is reason to believe that seniors are discriminated against in the work market. Exclusion from working life can also be a consequence of outdated skills. At the same time outdated skills – or lack of skills - may counteract staying on for longer in the work force.

It seems that the interest to learn more, as formal and non-formal education in schools, in adult education organizations and at the work place, is high in Norway. Of the total of adults that started in upper secondary school, one third was 40+ and as many as 9% were more than 50 years old. Almost all employees (92%) reported to have participated at training at the work place during the last 12 months in a study made in 2007, and the seniors (50-64) participated just as much as younger colleagues when it came to non-formal training at the work place, a little less in formal training. In the "Basic competence skills in Work life -programme" 40 % were over 50 years old and as many as 11 % were 60+.

Still – Lifelong learning is more than work-related or formal competence. 36 % of the 470 000 learners in Adult Education Associations were 50+ and the most popular courses were Aesthetics and handicraft. Learning new things together with others is for many an important contribution to a meaningful life and also a "medicine" against social exclusion after retirement.

Many of the ageing generations still have not had the same chances to learn as younger people. In Finland the basic education level of the elderly is worse than on average in Europe. This is not due to lack of interest, but rather to other issues, like war and poverty in their childhood. Large families could not send their children to school, as they were needed at home, supporting the family.

The situation is similar in Lithuania as well. Many older people, especially in the rural areas, at the age of 80 or older, can read and write poorly, as they had very limited possibilities to learn at school or at home.

Even if the basic education was short, the aging people have a lot to give to the working life. Decades of experience, information, social networks and knowledge of their work combine into information that a younger person cannot have.

Now Finland, like the rest of Europe, is greying at an increasing pace. Training can help motivate employees to stay in the work force.

In education policies Lifelong Learning has already gained great emphasis. Learning creates conditions for further learning. Encouraging learning experiences promote job satisfaction and capacity to stay in work. It is important to have those experiences through life.

SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

The goal of survey was to interview older adult learners, to find out their motivation, the favourite forms of learning, and areas of interest.

Objectives:

- to identify the gender of the adults involved in the courses;
- to clarify/find out the education level of older persons;
- to clarify/find out their ways of getting information about learning possibilities;
- to identify the favourite activities of the respondents;
- to find out how elder people like to learn;
- to clarify/find out their latest learning experiences (courses, seminars);
- to identify areas of interest for future studies;
- to identify the main learning barriers.

Information about the questionnaire data processing and lists:

The questionnaire was prepared in accordance with the Project, Senior +: "Golden" Senior examples of learning" in the

years 2008–2010, supported by Nord Plus programme. The questionnaire was distributed in four countries. In each country 45 to 55 persons filled in the questionnaire.

In Finland 1/3 of the respondents were students in our courses and 2/3 of the respondents were interviewed during a Senior meeting in Ikaalinen market square with the respondents chosen at random.

In Iceland the questionnaire was distributed in all regions. Of the 170 questionnaires sent to respondents, 55 came back. This number of respondents will be counted as 100 percent.

In Lithuania the questionnaire was distributed in the Trakai, Lazdijai, Pakruojis, Rietavas and Jurbarkas regions. Of the 48 questionnaires sent to respondents, 45 came back. This number of respondents will be counted as 100 percent.

In Norway the questionnaire was distributed in all over Norway to 191 seniors at different course sites. Most of them answered all questions, so the response was very good.

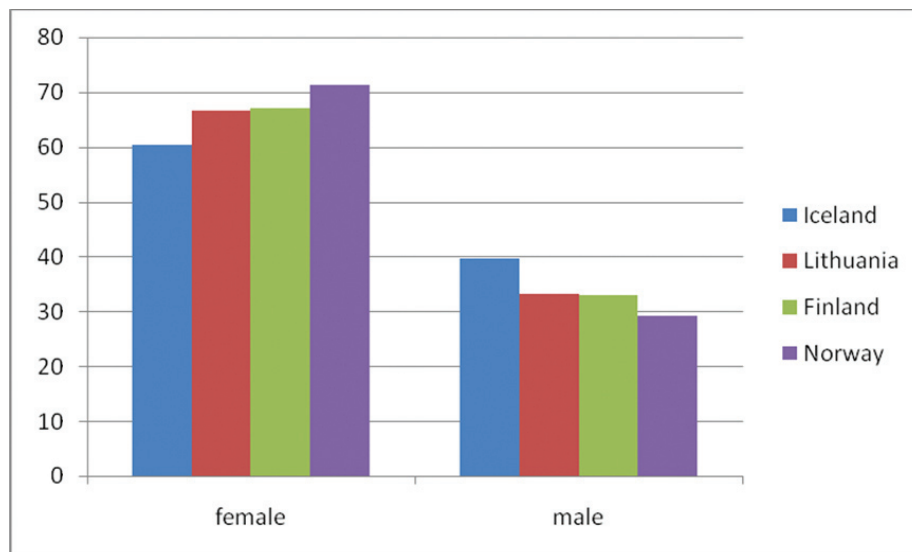
Questionnaire consisted of 15 questions.

Additional data:

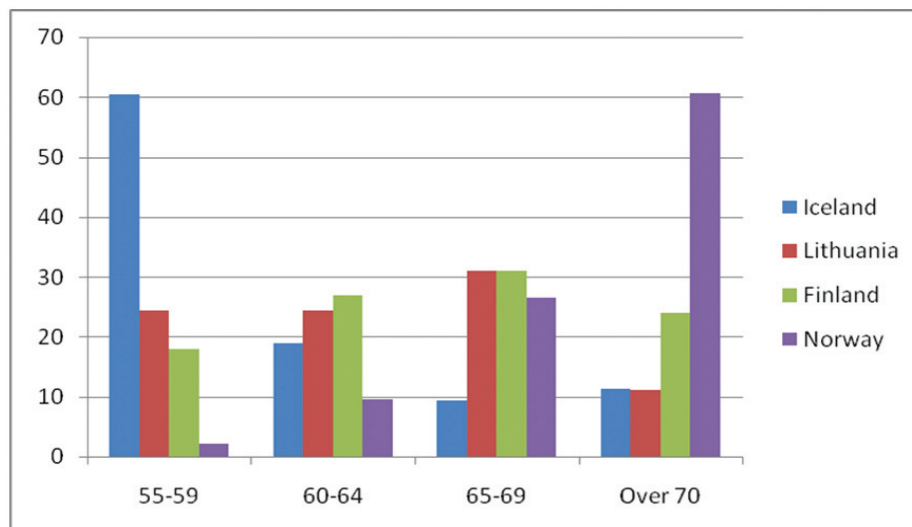
Retirement age in project countries:

Iceland	67	Norway	67
Lithuania	65	Finland	63

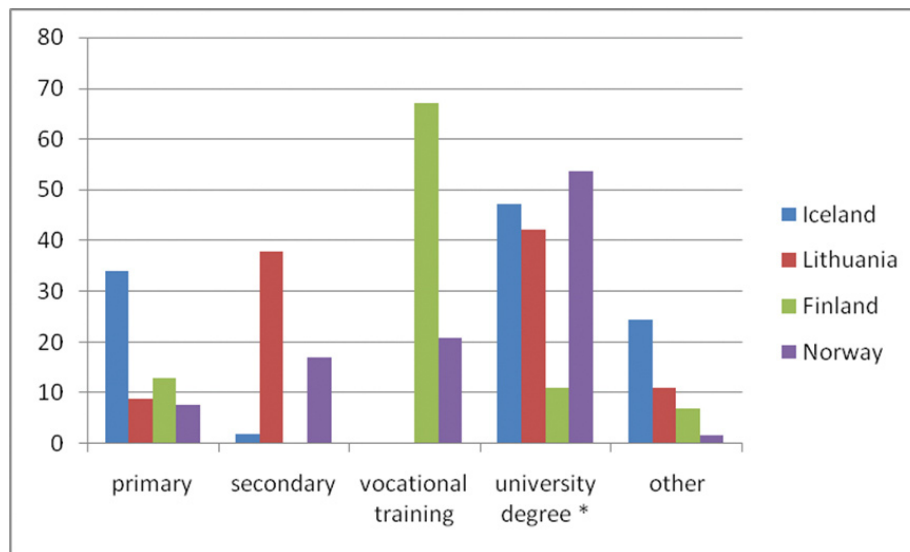
1. Gender of respondents



2. Age of respondents

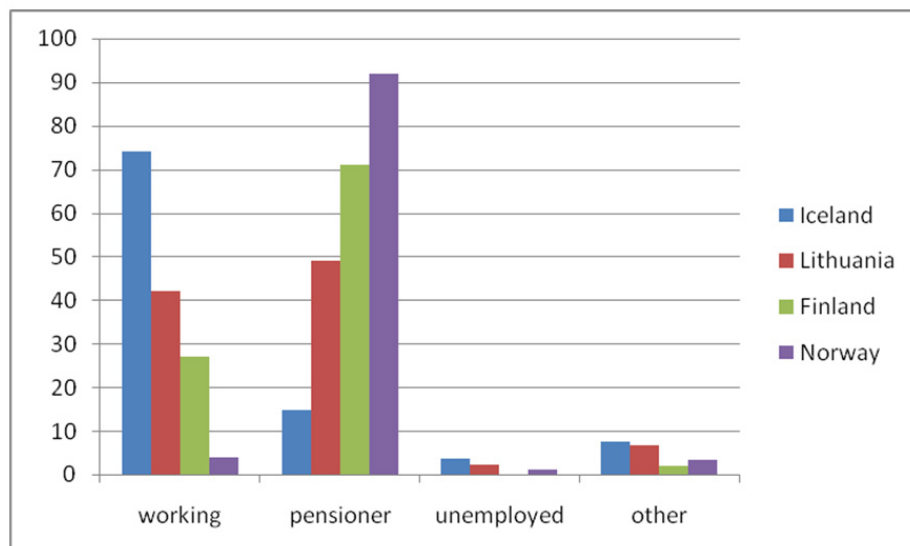


3. Level of education

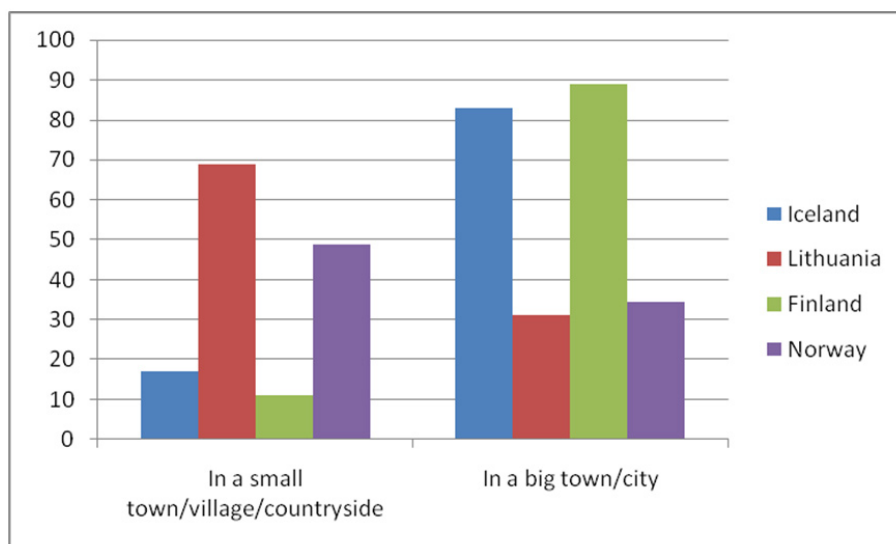


In Norway the alternatives were a little bit different. The first choice (primary) included primary and secondary school, the second choice (secondary) included comprehensive school.

4. Employment status

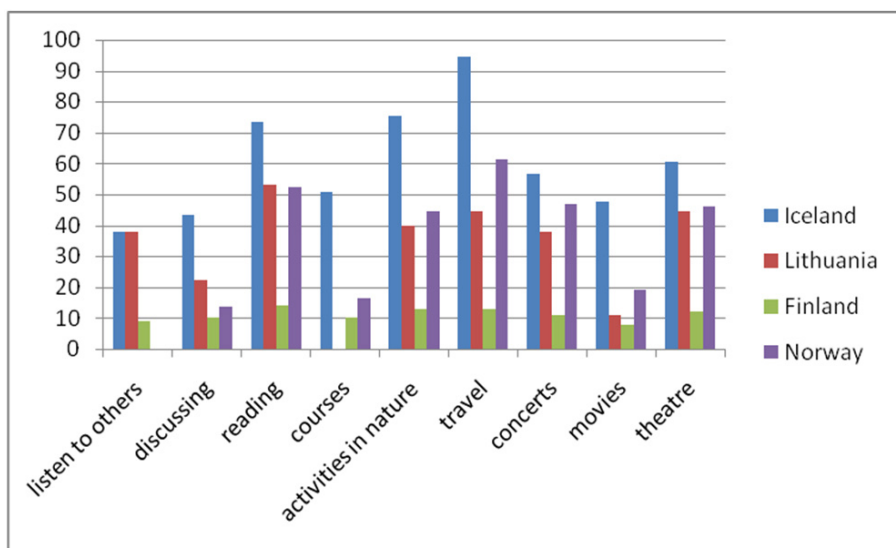


5. Place of residence

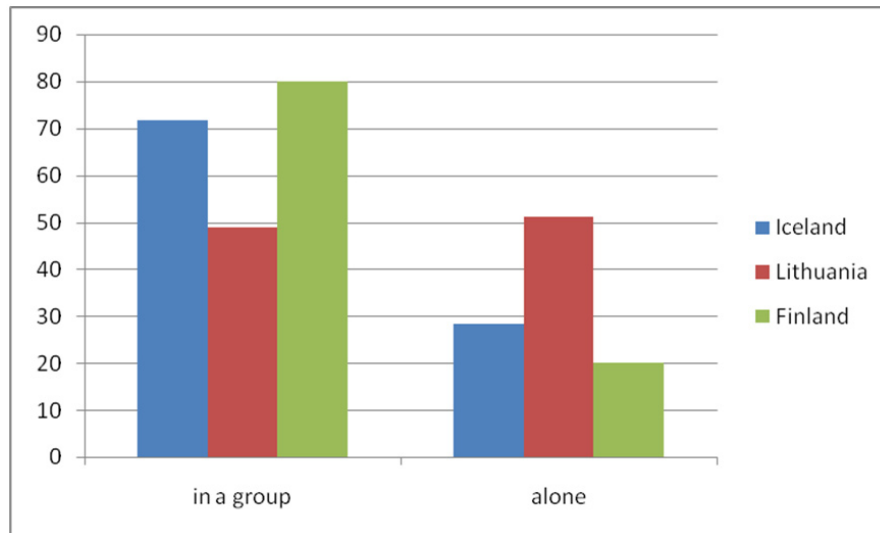


6. Favourite activities

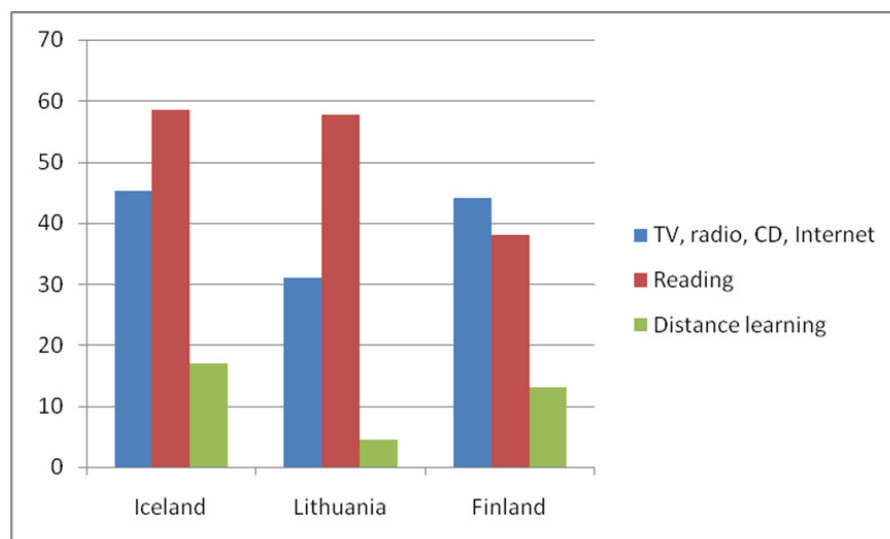
Respondents could choose as many alternatives as they liked and all kinds of activities were popular.



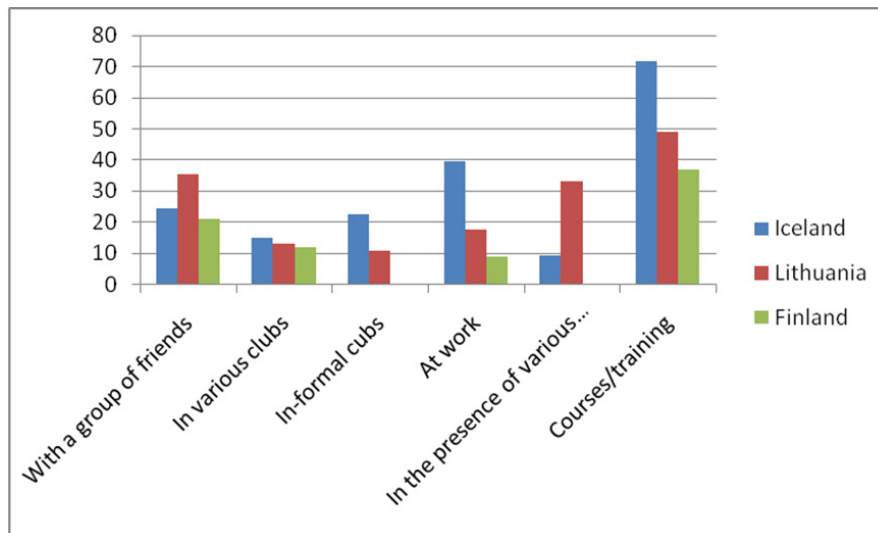
7. Favourite learning methods



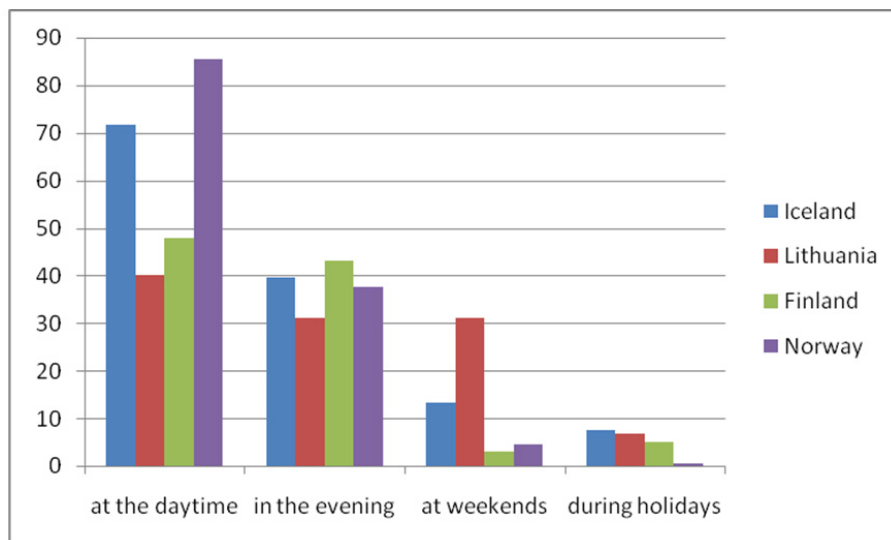
Of those who wanted to study alone, the most popular ways to study were:



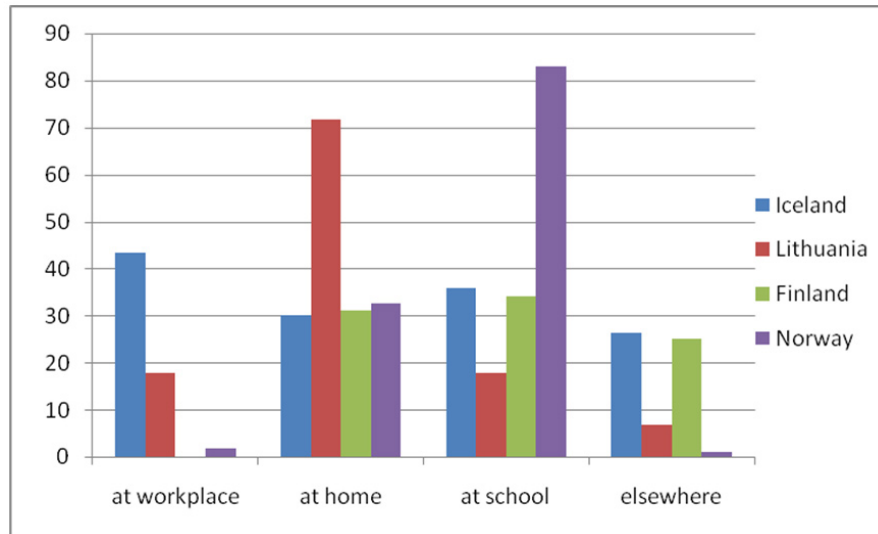
Of those who wanted to study in a group, the most popular ways to study were:



8. Preferred time for studying



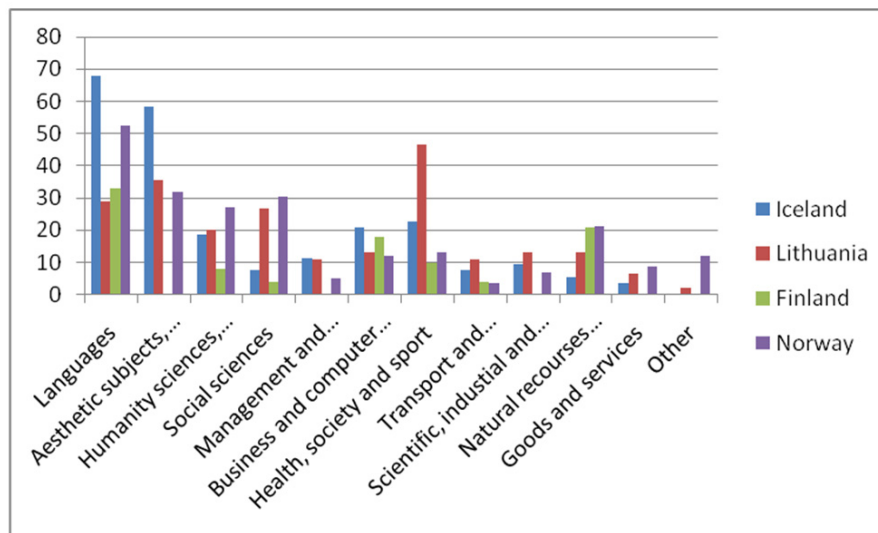
9. Favourite learning environment



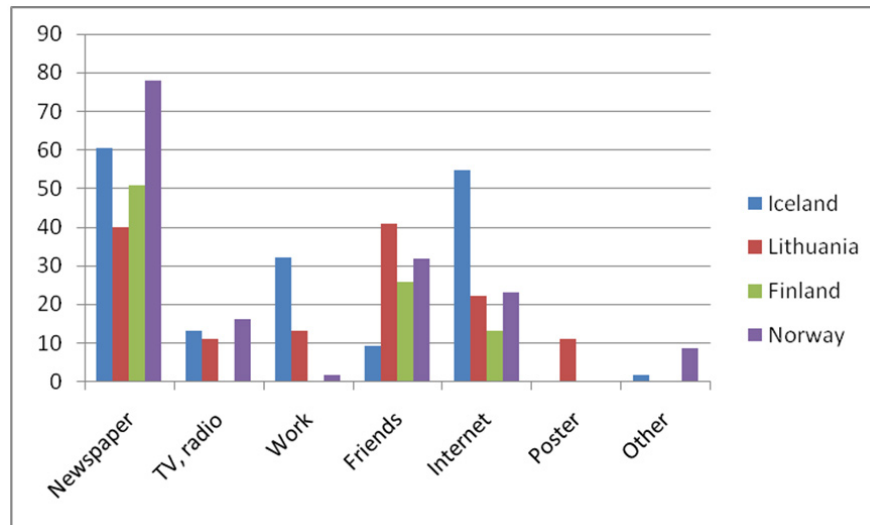
There is an interesting difference in the desired main venues for learning between Iceland, Lithuania and Norway, but this may also be because the Norwegian questionnaire had "school or course locations" as an alternative (not only school) and therefore may include respondents who otherwise would have answered "elsewhere".

25 % of the respondents in Finland wanted to study somewhere else (in a pleasant place, at church council premises etc., in another town, on excursions or at the premises of different kinds of organizations).

10. Favourite subjects

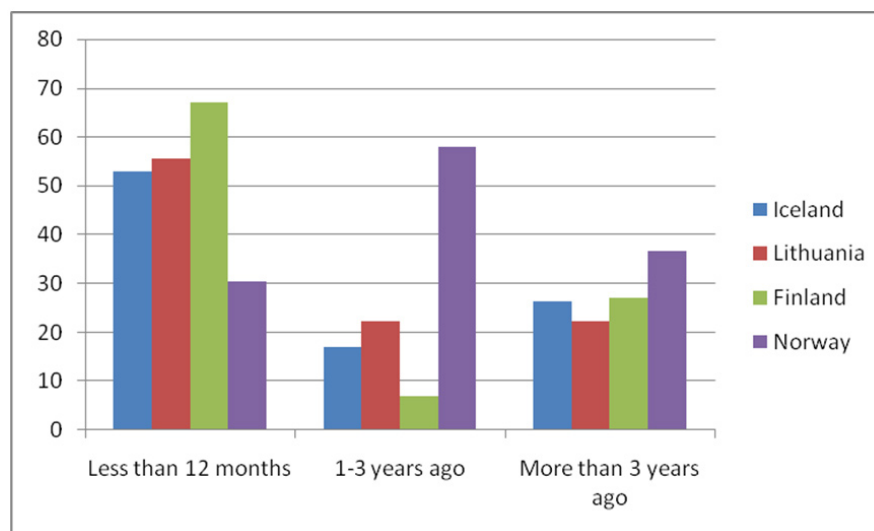


11. How they get information on the courses

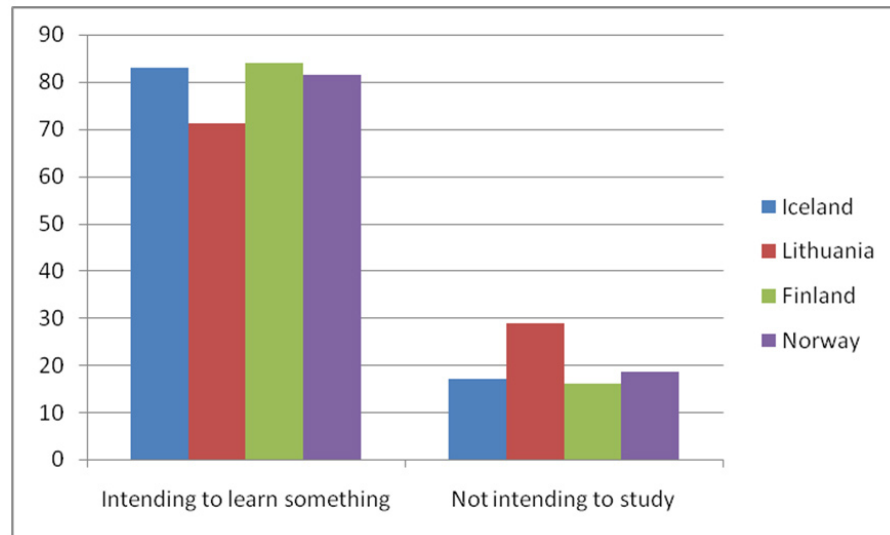


Newspaper is the clear winner in all countries, but also the Internet seems to be an important way to get information in Iceland. In Finland the Internet was not a very important source of information.

12. Latest attendance on a course

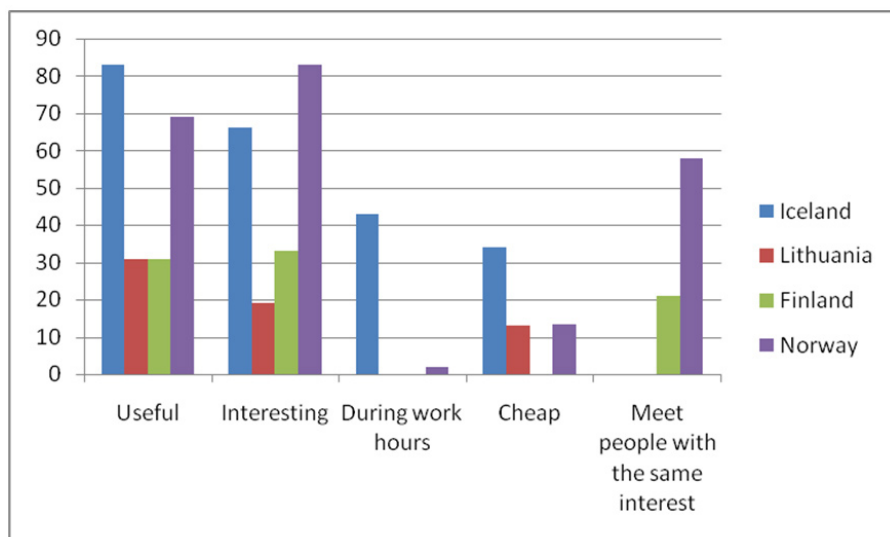


13. Possible participation in a course



Almost all the respondents could consider participating in a course in other partner countries.

14. Main motivations for attending courses were:



15. Biggest obstacles to signing up for courses.

Finland and Norway asked also about the biggest obstacles to signing up for courses. It was interesting to find that in both countries the most considerable hindrance was the same: lack of interesting courses (20 % in Finland and 38,5 % in Norway). Other obstacles respondents mentioned in Finland were:

I'm too old to learn (17 %)

I'm not interested (15 %)

I don't have time (15 %)

In Norway the other big obstacles were:

the price of the courses (23,1 %)

lack of time (22,2 %)

CONCLUSIONS

The study has revealed that people who live in project countries are interested in adult education and are ready to continue learning in order to cope in the society. IT skills and physical and mental health are the keys to a healthy future. Most of the respondents were ready to consider participating in some kind of course.

The most interesting subjects were languages, outdoor activities and IT. It seemed that most of the respondents were ready to participate in a course if they were interested and if they felt they would benefit from it. A very important motive to participate in a course was to meet other people who were interested in the same subject.

Why is learning beneficial?

Active learners feel physically and psychologically better. National economy benefits from active citizens. The social side of

learning must not be belittled, but it is important for the aged to keep up to date in the developing society.

People with versatile skills are a great asset in the job market. However, some employees have been sent to early retirement, even when they had the skills and motivation to keep working. Employing a young newly qualified person does not automatically bring better results. The young person does not have silent knowledge, gained only through years of working. Formal education can meet the needs of the working life only partially. Experience is needed. Transferring the silent knowledge to the younger generation is a challenge. Mentors can help in this process.

When the skills of the employee are in balance with the demands of the work, working capacity and wellbeing are easier to maintain. Information changes and develops rapidly, education is needed to update and maintain skills.

Not only for the ageing working force, but also for the pensioners, learning is necessary to avoid social exclusion. The skills needed to use a digital camera, television, mobile telephone and the Internet are new skills altogether. Without these services life is difficult and expensive. With the help of a computer it is very easy and cheap to contact one's grandchild who may live far away, perhaps even on the other side of the world. Increasingly, banking and other daily services have been moved to the Internet.

Training is motivating, improves self-esteem, increases feelings of commitment to work, and develops the social atmosphere within different age groups. Also according to the participants in the pilot courses organized during this project, what they considered the best things in the courses were for example expression of thoughts, discussions, communication, sharing opinions and experiences, reflections, honesty, immediacy and professionalism of the trainer (including taking time enough to make it possible for all participants to follow).

Challenges in adult training

Learning is not obvious for everybody. In fields which do not require much education and where the job is not greatly esteemed, learning and studying are not appreciated.

When talking about retirees, it is important to remember that the age distribution can be decades.

Lack of self-confidence can be considered a challenge, also. The threshold to take a course can be very high, if a long time has passed since the last time. Encouragement from the employer, colleagues and family can be of utmost importance.

Another challenge is the changed learning and teaching

methods. Self-directed learning requires getting used to. Attitudes may be negative on basis of earlier bad experiences. New technology is frightening. The aged are the immigrants in the virtual world.

It is important to cooperate with different actors in the field (adult education, sociology, economy, gerontology), to create the best possible learning methods and approaches just for this specific target group.

Reasons for and barriers to learning

For many seniors learning is a way to try and keep active and healthy, physically and mentally. But still the most important barriers include attitudes and expectations. Not everyone is interested in learning at all, or learning with a group. A human being is curious by nature, and learning happens in everyday life, although it is difficult to document. In some cases seniors think that they are too old to learn (this result was found especially in Finland).

An interesting observation in our survey was that many seniors (in Finland and in Norway) found there were not enough suitable interesting courses available in their area of living.

Participating is not automatically possible even if motivation is present. Families (spouses and children) have an influence on participation or non-participation. Other barriers include, for example, time issues, course fees, poor traffic connections or lack of interesting courses.

During the last years, many enterprises have cut their staff to the minimum. More work and less staff causes stress and fatigue. There is less energy to keep professional skills up to date.

Age does not have a great effect on learning. The younger are faster learners, but the aged can adapt information to real life and information gained through experience. Adults are also very motivated, and experienced; the learner can reach very deep reflection. But the physical health affects participation: the better condition they are in, the more they participate.

Learning is most interesting to those who have good experiences of learning, and whose basic education was longer than average. Support from friends and family is an important factor in learning activities. Family can have an adverse effect, according to our study on this project. The most important reasons for participation were that the course must be interesting and it needs to be beneficial/useful. Wage increase, certificate or possibility to participate during working hours were not very important reasons. This may be due to the fact that a great deal of the respondents were retired, and a survey among elders still working might have given other conclusions.

Reflections of the project and recommendations for senior training and learning

What are the possibilities for everyone to gain encouraging learning experiences? How to wake the desire to learn? Does everyone have to study? What is studying?

Looking from the education providers' standpoint, there are plenty of opportunities to learn. Why, then, do many think (as it showed in our survey) there are no (or not many) suitable courses available? Does the advertising not reach potential students? Perhaps training providers should go to the people and deliver information personally.

Why are men not interested in learning? Is it because training is mainly planned by women?

It is important to think about the age in planning the training. IT-training for the aged cannot be the same as for youngsters. The learning environment should be as good as possible. Lighting should be adequate, desk ergonomically suitable, all must be able to hear well. This should also be communicated when advertising the courses: "ICT for seniors", "English for seniors" etc may lower the threshold for entering a course, especially for those who may have lack of self-esteem about being too old to learn.

A homogenous group, in relation to the subject taught, makes it easier for both the teacher and the learners. Homogenous does not necessarily refer to age.

Good training should have an impact even at the work place.

Respondents in Norway made it extremely clear that they preferred courses during daytime (for various reasons, but mainly because they had other options in the evening, friends, family, TV etc).

Seniors have a different vision of education than younger people, they make greater demands on the instructor and they want to learn. When people get older, the main motivation to study is its interest and the usefulness of what they learn and that what they are studying will be aimed more directly at the specified needs. If this is not fulfilled they do not see the reason to break away from their everyday lifestyle. One technique seniors can use to study is their experience, both from life and work. They have a lot of knowledge they can use.

Anyway, there will always be a group of people who are not interested in organized courses, and they have a right to be that way. There are other ways to gain information: radio, TV, friends.



GOOD PRACTICES AND EXAMPLES OF
SENIOR TRAINING

Knowledge is power.

Þekking er vald.

- An Icelandic saying -

IN FINLAND:

Example 1

Strength in Old Age – A Health Exercise Programme for Older Adults, 2005-2009

National health exercise programme for older adults, Strength in Old Age, promotes the autonomy and quality of life of independently living older adults with decreased functional capacity. This is achieved by increasing the leg muscle strength and improving the balance of the target group with exercise and by developing services. Activities are provided especially for over 75-year-olds.

The programme is a large cooperation project carried out by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Education, University of Jyväskylä and several other actors. The main funding resource for the programme is the Finnish Slot Machine Association. The programme is coordinated by Age Institute.

The programme includes 35 third sector projects across Finland. These local projects organize strength and balance exercises, including gym, calisthenics and balance groups, guided outdoors exercise, and guided home exercise. The actors in public, private and third sector are encouraged to form networks, develop exercise services for older adults, and improve conditions of exercise and everyday mobility.

In Ikaalinen “Voimanpesä” is training active seniors to be peer exercise advisors and partners for exercise. Current theme happenings will be arranged for peer exercise advisors and partners.

Strength in Old Age programme has been presented in several international congresses.

http://www.voimaavanhuuteen.fi/sivu.php?artikkeli_id=225

Example 2

STU-RET ILC Project

The purpose of the Stu-Ret –project is to develop a supportive intergenerational learning environment so as to use the creative potential of both retirees and students. They use the blended learning approach with both retirees and students so that they can, on one hand, self-determine their learning environment and self-manage their time; use ICT in practice for learning and teaching purposes; and, on the other hand, socialize during face-to-face sessions and practice sport together in order to improve their intergenerational teamwork, health and activity as a whole.

The project elaborates teaching materials in relation to teaching approaches used for youngsters and adults, so that both target groups gain teaching competence which will contribute to the mutual transfer of knowledge, skills, and experience.

www.sturetu.eu



Example 3

University of the Third Age

University of the Third Age is a part of the Open University. It was founded in 1985. Its aim is to introduce latest research findings to older people and offer them opportunities to independent academic studies without formal qualifications. University of the Third Age is a meeting point for scientific knowledge and life experience.

There are nine universities providing Finnish language teaching, five of them are called University of the Ageing, and four University of the Aged. Åbo Akademi coordinates the university teaching for the Swedish speaking areas.

University of the Third Age operates in about 70 towns all over Finland and the world. In 2007, the University of the Aged had around 17000 students, of whom 76 % women.

The University of the Third Age provides current scientific information to the aged population, and provides possibilities for studying at a university without formal examinations. Any older person can study at the third age university, irrespective of their basic education, professional background of previous studies or hobbies. There is no minimum or maximum age for studying.

The University of the Third Age can also stimulate a person to participate in further studies.

- The ability to learn remains through life.
- Studying is important for information and for learning itself.
- The aged themselves can influence the contents and implementation of the study programme

The operation of the Third Age University is based on lifelong learning, university level teaching and the possibility for the students to participate in planning.

Example 4

Meeting of generations -project

The project idea was the meeting of different generations. Young people between 16 and 22 years of age were trained to teach computer skills to senior citizens. Four young people had the opportunity to experience how it feels to change their roles from being a learner to being a trainer. Eleven seniors, over 50 years old, studied the basics of IT under the young trainers. The atmosphere during the course was relaxed and the learning took place on the seniors' terms. Coffee breaks spent together added interaction between generations.

www.lpkky.fi/aikkari/projektit/meeting.html



Example 5

The way to teach seniors

The teaching of seniors is conducted with a slower pace to allow everyone to take their time and to practise what has been taught. Assistant teachers are used to make sure that everybody gets individual tuition. Social contacts during courses are also important. Seniors meet each other, coffee breaks are long etc.

IN ICELAND:

1. The Center for Long Life Learning in Vestmannaeyjar.

"Here in Vestmannaeyjar, we have been inviting citizens aged 60 + for coffee and offering an introduction to what is available, and in continuation of what we offered, a short computer course was held in a facility where the seniors meet regularly for various activities, beside the new putting field. This was a two days course in the Week of education last year, and it was followed by a computer course for a group. Also, we offer a retirement course, but we called it Learning to cope with changes. It appeared that more people attended the course if we changed the name, people who had to reduce their workload or stop working altogether due to illness or some other reason.

Also we have courses for this age group, 60+, in computers and digital cameras and we have had courses teaching how to use mobile phones."

2. Husavík Academic Center

"Several years ago we did a needs analysis with the Health institution in this area.

Following the needs analysis it was decided to offer a series of educational lectures for the public and for employees of the organization.

Issues discussed were mostly about aging. Although the target group was not specifically limited to 55 years and over, those who attended the lectures were mostly older than 55 years. Actually they were very specifically attended by people who live on Hvammi - home of the elderly and people who live in service residences around Hvamm.

Topics were, among other things; diet and nutrition, service of the Social Security, aging diseases - how to avoid them and exercise for elderly people. Lectures were well attended by the age group you are examining, even though it was not the original target group."

3. Project 50 +

In 2005, seven people were appointed by the Minister of Social Affairs for a committee to manage a five-year project, the main objective of which was to strengthen the position of the middle-aged and older people in the labour market. The project was also intended to strengthen the position of the group in general, among other things by creating a positive dialogue in this country for middle-aged and older people in the labour market, improving their image and developing a channel for different agendas in society for this group.

THE STRENGTH OF ELDERLY PEOPLE ON THE LABOUR MARKET

What obstacles can older people meet on the labour market?

- There have been enormous changes at workplaces in the last 10-15 years. Rapid changes in technology and computing, changes in working methods and development of the working environment, requiring continuing training and education.
- Junior employees enter the labour market with fresh ideas and working methods.
- Older workers worry that they will be "replaced" by younger people who have recently finished their studies, and also that they are less educated or are not offered the opportunity for education.

Why are older workers important?

- Are the role models and mentors for the junior staff.
- Are responsible, with experience in work safety rules.
- Have experience and knowledge of the activities of the workplace.
- Are proud of their work contribution and rarely miss workdays.
- Recognize the history of the workplace and have an understanding of its role in society.
- Many of them have dedicated themselves to the workplace for much of their work life.

How can employers and trade unions support older people in the labour market?

- Be aware of key knowledge and skills of older employees.
- Assist staff with learning new ways of working, thereby reducing the stress and increasing work satisfaction.
- Be alert for new roles that older workers can have, such as training and integration of new employees.
- Give opportunities for computer learning and education in this field.
- Provide information on courses and other services that could benefit older staff.
- Work with authorities to encourage older people to stay employed and employers to retain older staff. This will prevent loss of important knowledge and experience in the workplace.

4. Putting in Isafjordur

In 2008 a new putting field was opened beside the home for seniors in Isafjordur. The putting field is elegant, it is 80 meters long and senior citizens are actively using it among other citizens. This is a health program for seniors which they are very happy about.

5. "Clothes as a contribution"

Seniors in Patreksfjordur in Westfjords have been knitting and collecting sweaters, hats, socks, blankets and more for the Red Cross.

These are sent to Africa through the Red Cross and distributed as packages containing everything you need for your child. The packages have attracted attention by how well they are made, and how beautiful the contents are.

This project is called "Clothes as a contribution".

IN LITHUANIA

Pilot Courses in Modern Didactics Centre

Idea

The idea of pilot courses 'Let's Read & Share Joy of Reading' was to introduce the importance of reading in lifelong learning idea – to present various strategies and techniques of effective reading, to promote communication and cooperation.

Target group

Courses were held in capital city Vilnius (St. Cross' house) and small regional town Trakai (Trakai Center of Education), 30 km outside Vilnius. 26 seniors participated in the course: 12 in Vilnius and 14 in Trakai. 22 of the participants were women and 4 were men. Age of participants varied from the 8 participants who noted their age as 60 to 69 years old, to 7 participants 70 to 79 years old and 4 participants of over 80.

Courses

Content of courses: reading and its value in a person's life; various strategies of reading; methods and techniques of sharing reading experiences.

Courses were held on 23rd and 25th of February 2010 both in Trakai and in Vilnius (in Trakai) and on 23, 25 February 2010 (in Vilnius).

During the courses the seniors worked in a group or individually. Participants discussed about reading and its importance, had round table discussions, presented themselves as readers, talked about the necessity of sharing experiences of reading, made suggestions to other participants about what to read (book advertisement). Participants also discussed about how to involve young children in the reading process.

Evaluation

Summarizing work with both groups, it could be concluded that participants found trainer good and excellent. Courses hadn't met all the participants' needs, but they fulfilled expectations. In general seniors evaluated the course as good or excellent. The participants liked discussions, honest communication, sharing experiences and thoughts, also the preparation of the trainer. Seniors would like to learn more: they are interested in training like that and in topics on health, history, spiritual development and communication skills.

For the trainer the most difficult was to combine different interests and moderate the discussions so that all could have opportunity to share their most important ideas. Although the theme of the courses was the same, both groups were very different, because of differing interests and life experience. It would seem that seniors from the capital city are more interested in spiritual topics and seniors of a rural area in health, politics and other, more practical, topics. We can presume that this distinction occurred due to the different level of education and culture.

Pensioners Union of Lithuania "Bociai"

Idea

The course is a result of the project "Development of computer literacy of members of Lithuania pensioners union Bociai", funded by EU Social Fund. The idea of the courses is to teach the seniors to use computers in their everyday life.

Target group of the courses is 1500 seniors, who are members of the Pensioners Union "Bociai". Courses were organised in twenty municipalities.

Courses for older people were organized in 2007 (3-4 times a week) and delivered by experienced trainers. Seniors were taught to write, print, make tables, use the Internet and to receive and send e-mails. Theoretical knowledge of computer literacy and gained practical experience increased older people's competitiveness in the labour market and contributed to their social integration.

Evaluation

All participants received certificates for participating in the program and those who wanted to receive international ECDL certificate had additional examinations.

Social integration by theater and music in learning European language

Idea

The project's overall objective is social integration, motivation to learn languages and interest in linguistic and cultural diversity. Theatre and music serve as tools to reach this aim. Seniors are encouraged to engage actively in the learning process, to share experiences and interests, to develop knowledge and understanding about cultures and languages of other European countries.

Target group is seniors from the capital city of Vilnius, who are interested in theatre, music and learning languages.

Courses

This international project is funded by the European Commission and led by a public institution called "Volunteers Centre".

Each partner country selects its folk tales and folk songs. Members write a play based on the selected tale or song. The plays are translated into English and then sent to partner countries together with the original versions. Project participants study the texts received and analyze the plays and their cultural context. They learn the roles, rehearse and play it in their home country.

The number of performances corresponds to the number of partner countries. Plays can be modified to accommodate different understandings, interpretation is welcomed, but usually online communication among project partners helps to clarify the real meaning of one piece or another.

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International meetings begin with an evening of songs, presented in original languages. The other meeting days are spent at training and repetitions.

Participants change their roles- when some perform, others become spectators. Participants from different countries rehearse plays and communicate in English, at the same time improving their speaking, listening and understanding skills.

By learning language, singing and playing, people deepen their knowledge about music and theatre. Folklore material motivates them to take an interest in history, customs, tradition and culture of other countries.

Theatre performances in Rietavas

Idea is drama performances for seniors, organized by Mr. Steponas Eigirdas (78 years old).

Target group is people of various ages from Rietavas (small town in northern Lithuania).

Courses

Some time ago performances were held in recreation centre of Rietavas. Now people gather in museum of Oginskiai. People meet according to their needs at a time most suitable for them. Groups usually consist of 20 to 30 people. Their age is around 35 to 70 years. Steponas Eigirdas has initiated and developed 70 performances. First drama performance was a comedy called "Unexpected guest." The next -P. Vaičiūnas' comedy "Patriots", A. Korneičiukas"Plato Krečetas", A. Chekhov's "Bear" and "Matchmaking" and others.

Trakai. Teaching computer literacy in senior age

Idea is to improve computer literacy of people of various ages.

Target group

The age of the participants ranged from 16 to 64 years old.

Courses

One of the projects, "Teaching computer literacy to the countryside", was implemented in Elektrenai, Birštonas, Trakai, Širvintai

and Kaišiadoris district municipalities with the intention of raising computer literacy skills of the residents of those districts.

A good number of Trakai district residents appeared to be well disposed towards improving their knowledge or learning to use a computer. Mostly those were the elderly people, who wanted to learn to use a computer and various computer programs. In their opinion, in our contemporary changing society it is very difficult to imagine yourself without a computer. That is why the knowledge gained will help them improve their skills and learn to discover the world in another way. One hundred and fifty elderly people participated in these courses.

Senior club Sidabrine Gija in Pakruojis

Idea is to offer lectures and activities for the elderly people.

Target group is members of a seniors club „Sidabrine gija” located in Pakruojis. The age is from 60 years old upwards. The eldest member is 82 years old. Participants meet once a month.

Courses

Club prepares and offers educational health lectures. They are conducted by the doctors - cardiologist, surgeon, urologist, dentist, doctor of infectious diseases, general practitioners. They discuss diabetes and other common diseases at this age, and how to avoid them. Club members like lecturers-practitioners; examples based on experiences, not theory.

Notaries and social welfare specialists are also often guests at the club. Club invited poets Mr. Stasys Žlibinas and Mr. Vytautas Barauskas, composer Mr. Algimantas Raudonikis, writer Mr. Alfredas Šimkus and others to share their creative ideas.

Reading lessons in Veisiejai pension

Idea is reading sessions, where participants can share their reading experiences and discuss about favourite texts.

Target group is inhabitants of Veisiejai's (small town in south of Lithuania) home for the elderly, who are seniors from 60 years upwards.

Courses

Old people love to meet once a week in the living room. In the late afternoon they take their favourite books and meet together to read them or share their own handicrafts. Usually they meet in groups of ten or twenty. Social workers help disabled people get to the meeting point. Everyone has a chance to spend the afternoon in a creative and reflective atmosphere. One person in this group is blind. His passion is writing poetry. He records his poems in Dictaphone. Everyone likes his poems and listens to them with pleasure. Visually impaired persons usually listen to their friends. Sometimes social workers read for people during meetings, but more often members of the group read to one another.

IN NORWAY

Example 1

Driver 65 +

Driver 65 + is a course for drivers older than 60, who want to refresh their knowledge - and driving skills. Many drivers tend to be insecure when getting older; this course aims to increase security in traffic and to uphold mobility for older persons.

The courses are subsidized by the Norwegian Public Roads Administration and are very popular. The courses are theoretical, but those who want can also have some practical training. In all information about the courses it is stressed that nobody will lose their licence.

The car is very often the gateway to a more active retirement, and can in turn help combat a feeling of isolation and loneliness. The

car gives one the freedom to decide when and where to travel, independently of others. This is particularly important in these times, when structural changes often mean larger distances between family members, shopping centres and other services.

Example 2

Senior Nett, (ICT for seniors, taught by seniors)

Seniornett Norway is an NGO working for the inclusion of elderly people in the "e- world": PC, Internet etc. As is the case all over Europe, the elderly people (of 55+ years) often lag behind in the use of modern "e-tools", thus causing exclusion. Seniornett Norge seeks to counteract this sad state of affairs through its voluntary work. Their work is supported by the Norwegian government, Microsoft (Gates Foundation), several non-profit organizations and telecom companies. They have established 75 training centres, "clubs", all over Norway where senior citizens can go for training, take courses, meet their peers, ask questions, socialize etc. The teachers are usually seniors as well. Seniornett is member of Folkeuniversitetet Adult Association.

Example 3

University of the Third Age (U3A)

As in many countries, the University of the Third Age is very popular in Norway. The 80 local groups operate under a variety of names, (U3A, The Academy of Retired, The University of Retired, The Senior University, The Academy of Lifelong Learning etc) but the concept is more or less the same: to be a forum for exchange of knowledge and social contact. This is done through introducing current issues and research findings as well as lectures on cultural topics. Excursions, both within Norway and abroad, are also very popular. The programs are set up by the local board or committee. Some of the groups are associated with Folkeuniversitetet, most are independent. Membership is open to all seniors, (usually aged 60+) although in some places there are waiting lists. This is because the lectures are so popular that there may be problems with getting big enough venues.

Example 4

Elder centres /Senior Centres

The Elder/Senior centres are either a part of the municipalities' local welfare system or some are also run by voluntary organisations, like The Norwegian Health Association or the Red Cross. The majority of the users are from 60 to 90 years of age. The aim is to prevent social isolation and maintain the users' health – both physical and mental. The centre is a place where seniors can get information about public services but also, just as importantly, meet other seniors. The centres are informal, you may drop in and take a cup of coffee or read the newspaper, visit the cafeteria or buy dinner to take home, but also join more organized activities.

The activities vary, from different handicrafts, chess, bridge, folk dance and senior dance to yoga, Pilates, walks, entertainment and excursions. There are also separate groups for men and women. Being locally based, the centres are especially important for seniors that for various reasons cannot or will not to leave the neighbourhood to participate in activities.

Example 5

Norsk Senter for Seniorutvikling

This learning centre, inspired by the Danish 'seniorhøjskoler' (senior folk high schools) was founded in 1979, on the initiative of The Norwegian Women's Public Health Association, The Norwegian Health Association and a foundation that originally gave financial support to persons who could not afford to go for a vacation.

More than 2000 seniors participate each year, of which 50% go to one of the schools specialities; the 3-5 days boarding course: 'Preparing for retirement and the senior life.' This course deals with financial, retirement insurance and legal issues as well as diet and nutrition and the importance of physical activity. The participants come from all over Norway, and these courses are often paid for by their employers.

The centre also offers courses for members of senior councils in the counties and municipalities.

In addition they arrange courses and excursions within the same areas as the U3As.



Pilot courses in each country

Education is not preparation for the life.

It is life itself.

Menntun er ekki undirbúningur fyrir lífið.

Hún er lífið sjálft.

- An Icelandic saying -

During the project each partner organisation planned, marketed and arranged a pilot course in order to test the functionality of new ways to learn or a new subject to be taught. Courses vary a lot, but the results of the tests were encouraging. Here are the summaries of each country.

'BASIC WORD FOR SENIORS', NORWAY

8 seniors participated in the course. (One of them was actually not a senior, but went to the course together with her mother.) Only 6 were present the last day when the evaluation took place. All were women. Age of participants varied: the youngest being 40 to 50 years old, 3 participants were between 70 and 79 and the last two were 60 to 69 years old

The participants learned about the course from web-pages (2 participants), newspaper (1 participant) from a friend (1 participant) or from the course catalogue of Folkeuniversitetet (1 participant), while one had phoned Folkeuniversitetet and asked if they had courses in ICT for seniors.

Time and place

The course was held in daytime, at the premises of Folkeuniversitetet Oslo. This is very central and easily accessible (by train/tram/bus.) Both the time and that the course venue is easy to reach have earlier been stressed as important aspects by many seniors through the survey and in focus groups. This was confirmed by the participant's evaluation. 'Basic Word for seniors' was 18 hours long; 3 hours twice a week in a 3 week period.

Small groups

The course had a limited number of participants to make it possible for the teacher to follow each participant's progress and to guide each person. From experience we know that in general it is very important that participants do not get "lost", but this is perhaps particularly true for ICT courses, where many seniors may have low self confidence. The comments from the evaluation when asked what they considered the best with the course underline this:

- It was fine that it was adapted to seniors
- That the teacher used sufficient time so I could follow
- That we were only 8 in the group and that the teacher was excellent
- That we first had a short introduction of the main issues and then could work on our own and in our own pace

All participants assessed the teacher as "excellent". The teacher on the other hand gave the same evaluation to the group. In his opinion teaching seniors is both the easiest and also the most positive part of his work. (He teaches different groups like younger students, in company training etc.) He stated that the group was very motivated, positive and enthusiastic. Also that the senior classes are a lot more social and personal, compared to for instance company courses.

This was confirmed by the participant's evaluation:

- Good communication both between teacher and us and within the group
- That the teacher was inspiring and patient.

During the course, the trainer reached the planned objectives: to learn as much as possible about how to use Word - in a pleasant way. Other key words from the course description are inspiring and nice learning atmosphere. In other words: A course plan that is not only concerned about "academic goals" but also the social significance of the course. This again gives the teacher more freedom to adjust each course to the pace and interests of the specific group.

To the question of what kind of training would interest them, 4 of the 6 answered internet and/or picture editing. This may partly be because they knew this kind of courses would be offered in June, but could also be seen as a proof that they are "finding their feet" in the ICT-world.

THE LEGACY OF THE GENERATIONS, ICELAND

Report

When we looked at what courses we should set up for senior citizens, we found out from the survey that they had to be interesting but also useful. What might be of interest to senior citizens other than travelling, that seems to be one of their main interests, and may be useful at the same time? Then the idea came up to teach senior citizens to record their memories and preserve them for the next generations, so they could have access to them and get acquainted with the life of their ancestors. From that we made the course The legacy of the generations.

The group consisted of 12 senior citizens, 4 men and 8 women. To find these people we advertised and had personal interviews.

Participants were not accustomed to participating in courses, so this was a new experience for most of them. To make them comfortable, the environment was made attractive, with good lighting and quiet surroundings. Coffee and cakes were always offered, and the participants had a nice coffee break with much chatting and fun. There participants also communicated with the staff, who sat with them during their coffee break and formed a good relationship between them. Now these people contact us at their own initiative, which they did not do before.

The objective of the course was to teach seniors how to write their memoirs or stories from their life. Yet Not the technique, but what to write and the different ways it can be done – biography, memoirs, essays, questionnaires etc. Among the subjects were also the meaning of sources for writing and the meaning of writing things down for our ancestors and history. Also, that one person's memories can be very different from another person's memory of the same thing. The objective was also to teach how

to preserve memories and documents. Included in the course was some computer assistance, mostly on how to use Microsoft Word.

The course was very successful and the participants were active and interested. The trainer is an archivist and knows how to file and store documents.

After the course we had a good feedback from everyone, even the trainer. She was willing to take the course further and develop it, and the participants were also willing to do some more. The decision was made to go further and follow this course with another, where the text will be put into audible form for radio and cd. This will be done in autumn 2010. All content from these courses will be stored and kept at the archives for everyone to read or listen.

We found out, that the aim to have a course that was both interesting and useful, was fulfilled. The trainer was very pleased with the group. She said the group was very willing to study, interested in the subject and communicated a lot in the class. The participants were very pleased with the trainer and said that she was the best thing in the training. They also had a lot of fun and enjoyed being together with people of the same age. They are going to continue writing and sharing their knowledge with the future generations.

For the Center it was a good opportunity to try something new, create a new course and teach it. To build a relationship with seniors and see the effect coming to our Center had on them. To listen to their stories, which were remarkable, and to get this feeling that they liked the course, and liked coming to the Center. It was something we all could learn something from.

“GET FAMILIAR WITH THE UTILIZATION OF INTERNET”, FINLAND

The purpose of the course was to become acquainted with the utilization and fun of Internet, for example Skype, net-TV, games and e-learning.

The purpose was to organize a course with 10 participants at most, in order to give as personal a training as possible. We wanted to have elderly students with basic knowledge in IT. The course was planned to have 5 sessions, because according to a previous questionnaire, people didn't want courses to last too long.

The training was held in our own premises in Ikaalinen. The course was marketed by sending personal “invitation cards” to persons in this target group. We sent cards to the persons we knew to have basic knowledge in IT. This way to market the course turned out to be successful. We managed to get a group easily (this is not always so self-evident, because our town only has about 7000 inhabitants and there are rather many alternative hobbies for seniors). There were as many men as women (5+5) in the course, which is also a little bit surprising, because according to our statistics rather more women than men usually take these courses. The age distribution was quite wide. 38 % of the participants on the course were at the age between 70 and 74, and 25 % were at the age between 60 and 64 years. Most of the participants were present at every session of the course.

The main teacher, whom we called tutor because she also belonged to our target group, was 58 years old. Only the social media sessions were taught by a younger teacher. 63 % of the students thought they were both excellent.

One innovative thing in the course was also that the trainer (or tutor) didn't give any written learning material, all the necessary information was picked up from the Internet. Most (75 %) of the students thought this was good. The answer could have been a little bit different if the students had been beginners.

The course was held in the afternoon at 1-3.30 pm. 7 persons thought this time (+premises and equipment) was either good

(3) or very good (4) on a scale from 1-5. One person didn't like it, but he/she didn't explain why. E-learning was interesting according to almost all students (7) and it answered to their needs. One couldn't say whether e-learning was interesting or not. Most of the respondents (7) thought they will be able to use the knowledge they had learned. One respondent didn't find the course useful for him/her.

The students liked this way of learning (learning together). They thought it was fun and fruitful. They felt that they always learned something new from their fellow students and it made the studying more diversified. It was also mentioned that this way of learning should be continued and developed and learning together should be a “civil right” which should be supported by government (for example by tax benefits). Coffee breaks were also mentioned as a positive thing in the course.

At the end of the feedback questionnaire we asked about what other training they might find interesting. Most of the respondents (5) were interested in IT-training and also specialist software like genealogy was mentioned. Apart from IT, training concerning physical education for seniors was on their wish list. Someone suggested that all kind of training organized with “common sense” would be good. Possibly this meant practical approach in training.

According to the tutor, all the students were interested in IT, they had positive attitude towards learning and the group dynamics worked well. Students internalized the idea of co-operative learning well. Although the students were at different levels in their IT-skills, they helped each other all the time. The fact that most of them already knew each other may have helped the co-operation. It was easier to ask advice from a friend.

They even took Skype-contacts with each other outside the course, so the group dynamics really worked.

It seems that most of the people who take part in courses are social and active in life in general.

'LET'S READ & SHARE JOY OF READING', LITHUANIA

1. INTRODUCTION: Courses were held in the capital city of Vilnius (St. Cross' house) and in a small regional town of Trakai (Trakai Center of Education), 30 km outside Vilnius. 26 seniors participated in course: 12 in Vilnius and 14 in Trakai

The objectives of the courses were to follow the idea of lifelong learning, to encourage participants to share joy of reading, to introduce and try out various ways to discuss literature. The trainer worked for the first time with this age group, therefore she gave a lot of attention to the preparation of the course (search of material, planning).

The trainer didn't have any problems during courses, but there were some difficulties with time management, because all participants liked to talk and had much to say. Such type of training is very necessary, because seniors wish to communicate, share life experience and get together. According to the trainer, the participants were pleasantly surprised that they could learn something new about literature and reading at this age. Initially they thought that it was a matter of schooling and that they had nothing in common with it.

2. OVERVIEW OF 1st GROUP EVALUATION at Vilnius St. Cross' house (2010 February 23rd - 25th)

From the participants who attended the courses, 11 seniors completed the questionnaire. All of those 11 participants were women. Age of participants varied: 2 participants were 50 to 59 years old, 5 participants were 60 to 69 years old, 3 participants 70 to 79 years old and 1 participant was more than 80 years old.

The best things in the training were in their opinion: answers to questions, expressed thoughts, discussions, communication, sharing opinions and experiences, reflections, honesty, immediacy and professionalism of lecturer.

Participants had just one proposal on what to change in similar training in the future – to think about how to better introduce courses for seniors in order to have a bigger participation, how to promote it.

Participants assessed the trainer as very good, because no evaluations of "satisfactory" or "fairly good" were chosen. 1 participant assessed the trainer's preparation as "good" and 10 as "excellent".

The quality of the given materials participants assessed as following: material "satisfactory" – 1 senior, "fairly good" – 0, "good" – 3 participants and "excellent" – 7.

Participants assessed courses by evaluating propositions in numbers from 1 to 5 (from lowest to highest). The proposition "the organization of course was appropriate" participants evaluated as follows: 4 seniors agreed with the proposition (4 points), 7 participants strongly agreed (5 points). That "the material was sufficient", all 10 participants who answered the questionnaire strongly agreed (5 points). Also all of those 10 participants strongly agreed with the proposition that "courses met their needs". That "will be able to use what I learned" 3 participants agreed (4 points), 7 seniors strongly agreed (5 points). In assessing the proposition "the course fulfilled my expectations", 2 seniors agreed with it (4 points) and 8 participants of courses strongly agreed.

In general the seniors evaluated the courses as good. Nobody chose "weak" or "fairly good". 3 seniors evaluated the whole course as 'good' and 8 as "excellent".

Participants heard about courses from friends (6 participants) and at St. Cross' house, where the course was introduced and advertised.

To the question of what kind of training would interest them, only a few seniors answered. They would be interested in learning about teen's the upbringing of teenagers and spiritual development.

The trainer evaluated the first group as excellent: she stated that the group had good intentions, and was easily involved with activities and discussions. Course members are active not only in courses, but also in public life. They read and analyze a lot, especially theological and historical literature.

3. OVERVIEW OF 2nd GROUP EVALUATION at Trakai Center of Education (2010 February 22nd and 26th)

From all the course participants 10 seniors completed the questionnaire. 7 of them were women and 3 men. Age of participants varied: 3 participants were 60 to 69 years old, 4 participants were 7 to 79 years old and 3 seniors were over 80 years old (Table 7). Not all participants, who filled in the questionnaire, answered all the questions.

Participants assessed the trainer as very good, because no "satisfactory" or "fairly good" evaluations were chosen. 3 participants assessed the trainer's preparation as "good" and 7 as "excellent" (Table 8).

The quality of the materials given out the participants assessed as following: "good" – 3 participants and "excellent" – 7.

Participants assessed the courses by evaluating propositions and expressing their opinions in numbers from 1 to 5 (from lowest to highest). The proposition "the organization of course was appropriate" participants evaluated as follows: 3 participants agreed with the proposition, 7 seniors strongly agreed. That "the material was sufficient", 3 participants agreed and 6 seniors strongly agreed. In assessing the proposition "training met my needs", 1 participant neither agreed nor disagreed, 1 participant agreed and 7 seniors strongly agreed. That they will be able to use what they had learned, 5 participants agree, 2 seniors strongly agree. In assessing the proposition "the course fulfilled my expectations", with it 3 seniors agreed and 5 participants strongly agreed.

In general the seniors evaluated the courses as good. Nobody chose "weak" or "fairly good". 6 seniors evaluated it as "good" and 4 as "excellent"

During the courses, what the participants liked the most were discussions, openness, the trainer's tact, sincerity and consistency. Participants didn't have proposals on what to change in similar training in the future.

Participants learnt about the courses from friends and acquaintances (9 seniors) and from the internet (1 participant)

To the question of what kind of training would interest them, the seniors answered that they would like to learn something similar to those courses, also about rhetoric, health, history, politics and topics of scientific development.

The trainer evaluated the second group as fairly good. She said that the participants of the group were very different from the group 1: more inclined to share life experiences than to discuss literature. They were more interested in topics of Resistance, as it connected with their life experience; they participated in discussions quite actively anyway.

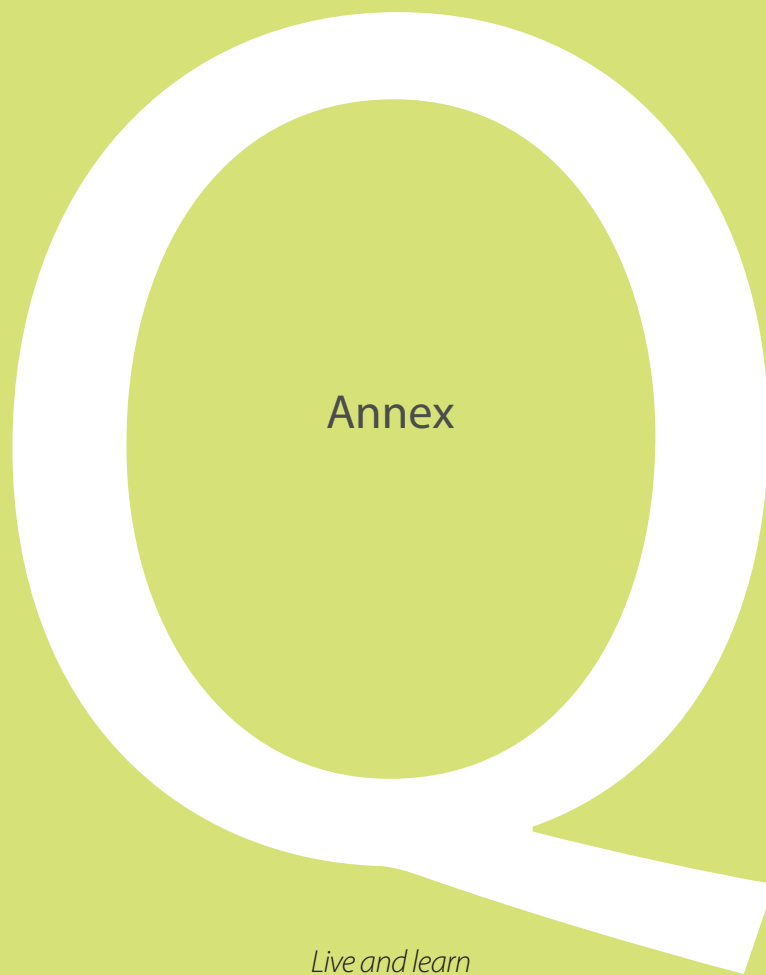
During the courses, the trainer reached the planned objectives – to follow the idea of lifelong learning, to encourage participants to share joy of reading, to introduce and try out various ways to discuss literature.

The trainer had to combine different interests, encourage participants to share joy of reading and motivate them to productive discussions. She had to put in additional effort, because of different interests of participants. The trainer solved this problem by splitting groups according to sphere of interests and giving appropriate tasks. The trainer noted that this type of training is a great opportunity for seniors to communicate. They understood and appreciated it.

4. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The participants liked discussions, honest communication, sharing experiences and thoughts, and also the preparation of the trainer. The seniors would like to learn more: they are interested in training like they just had, and topics on health, history, spiritual development and communication skills.

For the trainer the most difficult was to combine different interests and moderate the discussions so that all could have the opportunity to share their most important ideas. Although the theme of the courses was the same, both groups were very different, because of differing interests and life experience. It could be assumed that seniors from the capital city are more interested in spiritual topics and seniors of a rural area in health, politics and other, more practical, topics. We can presume that this distinction occurred due to the different level of education and culture.



Annex

Live and learn

Oppia ikä kaikki

- A Finnish saying -

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Male		2. Female	
3. Age	From 55-59	60-64	65-69 Over 70
4. Level of education Mark the highest education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Primary	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	University/College	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, what? _____	
5. Are you	<input type="checkbox"/>	working	Choose one <u>alternative</u> .
	<input type="checkbox"/>	retired	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	unemployed	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	something else (partly retired etc.)	
For how long? _____			
6. Where do you live?			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	In the town	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	In the countryside	
My area code _____			

7. Do you like

Choose as many choices as you want.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

theatre
cinema
concert
travelling
participating in courses
reading
outdoor life
discussing
listening to others

8. How do you prefer to learn?

☐

On your own

☐
☐
☐
☐

Distance learning
Reading
TV, radio, internet, CD
Other way, what? _____

☐

Together with others

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

at courses
by participating in organizations (senior clubs etc.)
at work
in study circles
in different clubs
with group of friends
other way, what? _____

9. When do you want to learn?

☐
☐
☐
☐

on holidays
at weekends

in the evenings

at daytime

10. Where do you want to learn?

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

at the workplace

at home

at school

somewhere else? _____

11. Is there something you think you want to learn (choose 3 options at most).

Language studies

Aesthetic subjects and handicrafts

Humanities, philosophy and ethics

Social sciences

Organization and management

Business and ICT

Health, social and sports

Transport and communication

Science, industry and technical subjects

Natural resource management, ecology, environmental protection and outdoor recreation

Goods and services

12. Where do you usually get information on courses?

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

advertisements in newspapers

advertisements in radio / tv

advertisement / introduction at my workplace

friends

internet

poster

other, specify _____

13. When did you last attend a course of any kind?

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

less than 12 months ago

- ☐ 1-3 years ago
☐ more than 3 years ago

14. Would you consider participating in any kind of course?

- ☐ yes (if you choose this option, please answer also to question number 16)
☐ no (if you choose this option, please answer also to question number 15)

15. What do you think is the main obstacle in attending courses? Please choose 3, and mark with 1, 2 and 3 with 1 as the main obstacle.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I don't have time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It is too expensive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I am not interested / I don't gain from the courses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | There are not many courses offered in my area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I'm too old to learn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Negative attitude from my co-workers / employer / family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It is difficult to travel to the course venue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I don't know about the possibilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other, specify _____ |

16. What do you think is the main motivation in attending courses? Please choose 3 and mark with 1, 2 and 3 with 1 as the main motivation.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I can attend courses during work hours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I will get a salary increase after finishing the course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | The course is free /cheap |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I get certification for attending |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | The course is useful for me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | The course is interesting for me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Encouragement and positive attitude from co-workers/employer/family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To meet other people at the same interest |

Other, what? _____

If you want to take part in the lottery, please add your name and address here:

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

Tel. _____

THANK YOUR FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!

This questionnaire is part of the project Nordic+ Senior Golden Examples which is part of Nordplus Adult learning programme.

The purpose of this project is to collect knowledge of seniors' learning needs and methods in Finland, Iceland, Lithuania and Norway.

This project also collects good examples of senior training and learning methods and disseminates the best of them to other countries and for the use of other organizations.

