

European context

Chapter 3. Social

Spain¹

Introduction

In Spain senior education has been in place since 1978. It is driven by the Community Development Directorate² at the proposal of the General Sub-directorate for the Family³, who have signed various agreements with entities promoting cultural institutions, such as the European Universities of the Third Age⁴ model. Spain has three institutions, Classes for the Third Age, Senior Citizens University Programmes and Adult Education Centres⁵. Adult Education centres offer intergenerational programmes.

Classes for the Third Age started their activities in Galicia (1978) and in other autonomous regions.

Senior Citizens University Programmes are educational spaces offering formal educational programmes for senior learners. In the nineties, the following universities pioneered these programmes: Alcalá de Henares (1992), Salamanca (1993), Granada (1994) and Castellón (1998).

Context

Currently the percentage of seniors (over 65 years old) in Spain is 32.9 %, and a sharp increase is expected in the coming years. In twenty years' time, the senior population in Spain will reach almost 47 %.

Related to socio-cultural characteristics, 60 % of Spanish senior citizens feel well and think that life is "to be enjoyed"; 26.6 % take up a sport, 12.2 % start craft classes and 8.8 % begin travelling.

Retirement means freedom and enjoyment. Spanish seniors think it allows them to perform new activities, such as travelling or joining associations. More precisely, 12 % consider retirement as an empty experience, 16 % as a release, 55 % do not consider it important, and 17 % do not know/do not answer.

The report on the elderly in Spain includes 38.7 % of women and 29.7 % of men over 65 who are literate but have no formal education. Only 17.8 % of men and 14.6 % of women over 65 years completed primary studies; among the youngest age group (65 to 69) this percentage was higher at almost 20 %.

Only 1.8 % of women over 65 years reached higher education compared to 5.3% of men.

With regard to health, 60 % of older people perceive their health as good or very good.

As regards citizen participation, 43 % of seniors and 47 % of society in general (all ages) believe that older people should have a greater presence in all areas of society.

Challenges

Relevant topics in Spain could be related to gender influences (marital status, living alone, daily activities, care, perception of health, social participation, etc.). Educational level is the

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⁵ "Aulas de la 3ª Edad" los "Programas Universitarios para personas mayores" and the "Universidades Populares"

determining factor in the process by which the elderly form their perceptions, but it does not affect loneliness. In rural areas social services are less well-known, and more local health services and more social services are called for. There are differences between the perceptions of society and seniors with regard to loneliness and social participation.

Therefore we must take into account the scope of the three types of organisations; all address the importance and the social component of social action.

Furthermore, it should be noted that Spain's agreeable climate favours extracurricular activities that can be done outdoors.

And finally, the formal academic setting for senior education should also be highlighted.

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Finland

Introduction

Finland has a population of some 5 406 000 people, of which more than a million are over 65 years of age. Finns are relatively highly educated and more than 60 % of people aged between 65 and 69 and about 25 % of the age-group of over 80 years have an upper secondary education; more than 40 % of people aged 65 to 69 and 25 % of the age-group of 70 to 74 years have reached an academic degree. In the Finnish culture, an education is highly valued. According to the results of the reports of the PISA (Programme for International Students Assessment), the Finns are the best readers in the world. The literacy rate of the population has traditionally been high ever since the 17th century.

A significant part of senior citizens (65+) participate in lifelong education. In Finland, there is a long tradition of folk high schools. There are some 200 further education and adult education centres in Finland, offering education and courses in a great variety of subjects, open for anyone at a reasonable price. The network of these education centres covers the whole country, which is significant as Finland has one of the most sparsely populated countries in Europe. Most of these educational institutions are owned by the municipality, some are private. Some 200 000 students of folk high school are over 60 years of age and the majority of these are women. In addition to the folk high schools, there are special educational centres for senior students, which operate in connection with universities, e.g. the University of the Third Age at the University of Helsinki, which is part of the Open University. Its aim is to introduce the latest research findings to older people and offer them opportunities to independent academic studies without formal qualifications. Also similar Third Age universities can be found in other universities around the country.

Context

The population of Finland in March 31st, 2012 was 5 406 018. Of these, more than one million had reached the age of 65 years (June 2012). At the moment, the Finnish population is aging faster than that of any other European country. This is because of the low birth rate and high proportion of baby-boomers, born between 1946–1949. The population though, is slowly increasing because of immigration, even though the amount of immigrants is distinctly lower than in many other European countries. The population density of the country is low, about 17 people/square kilometre, with the greatest part of people living on the southern coast. The life expectancy of women at the moment is 82 years, and that of men about 76 years. However,

there are remarkable differences in health according to the residential area, education and income rate of people.

According to a recent study, two thirds of senior citizens are not fully satisfied with their situation, and a remarkable part of them feel, that the development of care for the elderly in recent years has not been satisfactory. 25 % of the seniors suffer from loneliness to some extent. The increasing amount of seniors in Finland is a future challenge for senior and health care.

Challenges

Seniors in Finland feel lonely for many reasons; their spouse has passed on, children have moved out, they live alone without family and friends or live some distance from the cities. The long, cold dark winter causes a decline in their social lives. Primarily, seniors need emotional and instrumental support and being there to listen and share their feelings is sometimes enough but instrumental support on the other hand, is about helping with tangible goods, such as travel services.

Some government agencies arrange daily activities for seniors and some arrange transportation such as taxis so that they can get out from their homes and get involved in activities such as discussion, sports, choir, swimming or to volunteer for occupational and outdoor activities. Most seniors volunteer to help young children in schools or engage in non-governmental organization activities and charitable works in order to fill up the void of loneliness.

Being a sparsely populated country, Finland is challenged in education for seniors. The network of adult education centres is well-developed, and seniors participate actively in the courses offered by these institutions. Nevertheless, there remains much to do in the field of modern technology, since a lot of elderly people are not active users of information technology. The fast growth of the senior population also sets its challenges in adult education.

Sources: Statistics Finland, Ministry of Education and Culture, The Finnish National Board of Education

Italy

The problem of adult literacy starts to become a real issue in Europe at the beginning of 1900, given to the high number of illiterate people, employed or unemployed. Social and economic changes deriving from the industrial revolution create the necessity of a mass education: the main challenge is teaching adults to read, write and calculate. Schooling happens first in towns and cities and then in country locations. During the second half of 1900, in Italy start to appear the Mutual Aid Societies and the Chambers of Labour, being a point of reference for the working class, bringing up forms of education aid and solidarity. One major target is to fight absolute illiteracy of great part of the population. Overtime, other capillary forms of social aggregation will come up, like ACLI (Christian Labour Italian Associations), with the role of promoting education and professional training.

The Italian government starts to have a major role in handling the situation only after the second World War and, during 1947, the first Public Schools for the illiterate start to appear and they will be operative until 1982. During the sixties, adult evening classes for the workers start to appear in Vocational Schools according to the Legislative Decree nr. 140 of March 8, 1968. During the following ten years, these classes start catching on more and more adding also important modifications like matching classes to the specific needs of the adult learners.

Major changes however, happen during the nineties, with the creation of the CTP (Territorial Permanent Centres) and a more extensive diffusion of evening classes between second grade secondary schools, offering proper chances of learning upgrading. The coming forward of a new "information society or post industrial society" creates a new need of passing from a basic literacy of the population to a different meaning of education, intended as lifelong learning, allowing people to learn during their entire path of life.

In Italy people start talking about EDA (Adult Education) referring to new opportunities of getting new professional competences both for public and private labour force, being an integral part of the right of citizenship. The EDA is under the wing of the Public Education and received a proper role from the Fifth World Conference of UNESCO in 1997 (“One hour a day of learning for all”⁶). This Conference gave all state members the guidelines to establish the Adult Education forms.

From this date onward, new structures start to spring up, addressing non formal education, like municipal networks for the adult education initiatives, public cultural infrastructures and associations, Universities of Third Age (for seniors), all these being entities offering non formal adult education, with the purpose to support a proper personal growth of citizens through wide learning as well.

Latvia

Introduction

The main target groups and their needs have been defined in the planning document “Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007–2013”⁷: people without the elementary education and with low level of basic skills, people with special needs, and people with economically little activity who are bounded to the household, people who have already retired and pre-pension aged people. This document identifies the key problems for improving a lifelong learning system in Latvia. In the Latvia the general, professional and the higher education network operates in a defined structure, however, there is a lack of system in the adult and senior education. People of this age group prefer to use non-formal education opportunities. It has been observed that people of pre-pension age and older than that are eager to use informal education opportunities to obtain qualification and knowledge. Low geographical mobility is negatively influenced by the insufficiently developed transportation infrastructure in the economically less developed regions, creates restricted availability to lifelong learning for the rural population. The low level of income of seniors has negative impact for education opportunities, especially outside of capital city Riga. Poverty is one of the most important aspects of social exclusion. Elderly people are one of the social exclusion risk groups.

Context

It is estimated that 22 % of all Latvian inhabitants will be aged between 60 and 79 years in 2030 and 6 % - above the age of 80 years.

Taking into consideration national socio-economic situation, the amount of pension, social and health care facilities, options for life quality maintenance for older people in Latvia are very limited.

The results of Quality of Life Survey in 2005 in Latvia showed that the worst assessment of life was for the elderly people (71 % of respondents agreed to this statement) and rural inhabitants (63 %) . As one of the most important aspects of quality of life in Latvia was mentioned health and financial security. The quality of life is also characterized by satisfaction with life in general. According to the results of European Quality of Life Survey in 2008, Latvian people's satisfaction with their lives was average; the average evaluation on a 10-point scale was 6 (the average evaluation in Europe was 7 points). Data of Eurobarometer survey in 2008 showed that more than half (62 %) of Latvian inhabitants were satisfied with their lives in general, while Latvia is well below the EU average level (-14 percentage points). The number of respondents who were satisfied with their lives decreased to 45 % in the age group of 55 years and older.

Health status indicators deteriorates with age, it occurs in the health self-assessment. People in the age group of 65 years and older in the new EU-12 Member States, including Latvia,

⁶ <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/declaeng.htm>

⁷ http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/Izglitiba/Muzizglitiba/LLL_Programme_Latvia_EN.pdf

evaluate their health status as poor more often (34 %) than in the old EU-15 Member States (15 %) (the average evaluation across the EU is 18 %). Differences between the groups of countries appeared in the answers to the question about long-term health problems, especially at the age of 65 years: 45 % of men and 56 % of women in the EU-12 Member States have admitted that they have long-term (chronic) physical or mental health problems, illness or disability. In the EU-15, respectively, this proportion is 42 % of men and 45 % of women.

Important indicators are those describing the health problems that prevent or restrict the daily activities at home, work or leisure time. 72 % of the inhabitants who are older than 65 years recognize such restrictions for at least the last 6 months. About one third of these respondents have real limitations. This shows the limited quality of life.

Challenges

Loneliness and social isolation are also one of the aspects of social exclusion. Large number of older inhabitants in Latvia are in a special situation that is marked by long-term living in poverty, leading to a sharp existential problems. They range from the spiritual to the material ones, such as despondency and depression. Participation in lifelong learning activities can reduce risks of socialization and mental health that significantly affect the quality of life.

Also physical health being greatly affected by the lifestyle is an essential component of quality of life. According to the study, only 1 % of respondents consider their lifestyle to be very healthy. Overall, a third of respondents (34 %) admit that their lifestyle can be pretty much considered healthy. The most often people look on their lifestyle as on average healthy (48 %). Data reveals that 18 % of retired people regard to their lifestyle as little healthy or unhealthy at all. Data of seniors focus group research indicate that the vast majority of people would like to know more about the psychology and the art of positive thinking. They also would like to get information about the optimal age-appropriate exercises, different types of physical activities and disease prevention. Seniors are less interested in the information related to the basic principles of a balanced diet and preparation of healthy food.

Acquisition of new technologies is also significant at this age. The best practice in this field is project financially supported by ICT enterprises Lattelecom “Be connected with Latvia” The main goals of the project are to reduce the digital divide – the barriers to information and communication technology, which creates the threat of particular segments of society being excluded from the information flow, socializing and employment opportunities.

Poland⁸

Introduction

After the Second World War, the Polish Ministry of Education has undertaken a number of initiatives that included the creation and support of schools for working adults. The forms of education of adults, known as practical training dynamically evolved. Until 1989, teaching and professional skills classes were also carried out by companies and their educational institutions. According to statistics conducted in the years 1960-1970 elementary schools were completed by nearly one million adults graduates. At that time there was also a significant participation of adults in the secondary level education, both in high schools and technical schools (schools that prepare students for a job - practical skills). In comparison to the period immediately after the war, the number of working adults - students at high schools and techniques increased from 146 500 to about 488 000. The vast majority they were the students of technical schools⁹.

⁸ Responsible for this study is Gil Alina, and members of the research team of Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa

⁹ Błędowski P., Nowakowska M., (2010). Poradnik. Podstawy kształcenia ustawicznego, Instytut Nauk Społeczno-Ekonomicznych, Łódź, http://www.centrumego.eu/pliki2/kwalifikacjeto_podstawa_poradnik_ksztalcenia_ustawicznego.pdf

Year 1989 brought the significant changes in Poland in the field of education and training for adults. The fall of the communist regime and the numerous economic and social processes (privatization, rising unemployment, the democratization of the rules of social life), caused that Polish began recognize the benefits of raising level of their education and the acquisition of new qualification or improvement of professional qualifications. There began to appear more and more frequently training institutions, which offer to adults and allow them to take, or continue their education at higher levels. As a result of Polish integration with the European Union, since 1990s dynamic growth market of educational services was recorded. But Polish adults participation in these forms of training in 2002 was only 1.5 %. The analysis carried out during the research process led to the following conclusions:

- participation in various types of training is relatively small among Polish;
- training held in Poland lasts much longer than in the countries where the level of participation is high;
- there is observed very low level of participation among the unemployed and job seekers in targeted trainings;
- in Poland, as in the other countries, people aged from 55 to 64 years participate in lifelong learning much less than 25-54 years age group.
- in continuing education usually participate people who already have a high level of education (for example, those who have completed studies in normal mode and then have taken the post-graduate studies), while those with lower levels of education participate much less in the process of their skills improvement and expanding their knowledge.

This situation is mainly due to the fact that they have to face much more serious barriers (lack of financial support, lack of motivation) in access to various forms of education, than higher educated people (who receive higher wages and are able to self-finance their further process education)¹⁰

Context

According to the data collected by Social Insurance Institution¹¹ in 2012, there are over 7 million 357.4 thousand retired people, with still increasing tendency. The retired in Poland usually take pension, sometimes they use family help, but only a few of them work. The overall tendency appears that Polish seniors do not have a job, even the part time.

In August 2012, Public Opinion Research Centre¹² published results of a survey about way of spending time during retirement. Overwhelming majority of Polish seniors claim, that at the retirement, they spend their free time watching television (98 %), meeting family and friends (87 %), praying at church (81 %), listening to the music (81%), reading book or newspaper (80 %) and do some activity outside like walking (70 %). Just over a half (55 %) work in garden or in allotment, only slightly fewer (44 %) said that they help family taking care of grandchildren or disabled family members. Polish when retired are also familiar with the newest technology: they use computers and smartphones, surf the internet, use virtual communicators but 64 % of the elderly are not interested in new technologies. Upwards of a third seniors in Poland declare to travel around the country and continent (36 %), spend time on their hobbies (44 %), participate in cultural life, go to the cinemas, museums, operas, theatres (35 %), whereas only few of them are volunteers in charity organization (17 %). Only a tiny percentage of seniors (6 %) decide to learn foreign languages, take a part in various courses, self-educate or join to the University of the Third Age.

¹⁰ The OECD study "Adult learning - Thematic review". <http://www.mpips.gov.pl> (02.10.2009).

¹¹ Statement of Social Insurance Institution for September - <http://biznes.newsweek.pl/czy-system-to-wytrzymasz-zus-o-szesc-tysiecy-wiecej-emerytow-i-rencistow,96636,1,1.html> (13.10.2012)

¹² Ways to spend your free time in retirement, (08. 2012), CBOS. http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2012/K_106_12.PDF

Half of Polish seniors are also dissatisfied with their education and skills, whereas only 12 % of retired were satisfied. As can be seen from the survey, Polish seniors at the retirement prefer to do things which do not require spending money and big physical activity. The reasons of this behaviour may be high of the pension and low health state. Overall tendency (75 %) appears that Polish seniors prefer to live on their own, whereas a quarter (25 %) live with children, grandchildren or other family members. Only 7 % of seniors think that their standard of living is comfortable and there is no need to save money for bigger purchases, while overwhelming majority (87 %) admit that they have average standard of living and they have to save money for the first need articles sometimes. A tiny percentage of seniors (6 %) declare themselves as poor and admit that they have the serious problems with satisfying basic needs. Over a third of Polish seniors (40 %) claim they are disabled. Just under a third (30 %) of seniors have a depression, impairment memory and require constant care. 50% of retired have vision impairment, 60 % have hearing impairment, 40 % of seniors suffer from pain in the muscles or joints.

Challenges

There is always possibility to learn some new skills at various courses like pottery course, knitting course, florist course, IT, etc. Information about them can be found in the newspaper, Internet, radio or just advertisement in the bus. All the seniors need to do is find announcement about the interesting course, apply and pay for the course. It is a common rule that courses are not for free and this is often the obstacle.

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Hungary

Introduction

Unlike in many European countries, in Hungary there is not a systematic strategy regularized by laws for the education of the seniors. The laws on adult education in general (Act CI of 2001 on Adult Education) cover the informal and non-formal education of seniors with not specific rules for its specifics. There are two types of adult education to be distinguished for older people. One is the labour market orientation-driven education, where the main aim of the trainings is to integrate older employers to the labour market, make their skills and competencies competitive, and help them not to drop out too early from their workplaces. The other type of education is more related to recreational and life quality-driven trainings (which is our scope of interest in Eduseni project). Here we are lagging behind other European countries in our statistics. Among older people over 55 only 1 % of the population (compared to the EU average of 5 %) is engaged in any kind of education. The majority of these people attend non-formal and informal shorter courses, mostly organized by the Community Centres-which are mostly run by local governments and offer courses at a relatively low rate.

Context

The population of Hungary was 10 million 45 thousand on 1 January 2008 out of which 47.5 % is the share of males and 52.5 % is the share of females. The decrease in the number of births, the rise in the number of deaths and the gain from international migration lower than in the previous years resulted in an actual population decrease of 20 800 people in average per year. Since 2006 the rate of population aged 65 years and over has exceeded the share of child-age (0–14 year-old) population. On 1 January 2008, the rate was 108 old-age people per 100 child-age people. The life expectancy at birth is 77.8 (female) and 69.2 (male) has slightly risen in the last years but is still under the average European life expectancy.¹³

Table 1. Dependency ratios and ageing index (1 January)

Year	Age composition			Youth dependency ratio	Old-age dependency ratio	Total dependency ratio	Ageing index
	0-14	15-64	65-				
1960	25.4	65.7	8.9	38.7	13.6	52.3	35.2
1970	21.1	67.4	11.5	31.3	17.0	48.3	54.4
1980	21.9	64.6	13.5	33.8	20.9	54.8	61.9
1990	20.5	66.2	13.2	31.0	20.0	51.0	64.5
2000	16.9	68.1	15.0	24.8	22.9	46.8	88.5
2001	16.6	68.3	15.1	24.3	22.2	46.5	91.3
2002	16.3	68.4	15.3	23.8	22.3	46.1	93.5
2003	16.1	68.5	15.4	23.5	22.4	45.9	95.4
2004	15.9	68.6	15.5	23.1	22.6	45.7	97.6
2005	15.6	68.7	15.6	22.8	22.7	45.5	99.9
2006	15.4	68.8	15.8	22.4	22.9	45.4	102.4
2007	15.2	68.9	15.9	22.1	23.2	45.2	104.9
2008	15.0	68.8	16.2	21.8	23.5	45.3	107.6

Health: Some 19.2 % of Hungarians in 2008 said they considered their health condition to be “bad” or “very bad”. That is double the EU average and beaten only by Portugal. Life expectancy at birth was 73.8 years in 2008 – the lowest of any OECD country save Turkey¹⁴.

As to life satisfaction, according to an OECD survey¹⁵ Hungary is one of the unhappiest countries. When asked to rate their general satisfaction with life on a scale from 0 to 10, Hungarians gave it a 4.9 grade, lower than the OECD average of 6.7. Hungarian women are even less happy than Hungarian men.

Challenges

In Hungary the economic system as well as health conditions and overall life conditions result in a much poorer situation of Hungarian seniors if compared with other European countries. The difference is even bigger if we take a look at senior's involvement in education. In Hungary the rate of people over 55 participating in education is only 1 % compared to the European average of 5 %. The reasons are various ranging from a lack of resources and free time as well as motivational factors. There are a lot to do to change this situation, both at policy level (increasing offers and accessibility of courses as well as promotion) as well as individual level (increasing motivation and willingness to participate. An exchange of good practices among European partners as well as developed guidelines and possible solution-mapping could highly contribute to the new thinking in the country.

¹³ Statistical Yearbook of Hungary, 2007 Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2008

¹⁴ http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2010/07/health-care_hungary

¹⁵ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/>

Bulgaria

Introduction

According to a number of usual statistical indicators, the educational attainment in the Republic of Bulgaria is currently at EU level, but aging and emigration bring the necessity for adult and senior learning.

Historically, the demand for lifelong learning in Bulgaria has always been recognised. But for a long time there was a lack of concrete activities aimed at the improvement of general knowledge and vocational skills. Still for a long time the system for senior education was not part of the educational system, it was informal and delivered by institutions in the form of courses, rounds and correspondence.

Bulgaria has the lowest EU record for overall adult participation in formal education and training compared to the EU average. Among people aged 45 years and over, participation in educational activities declines sharply, and the 55 years and over age group has the lowest participation level (6.5 per cent). The EU25 average in all these figures is about two to three times higher. Nowadays less than 2 % of adults participate in education and training, 1.4 in formal education and training¹⁶.

A major trend in the demographic development of Bulgaria is the ageing of the population. This will have implications for the education and training systems and employment structure in Bulgaria over the next two decades¹⁷.

Despite the long list of institutions and NGOs active in Adult Education and Learning (ALE) in Bulgaria, training and education for seniors though can be obtained in rather limited institutions. They mainly provide educational opportunities for seniors, organized in courses, programs, and different formal/informal activities.

The implementation of a Programme for Increasing the Quality of Adult Training in 2008 caters for the development of the senior and adult education sectors. Andragogy training courses for adult educators (multipliers) have been organised.

Context

According to the National Statistical Institute, Bulgaria, "... the most recent data (at the end of 2007) show that the calculated resident population of Bulgaria had dropped to 7.6 million persons. It is expected that the population will be 7.649 million by 2010 and 7.170 million by the end of 2020. There are 4 789 967 people between 18 and 64 years of age (65.1 %) and 1 389 059 people older than 64 (18.9 %)"¹⁸.

Nowadays, 23.7 % of the population of Bulgaria is of pensionable age and this number is constantly on the increase. Therefore ensuring the well-being of senior citizens (in terms of both physical and mental health) is a challenge for public authorities, health and the social services. At present, efforts are being made in order to develop new legislative acts, concerning the above, and to restructure the existing mechanisms and methods of work.

Unfortunately, in Bulgaria, retiree average income is very low. Pensioners tend to live with their children's families, other relatives, or, in public care-centres for elderly people. Usually, those who are in good health try to find a job to help them cover their everyday needs, no matter whether it corresponds to their educational qualification or not. The description of the current

¹⁶ Adults in Formal Education: Policies and Practice in Europe, Euridyce, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2011, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/128EN.pdf

¹⁷ Country Report on the Action Plan on Adult Learning: Bulgaria, March 2011, presented in the working group on the Adult Learning Action Plan, http://ec.europa.eu/education/adult/doc/bulgaria_en.pdf

¹⁸ Idem, ref. 16

situation shows that there are not many premises and opportunities for gaining new knowledge by taking part in training and educational programs for people of pensionable age.

There are about 800 centres for social services in the country and their capacity ranges from 12 to 150 places. However, their condition is extremely poor. The fall of the net income and the gradual and constant ageing of the population have led to the increase in the number of people needing social aid and protection, and consequently, to more people waiting to be admitted to the social services centres

Challenges

The main types of institutions involved in senior education are public and municipal centres, including evening schools, a variety of schools, colleges, training centres and information and guidance centres, and higher education universities.

Opportunities have been created for evening or part-time/distance forms of learning. Concurrently, various projects involve teaching adults and seniors to read and write or include training for acquiring professional qualification and/or requalification. Senior education has been mostly delivered by community centres and libraries as recognized education centres for seniors in Bulgaria. Based on a survey conducted in Bulgaria, seniors prefer to be involved in activities related to use of new technologies, leisure, cultural and sporting events, health lectures and seminars on healthy lifestyles.

Some basic documents have been developed where systematic and long-term activities on a national level have been defined.

The Programme for Increasing the Quality of Adult Training adopted in 2008 caters for the development of the senior and adult education sectors. Other key documents are the National Lifelong Learning Strategy (2008-2013)¹⁹ and the Action Plan on Adult Learning.

Among the key trends referring to senior education are improving the quality of provision and staffing, increase the possibilities to achieve a qualification at least one level higher, speed up the process of assessing, recognising non-formal and informal learning for disadvantaged groups, improve the monitoring of the sector.

Measures are being taken to increase the flexibility of access to senior learning opportunities, and promoting educational mobility for senior learners. Part of these focus on a second-chance system for formal and informal education, as well as recognition of non-formal and informal prior learning. E-learning and distance learning are also areas, which are being developed, particularly in aiming to make the systems more attractive to learners²⁰.

¹⁹ http://www.mon.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/en/top_menu/vocational_education/LLL_Strategy_2008-2013.pdf

²⁰ EAEA Country Report on Adult Education in Bulgaria: Helsinki, 2011, <http://www.eaea.org/doc/pub/Country-Report-on-Adult-Education-in-Bulgaria.pdf>

This text is part of the book “Education and quality of life of senior citizens”. See the full book in <http://www.edusenior.eu>

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