Nationale Agentur beim Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung

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United Generations

Mapping Intergenerational Learning focused on Basic Skills – Germany

Developed By:

CGE CULTURE GOES EUROPE Soziokulturelle Initiative Erfurt e.V.

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Contents

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1. Introduction

This document is related to the first part in the development of the United Generations project. Its purpose is to present the results of our field survey as well as the various public orientations and policies put in place to address the problem of the digital gaps. We will first present the results of our quantitative survey (illustrated by graphs). Before presenting the findings of our qualitative survey, we will return to the various topics and main advice received during all our meetings with local players in the digital sector. We will focus on the profiles of the two target audiences: young adults and seniors. This report presents the inventory of digital issues and accompanying offers concerning the territory of the city of Erfurt in Germany.

In the framework of this project, intergenerational learning is defined as the learning that occurs when generations work together to gain skills and value. Regarding the challenges impose by the ageing of EU population, intergenerational learning can provide opportunities for individual and reciprocal learning, for creating community cohesion and deconstructing some generational barriers (Brink, 2021). Furthermore, European research and practices showed that intergenerational learning is considered an important part of lifelong learning and critical for promoting successful ageing and social inclusion of older people in the local communities (EUCIS-LLL, 2015).

2. Intergenerational Learning in Germany

EU population is rapidly ageing, and this trend will continue accelerating in the next decades. In Germany, ageing population and a tightening labour market will greatly affect the country in the next years. Older workers are likely to increase in number due to current demographic trend and the raising in retirement age. However, in relation with other European countries, Germany lags behind in participation by older workers in vocational education and training. Furthermore, against the background of demographic change, a major challenge for the labour market is to

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improve the participation of migrants and disadvantage groups in politics, society, social systems, the media, etc., through the education system[1] (DVV, 2007; Vizthum, 2013).

The ageing trend in the EU and Germany poses many challenges, including the risk of growing gaps between generations (EACEA-LLP, 2012). As such, considerably more cooperation between seniors and younger people might be need in their current activities at workplace and even outside of it (EUCIS-LLL, 2015). However, the intergenerational exchange and cooperation may encounter some difficulties, as different generations use 'different languages', have different social and working practices, and activate and work at different paces (Lupou, et.al., 2010).

As state by the European Pillar of Social Rights "everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable people to participate fully in society and successfully manage transitions in the labour market" (European Commission, 2020). The acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competences happen throughout the life course, starting from the family, the school system to non-formal education and intergenerational relations (Lupou, et.al., 2010).

Despite in the past few decades the access to education, training and educational attainment levels have increased tremendously in the world and within the EU, many adults still struggle to acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy, and digital skills (UNECE, 2019). The OECD Survey of Adults Skills (2019) shows that 1 in 4 adults had very limited experience with computers or lack of confidence when using them. In the EU, close to 1 in 5 adults struggle with reading and writing, calculation and using digital tools in everyday life (European Commission, 2019a). In Germany, one in eight people cannot read and write well (Thuringian Ministry for Education, Youth and Sport, 2021).

[1] Since the Immigration Act was passed in 2005 in Germany, integrational courses were promoted for migrants to learn German language as well as several aspects of the political, economic, legal, and social aspects of living and working in Germany. However, in states like Thuringia, particularly in rural regions, integration policies are half-hearted and not really design out of demographic facts and intercultural knowledge, encouraging migrants to move to on to big cities.

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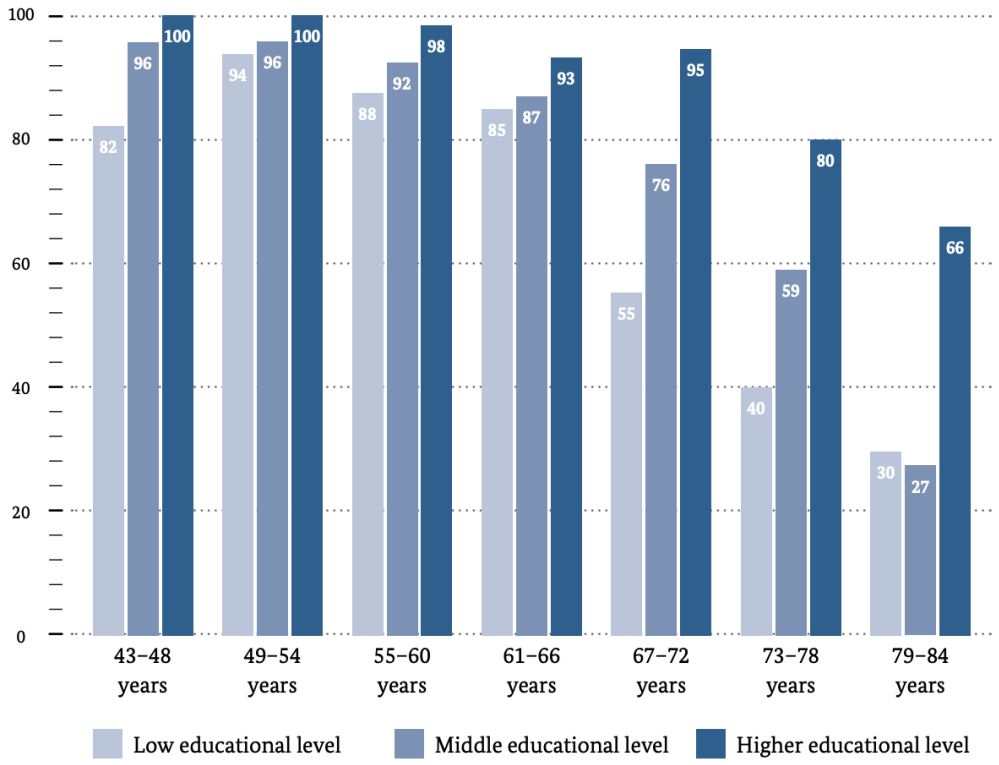
Similarly, the digital gap is particularly wide between senior adults and young generations, and it increases the risk of marginalization and social exclusion of the older population (UNECE, 2019). The digital gap between younger and older Germans remains a large one while there are also significant differences in digital literacy within the older population regarding factors such as educational level, gender, professional and technical biographies (Huxhold, et. al., 2020). As a result, seniors with lower levels of education have a bigger risk to lag behind internet access.

Illustration 1. Proportion of people with access to the internet by age group and education (2017, in percent)



Source: Huxhold, O. and Otte K. (2019): Zugang zum Internet und Nutzung des Internets in der zweiten Lebenshälfte [Access to the internet and use of the internet in the second half of life]. DZA Aktuell. Berlin: Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen [German Centre of Gerontology]. Based on data from: DEAS 2017, weighted, (n = 5246).

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To address these challenges, the Upskilling Pathways initiative was proposed by the European Commission and adopted by the Council to help adults to acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital and to develop those skills throughout their lives (European Commission, 2019a). Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration prioritize encouraging access to Lifelong Learning and achieving social and digital inclusive education by providing more learning opportunities for senior citizens in their communities (UNECE, 2019).

Moreover, the German Digital Strategy 2025 identified digital learning as a lifelong learning need and set as a goal "to expand media literacy and enable everyone to use the resources offered by the Internet to continue learning on their own, and to be able to judge the quality of digital information and education being offered" (Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, 2016).

Following the adoption of the Council Upskilling Pathways initiative as well as the national agenda, a growing emphasis on digital skills and the impact of digitalisation on people and the labour market is apparent in Germany national reform plans. For instance, in 2018, Germany adopted a new Law -Qualification Opportunities Act- to increase opportunities for qualification, upskilling and protection of low qualified people who are employed in jobs that may be at risk of displacement due to digitalization (Bundesgesetzblatt, 2018). Furthermore, since 2020, young adults -particularly the collective not in education, employment, or training- are subjected to upskilling opportunities offered at Job Centers (European Commission, 2019b).

The German Senior Citizens' policy aims to strengthen the existing potential of older people and thus promote intergenerational cohesion. The governmental institution in Germany that is responsible for policies that affect the elderly population and assess the presented concerns is the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ)[2], which reports and raise awareness on the

[2] Other ministries can be involved in the implementation of the programs for older people, that is for example the case of the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) that cooperates with the BMFSFJ program

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situations of older people. The Ministry is responsible for the Government Reports on Older People, which, in its eighth and most recent version of 2020, focused on the opportunities and challenges associated with digitalization for the lives of older people. The report recognized that education and digital sovereignty are important for older people to participate actively and self-determinedly in social life. Additionally, it showed that the effects of the digitisation process on life in old age are relevant in the fields of housing, care, mobility, and health, as well as in the creation of social spaces (BMFSFJ, 2020). The BMFSFJ also executes the guidelines for the Federal Plan for the Elderly (Bundesaltenplan)[3] which specifies projects and measures that can be funded by this ministry.

Since a successful senior citizens' policy depends on cooperation from partners from civil society, which participate in the implementation of the different government programs, and which also generate their own initiatives, the following civil society organizations are one of the most relevant in Germany:

The Federal Working Group of Senior Citizens' Offices e.V. (Die Bundes¬arbeitsgemeinschaft Senioren¬büros e.V. (BaS)) is the network of around 450 senior citizens' offices in Germany. Senior citizens' offices promote the voluntary commitment of older people and are committed to a good quality of life. BaS promotes cross-generational and cross-cultural encounters between committed senior citizens and young people with an immigrant or refugee background.

BAGSO - Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenorganisationen e.V. represents the interests of the older generations in Germany. It advocates active, self-determined and healthy

"Mehrgenerationenhäuser" within the framework of the National Decade for Literacy and Basic Education 2016 to 2026 with the special focus "Promoting literacy and numeracy skills" funded by the BMBF. https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/alle-meldungen/bundesprogramm-mehrgenerationenhaus-neue-foerderphase-beginnt-173648

[3] The Federal Plan for the Elderly provides important impetus for the further development of assistance and work for the elderly at the federal level. Based on the guidelines of the Federal Plan for the Elderly, federal projects are funded that contribute to supporting older people in their independent and equal life in society. Fundamental concerns are: the active participation and activation of the potential of older people, the guarantee of protection and assistance in old age, and supporting older people with disabilities for their self-determined participation in social life.

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aging. BAGSO puts topics on the political agenda that are relevant to the quality of life of older people and brings together around 120 organizations in civil society that are supported by older people or that are committed to their interests.

Malteser Hilfsdienst e.V. is an international Catholic organization that helps people in emergency situations, in Germany and worldwide. In Germany Malteser implement different projects for older people with the aim to strengthen the relationships between the generations. Among their projects is the Common paths -Intergenerational cooperation Project, the "Miteinander-Füreinander - Kontakt und Gemeinschaft im Alter".

On the European level, the Lifelong Learning Program (LLP), 2007-2013, was an EU program for education and training that supported active ageing through intergenerational learning and learning opportunities in all stages of life. Within the framework of this program, German organizations developed EU funded projects with the aim to contribute and support active ageing and intergenerational learning through the development and use of digital skills (EACEA-LLP, 2012). Some of the German initiatives were, firstly, “Basic Web 2.0 Skills by Learning in Family Environment” project aimed to provide educational methods of family learning and raise awareness of lifelong learning for the entire family. By means of family learning, disadvantage families were supported and motivated to acquire skills and knowledge in ICT[4].

Lifelong learning focusing on the acquisition digital skills and knowledge were very present with the LLP program implementation in Germany. For example, “Connect in Laterlife- Social Networking for Senior Citizens”, project provided a web platform for networking of older people. The curricula and programmes inside the platform aimed to teach older person ICT skills and support and encourage the learning of a foreign language[5].

Another project, “CyberTraining-4-Parents” provided face-to-face training courses on cyberbullying for adult educators working with parents. As “digital migrants” some parents lack

[4] https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/teacher_academy/catalogue/detail.cfm?id=78071
[5] www.connectinlaterlife.eu

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the knowledge and skills to help and give advice to children and youth about online risks and challenges. Furthermore, the project provided self-directed course for adults and adult trainers on ICT and web-based content for tackling cyberbullying. Thus, the project equips adults with skills and strategies (for them and their children) to cope with the risks of the digital world[6].

The projects also focused on intergenerational aspect of lifelong learning. eScouts - Intergenerational Learning Circle for Community Service aimed to deliver a new intergeneration learning methodology which focused on digital inclusion of seniors and the entrance of young people in the labor market, all through intergenerational dialogue and mutual support. The intergenerational learning methodology acts as an inclusion catalyst by addressing professionalization of staff from educational and cultural centers and digital services, developing key competences curricula for disadvantage collectives, and testing intergenerational learning cycles based and social media applications so as to empower the learners[7].

Digital storytelling as an element for intergenerational learning was developed in two programs of the LLP. Firstly, "CROSSTALK: Moving stories from across borders, cultures and generations" project encouraged older people and disadvantage groups to engage in digital storytelling and engage them in "crosstalk" between generations and cultures. The project involved a training in media for younger and older people and a later stage of intergenerational experimentation, where seniors and children/youngsters interviewed each other and produced audio guides together. The project earned The German media award "Dieter Baacke Preis" 2010 in the category "Intergenerational and Integrative Media Pedagogy" awarded by the Gesellschaft für Medienpaedagogik und Kommunikationskultur (GMK) and by the National Ministry for Families, Seniors, Women and Youth[8].

Additionally, "DeTALES: Digital Education Through Adult Learners' EU-Enlargement Stories" project provided seniors, low-skilled adults, migrants, unemployed adults and adult

[6] http://cybertraining4parents.org/
[7] http://escouts.eu/
[8] www.crosstalk-online.de

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trainers with training material about EU topics using the digital storytelling method. This tool encouraged intergenerational learning through the support given by young people and children to the adult/senior participants to digitalize their stories[9].

Finally, "Mix@ges - Intergenerational Bonding via Creative New Media" projected aimed to support intergenerational bonding, understanding and dialogue between seniors and young people by using the creative potential of digital media. Art education was used to explore the creative and artistic use of the internet, mobile phones, personal computers, game consoles, digital cameras etc. Under the guidance of professional media artists and trainers, both generations jointly create innovative media products. The project was coordinated by the Institute for Arts Education and Culture (ibk) in Remscheid, Germany[10].

Positive developments are recorded as Germany set in motion its national agenda on supporting the digital upskilling of people whose job is at risk of automatization, the unemployed and the collective of adult seniors (European Commission, 2019b). According to UNECE, the generational gap brought by digitization is lower in Germany than in the UNECE region average. Moreover, in the field of learning and empowerment, UNECE states that Germany has made it a focus to advance digital literacy by supporting courses for older persons, and mentoring partnerships between the young and old to help eliminate barriers and promote social interaction among its citizens (UNECE, 2019).

Illustration 2. Percentage of people using the Internet aged 25 to 54 and 55 to 74. UNECE average based on data of 43 countries.

[9] www.detales.net
[10] www.mixages.eu

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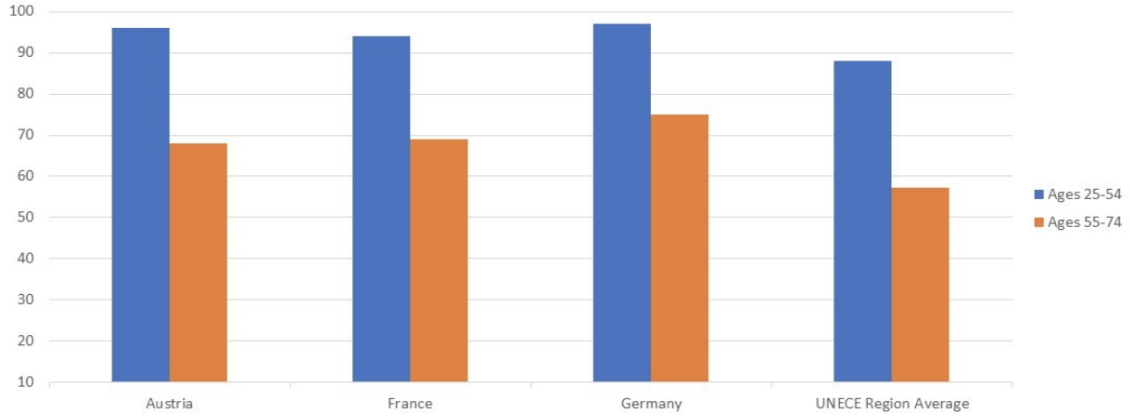

Source: UNECE Statistical Database 2017

Additionally, national reports showed that across age groups, Germans identified their digital skills as satisfactory. However, +65 adults in Germany rate their own digital skills as sufficient, while +75 adults rate their digital skills as poor. Furthermore, in contrast to other age groups, people over 75 years show a higher preference for having a space where to try out new technologies and learn new skills and would also welcome national services such as companions to support them with concrete assistant on digital topics (Institut fur Verbraucherpolitik, 2021).

In OECD countries, older adults score lower in literacy and numeracy proficiency, partly due to ageing but mostly because the access to the education system was expanded in recent times. This situation differs from the German case where the difference in the literacy of age groups is almost none because the country started the process of access to education in the more distant past (OECD, 2019).

3. Good Practices

GOOD PRACTICE 1	
Name	"Digital Angel" project
Description (50-70 words)	Consists of a team of advisory professional who travel throughout Germany to instruct older people -in a tailored and on-site way-

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	about digital skills and how daily routines can be enriched and made easier by using digital applications.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	Deutschland sicher im Netz e.V. association (DsiN); Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ).
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Digital skills
Tools/Resources/ Services	Advisory service
Link/ Website	https://www.digitaler-engel.org .

GOOD PRACTICE 2	
Name	"Digitization and Education for Older People" service center (Servicestelle "Digitalisierung und Bildung für ältere Menschen")
Description (50-70 words)	A service center that provides information and services on digitalization and education for seniors. Through the online portal, they offer a national database where seniors can find local contact
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	Supported by BMFSFJ and Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenorganisationen e.V. (BAGSO)
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Digital skills

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Tools/Resources/ Services	Local service carters and a national database
Link/ Website	https://www.wissensdurstig.de

GOOD PRACTICE 3	
Name	DigitalPakt Alter
Description (50-70 words)	is a longer-term initiative to strengthen the social participation and commitment of older people in the digital world. Its aim is to expand local services in the areas of housing, mobility, social integration, health and care, and social space. In this way, older people throughout Germany will be able to find suitable offers for acquiring digital skills.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	It is supported by a broad social alliance: the federal government, the states, local authorities, business and civil society.
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National-local
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Digital skills
Tools/Resources/ Services	Services
Link/ Website	https://www.digitalpakt-alter.de

GOOD PRACTICE 4	
Name	"ValiKom"

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Description (50-70 words)	Is a project and certification in a dual system of apprenticeship. Valikom project developed a procedure to certify vocational skills of those who have no formal qualification.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	Chambers of Commerce and Industry and of Skilled Crafts; Deutscher Industrie und Handelskammertag; Westdeutschen Handwerkskammertag; Verband der Landwirtschaftskammern; Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung.
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Vocational skills
Tools/Resources/ Services	Assessment methods: (ole play, specialist interview, presentation of work results, case studies, work samples, etc. 2 assessors, guidance and advice to achieve the certificate of acquisition of skills.
Link/ Website	https://www.validierungsverfahren.de/startseite

GOOD PRACTICE 5	
Name	ZGL (Shaping Living Together) - Jena
Description (50-70 words)	Workshops where the participants choose the topics. They create their own initiative, like picnics, hiking tours, dancing. The idea is that

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	the group moderate, guides and provides the experiential and peer-to-peer learning.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	ZGL projects are funded by the Ministry of Interior. The team first identifies the organizations that can act as multipliers or organizations working with similar target groups. For example, these could be hiking clubs, churches, etc. Also, they reach public-funding centres like family centres, elderly homes.
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	Regional
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Lifelong learning skills
Tools/Resources/ Services	Adaptation of simulation game developed by Jena University but translated into reality.
Link/ Website	https://www.iwmgmbh.eu/projekte/

GOOD PRACTICE 6	
Name	ZGL (Shaping Living Together) – Erfurt
Description (50-70 words)	Cooking together, networking and sharing the meals. This workshop is a really good tool to teach different language skills.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	ZGL projects are funded by the Ministry of Interior. Ukrainian cultural organizations and organizations supporting Ukrainian refugees.
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	Local

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Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Language skills
Tools/Resources/ Services	Regular in-person workshops. Nebenan: social media use by old seniors. Is a good tool to approach +60 adults from the neighbourhood.
Link/ Website	https://www.iwmgmbh.eu/zlg/

4. Result and discussion: The Profile of Disadvantaged Adults (Age 60+)

We conducted a survey to people aged 60+, to better understand the digital skills and competences of senior adults in Germany. The age sample was homogenous since 100% of respondents were aged between 60 to 70 years old. This relates to our difficulty to reach people older people since they were suspicious and very often refuse to respond to any request without a relationship of trust established upstream. According to educational level attained, the sample was also rather homogenous as most respondents had at least university level of studies (81%) and the rest (19%) achieved higher secondary education.

Regarding digital skills, findings show that senior adults have a better ability to operate laptops and smartphones than tables. For the ability to manage the first two devices, respondents placed their answers between good and excellent while regarding the skills to manage tablets, half of the surveyed people placed their answers between none and very poor. While 50% of the respondents recognize their use of laptop as very good or excellent, a bigger proportion of them (63%) answered their ability to operate smartphones was very good or excellent. Overall, we can already point out that older people living in Germany is more comfortable with the usage of smartphones than laptops, and to a much lesser extent with tablets.

As for the ability to use and set up equipment such as cameras and microphones, findings show than more than half of the seniors surveyed have good (38%) and excellent (19%).

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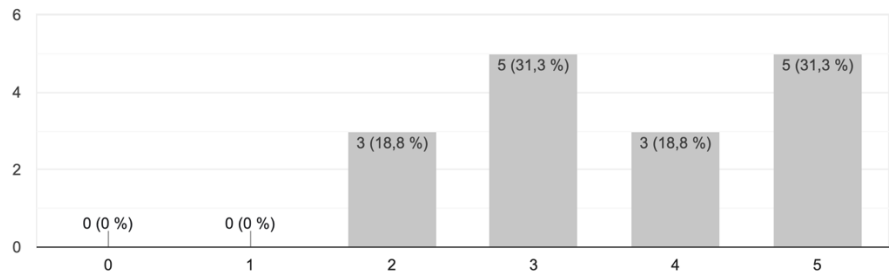
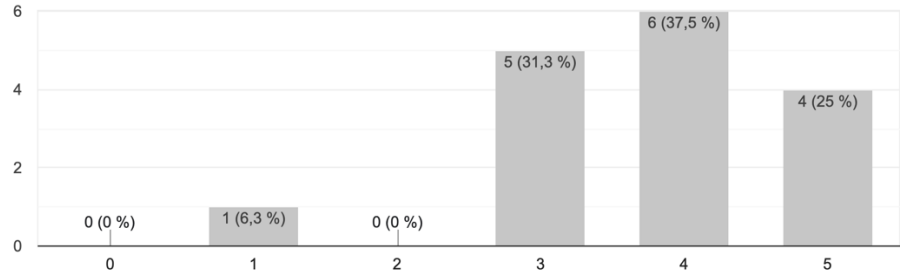
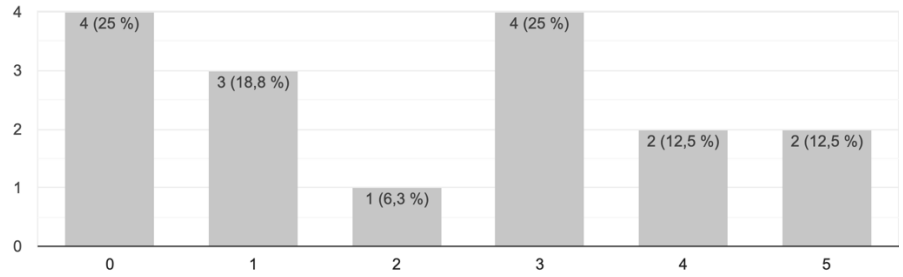
Ability to operate a computer/ laptop
16 respuestas



Ability to operate a Smartphone
16 respuestas



Ability to operate a Tablet
16 respuestas



Regarding the ability of senior adults to navigate through the internet, use online means of communication and book appointments online, results indicate that nearly 70% of respondents

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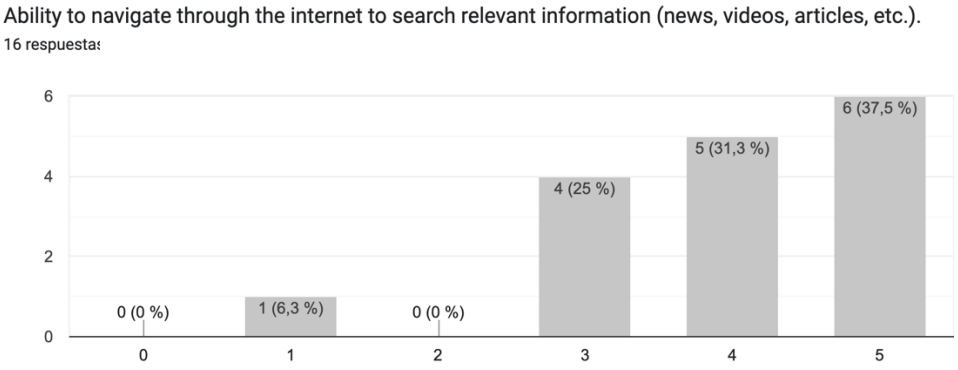
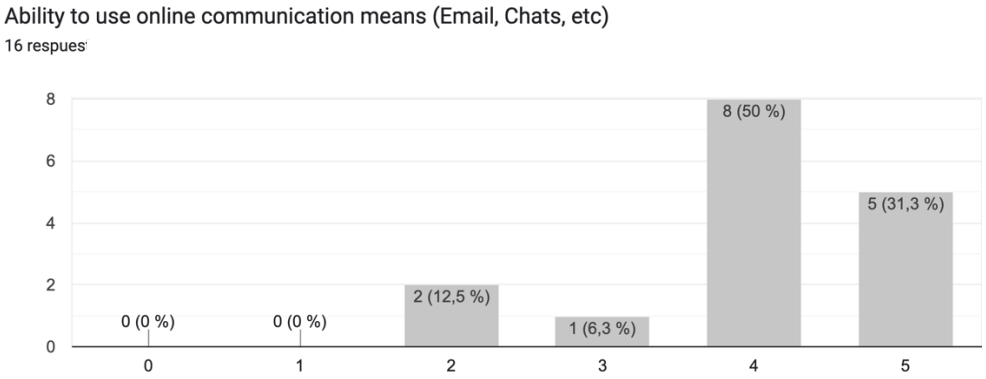
have a very good to excellent mastery of these digital skills. However, results show that respondent are more confident in communicating and making online appointments rather than to search information on the internet. This can be related to the need of seniors to develop their daily tasks through online means. This is partly a consequence of COVID-19 pandemic that accelerated the digitalization of services and facilitated the transition of making our daily routines and communications more digital.





However, regarding senior's competences about protecting personal data and recognize threats on devices, more than 60% of results varied between poor and good. This major gap between poor use of data protection on the one hand and many users' browsing information on the other represents one of the largest grey areas in the daily use of digital technology.

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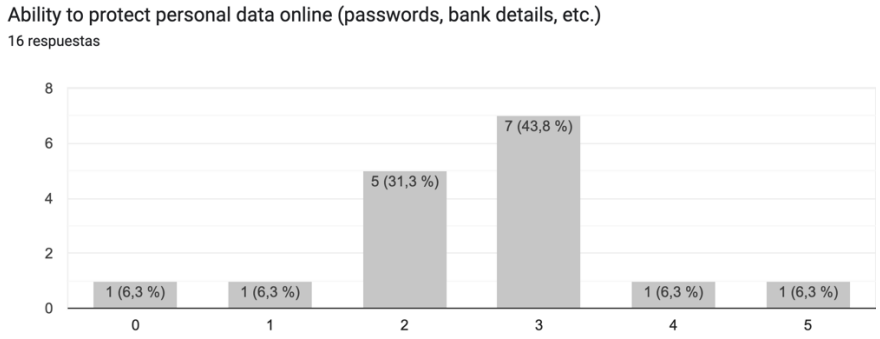

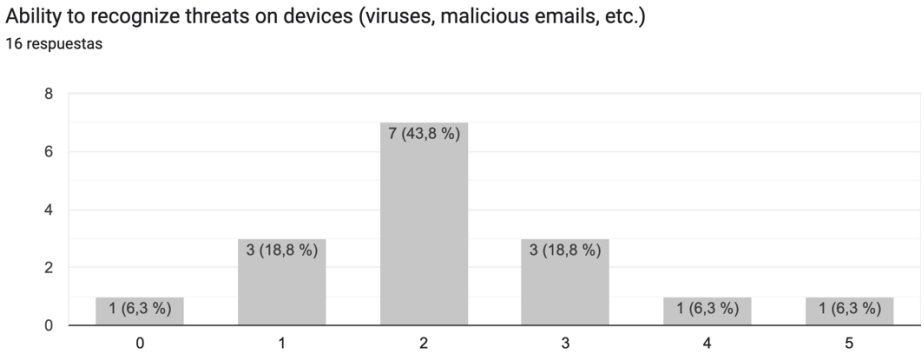

The situation of English language skills of seniors living in Germany was also investigate through our survey. The findings show a diverse landscape, where some older people master this second language, and others are unable to communicate through it. This can be related to the fact that the survey was done with migrant seniors and German citizens. Whereas in Germany the education system expanded long time ago, the education system of developing countries expanded relatively recently. For instance, 44% of respondents manifested having very good or excellent reading skills while the other 44% acknowledge their reading competence was none to very poor. Moreover, 56% of surveyed people operate their digital devices in German and 50% does it in Russian. This can be explained by the fact that many migrants in Germany come to the country with poor or no knowledge of English and the language they need for integration in society in German.

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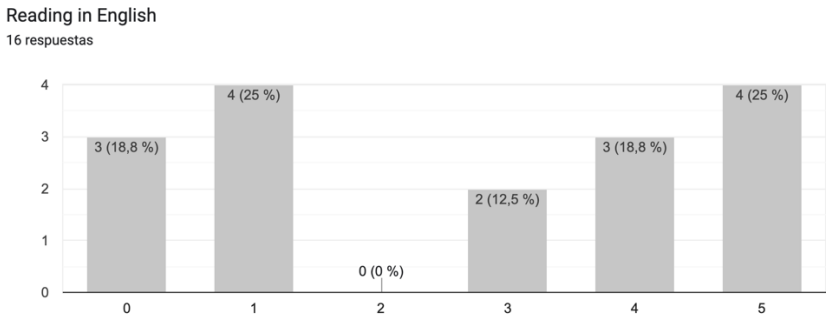
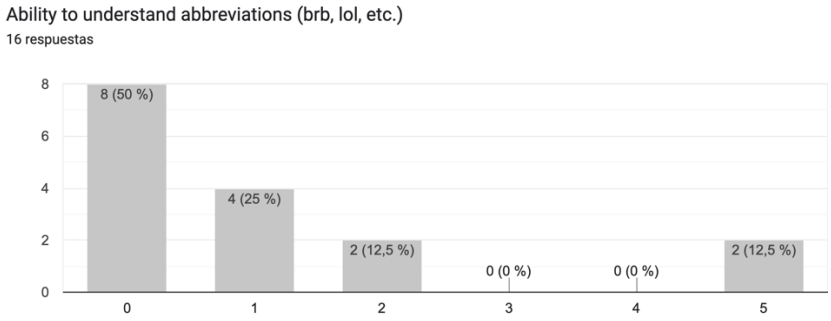


For oral comprehension, the difficulties are much more visible as 50% of participants rate their skills as none of very poor. Accordingly, to these gaps in English language, 56% of participants would be interested in having courses to improve their language skills.

However, for the question about their ability to understand abbreviations such as “brb” or “lol”, 75% of the people surveyed manifested a cero to very poor understanding. Thus, we could say that this online jargon is not under the competence of senior adults.



About the willigness to participante in lifelong learning courses with youth, half of respondents would do it to improve their digital skills. However, if they would have to share their knowledge and competences to younger people, 69% would be willing to. Among the topics that these respondents would like to share with youth, most of them (72%) are interested into cultural and history topics, followed by the transmission of cooking skills (36%).

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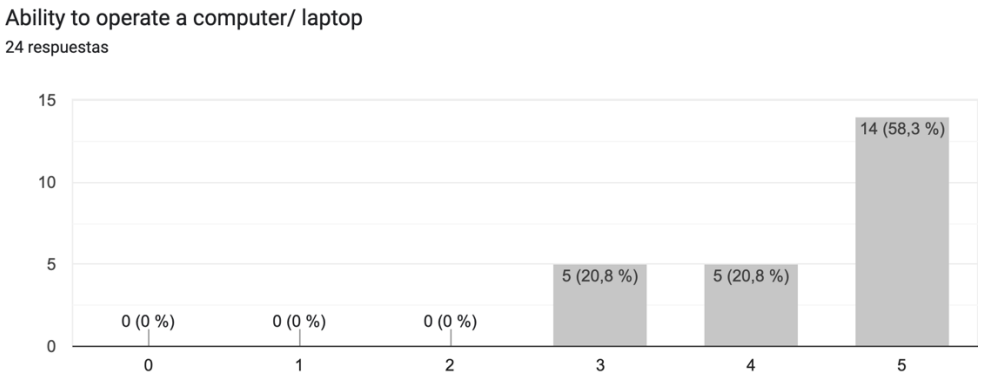
5. Result and discussion: The Profile of Young Generation (15-30)

We conducted a survey to people aged 15-30, to better understand the digital skills and competences of young people living in Germany. The results gather was well distributed sample across group ages: 29% respondents were aged 16 to 20, 33% were aged 21 to 25 and 38% were aged 26 to 30 years old. According to educational level attained, the sample was more homogenous as most respondents had at least university level of studies (71%) and a quarter achieved post graduate studies.

Half of respondents have an excellent mastery of technological devices such as laptops, smartphone, and Tablets and nearly 20% of them have an almost excellent domain of them. We can relate this ability to their daily usage of these items in the 21st century. The findings of the survey are conclusive and sound about the hight competences that young people have regarding the digital world.



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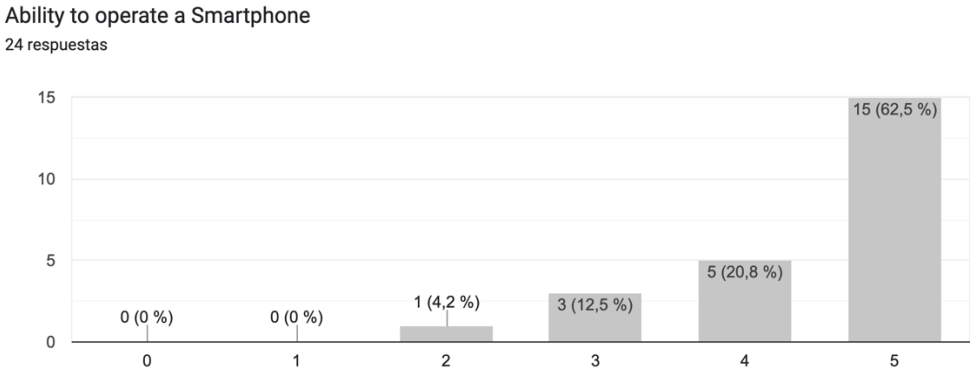

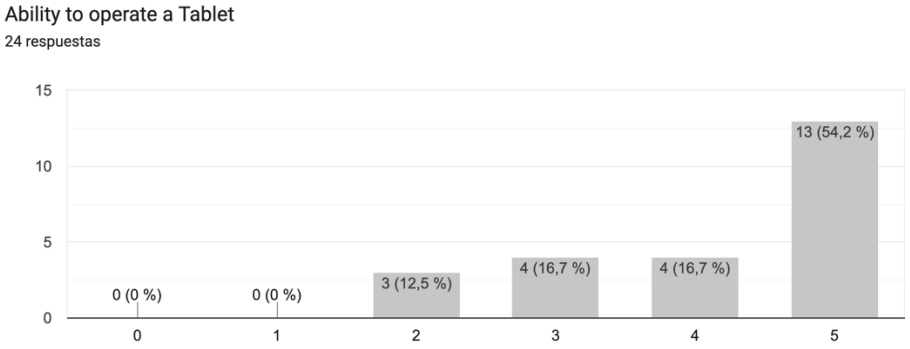

Similarly, 75% of respondents considered excellent their ability to navigate through the internet to search relevant information (news, videos, articles, etc.) and 17% almost excellent. These results show young people aged 15-30 can be called a digital native, which is the person born or brought up during the age of digital technology and so familiar with computers and the internet from an early age.

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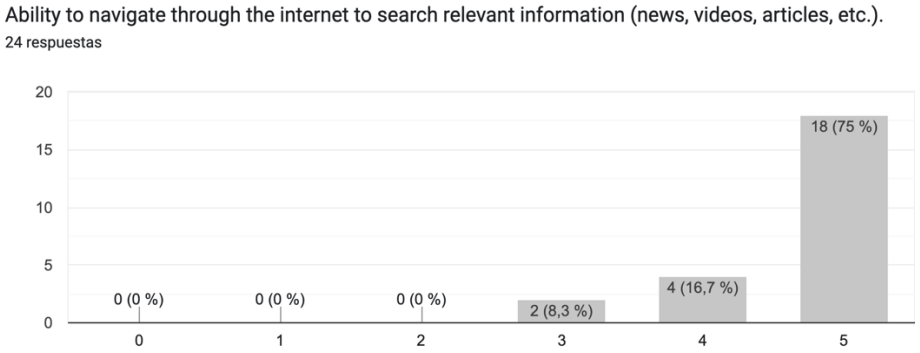
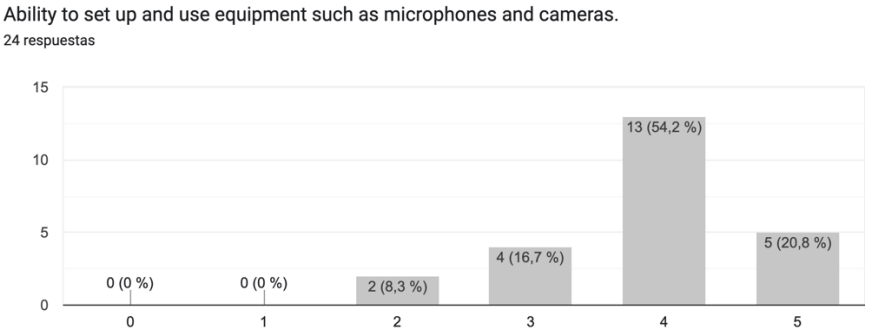


Results weren't the same for the ability to set up and use equipment such as cameras and microphones. More than half of the respondents consider that they mastery those devices was almost excellent and only 21% considered it excellent. We consider that these results are related to less frequent -and more specific- use of such devices. This is because laptops, smartphones and tablets have already microphones and cameras installed in their operating system. Thus, the use of extra equipment is used on more specific occasions or regarding certain interest such as gaming, podcasting, working, etc.



The findings show a very high ability (80%) to use social media platforms among respondents, while the ability to communicate by online means is far higher, with 92% of the youngsters reporting excellent domain in it. This later finding can also be related not only to their digital native ability but also to the restrictions that pandemic imposed on face-to-face

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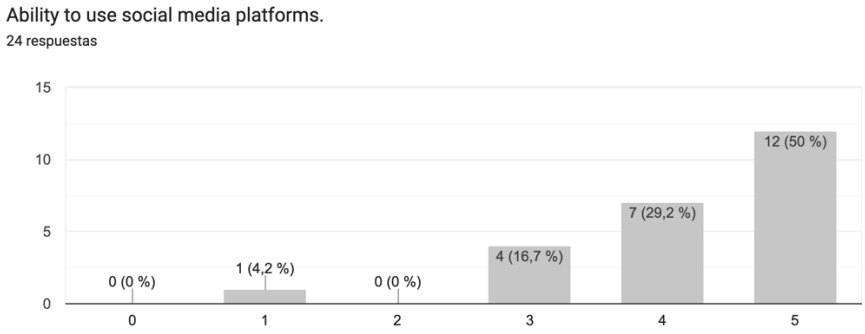
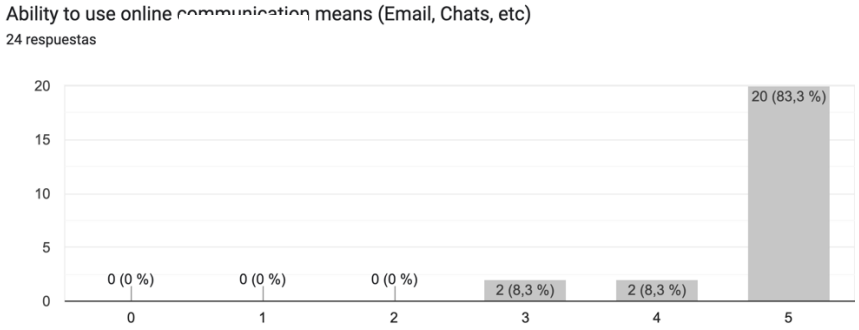
communication. This can be better understood by the fact that almost all respondents are using multiple means of communication (instant messaging 92%, video conferencing 83%, social media 88% and email 88%).





Regarding language skills, more than 80% of participants reported very high and excellent reading, writing and listening skills. These findings contrast notably with seniors answers, since almost half of the smaple reported very bad or none English language skills.

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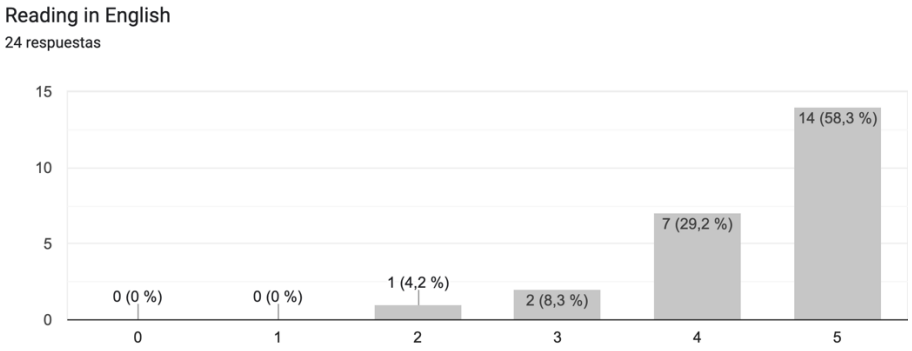

As for the undestanding of abbreviations such as “brb” or “lol”, answers were evenly distributed beetween good (33,3%), very good (33,3%) and excellent (29,2%). Most repondents (88%) operated their phone in English as well as in another language (Probably their native one, as most surveyed people were inmigrants).

About the willigness to participante in lifelong learning courses, only one third of respondents would do it to improve their digital skills. However, 75% of them would be interested in learning opportunities to enhace their language skills, and they would be interested as well to have this courses together with adult seniors.

Regarding intergenerational learning, 79,2% of participant would definitly share their knowledge and interest to seniors. The first topic that young people would chose for intergenerational learning is language (88%), followed by history & culture (58%), stories & storytelling (54%) and cooking (33%). Lastly, one respondednt also showed interest in sharing/transmitting knowledge and competences in film making and podcast creation.

6. Lifelong Learning Providers

We conduct research about the current offers of lifelong learning providers in Thuringia region and the city of Erfurt. The interviewed adult-trainers recognized that the landscape of

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Lifelong Learning is diverse in Thuringia since many organizations offer courses and workshops where they integrate older and younger people by common topics and interest that these collectives share. Some examples are hiking clubs, book clubs, churches, and organizations for refugees. Therefore, intergenerational learning occurs through specific topics that gather people from different generations. As suggested by the adult trainers, this process leads to both generations to indirectly learn from each other. Thus, despite it not being outspoken, intergenerational learning is happening in every activity. However, the interviewed recognized there is room for improvement and suggested that moderators and trainers can address the topic of intergenerational learning by asking straightforward to seniors and youngsters their different opinions on those topics so that each age group can learn from the other.

During the interviews and informal conversation with stakeholders, we learnt that adult Education Centers (Volkshochschulen) have a long tradition in Germany. In the federal state of Thuringia, adult education is recognized as lifelong learning and supported through the Thuringian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, who is responsible for the recognition and financial support of those organizations within the framework of the Thuringian Adult Education Act. While goals and task of adult education are regulated by the Act, the content of the education is determined by the centers provided the adults' needs.

As informed by the ministry servants through informal conversations, the Ministry recognizes as adult education center 12 independent institutions, 3 residential adult education centers and 23 adult education centers affiliated with the Thüringer Volkshochschulverband e.V. in Thuringia.

The Thüringer Volkshochschulverband e.V. is the umbrella organization of the German adult education centers (Volkshochschulen). Many Volkshochschulen have a well-developed array of adult-education tools and workshops. For example, the adult education center in Arnstadt-Ilmenau, close to Erfurt city, aims at enabling participants to exchange their opinions and views, to get involved and active in self-development through a wide range of offers. The center provides seniors with continuing education and training on digital skills, language courses (English and Spanish), road safety course, etc. The adult center also provides opportunities for

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intergenerational learning through dance classes for both seniors and children/young people, Chinese language and cultural course, courses for parents and their children, and Christmas baking workshops for all ages, among others.

Thuringian Association of Adult Education also developed a wide array of learning projects for adults in the field of integration. For example, some adult education centers in Thuringia implemented traineeships where migrant adults learn inside the companies during short internships. What worked well in rural areas, is that these adult education centers can provide learning prerequisites like constant training of the adult-educators, socio-pedagogical support for participants and working in small groups.

Another project "German for Professional Purposes", unemployed adult migrants not only learn the language and the several aspects of the political, economic, legal, and social aspects of living and working in Germany, but they are provided with vocational training for re-joining workforce. This program was implemented in more than 38 vocational schools in the region. One particular aspect of success was paying transport cost to participants.

In the city of Erfurt, we could also find social enterprises that provide language support and activation and professional integration for migrants through intercultural training, coaching and advice. These organizations work jointly with job-centers and offer workshops about social learning to support unemployed people to find an occupation and get integrated into society.

Other of intergenerational learning programs can be found Thuringia region. One important one is the initiative under the federal program, Mehrgenerationenhäuser (Multigenerational houses), which gave funds to around 530 houses until the end of 2008. The multigenerational houses provide spaces where young and older adults can meet, learn from each other, and work together for the community. An example of the multigenerational houses can be found in Erfurt, at Moskauer Platz. This multigenerational house is a meeting point where the generations develop activities together and learn from each other[11]. Another example is the

[11] The website of the intergenerational house at Erfurt is https://mmev.de/angebote-des-mehrgenerationenhaus

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multigenerational house in Thuringia region is “Pusteblume", in Halle. Here seniors and young people meet, help each other, contribute their experience and skills. Particularly in the digitalization topic it offers creative and counseling services as well as various workshops in topics like video telephony, booking a trip online, first steps with the smartphone or tablet, image editing, social networks, computer entry, e-mail - the modern letter and more[12].

7. Conclusion/ Summary

This report showed that the digital gap between younger and older people in Germany is still a large one. This is supported by the surveys run to both generations. Native-born digitals have a higher ability in their to use of internet to browse for information and in their ability to operate digital devices including tablets.

The German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth recognizes that education and digital sovereignty are crucial for older people to participate actively and self-determinedly in social life. Regarding this concern, senior respondents reported a very good ability to make appointments online and communicate online. This can be related the need for adaptation of adults to the digitalization of services and of communication channels, which was accelerated because of the pandemic. However, this can also be related to the presence of lifelong learning providers which are financially supported by the regional government and offer a wide variety of upskilling workshops for adults, especially for immigrants.

Results from the survey suggest an important intergenerational gap regarding English language skills. This can be related to the fact that most seniors surveyed were migrants from developing countries and who acquired German as a second language during their integration courses. Moreover, the wide difference in the ability to understand abbreviation between young and old people suggest that younger generations are more exposed to online jargon and online social media, where English is the most important language.

[12] The website of “Pusteblume" initiative is: https://www.mghhalle.de

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Despite the generational gaps and lower language skills of adults, both groups were willingly to take part in intergenerational courses to enhance their skills and share their interests and knowledge, with very common topics: culture and history and cooking.

In the context of rapid ageing of German population, and the challenges that this implies for the job market and economic future of the country, we can suggest that lifelong learning providers are very active in Thuringia region and that civil organizations that provide adult training are greatly supported by the government at the regional and national level. The agenda of upskilling of adults, is particularly supportive to migrants' groups for their successful integration in work and life in Thuringia.

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