

BAGSO Responses to the Guiding Questions on the Focus Areas of the 10th Session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing: Education, training, life-long learning and capacity-building

National Legal Framework

1. In your country/region, how is the right to education, training, life-long learning and capacity building in older age guaranteed in legal and policy frameworks?

The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany does not explicitly formulate the right to education, yet it is implicitly derived from the fundamental rights laid down in the Basic Law, such as respect for human dignity and equal rights.

Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are binding in Germany, while the right to free higher education (Article 13, paragraph 2c) is not observed. Due to the federal structure, different regulations apply in the federal states.

Education for people in the post-professional phase is not regulated by law, but many institutions offer unrestricted education for a fee or even free of charge. In old age, offers of non-formal learning are primarily utilised.

Second chance education allows individuals of all ages to catch up on any school-leaving qualification. De facto, however, this has to be agreed with education providers and employers.

Availability, Accessibility and Adaptability

2. What are the key issues and challenges faced by older persons in your country/region with regard to the enjoyment of all levels of quality education, training, life-long learning, and capacity building services¹?

¹ including for example: literacy and numeracy programmes; adult education; vocational and professional training; higher education; information and communication technologies (ICT); and informal, recreational and community-based programmes, including volunteering

Education providers for the elderly in Germany are, for example, local adult education centres, senior citizens' social institutions, church or political sponsors, senior citizens' centres, more than 540 multi-generation houses, 380 senior citizens' offices, migrant self-organisations, senior citizens' associations, self-help groups, museums, cultural institutions, libraries, universities, colleges, voluntary agencies or civil society institutions of adult education. In addition, self-organised institutions offer education for seniors, e.g. the approximately 200 senior computer clubs. There are special German language courses for migrants.

In many cases, the elderly themselves are active as teachers and trainers on a voluntary basis or for little or symbolic remuneration, and contribute their knowledge and skills. Many education providers face a precarious financial situation.

Many universities offer studies for senior citizens, but these courses are not uniformly regulated nationwide. Germany's largest online learning portal "Ich will lernen" (*I want to learn*) offers more than 31,000 exercises on literacy and basic education, preparation for school-leaving qualifications and economic basic education.

The elderly are particularly interested in educational opportunities that are close to everyday life. Courses on computer and Internet usage are becoming increasingly popular. Fixed and predefined learning objectives take a back seat. Education in later life is above all about personality development.

Older people are often under-represented in continuing vocational training. The Federal Employment Agency promotes the further training of older workers under certain conditions. Participation in continuing education is highest among adults aged 35-44. It decreases rapidly from the age of 65 (Destatis 2016)

3. What steps have been taken to ensure that education, training, life-long learning, and capacity building services are available and accessible to all older persons, adapted to their needs, suited to their preferences and motivations, and of high quality?

In order to facilitate access to educational opportunities for all seniors, they must be low-threshold, individually designed and target group-oriented, given the huge diversity in later life.

In the continuing education sector, there are online offers aimed at making the educational offers that exist in the federal states more transparent.

At the federal level, the "Digitalisation and Education" service centre with its portal *www.wissensdurstig.de* was set up in 2017 as a nationwide contact point for education for the elderly. The increasing digitalisation is being used to also make educational offers accessible to older people who are no longer mobile.

In rural areas, many offers are not available. New approaches such as the "Smart Country" project are being tested.

Geragogy deals with the education of older people and is a recognised course of study in Germany.

Adequacy

4. In your country/region, are there studies and/or data available on the access of older persons to the right to education, training, life-long learning and capacity building in older age?

The Federal Statistical Office *Destatis* regularly publishes data on educational participation.

Scientific studies on the participation of seniors in education show that the participation of older people in education tends to increase; however, some groups do not have access to conventional educational offers¹. The demand for self-organised education and learning in informal contexts is increasing, i.e. in everyday environments such as cafés, bookstores and meeting places².

¹ Tippelt et al. 2009: Bildung Älterer. Chancen im demografischen Wandel, Bertelsmann, Bielefeld.

² Bubolz-Lutz et al. 2010: Geragogik. Das Lehrbuch. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 114 et seqq.

The CILL study³ revealed that reading literacy and everyday mathematical skills among older people tend to decrease with age. The importance of the family of origin for the interest in education was clearly demonstrated – even among 80-year-olds⁴. The latest study on elderly education is the German Ageing Survey (Mahne et al 2017), a longitudinal study by the German Centre for Ageing.

Equality and non-discrimination

5. In your country, is age one of the prohibited grounds for discrimination in relation to education in older age?

No. Educational offers in all educational areas are available to all people in Germany free of charge or for a fee. Older people with physical and/or mental disabilities, low educational attainment, migration background and/or living in rural areas are most likely to be disadvantaged. In addition, there are too few (online) offers tailored to the educational needs of older people⁵.

Accountability

6. What mechanisms are necessary, or already in place, for older persons to lodge complaints and seek redress for denial of their right to education, training, lifelong learning and capacity building?

With the exception of the “Digitalisation and Education for Older People” service unit at BAGSO, there is no superordinate, neutral organisation representing the educational interests of older people.

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Office is the point of contact for the submission of complaints. It advises and informs on old-age discrimination.

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³ “Competencies in Later Life”; Jens Friebe, Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha, Rudolf Tippelt (ed.) Results of the study "Competencies in Later Life (CiLL)". DIE spezial, 2014.

⁴ Schmidt-Hertha 2018, Die Bedeutung von Large-Scale-Studien für die Forschung zu Bildung im Alter. In: Schramek et al. (ed.): Alter(n) Lernen Bildung. Ein Handbuch. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 79 et seqq.).

⁵ 7th Education Report compact 2018, 21 et seqq. <https://www.bildungsbericht.de/de/bildungsberichte-seit-2006/bildungsbericht-2018/pdf-bildungsbericht-2018/bbe18-kompakt.pdf>