

The Silver Economy

An Ageing Society in the European Union

**Agata Niemczyk, Katarzyna Szalonka,
Anna Gardocka-Jałowiec, Wioletta Nowak,
Renata Seweryn and Zofia Gródek-Szostak**

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4 Forms of managing leisure time of European seniors of the 21st century

Leisure time of seniors and how it is used

Technical and socioeconomic progress, as well as the development of medicine and new forms of work organization, has increased the amount of free time. Currently, it is no longer a privilege of the upper class but has become an important component of the quality of life of almost everyone. Part of modern society, referred to as leisure society (Vattimo, 2003), is the development of a broadly understood leisure industry sector.

Literature distinguishes two aspects of free (leisure) time: quantitative and qualitative.

In terms of quantity, free time is that part of the daily, weekly, or annual time budget that a person has at their sole disposal, that is, which remains after necessary and obligatory activities or tasks are completed (Wang et al., 2022). These activities and tasks include meeting biological and hygienic needs, studying, working, and participating in family and social life. Free time is measurable and its amount can be analysed numerically (in hours).

In the qualitative aspect, free time is defined by the quality of life (Haworth & Veal, 2004) or the experience. This is the so-called leisure time, which can be used for leisure activities. It is characterized by three basic features: it is voluntary (volitional), non-profit (it does not constitute the main source of income and does not involve financial compensation) and it provides pleasure (satisfaction) (Holder et al., 2009). In other words, leisure time begins when working (study) time ends and a person is not subject to any social constraints, direct pressure from other people, or obligation. The absence of limitations and a sense of obligation (as denoted by the term “free”), as well as freedom of choice and its awareness, are key to determine which behaviors constitute leisure and which do not (Kelly, 2012).

Considering the time budget of seniors, it usually includes time dedicated to satisfying the basic needs of the body, time devoted to household and family duties, and free (leisure) time. In the case of this group, especially retirees, the time budget does not include professional work and commuting. Retirement brings significant changes in the structure of human activity and in their social position. This is because one of the essential roles and activities

of a person is eliminated (or significantly reduced) – the role of an employee (Rosenthal & Moore, 2019). In addition, as a result of ageing, other roles in the family and society also undergo transformation (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2011). To maintain a positive self-image, seniors must replace roles that have been lost along with the ageing process with new activities (Wagner et al., 2015), all the more so that their self-image depends on the role they play or in the activities they are involved in. In this way, well-being in old age is the result of being active in new roles. The factors that make it easier to settle in a new role (a retiree, an empty nester, often a widow/er) include, for example, the ability to execute one's plans, returning to once-abandoned passions (Tomczyk & Klimczuk, 2015) and hobbies, traveling, visiting family and friends, gardening, or continuing professional work, but in a different form. Adaptation is harder when the senior did not show, develop their personal interests and passions, or undertake nonprofessional activities during the period of professional work. Therefore, gerontologists often emphasize the need to lead an active life, both after and before retirement (ter Hoeve et al., 2020).

Considering that the retirement time budget no longer includes work and commute, it can be assumed that a large part of it is free time. It is an unquestionable asset for seniors (Scherger et al., 2011), and the role of a free time user is one of the most important social roles for the senior (Róžański, 2020). One's daily well-being and health (Lee et al., 2018) (Adjei et al., 2017; Hicks & Siedlecki, 2017) as well as their development in various fields, the ability to adapt to changing social, cultural, economic conditions, etc., and the quality of their social functioning depend to a large extent on how they use their free time (Bull et al., 2003).

Numerous classifications take into account different types of free time use. Due to the complexity and richness of content, they can hardly be systematized and presented in a uniform scheme. The simplest classification distinguishes passive and active forms of using free time (Figure 4.1). It is commonly believed that the former impoverish the mental and intellectual sphere of man and have a destructive effect on his physical and mental condition (Zawadka & Pietrzak-Zawadka, 2018). Therefore, leisure time should be filled with active forms of spending free time, allowing for the creative function of this time (Park, 2007; Kim et al., 2016).

Activity is the essence of R. Havighurst's theory of activity. It is one of the key concepts explaining the regularity of the human ageing process (Teles & Ribeiro, 2019). According to this theory, people who remain active in late adulthood have a higher degree of satisfaction with their lives. Gerontological research shows that people who lead an active lifestyle despite their old age are characterized by (McPhee et al., 2016) improved physical and mental condition and longevity. They perceive themselves as healthier; they suffer from dementia and impairment at a later age (including Alzheimer's disease and many other chronic diseases), are more resistant to the stresses of modern life, better cope with failures, and have a sense of helplessness and loneliness. (Sala et al., 2019) They feel needed, fulfilled, their functional

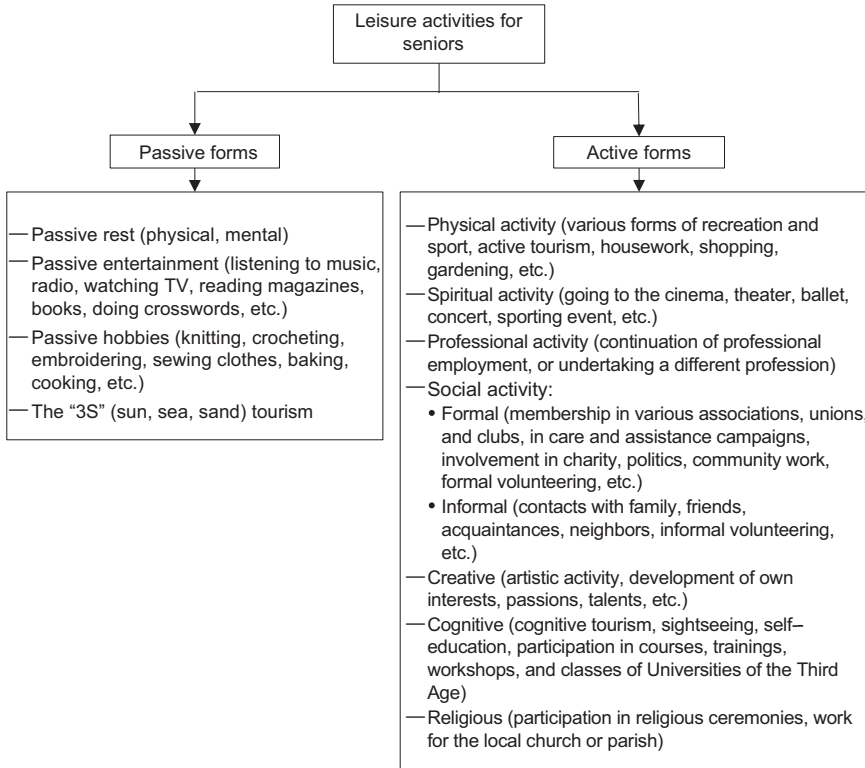


Figure 4.1 Types of leisure activities of seniors.

Source: own study.

indicators are higher, and the risk of type two diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and mortality is lower (Singh & Kiran, 2014). In the case of old age, any activity is important because it helps to find the meaning of life (Henning et al., 2021) and is the foundation for the treatment of many diseases and delays the ageing process. Lack of activity can lead to loss of acceptance from other people, loneliness (Pels & Kleinert, 2016), and even to social exclusion. Therefore, staying active as long as possible is necessary to achieve satisfaction (Argan, Argan, & Dursun, 2018; Eime et al., 2013). It can be assumed that people who were active in the early years of life will continue to do so in old age as seniors tend to participate in activities that are familiar to them mostly because of the sense of security and self-confidence (Jaumot-Pascual et al., 2018).

Considering the leisure activities of seniors aged 50+ in EU28 countries, unfortunately, most of them do not engage in physical activity outside of work time at all, and the share increases with age. Most people in the 65–74 age group dedicate five hours or more per week to physical activity, although

in the other two groups, the percentage of such people is also relatively high. The lowest percentage of Europeans engage in less than 1 hour of physical activity per week, which is good; however, this proportion is, unfortunately, increasing with age – Figure 4.2.

Among all EU citizens, the most physically active are the residents of Slovakia. All citizens of this country aged 50+ engage in some form of activity. Estonians rank second; up to 71% of the country's residents aged 50–64 and 75+, as well as 59.2% of residents aged 65–74, spend five or more hours a week on physical activity. The British are in third position, although in the 75+ age group, Denmark, the Netherlands, Slovakia, and Germany score better. Croatia closes the rank, with up to 70% of residents aged 50–64, 71% aged 65–74, and 81% aged 75+ not engaging in any physical activity outside working hours (Eurostat, 2022m).

The physical activity most European seniors engage in is walking. Aerobic sports rank second, muscle strengthening third, and cycling is declared the least frequently chosen activity (Figure 4.3). Please note that the share of individual types of activity increased in 2019 compared to 2014 (except for aerobic sports and muscle strengthening in the 65–74 age group, where a decrease was observed). However, in both years, the share decreased with the age of seniors except for walking, the share among people 65–74 years was higher in both years than in the age group 55–64.

In terms of the studied forms of physical activity, Romania stands out among the EU countries. In both the years surveyed and in all age groups, the country ranks first in terms of the percentage of senior citizens who engage in walking. Unfortunately, the share of this type of physical activity not only

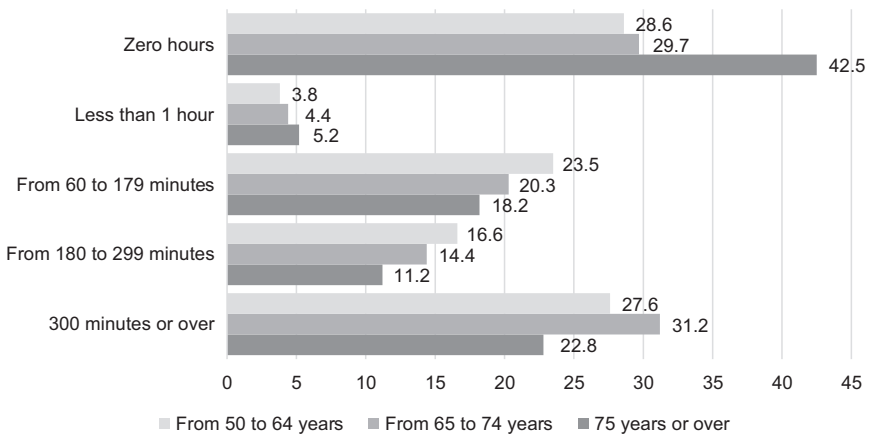


Figure 4.2 The time that EU seniors 50+ spent on physical activity outside working time in 2017 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022m).

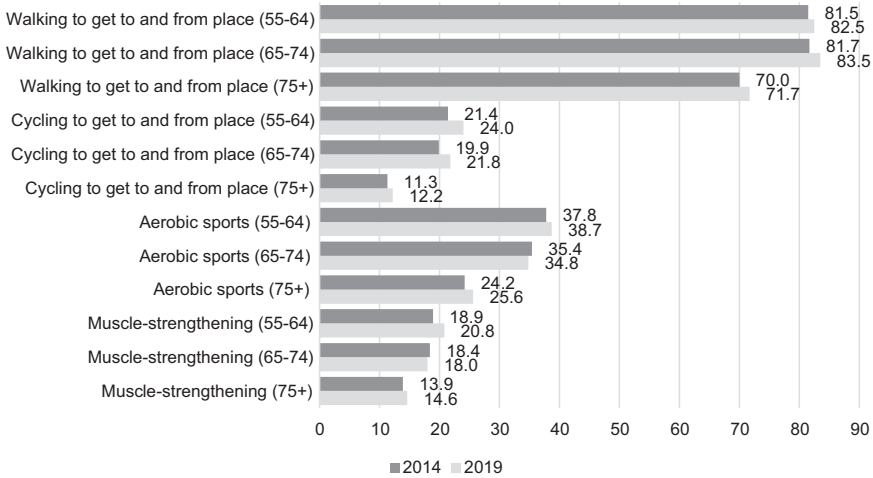


Figure 4.3 Type of physical activities (not related to work) undertaken by EU seniors 55+ in 2014 and 2019 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022i).

decreased with age but also with time (2019 compared to 2014). Residents of Cyprus declare walking least often but practice aerobic sports in the largest number. However, among EU countries in terms of aerobic sports, they are behind the citizens of Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, and Luxembourg. Also, these countries are characterized by the highest percentage of people who engage in muscle-strengthening. Aerobic sports are the least frequently undertaken by residents of Romania and Bulgaria. In terms of the lowest share of people undertaking muscle strengthening, Romania and Bulgaria also stand out, as well as Cyprus and Malta. However, quite understandable cycling is most often undertaken by seniors in the Netherlands. Danes are also in the lead among EU residents in terms of the percentage of seniors taking up cycling. On the other hand, elderly residents of Malta and Cyprus hardly ever cycle (Eurostat, 2022i).

When it comes to cultural activities, most European seniors do not engage in any. Furthermore, the share increases with the transition to subsequent age groups (Figure 4.4). Visiting cultural sites is the most popular, followed by live performances. The least popular cultural activity among seniors aged 55–64 is going to the cinema, and even older seniors participate the least often in sports events. Please note that the frequency of participation in all the surveyed cultural activities decreases with the age of seniors.

Senior residents of Denmark and Sweden go to the cinema most often. On the other hand, as many as 96.7% of Bulgarian seniors aged 50–64 and over 99% of the total seniors studied did not go to the cinema at all in 2006. In 2015, the situation improved slightly, although, in terms of non-participation

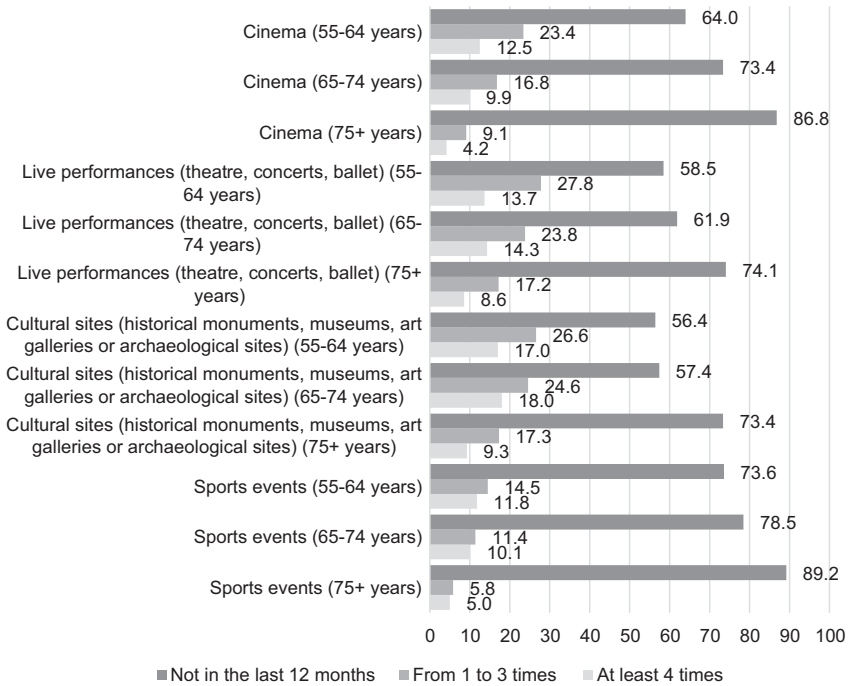


Figure 4.4 Frequency of participating in different cultural or sport activities in the last 12 months by senior EU residents 55+ in 2015 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022c).

in cinema performances, Bulgarians were still in the lead among EU residents in two age groups – 65–74 and 75+. In the group of the youngest seniors, Bulgaria was superseded by Romania and Croatia. Also, in terms of participation in live performances, Bulgarians are the least active. Over 90% of the country’s seniors did not visit the theatre, concert, or ballet at all in 2006. In 2016, this percentage decreased slightly and Bulgarians ranked last among people attending live performances only in the 65–74 age group. In the other groups, they were superseded by the residents of Romania. When it comes to seniors most actively engaging in live performances, in 2006, these were Swedish residents, and in 2015 – Finnish citizens. In terms of visiting cultural sites, in both years and in all age groups, the Bulgarians again ranked last. As many as 90% of seniors from this country did not undertake this type of leisure activity. In 2006, seniors of Finland were the youngest group to visit historic sites in the greatest numbers, while citizens of Germany dominated in the remaining age groups. In 2015, seniors from Sweden came to the fore in all age groups among visitors of cultural sites. The latter also most often prefer to participate in sports events – in 2006, they were in the lead among people aged 65+, and in 2015, among people aged 50–64 and 75+. In 2006,

in the youngest age group, the Swedes were superseded by the Irish, and in 2015, in the 65–74 age group, by the Dutch. On the other hand, Bulgarian seniors were again the least active in terms of participation in sports events (over 82% of them in 2006 and over 95% in 2015 did not participate in sports events). Only in the 50–64 age group, Romania had the highest percentage of seniors not interested in sports events (Eurostat, 2022c).

According to Eurostat data, approximately two-thirds of European seniors aged 50–74 and over three-quarters aged 75+ did not undertake artistic activities at all in 2015 – Figure 4.5. Only 12.5% of seniors aged 65–74, 12% aged 65–74, and 8% aged 75+ engaged in artistic activities each week. In the 50–64 age group, daily artistic activities were undertaken the least often, and in the remaining groups – at least once a year. Please note that the percentage of people engaging in artistic activities several times a month and less often decreases with the transition to subsequent age groups. On the other hand, people aged 65–74 are in the lead when it comes to undertaking artistic activities every day and every week.

Artistic activities are practiced most often, that is, daily, by seniors from Finland and Malta. Senior Fins are the largest group to take up such activities weekly, although in the 50–64 age group they rank ex aequo with seniors from Austria and Germany, and in the 65+ age group – with seniors from Sweden and the Netherlands. Engaging in artistic activities once a month and several times a month is most characteristic of seniors from Germany and Finland. Also, seniors of these countries, and of Denmark, most often

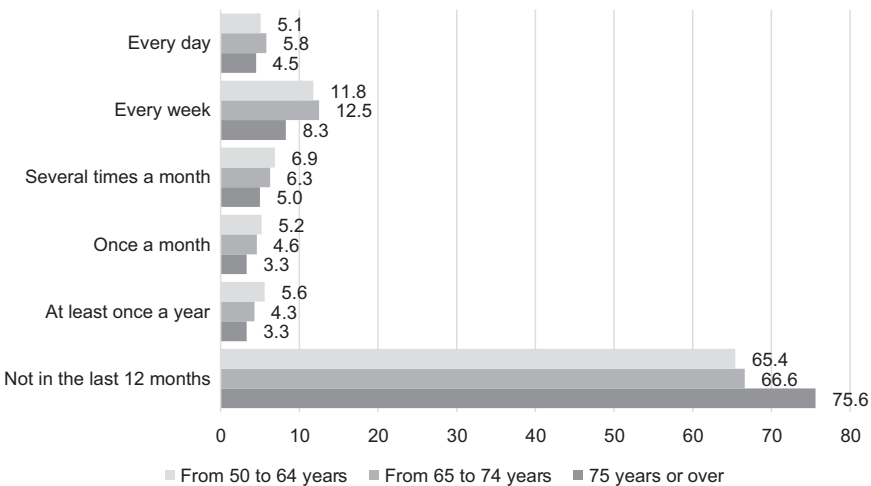


Figure 4.5 Frequency of engaging in artistic activities by EU residents aged 50+ in 2015 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022d).

declared taking up artistic activities once a year. The least active in terms of artistic activities are seniors from Romania and Croatia – over 85% of them did not take up any artistic activities throughout 2015 (Eurostat, 2022d).

On average, one in three European seniors meets with family and friends every week. In the 50–74 age group, seniors meet more often with friends, while the oldest seniors – with family and relatives. 20% – 25% of EU seniors meet their friends several times a month, and 17% – 20% of EU seniors meet with their families. Please note that people aged 75+ declare their families as the most frequent contacts (on average every fourth senior). In addition, the older the age group, the less frequent contacts of seniors with friends. However, in the case of contacts with family and relatives, the share of seniors who maintain them at least once a year is slightly higher than those who do it once a month (Figure 4.6).

In terms of social contacts, Cyprus, Greece, and Portugal come to the fore among the EU countries. In Portugal, almost every second senior meets with family on a daily basis, and every third maintains daily contact with friends every day. Seniors from Belgium and Finland contact their families most often, and seniors from Belgium and Sweden contact their friends. Poland

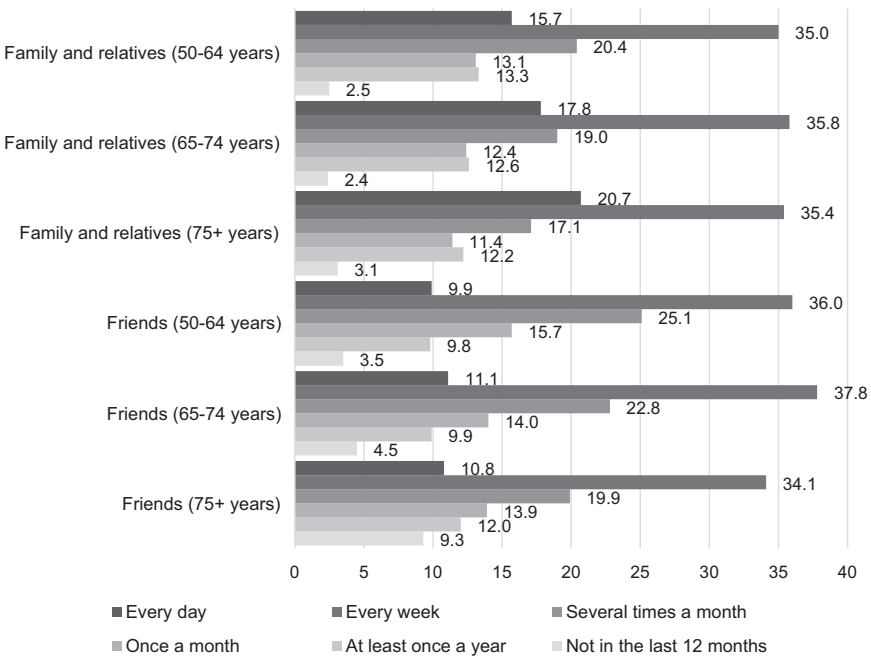


Figure 4.6 Frequency of getting together with family and relatives or friends by EU residents aged 50+ in 2015 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022b).

and Bulgaria lead in terms of monthly meetings of seniors with family and relatives, and Poland, Latvia, and Czechia in terms of monthly contacts of seniors with friends. Seniors from Denmark and Lithuania meet with their families several times a month, and seniors from Latvia, Estonia, and again Lithuania – at least once a year. In turn, in terms of contacts of seniors with friends, Denmark and Germany are in the lead with contacts several times a month, and Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania in terms of contacts at least once a year. Seniors from Sweden and Estonia were the least eager to contact their families in 2015. The percentage, depending on the age group, ranges between 4% and 6%. The situation was slightly different in the case of contacts of the seniors with friends. Here, the seniors of Malta stood out with a fairly high percentage (19–32% depending on the age group) (Eurostat, 2022b).

Some seniors work as volunteers, contributing to the well-being of their families and communities (Williamson & Christie, 2009). According to Eurostat, the most popular form among Europeans is informal volunteering. On average, it is taken up by every fourth EU citizen aged 50–74 and by 13% of people aged 75+. Formal volunteering is almost as popular. On average, every fifth European senior aged 50–74 and 14% of people aged 75+ engaged in it. On the other hand, active citizenship is taken up by approximately 13–14% of people aged 50–64 and 7% of EU residents aged 75+. In the case of informal volunteering and active citizenship, the percentage of seniors who engage in these activities decreases with age, while the most active formal volunteers are people aged 65–74 (Figure 4.7). This is probably related to the fact that after retiring they have more free time, which they try to fill in some way, and volunteering makes them feel still needed.

Among EU countries, seniors from the Netherlands, Finland, and Sweden stand out in informal volunteering. On average, two out of three of them undertake such activity. At the end of the ranking are seniors of Malta, Romania, and Cyprus. Among them, the percentage of informal volunteers

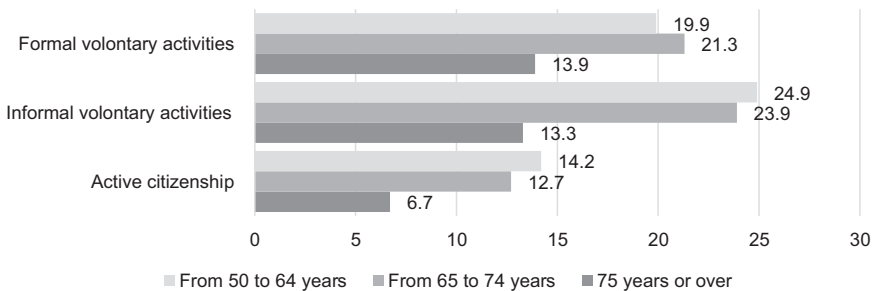


Figure 4.7 Participation in formal or informal voluntary activities or active citizenship by EU residents aged 50+ in 2015 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022e).

ranges only from 0.4% to 3.2% (depending on the age group). The interest in formal volunteering is slightly lower in all European countries. It is most often undertaken by seniors from Luxembourg, Denmark, and the Netherlands (and in the oldest age group, mainly from Germany), on average by every third person. Formal volunteering is least frequently practiced by seniors from Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary (0.8%–6.8%). Active citizenship is most popular among older Swedes, French, and Dutch – on average, one in four of them takes up this activity. On the other hand, among seniors from Slovakia, Romania, and Cyprus the percentage of active citizenship varies from 0.9% to 3.1% depending on the age group (Eurostat, 2022e).

In the phase of late adulthood, a person should undertake activities in accordance with their own needs and possibilities (Singh & Kiran, 2014) impacted by various constraints and life situations. The factors that should be considered as particularly important determinants of leisure activities are (Yoon et al., 2020):

- biological – age, health, physical fitness,
- sociodemographic – gender, education, profession, marital status, family size, and structure, place of residence,
- economic – source of income, material situation, type of socio-economic group,
- psychological – personality traits, habits, social skills, self-confidence,
- cultural – traditions, fear of criticism.

The highlighted circumstances certainly do not cover all possibilities. The way seniors use their free time also differs, for example, depending on whether they live alone, with a family (partner), or in a care facility. Previous experience of seniors is also meaningful. What is more important, the determinants are interrelated (e.g. the financial situation of an individual and their family is often the result of the place of residence, level of education, and profession). Therefore, they cannot be considered separately in relation to a person.

When analysing the issue of non-participation in leisure activities by EU seniors, it should be noted that the percentage of such people is gradually decreasing – Figure 4.8. The decrease is most noticeable in the youngest age group – by almost 8 p.p. in 2014–2021. What seems interesting and at the same time optimistic is that the share of people who cannot afford regular participation in leisure activities is the lowest in the group of the oldest seniors – only 8% in 2021.

Regardless of the age group, Romania and Lithuania are the EU countries in which the largest percentage of older people cannot afford regular participation in leisure activities. In the case of the former, it is every second senior on average, and in the case of the latter – every third senior on average. It should be emphasized, however, that in both countries the percentage of such people decreased in the analysed period. On the other hand, the countries with the lowest percentage of seniors who cannot afford regular leisure

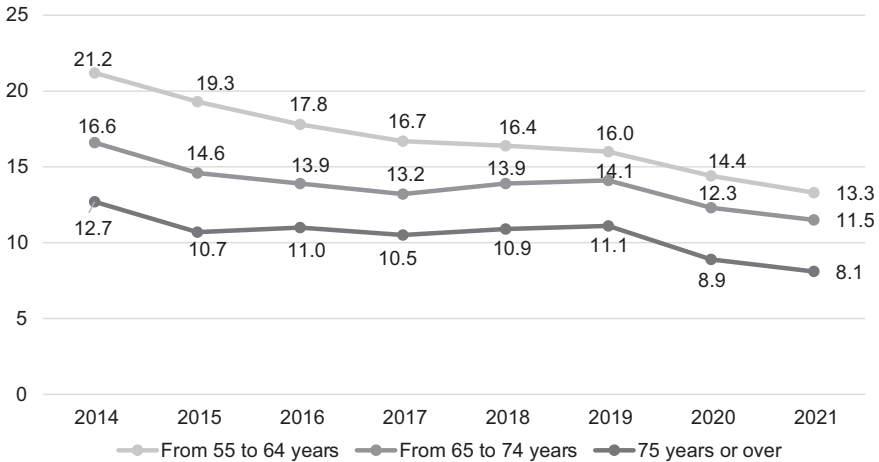


Figure 4.8 Persons aged 55+ from European Union who cannot afford to regularly participate in a leisure activity in 2014–2021 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022n)

activity are Luxembourg and the Scandinavian countries. In the analysed period, this percentage ranged from 0.6% to 10.1%, depending on the year and age group. Moreover, as the age group progressed, the percentage was lower and lower (Eurostat, 2022n).

Among the reasons why European seniors do not take advantage of cultural activities, two stand out: lack of interest and the so-called other reasons (Figure 4.9). In 2015, in all the surveyed types of activity (except visiting cultural sites), the first of these reasons was most often indicated by seniors aged 50–74 (mostly lack of interest in sports events). On the other hand, except for participation in sporting events, where lack of interest was slightly more important, older Europeans declared other reasons. These certainly included health and fitness level (especially since the largest percentage of people 75+ indicated other reasons when visiting cultural sites). Please note that financial reasons were not the most frequently declared by the oldest seniors. On the contrary, the share of economic reasons for non-participation in cultural activities decreased with age (the largest share was related to participation in live performances of people aged 50–64).

Financial reasons for not attending the cinema and live performances in 2015 were indicated primarily by seniors from Greece and Lithuania (in the case of live performances also from Latvia), and least often by seniors of Finland and Malta. Lack of interest in cinema and live performances was indicated also mainly by seniors of Greece, and also the Netherlands and Austria, while this reason was not relevant for seniors from Lithuania and Bulgaria. Lack of cinema, theatre, concert, or ballet show in the area was declared most often by seniors from Romania, and least often by seniors

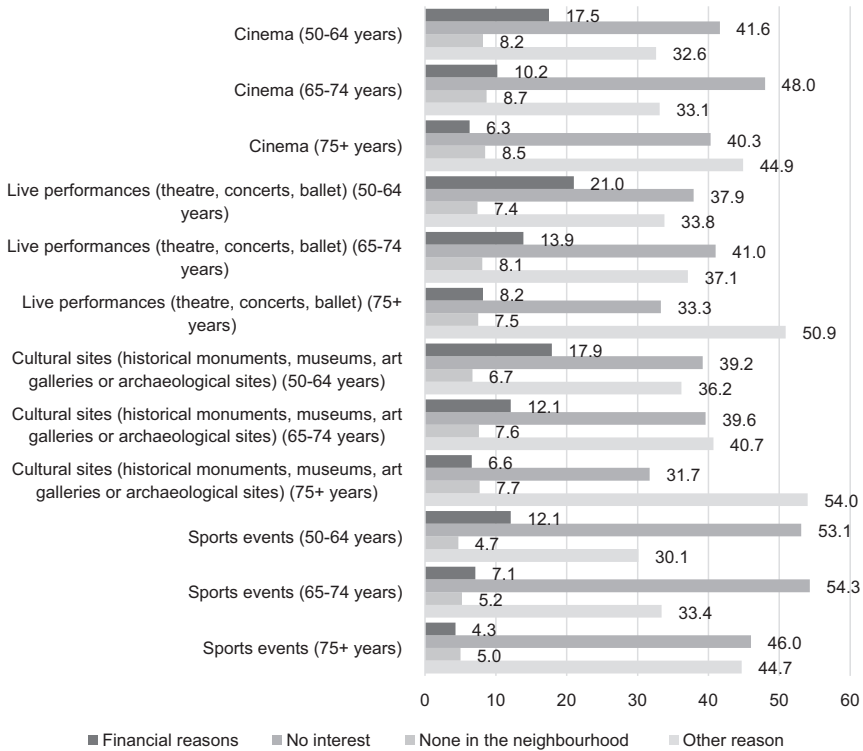


Figure 4.9 Reasons for non-participation in the cultural or sport activities in the last 12 months by EU residents aged 50+ in 2015 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022o).

from countries with small territories, such as Malta, Cyprus, and Belgium. Other reasons were mostly indicated by seniors from Croatia, Luxembourg, and Bulgaria, and in the least by seniors from Greece and the Netherlands (Eurostat, 2022o).

Financial reasons behind not visiting historic sites were emphasized mainly by seniors from Lithuania and Latvia. However, for Finnish, Swedish, and Maltese seniors this reason was irrelevant. Seniors from Greece and Ireland reported primarily a lack of interest in visiting historic sites, while this reason was the least relevant for seniors from Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Croatia. Lack of historic sites in the area was indicated mainly by senior residents of Romania, Sweden, and Finland, and senior citizens from small countries, that is, Malta, Cyprus, and Belgium, hardly mentioned it at all. The highest percentage of seniors who indicated other reasons for not visiting historic sites include populations in Croatia, Luxembourg, and Bulgaria, and the lowest – by seniors from Greece, the Netherlands, and Ireland (Eurostat, 2022o).

On the other hand, non-participation in sports events for financial reasons was reported mainly by seniors from Greece and Slovenia, and least frequently – by seniors from Luxembourg and Finland. Seniors from Greece, Austria, and the Netherlands showed a particularly low interest in such events, and seniors from Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania – the highest. The lack of sporting events in the area was especially pointed out by senior citizens from Romania, Finland, and Sweden, a reason that was hardly taken into account by elderly citizens of Malta, Cyprus, and Belgium. Other reasons for not participating in sports events were significant for seniors from Croatia, Bulgaria, and Luxembourg, and were not important for elderly people from Greece and Austria (Eurostat, 2022o).

Eurostat data shows that among the reasons for the non-participation of European seniors in volunteering (both formal and informal) are the so-called other reasons, and their percentage increases with age. On the other hand, the share of lack of time as reason decreases (quite obviously). This reason is declared on average by every fifth European senior aged 50–74 and only every twentieth aged 75+. The most common reason for EU residents aged 50–74 to not take up active citizenship is, in turn, lack of interest, while the oldest seniors justify it primarily by the so-called other reasons (Figure 4.10).

Lack of time as a reason for not participating in volunteering was reported primarily by seniors from Malta, Austria, and Italy, and in the smallest percentage – by seniors from Croatia, Bulgaria, and Czechia (in the case of formal volunteering) and Finland, Sweden, and the Netherlands (in the case of informal

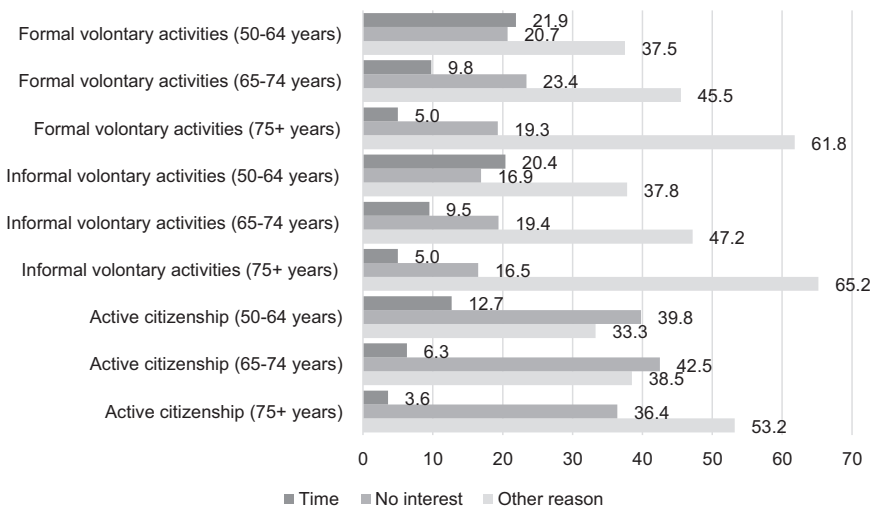


Figure 4.10 Reasons for non-participation in formal or informal voluntary activities or active citizenship in the last 12 months by EU residents aged 50+ in 2015 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022p).

volunteering). On the other hand, the lack of interest in volunteering was mainly expressed by seniors of Greece, Hungary, and Malta, and least often by seniors from Finland, Croatia, and Ireland (in the case of formal volunteering) and the Netherlands, Sweden, and also Finland (in the case of formal volunteering). Other reasons for not taking up volunteering were indicated especially by Croatian, Bulgarian, and Spanish seniors, but were the least important for seniors of Greece, Malta, and Austria (in the case of formal volunteering) and the Netherlands, Sweden, and also Greece (in relation to informal volunteering). Senior residents of Italy and the UK indicated lack of time as the reason for not taking up active citizenship, and this reason was of little importance for seniors from Croatia, Malta, Czechia, and Spain. For senior residents of Greece and Slovenia, an important deterrent to active citizenship was the lack of interest, while this reason was indicated by a small percentage of Bulgarian, Romanian, and Italian seniors. Other reasons for shunning active citizenship were declared mainly by senior residents of Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania, and in the smallest percentage by seniors from Greece (Eurostat, 2022p).

Tourism as an important leisure activity of modern seniors

Participation in tourism is a notable example of a leisure activity for seniors. The literature proposes a fairly broad understanding of the term “participation”. Therefore, the entire concept of tourism activity as a process consisting of specific stages that relate to specific, extended phases of the purchase and consumption of a tourist product is also broad (cf. Figure 4.11).

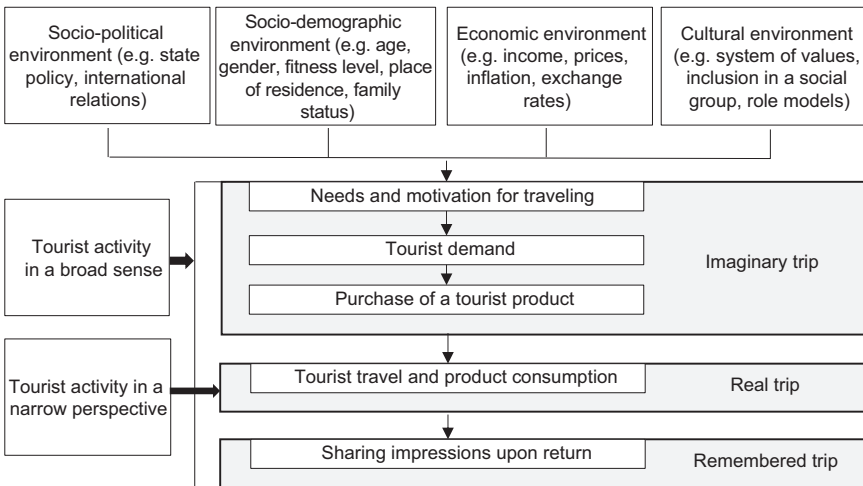


Figure 4.11 Various perspectives on tourist activity.

Source: Own elaboration based on (Niemczyk, 2012).

As observed, tourist activity begins long before departure and usually continues for some time after returning. If undertaken by senior citizens, it is referred to in the literature as senior tourism or silver tourism (Qiao et al., 2022).

Motivations for the participation of seniors in tourism could vary as they depend on many variables (Figure 4.11). Among the important reasons for tourist activity in the autumn of life are:

- improvement of physical and/or mental condition,
- improvement of health, beauty, and well-being (Hsu et al., 2007),
- extending the period of active life,
- quiet and peaceful rest and relaxation,
- exploration of new cultural and natural sites that seniors had always planned to visit (Balderas-Cejudo et al., 2016),
- a sentimental journey to a place remembered from childhood, youth, and adulthood, especially associated with positive memories (Zsarnoczky, 2016),
- making up for the time “lost” in the earlier stages of life (the period of daily mundane between home and workplace) through entertainment, fun, sports competition, etc.,
- escape from everyday life (Mélon et al., 2018),
- escape from loneliness, contact with other people, making new acquaintances (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014),
- spending time with family (children, grandchildren), friends,
- supporting their children in childcare by taking grandchildren on a trip,
- visits by family and friends (Zsarnoczky et al., 2016),
- pursuing passions, hobbies, interests,
- satisfying religious needs and fulfilling pledges, asking for grace,
- raising/maintaining prestige, gaining respect and recognition, increasing self-esteem (Sangpikul, 2008).

Please note that, as in the case of other segments, it is not easy to identify a single leading cause of tourist migrations of older people, since tourist behaviour is usually of a poly-motivational nature. In the case of seniors, this is particularly evident due to their awareness of age restrictions. As long as their health and psychophysical fitness allow them, they try to make the most of each trip and maximize their tourist experience (Głąbiński, 2018). In addition, the travel motivations of senior tourists are dynamic. They change not only with age and health but also under the influence of many other factors. These include new trends in the tourist market, fashion, new destinations, security of certain destinations, as well as national and global socio-political situation.

Participation in tourism affects seniors in many ways. This impact can be considered at three levels (Table 4.1).

It is difficult to clearly define which of the above functions are important for seniors and whether they realize all of them. However, it is undisputed that seniors need what tourism gives them. Numerous empirical studies have

Table 4.1 Basic functions of senior tourism

<i>Physical health functions</i>	<i>Mental health functions</i>	<i>Social functions</i>
contributes to maintaining the necessary level of mobility and mental fitness of the body	provides an opportunity to break away from everyday life, to break the monotony, get out of the mundane, and break away from musing on the deterring health and social condition	constitutes an element of socialization
develops endurance for prolonged effort	allows relief from stress, tension, and negative emotions thanks to physical effort, games, sports competition	constitutes an important source of networking, friendship, and an opportunity to meet and interact with other people
provides the opportunity to maintain physical activity (which is necessary to extend the functioning of all internal organs)	provides the opportunity to overcome weaknesses and fears and to increase independence	helps in overcoming social isolation
helps to control diseases (obesity, diabetes, etc.), sometimes replacing pharmacological or invasive methods of treatment	allows self-satisfaction, brings joy (from sports achievements, health, own condition, body shape, beauty, etc.), increases self-esteem	teaches how to function in a group
helps prevent, minimize, and reverse many of the physical risks that often accompany ageing	can stimulate multidirectional interests and passions	provides the opportunity to take on and fulfil new social roles
prevents premature ageing (or at least inhibits it) and is an alternative to gerontological rehabilitation	contributes to intellectual development, increases awareness of one's environment	allows maintaining one's social standing, prestige, respect, recognition
	constitutes a source of optimism for the coming days, months and years	shapes an appropriate attitude towards the world and the environment

Source: Own elaboration based on: (Qiao et al., 2021; Berbeka et al., 2021)

provided evidence of the positive impact of tourism experiences on health (Ferrer et al., 2016) self-reliance, resourcefulness and quality of life of seniors (Uysal et al., 2016) and that travel is an effective way to promote healthy ageing (Gu et al., 2016). That is why encouraging the participation of seniors in tourism is so important.

In the period 2012–2019, the number of European seniors participating in tourism increased and only in some years it was slightly lower than the year

before (cf. Figure 4.12). In the younger age group, this was the case in 2014, when, compared to the previous year, 1.77% fewer people took a trip at least once a year. However, among older seniors, such a situation was observed in 2017, when the number of people engaging in tourism decreased by 1.5%. In total, in 2012, almost 70 million people aged 55+ engaged in tourism, and in 2019 it was already more than 83.5 million people, that is, almost 1/5 more. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of seniors traveling for tourist purposes decreased by more than 1/4. A slightly higher decrease was recorded among people aged 65+ (by 27.94%) than among younger seniors (by 22.45%).

Germans are widely recognized as the most active tourist nation in Europe (Seweryn, 2011). This is confirmed by Eurostat data on the number of traveling seniors. In the years surveyed, on average, more than 9.6 million Germans aged 55+ took a tourist trip each year. France ranks second, with an average of almost 7.2 million people, followed by Spain and Italy with more than half as many (approximately 3.4 and 3.2 million people, respectively). On the other hand, small EU countries rank last, which does not come as a surprise, for example, Malta (an average of fewer than 25,000 people), Cyprus, and Luxembourg (an average of over 53,000 people). In addition, a successive increase in the number of traveling seniors aged 65+ from France, the Netherlands, Poland, and Hungary is noteworthy in the analysed period

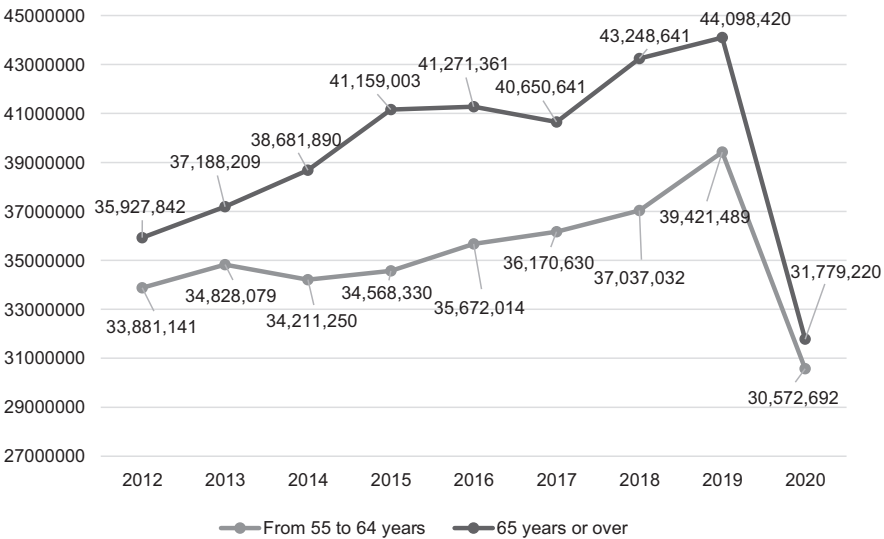


Figure 4.12 Number of persons aged 55+ from European Union participating in tourism for personal purposes in 2012–2020.

Source: (Eurostat, 2022f).

(of course, apart from the pandemic year 2020), and from 2015, also an increase of Cypriots and Maltese. In the younger age group, such a full-term increase was not recorded, but since 2015 the number of senior travellers from Italy and Austria had been increasing and since 2016 from Poland and Greece. It should also be emphasized that in most EU (developed) countries, the number of senior travellers 65+ is greater than the number of younger age groups engaging in tourism. The opposite is observed in countries such as Poland, Belgium, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Estonia, and Cyprus (Eurostat, 2022f).

Upon analysing the percentage of EU residents aged 55+ participating in tourism, similar conclusions can be drawn as in the case of the number of travellers. The percentage increased in the analysed period, with minimal decreases in the years: 2014, 2015, and 2017 (Figure 4.13). Nevertheless, approximately 60% of younger seniors and almost every second senior aged 65+ participated in tourist traffic every year. In 2020, the pandemic reduced the tourism participation rate to 50% in the first group (decrease by 14.14 p.p.) and to 36% in the second group (decrease by 13.15 p.p.).

By juxtaposing Figure 4.12 and Figure 4.13, it can be observed that although the number of seniors traveling as tourists is higher in the 65+ age group, the rate of participation in tourism is several p.p. higher in the case of younger seniors. This means that this group is more active in tourism.

In terms of the rate of tourist activity of 55+ seniors, Finland is the leader among EU countries. In the years surveyed, the average annual percentage of people participating in tourism was 81.3%. The next in the ranking is the Netherlands (78.4%), followed by Luxembourg (70.9%) and France (70.0%). Germany ranks only fifth (68.2%), almost on par with Denmark (68, 1%) and Czechia (68.0%). At the bottom of the list are Romania (only

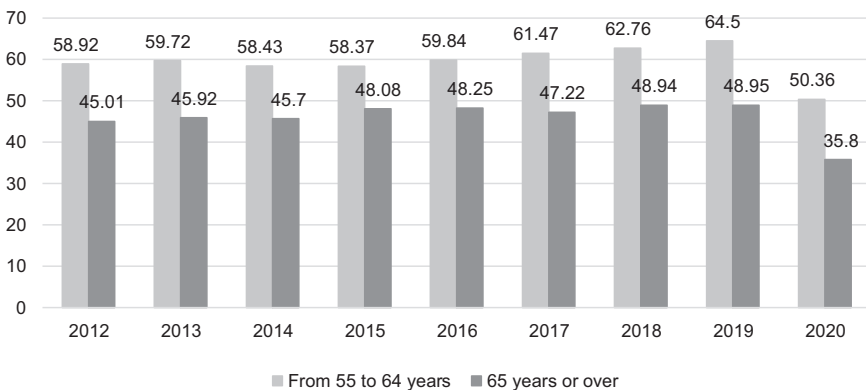


Figure 4.13 Participation in tourism for personal purposes by EU seniors 55+ in 2012–2020 (percentage of population).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022g).

16.3%) and Bulgaria (17.3%). It should be emphasized that throughout the study period (except for the 2020 pandemic), the percentage of senior travellers from Bulgaria increased in the younger age group, and in the older – from Poland. Since 2015, such an increase has been observed in Sweden and Italy (among people aged 55–64), and since 2016 in Poland and Malta (in the 55–64 age group) as well as in Austria, Spain, Hungary, Slovakia, and Malta (in the 65+ group). It is also impossible not to add that in all surveyed years and in relation to all countries, the percentage of younger traveling seniors was up to 50% higher than that of older seniors (Eurostat, 2022g).

Considering the amount of expenses of European seniors for a single trip, it should be concluded that the average cost is approximately EUR 400 – Figure 4.14. In the years 2012–2019, a slight increase in expenses was observed, to EUR 455 in the pre-retires group and EUR 442 in the late retiree's group (except for 2014, when the budget decreased among younger seniors by 4.91%, and by 5.76% among older seniors, and in 2019, when the decrease was 0.85% and 7.52%, respectively). Please note that in all the years analysed (except the last one) the average expenses of people aged 65+ were slightly higher than those of younger seniors.

The highest expenses per trip were characteristic for seniors from Luxembourg (EUR 904 on average in the analysed years in the 55–64 group, and as much as EUR 1,057 in the 65+ group), Malta (EUR 663 and EUR 633, respectively), Belgium (EUR 657 and EUR 717, respectively) and Austria (EUR 644 and EUR 680, respectively). On the other hand, Romanian seniors spent the least on a single trip (EUR 96 in the 55–64 age group and EUR 79 in the 65+ group), followed by Czechs (EUR 129 and EUR 109, respectively), Hungarians (EUR 146 and EUR 86), Bulgarians (EUR 151 and EUR 118) and Latvians (EUR 152 and EUR 112). Please note that during the entire study period, only

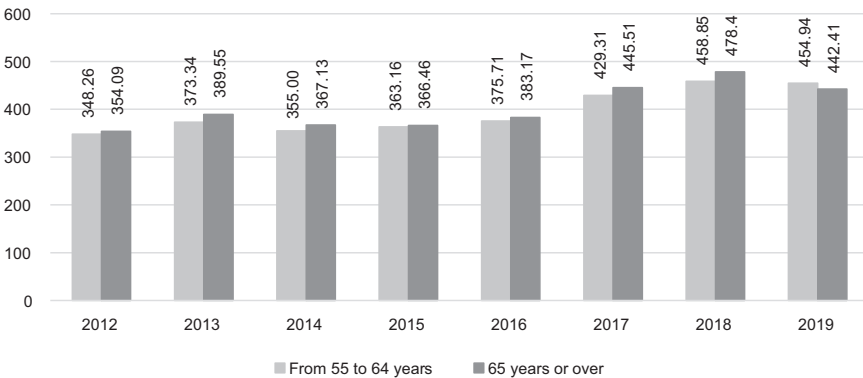


Figure 4.14 Average expenditure per trip spent by European seniors 55+ in 2012–2019 (in EUR).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022a).

the expenses of seniors from France increased successively and only among people aged 65+. On the other hand, since 2015 and in the 55–64 age group, expenses of residents of Estonia and Hungary increased, and since 2016, among seniors aged 65+, expenses of residents from Luxembourg, Malta, Finland, Estonia, and Latvia. An important conclusion is also that in a large number of EU countries, the expenses of younger seniors were higher, although the opposite situation was also observed – older seniors of Luxembourg, Belgium, Austria, Germany, France, and Greece spent more (Eurostat, 2022a).

Finally, please note that the contemporary profile of a senior consumer on the tourist market is completely different than a dozen or so years ago. The traditional, pragmatic, thrifty customer, who is low-maintenance but reluctant to do anything digital, is becoming obsolete. They had been replaced with a new type of senior consumer: one who is market economy savvy and happy to live a consumer lifestyle, who has many interests and who is much better off financially (Guido et al., 2022). A typical kind of senior tourist is the Boomer, born between the late 1940s and mid-1960s (Seweryn, *Tourist activity of four generations of contemporary Europeans*, 2016). They usually buy travel packages and are willing to travel at any time of the year. They want to stay longer in a destination, show keen interest in other cultures, and are open to new trends in gastronomy (Zsarnoczky et al., 2016). Such changes in the characteristics and behaviour of silver head customers in tourism should be taken into account when preparing an offer for what the analysis shows is a large segment of the market.

Active ageing through participation in courses, trainings, and workshops

One way to stimulate seniors to active ageing is to encourage them to participate in various types of courses, trainings, workshops, academies, etc. Since rapid civilization and technological progress force the need for lifelong learning, people who participate in this process adapt to changes more easily and go through them more smoothly. They are also better prepared to face the many threats of the modern world. Moreover, an individual's life record, including educational achievement, is an important predictor of life satisfaction in later adulthood (Zielińska-Więczkowska, 2010). Although participation in education or training courses becomes less frequent as people age, some people do not enrol until after retirement, and many universities run special courses for the “third age” (Laferrère, 2016).

The founder of the first University of the Third Age (U3A) in Europe was P. Vellas, professor of international law at the University of Toulouse. Sensitive to the problems of the elderly, he saw the need to create an institution that would encourage participation and continuous education of people in late adulthood. It was also significant that the obligation to provide lifelong learning opportunities was imposed on universities in 1968 by the French law on higher education. After studying gerontology and law, P. Vellas created the

first experimental summer school for retirees from Toulouse in 1972. As this school became popular with the city's seniors, he founded the first U3A in 1973. This institution was available to every person of retirement age. There were no entrance examinations and no qualifications required. All entrants had to do was fill out the application form and pay the minimum admission fee. The classes were held five days a week and lasted 8–10 months a year. A hundred people attended the first session of U3A. Its huge popularity in Toulouse was the inspiration for similar institutions in other regions of France. The model was adopted in more than 60 French campuses. The curriculum was adapted to the needs of seniors and included issues related to their social and medical problems (Formosa, 2009).

The establishment of U3A in Toulouse also led to the rapid development of facilities of this type in Europe and beyond. From year to year, the U3A movement developed to celebrate the creation of 1,000 universities in 2016 (Funnell, 2017). The reasons for this growth include the increase in the number of retirees, the systemic support provided for this type of facilities, and the emergence of a new generation of seniors who have different requirements, needs, lifestyles, and forms of spending time than their predecessors (Kobylarek, 2018). One of the factors that determined the popularity of U3A was also the fact that they matched the idea of open education (Rubens et al., 2017).

Currently, there are two models of U3A functioning worldwide: French and British. The French model has been adopted in Belgium, Switzerland, Poland, Italy, and Spain (Vellas, 2019). U3A based on this model is founded on close cooperation with a traditional university. They conduct both teaching and research activities, and the lecturers are mainly academic teachers. The number of lecture hours per year, as well as the proposed curricula, vary significantly. Some universities offer only lectures. Others offer additional activities, such as recreational trips or various types of courses. The British model, on the other hand, is based on the assumption that “those who learn should also teach, and those who teach should also learn”. Thus, it operates on the principle of mutual self-help of learners (there is no distinction between teacher and learner) and is usually associated with traditional educational institutions. Moreover, members of the British U3A model are free to choose their own subjects and teaching methods. Autonomy in this area has a large impact on the planning of curricula that are adapted to the expectations of seniors (Formosa, 2017).

The mission of all U3A is to stimulate seniors mentally and physically. The main tasks of these institutions are presented in Table 4.2. Given the variety and multiplicity of U3A tasks, there is no doubt that it is justified to support its participation in building silver economy systems.

Nowadays, increasing accessibility to modern means of communication among seniors is significant for the functioning of U3A (Zielińska-Więczkowska, 2010) as it is related to the adaptation of seniors to the conditions of life in the 21st century and the use of modern technologies such as e-learning or online magazines in education, which is becoming inevitable (Formosa, 2009). This type of education could prove particularly attractive

Table 4.2 Tasks of the U3A

<i>Area</i>	<i>Tasks</i>
Educational	education, broadening skills and knowledge, including on the process of ageing and old age, updating knowledge, adaptation to new requirements of the environment, counteracting digital exclusion of seniors
Social	preventing pathologies in the social life of seniors (isolation and loneliness), fostering social bonds, socialization, and intergenerational integration, fostering openness and ownership of one's development, encouraging active citizenship and social participation
Cultural	learning about history, the natural and cultural environment, active participation in culture (theatre, opera, etc.) and culture-forming activities, exploring new cultures
Physical	promoting a healthy lifestyle, organization, and promotion of active leisure (e.g. through sport or tourism)
Psychological	providing education to people who were unable to pursue it in their youth, mental stimulation and memory training, developing interests and aspirations, building self-esteem and the sense of meaning in life, acceptance of one's fate, setting new life goals and tasks, opportunity to reorganize life in the "empty nest" phase, preventing passivity, improving overall well-being and quality of life
Scientific	investigation of the life situation of seniors, identification of factors that determine the ageing process, research in the field of gerontology, geriatric prevention

Source: own study.

to people who, for various reasons (including health-related), cannot participate in classes, temporarily, or permanently. The use of new technologies in teaching seniors will enable them to actively obtain new information, but will also foster cooperation between U3As operating in different countries. Such cooperation can diversify educational programmes and be an opportunity for students to learn a foreign language, explore other cultures, and bond with people with similar interests (Savukinas et al., 2002).

It is also important that educational institutions for seniors tailor their curricula to a group that usually does not pursue a degree or opportunities for professional development. In most cases, seniors who participate in various courses and workshops are interested in learning for the sheer joy it brings, as well as for the opportunity to connect with peers, and not for grades, certificates, or diplomas (Aldridge & Tuckett, 2007; Niemczyk & Handzel, 2016). Therefore, appropriate methods should be used to teach seniors, with specially designed activities and teaching materials.

Upon analysing the participation of seniors (aged 55–74) from 28 EU countries in courses and training, it should be noted that although it is relatively low (2–5%), it showed an upward trend until 2020, when it decreased

by 1.3 p.p. due to the pandemic. However, the participation rate increased again in the following year to a level higher than in 2013 (by 0.6 p.p. less than in the pre-pandemic year) (Figure 4.15). Please note also that in 2020 what decreased is only the percentage of seniors participating in non-formal education and training. What comes as a surprise is that participation in formal education and training remained at the previous year's level. However, it should be emphasized that the percentage of seniors participating in formal education and training was very low throughout the review period and increased only in 2019, by 0.1 p.p.

In all the surveyed years, the leading EU countries with the highest percentage of seniors aged 55–74 engaged in formal and informal courses and trainings were the Scandinavian countries, that is, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. Initially, the UK had a comparable percentage, but this percentage gradually decreased to only 8.2% in 2019. The least active in this respect were seniors of Greece, Croatia, and Hungary (Eurostat, 2022h).

Similar conclusions can be drawn when analysing the participation of European seniors in non-formal education and training alone. Here, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland (and initially also the UK) opened the list, followed by Greece, Croatia, and Hungary, and in some years also Poland, Portugal, and Slovakia. In turn, in formal education and training, the ranking was topped by the Netherlands, Sweden, and UK, and in some years also by Malta and Finland. The least active in terms of formal education and training

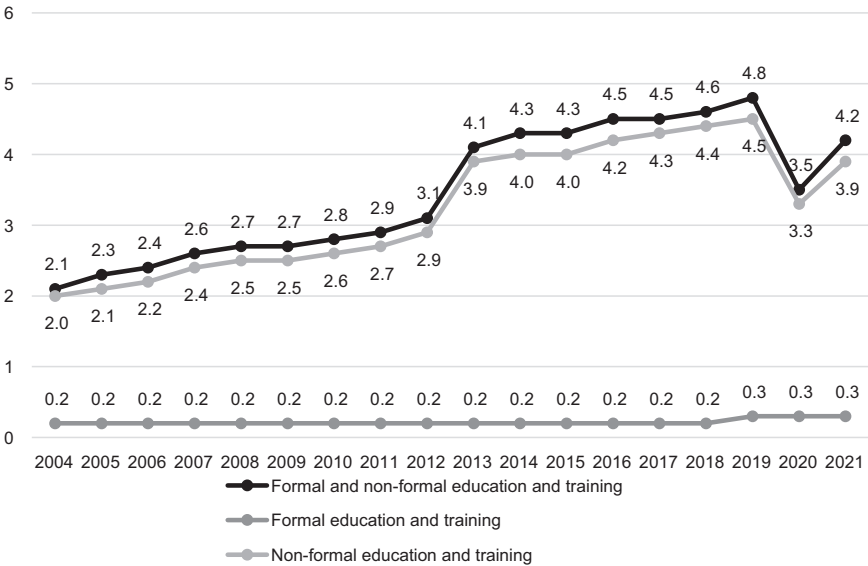


Figure 4.15 Participation rate in education and training (last four weeks) by type by EU residents aged 55–74 in 2004–2021 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022h).

were Germany, Czechia, and Italy, and in some years also Greece (Eurostat, 2022h).

The level of participation of EU residents aged 65+ in training related to professional activity was at a very low level in 2016. In the entire EU, the percentage of retired persons was only 1.2% (up to 3.6%) on average, and 1.7% (up to 4.6%) for the population aged 65+. In terms of the percentage of participants, Estonia stands out among the EU countries, with the largest part of the population of seniors aged 65+ engaged in such training in 2016. It is followed by the Netherlands, Malta, and Austria. The ranking closes with Greece, France, and Croatia (Figure 4.16). Similar countries (except Estonia), that is, Malta, Austria, and the Netherlands are in the lead in terms of the percentage

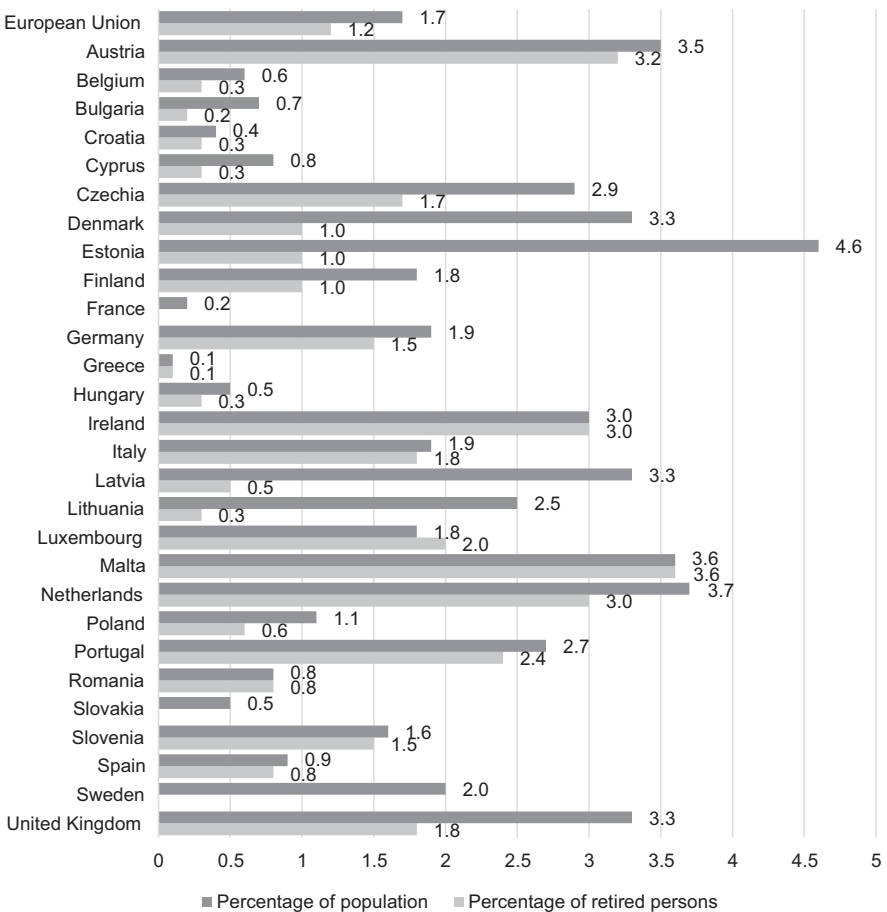


Figure 4.16 Percentage of EU residents aged 65+ participating in training related to professional activity in 2016.

Source: (Eurostat, 2022i).

of retirees. Retired residents of such EU countries as Sweden, Slovakia, and France did not participate in training related to professional activity at all.

The situation is slightly better when it comes to the participation of European seniors in training related to hobbies. In 2016, the average percentage of the EU population of seniors 65+ was almost five times higher. When it comes to the percentage of retirees, their participation in training related to hobbies was almost 7 times higher than in training related to professional activities. However, the rate below 10% is not impressive. On average, only every 12 senior (retiree) participate in training related to their hobby. Among the EU countries, Denmark is clearly in the lead. More than every third senior (retiree) from this country is a participant in hobby-related training (Figure 4.17). This relatively high rate is also characteristic

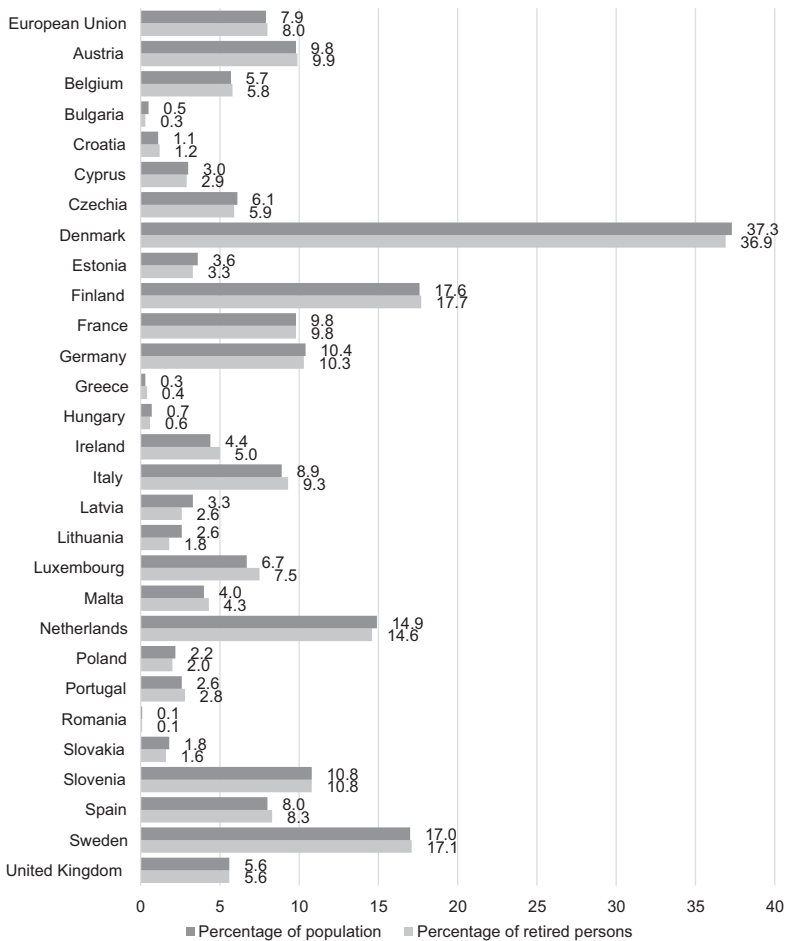


Figure 4.17 Percentage of EU residents aged 65+ participating in training related to hobbies in 2016.

Source: (Eurostat, 2022k).

of other Scandinavian countries (Finland and Sweden), as well as Slovenia, Germany, Austria, and France. The least active nations in terms of senior participation in training related to hobby are Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Hungary – less than 1% of the inhabitants of these countries engage in this type of activity.

Among the reasons for not participating in training related to professional activity by senior EU residents aged 65+ in 2016, the so-called other reasons, although a slightly smaller percentage of seniors indicated lack of time (which seems intriguing). Financial reasons, lack of interest, or lack of appropriate courses or curricula were very rarely indicated. As expected, almost no one declared lack of employer requirements (Figure 4.18).

Financial considerations were primarily mentioned by senior residents of Denmark and this factor was not taken into account by senior citizens of the UK and France at all. As many as 90% of Greek, English, and Luxembourg seniors indicated a lack of time, which was hardly mentioned as a reason for not participating in training related to professional activity by senior citizens of France and Sweden. The lack of interest in such trainings was declared mainly by seniors from Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, and Malta, and this reason was not indicated by the seniors from the UK at all. The largest percentage of seniors from Luxembourg indicated the lack of appropriate courses, and French, Swedes, and Finns – the so-called other reasons (Eurostat, 2022j).

Finally, please note that an important area of everyday life, which is related to informal education for seniors, is the family. Very often, grandparents actively contribute to the integration of families, to their well-being, to provide care and support for their grandchildren. They do so as a result of a grounded sense of purpose in life, family identity, and ancestral ties.

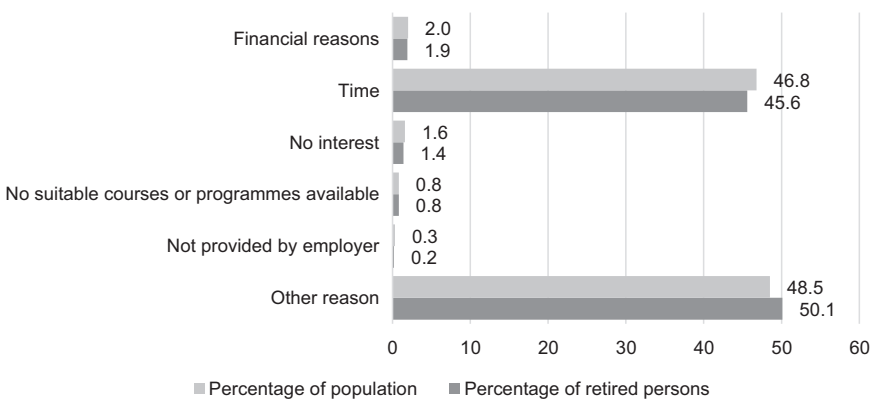


Figure 4.18 Reasons for non-participation in training related to professional activity by senior EU residents 65+ in 2016 (percentage).

Source: (Eurostat, 2022j).

Conclusion

The problem of stimulating the leisure time of seniors is of particular importance in the face of the ageing process discussed in the first chapter of this book. Since remaining active is so important in the life of a senior, it is necessary to take actions that encourage all kinds of activity and facilitate an active life (Yoon et al., 2020). However, leisure time activity cannot be associated with forcing seniors to engage or imposing various forms of activity on them. The preferences of the older generation should be respected and given choice to enable independent decisions (Singh & Kiran, 2014). Furthermore, seniors should not be treated as a homogeneous group. Diversity and individual characteristics do not disappear after crossing a certain age threshold. People still differ in many ways (Guido et al., 2018), which results in the diversification of their leisure behaviour, as presented in the analysis discussed in this chapter. Please note that there is a large discrepancy between seniors from highly developed EU countries (especially Scandinavian countries, Germany, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) and seniors from Central and Eastern European countries (especially Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia, and even Greece or Croatia). The former more often engage in various types of physical, artistic, cultural, tourist, educational, or volunteering activities, not only because they can afford them, but also because they are more interested in them.

What is more, free time cannot be considered only as a personal space to pursue hobbies, but also as a potential source of various threats, especially inactivity (Gayman et al., 2017), for example due to health problems, financial difficulties, family situation or lack of specific skills, interests or simply willingness to be active.

Finally, it is impossible not to notice that various types of projects and initiatives that were developed more or less dynamically in many European countries so far, aimed at increasing leisure time activity of seniors, were interrupted in March 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic (Marques & Teixeira, 2022). It seems that the process of their restoration can take a relatively long time, taking into account the conservative attitudes of some seniors, their passive attitude, and even the lack of trust deepened by the pandemic.

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