

Short summary on the results of the Be Smart Seniors (BESS) project's survey on the use of IT services by adults over 60 years of age in Liechtenstein

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Introduction

The Be Smart Seniors (BESS) project is supported by the European Union's Erasmus + Education, Training, Youth and Sport program between October 2018 and September 2020. The AIBA is responsible for coordination Erasmus + applications in Liechtenstein.

The project consortium consists of the following organizations:

Corvus Kft. - Project Coordinator (Hungary)

Andragoski zavod Maribor - Lyudska Univerza (Slovenia)

CareerSuli Educational Foundation (Hungary)

TURUN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU (Finland)

Pensioners Association Pécs (Hungary)

Anthropogogik Brändle (Liechtenstein)

Prompt-H Ltd. (Hungary)

Project background

The European Union considers the ageing of the society to be the greatest challenge that all European countries, including Liechtenstein, must tackle in the 21st century. Modern online services, info communication technologies can help older adults to keep in touch with younger generations, maintain their autonomy, improve their lifestyles and create new opportunities including interactive relationships. With the right IT skills, these technologies can become an important tool for maintaining quality of life and can reduce intergenerational distance (Ageism).

Project target group

The target group of the project is adults over 60 years of age, primarily in the countries implementing the project.

Project Goals

The project partnership has set four goals:

- Developing an intergenerational study model that primarily involves young relatives of older adults to help them to acquire basic IT skills.

- Creating an online video repository as a collection on topics tailored to the needs of the project target group. These short teaching materials, with special pedagogical and andragogical approach, focusing on international and country-specific topics. Their aim is to introduce services and technologies to older adults in order to teach them use of them.
- Creating an online learning environment where older adults can easily find teaching materials tailored to their needs. The interface will be suitable to serve community and communication functions as well.
- A brief guide for the target group on how to make their own teaching materials about their hobbies with simple tools, how they can share their memories with others (e.g. in the form of a blog), giving their knowledge and life experience to younger generations on a particular topic.

Purpose and background of the survey

The survey presented in this summary serves to justify the project, justify its professional foundation, and prove the validity of the preliminary hypotheses.

The survey examines the use of IT tools by older adults and their learning preferences.

The results obtained here are intended to prove the concept of intergenerational study model and to give guidance and focus of the curriculum development.

Structure of the questionnaire, data collection

The questionnaire contained 99 questions that are organized in the following topics:

- Demographic data
- Use of internet
- Learning preferences
- Study questionnaire

The survey was carried out in December 2018 and January 2019 in all participating countries.

We used paper-based questionnaires in order to get data from those members of the target group who are not familiar with the use of ICT tools.

With the help of the experts of the University of Turku we managed to prepare a well-defined, professional questionnaire to identify the motivations, areas of interest, and abilities of the target group. The results of the questionnaire evaluation can provide us with a clear view of

the orientation and needs of the elderly in line with the project objectives. We tried to include respondents who can become potential users of the curriculum to be developed in the future due to their age, family background and IT equipment.

Expectations, hypothesis

We expect the majority of people in the target group to have an internet connection. According to the Eurostat survey, more than 85% of European households have access to the Internet.

Based on our adult education experience, members of the older generation prefer the use traditional desktop devices, although modern smart phones gaining ground in this age group too.

We assume that the members of the target group acquired their IT skills through non-formal learning, so their knowledge is often limited to the use of some programs, websites, and services. An exception to this is the age group 60-65, whose members are often active workers and usually experienced computer and internet users.

We expect that the target group members do not prefer formal learning paths (courses, trainings), but are willing to use the help of people or relatives who they trust.

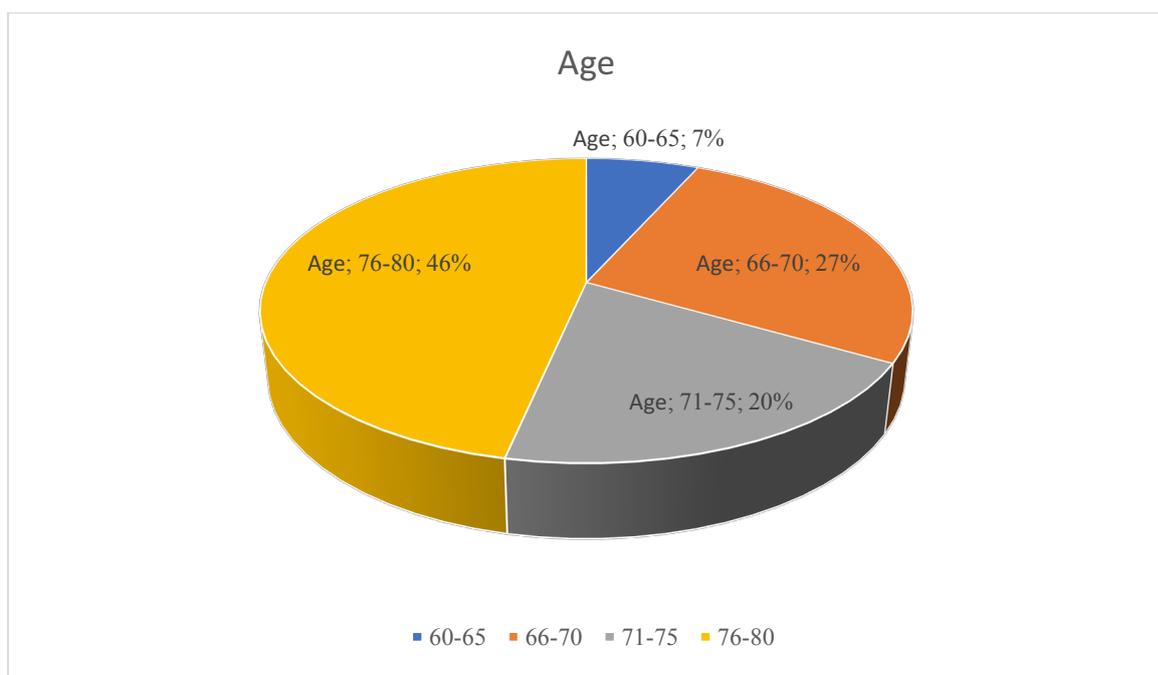
The Liechtenstein results of the survey

The most important findings and conclusions of the survey data are summarized below.

Personal data

73 % of the persons who answered the questionnaires were women and 27 % were men.

Respondents showed the following distribution by age group:



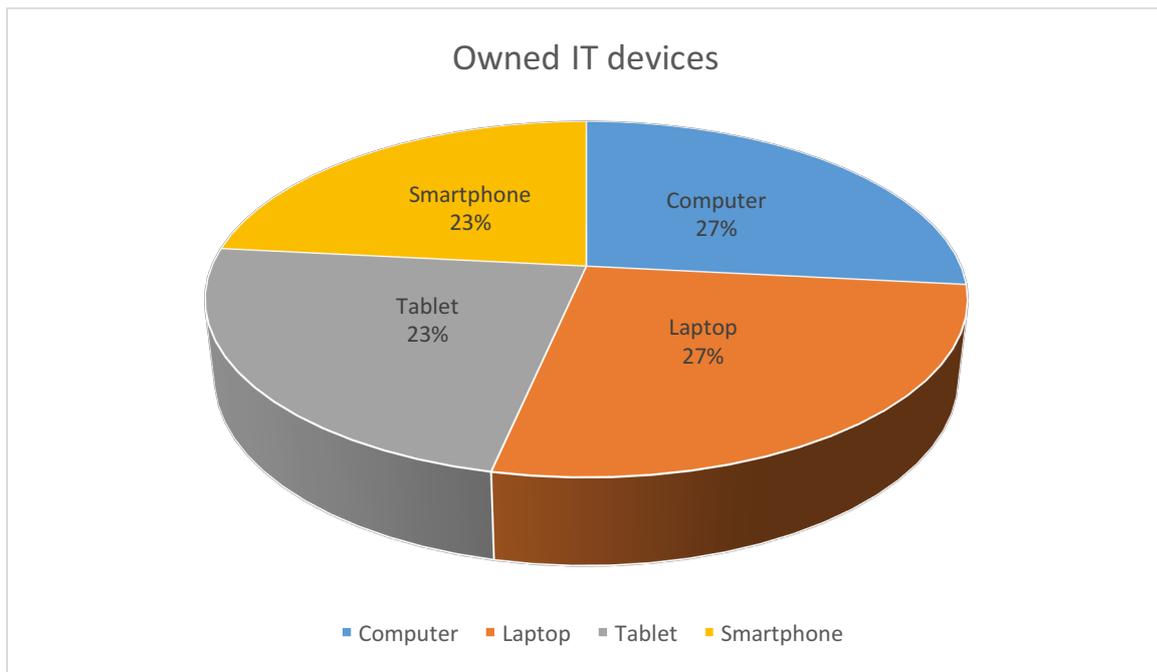
All respondents are retired. 80% of them live in a village, 20% in the Capital Vaduz.

Personal data show that women at the 76-80 age group are over-represented among respondents. This reflects the difference between men and women in the age structure of Liechtenstein's population quite well.

Use of internet

80 % of the respondents have an internet connection. 20 % of the interviewees don't use the internet. 13 % of them aren't interested in using it and the rest doesn't have broadband internet yet.

Respondents use different types of IT devices in the following proportions:



Respondents typically have more than one IT device. In the largest number traditional desktop computers and laptops are used, but we have also found a high number of people with a smartphone or tablet.

80 % of the respondents rate their IT skills medium or higher, 20 % say, that they can't use it at all and none of them see herself or himself as an expert. In order to evaluate this data, it is important to point out that the existence of medium knowledge was tied to the knowledge of email sending and was entirely based on the self-assessment of the respondents, which level was marked.

Most of the respondents, 43 %, have never learned how to use the computer and internet, but use it and would like to learn more about it, if someone would help them with it. 29 % needed it for their jobs. Only 7 % attended a course privately. 21 % don't use the internet, but half of them would like to use it.

50 % of the respondents spend at least one hour daily using the Internet, while 33 % do not use it on a daily basis. The rest of the respondents spend less than one hour online each day.

Use of the internet – questionnaire

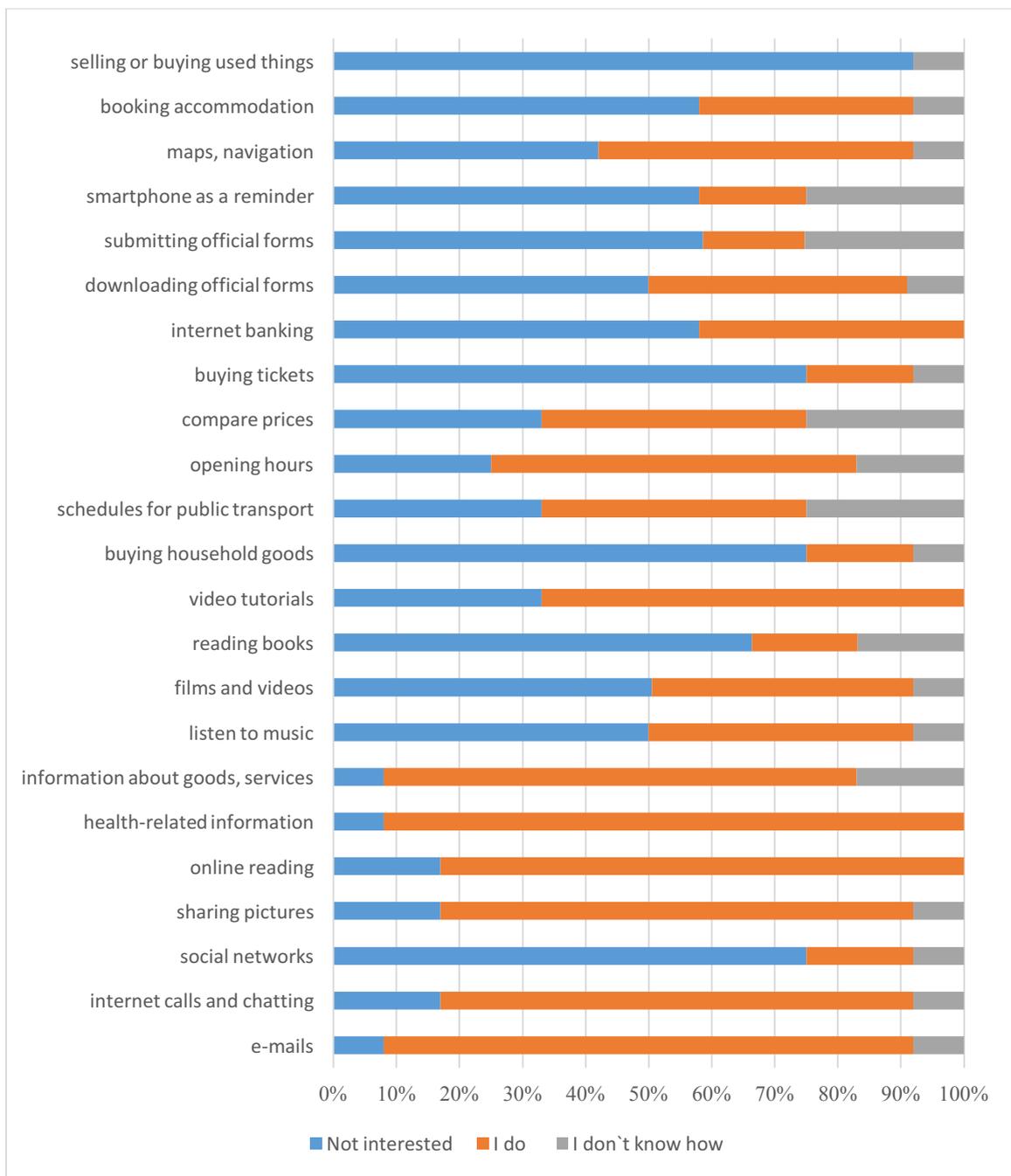
With more than 20 questions in the questionnaire, we tried to map the online services that respondents use regularly or with the right knowledge they would use. Of the on the questionnaire listed online services, respondents were given a four-degree scale to determine

whether they were interested in the service, whether they used it rarely or more frequently, or whether they would use the program if they had the knowledge.

In the following chart is shown whether the respondents already use the online service or would like to use it or aren't interested at all.

The information gathered here is primarily used to select topics for online video tutorials development.

Responses to areas of interest showed the following distribution:



The most commonly used online services are the search of health-related information, reading online news/newspapers and magazines, sending and receiving e-mails, sending and receiving pictures and finding information about goods or services.

Based on the answers, we have found out that the following online services are not common to use among the respondents: selling or buying used things, submitting completed official forms online, buying tickets or household goods, reading books online, participating in social networks and using the smartphone as a reminder.

The answer for the question about selling or buying used things online was the only one where none of the interviewees did it and 92 % weren't interested in doing so.

The most interesting part for the project was the range of services where respondents expressed interest in using the service if they had the right knowledge.

A quarter of the interviewees in Liechtenstein were interested in learning how to use the smartphone to remind them of appointments / taking their medicine e.g., compare prizes of products online, find schedules to public transport and submit completed forms online. Around 17 % wanted to know how to find information about goods or services, read books online and find information about opening hours of shops and offices. Some were interested to learn how to make calls or chat online, send and receive e-mails, participate in social networks, receive and send pictures, listen online to music, watch films and videos, order food or buy household goods, sell or buy used things online, buy tickets online, download and print official forms, find information to get from one place to another and book accommodation online.

There was no interest in Liechtenstein to learn about reading online news sites / newspapers / news magazines, seeking health-related information and learning by using video tutorials. It seems there was no need for that, cause most of the respondents already know how to do that. For example, the seeking for health information is done by 92 % of the respondents.

The question about internet banking showed an interesting result. Either they did it frequently (42 %) or they weren't interested at all (58 %).

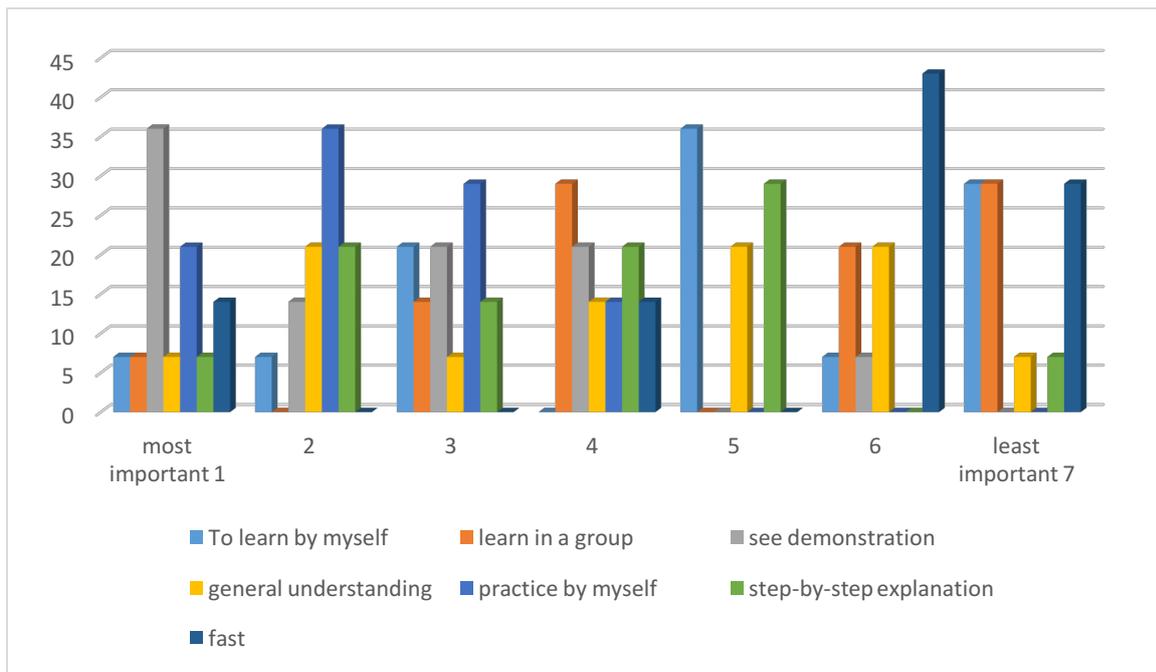
Learning preferences

The following question group looked at respondents' learning preferences.

In the first round, we wanted to know what found the respondents important when they are learning new IT skills.

We have examined whether individual or group learning is more attractive to the target group, how detailed or goal-oriented knowledge they want. We also asked about the topic of self-study and length of time for learning.

How important are these qualities / features for the interviewees when they learn new IT related skills?



Based on the answers, the following statements can be made for Liechtenstein:

Interviewees prefer to see a demonstration how to solve a specific task and have then the opportunity to practice themselves.

To learn it properly the respondents are not in a hurry. They want to take their time for it.

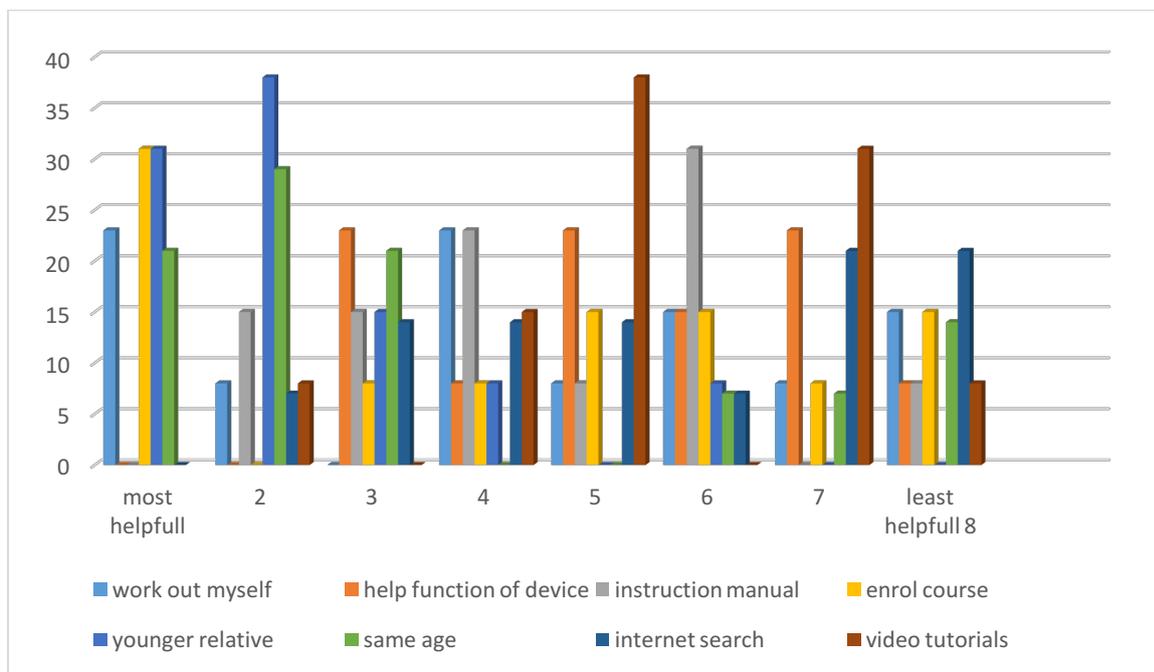
The respondents did not consider it essential whether they learn by themselves or in a group.

The following questions of the survey tried to find out how the respondents prefer to acquire knowledge when learning new IT skills. The possible responses ranged from independent attempts to course attendance.

From the point of view of the planned developments, it was a critical element in these questions to what extent the respondents prefer to use the help of a younger relative or a friend and whether they are rigidly rejecting the use of online learning materials.

To come to the point: As you can see on the following chart 92 % of the respondents find it very helpful to talk to a younger relative or friend. But at the same time 71 % wouldn't mind to learn from a relative or friend in the same age group, if he or she is competent.

Helpful methods to learn new IT skills in percent:



The most preferred method of learning is using the help of a younger friend or relative. Less than 50 % want to enrol a course. They prefer learning from one person they trust and practice then by themselves.

The opinion regarding the use of online video learning material is not as hoped for. 77 % listed it as not so helpful. But when asked if they think video tutorials could be a help as a repetition tool, all of them said yes.

We can conclude that the target group profits from a combined form of education that allows them to acquire the necessary foundation with the help of a young relative or friend and after that if they have the well-established foundation, they can use the online forms of learning.

Those interviewees who have good IT skills find it useful to work it out by themselves with the help of an instruction manual.

This supports our project idea as a well-structured video learning curriculum can fit well into this independent problem-solving learning attitude.

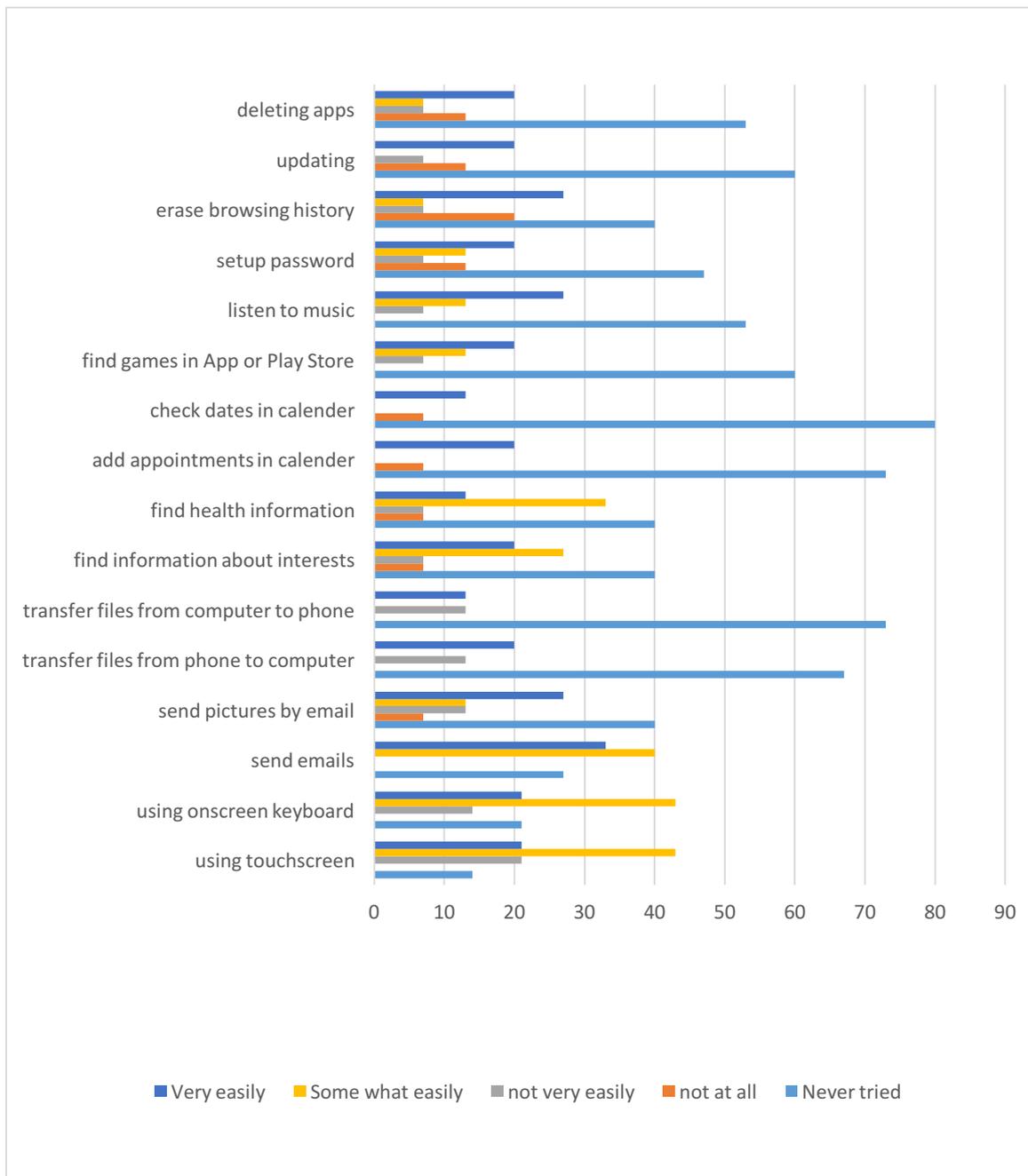
The most important data for the project is that the help of a young assistant is by far the most useful for the respondents. At the same time, we also must see that low rates for the video learning materials are not a coincidence: 77 % of the respondents say this learning method isn't useful. There is obviously a need for significant didactic innovation in order to produce curriculum that is better adapted to the needs of the target group.

Study questionnaire

In this section we wanted to have a better insight of the computer skills and skills with a mobile device of the respondents.

They had to use a five-grade scale to define how confident they can accomplish a certain basic IT task.

Skills:



Based on the received data the following statements can be made for Liechtenstein:

- There are 13 % of the interviewees who have no problems at all with the tasks we asked for.
- The vast majority of respondents can confidently navigate on-screen menus using the touchscreen and the on-screen keyboard. At the same time 13 % never tried to use a touchscreen and 20 % find it difficult (This could be because older skin is dryer than younger skin and this could cause a problem with the capacitive touchscreens).
- 73 % of the interviewees have no problem sending and receiving emails, but only 53 % can send a picture by email.
- 80 % don't use a personalized calendar, but 25 % respondents would like to use one to remind them of appointments, taking their medicine or something else.
- Around 70 % of the interviewees never tried to transfer files from their smartphone to the computer and vice versa.
- In security matters like updates, setting up a password, deleting the browsing history, games, apps or temporary files there is the need to teach the respondents how to do that. 60 – 73 % have never tried it or have problems with it.
- The questions about the entertainment tasks showed a variety of different answers.

Conclusions

The majority of the pre-survey hypotheses regarding the use of IT services by adults over 60 years of age were correct.

Compared to our prior expectations, respondents had a higher proportion of mobile devices (presumably due to the specific distribution of the sample), but they do not yet have the appropriate skills and knowledge to use these tools.

The use of desktop devices is still a major factor among the respondents, but there is a clear trend in this age group, which has already emerged among the younger ones, as mobile devices are becoming more widespread and displacing traditional computers and laptops in terms of content consumption.

The majority of respondents have the knowledge of basic tasks such as emailing, browsing, and using search engines, but there is a significant group in almost every area where even this basic knowledge is missing.

The aim of the project was to involve younger relatives in the development of basic IT skills for older adults with an intergenerational study model. Interviewees prefer this learning method and consider it effective. The added value of this learning model can be to reduce intergenerational distance and reduce age-based discrimination.

The success of the questionnaire survey drew the attention of the project implementers to the fact that it is an important task to attract older people effectively, to encourage the use of online video learning materials, and to promote the possibility of “easy home learning”.