

Final questionnaire analysis

Summary

PR1 - T1.1

Seniors for Circular Economy

(SEN4CE)

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Introduction


To develop a custom-tailored training course on circular economy for seniors, closing gaps of existing approaches and creating synergies with other projects, the SEN4CE partners conducted a needs analysis to assess the knowledge and behavioural habits of its target group in the partner countries.


The questionnaire consisted of 19 questions covering different aspects of the circular economy such as **responsible consumption, product lifespan, responsible use of resources**, considering **socio-demographic characteristics of the target group**, i.e., age, gender, education level, occupation status, and country of residence. In addition, the questionnaire included some questions assessing the target group's understanding of circular economy, to adapt accordingly the curriculum based on seniors' awareness level on this topic.


The questionnaire was designed by [E-Seniors](#), a French NGO working in digital with seniors in Paris, in collaboration with all the SEN4CE partners and translated in each partner's language and distributed among seniors 60 years and older in Austria, France, Germany, Portugal and Spain.

 In Austria, [BIT](#) used different channels to distribute the questionnaire: they informed network partners working with the target group and asked them to forward the link for the online survey in their communities. They also used existing contacts from projects where they were already working directly with the target group and sent them the questionnaire. After 4 weeks, the survey was closed, and the results were summarised.

 In France, [E-Seniors](#) distributed the questionnaire via e-mail to the seniors that are members and/or active participants of the association and its activities. In addition, they shared the questionnaire online on social media, namely on E-Seniors Facebook page to engage more respondents. They obtained the answers in about a month.

 In Germany, the questionnaire was distributed by [Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V.](#) to friends and parents as well as to special interest groups like senior citizen centres, grandmothers for future, a magazine addressing seniors, and assisted living facilities. The questionnaire was distributed via email and one phone interview was held. Two weeks were given to seniors to answer.

 In Portugal, [Future Balloons](#) distributed the questionnaires by email in the beginning of August (sending the link of a Google form) to their associated partners, friends, parents, and to private Institutions of social solidarity. They got the answers in about one month.

 In Spain, the questionnaire was distributed by [CETEM](#) through a mixed strategy: some of them were sent directly by email but others were distributed in person to seniors used to cooperate with CETEM. After sending all the questionnaires, the organisation waited one month to collect the answers.

Overall, we obtained 52 responses from the 5 partner countries, divided as follow:

- 13 responses from Austria
- 11 responses from France
- 5 responses from Germany
- 13 responses from Spain
- 10 responses from Portugal

The questionnaire results will be used to develop the curriculum created for 2 EQF levels, i.e., 2-3 and 3-4, to ensure compatibility with the diverse learning needs of seniors 60+ and the country-specific results obtained in the framework of the respective needs analysis.

Respondents' characteristics (Questions 1-5)

From the results of the national questionnaires, we found that the respondents belong to a variety of age groups. Thus, while in Austria, Germany and Spain, most respondents were aged 65 to 75 years old, in France, they were mostly 80 years or older and 60-65 years old, while in Portugal, they were mostly 60 to 65 years old and 70 to 75 years old. This shows that seniors of all ages are well represented in our answers.

The gender ratio was overall well balanced in every country, with a slightly higher part of women. In Germany, however, 80% of respondents were women, making them a vast majority amongst German respondents.

Regarding the countries of residence, our respondents all reside in the partner country in which they completed the questionnaire, meaning that out of the 52 respondents:

- 13 reside in Austria
- 11 reside in France
- 5 reside in Germany
- 13 reside in Spain
- 10 reside in Portugal

As for the level of education of our respondents, they are quite varied depending on the partner country. For instance, while respondents in Austria, France and Germany are quite highly educated, with a vast majority of them having at least completed a high school degree, the largest proportion of respondents in Portugal (80%) and Spain (42.6%) declared not having completed schooling. In Austria, the biggest group represented is seniors with a high school diploma or equivalent (38.5%), while in France (54.5%) and Germany (60%), it is seniors who completed a master's degree or more. Such differences in responses depending on the country might be explained by several factors. For instance, the different partner organizations in this project target different senior groups

Finally, regarding the employment statuses, a vast majority of respondents (80% to 90%), all countries combined, are retired, which suits the target group of the SEN4CE project and the conducted questionnaire.

Knowledge of circular economy (Questions 6-8)

In most partner countries, the majority of respondents had already heard of the circular economy when filling in the questionnaire. This is particularly true for respondents from Austria (76.9%), France (100%), and Germany (80%). In Spain, just over half of the respondents had already heard of it. In Portugal however, only 70% of respondents had never heard of the circular economy before. It is therefore quite interesting to see we have quite a wide range of profiles in our responses.

Regarding the practices that our respondents think of when hearing the expression “circular economy”, they are quite varied depending on the country. In Austria, France, Germany and Spain, “Remanufacturing, refurbishment, repair and reuse of products and components” as well as “recycling” appear as some of the top answers for respondents. Another popular answer in Austria, France and Germany was “the efficient use of resources”. In Portugal, however, respondents think more of “a shift in consumption patterns”, when they hear the term “circular economy”. Portuguese respondents also did not answer this question as much as respondents from other countries did, which may be explained by the fact that most of them previously replied that they had never heard of the circular economy before.

Finally, the vast majority of respondents, all countries combined, believe that it is necessary for individuals to adopt circular economy practices, as opposed to thinking that individual actions don't have an impact, and that only states and companies have the power to build a more circular economy. The numbers vary from 84.6% (Spain) to 100% (Austria and Germany). These numbers are quite encouraging, because it shows that individuals are aware that their practices need to change in order to build a more circular economy. This can open them up to the possibility of being educated about it, which is the goal of the SEN4CE project.

Responsible consumption (Questions 9-12)

In the partner countries, the majority of people reportedly take into account the environmental impact of production while buying food, clothes and household appliances, whereas only a few of them do so when it comes to games and leisure items. Interestingly, whereas in Spain and Portugal the respondents feel the most concerned about environmental impact while purchasing household appliances (70%), in Germany, France and Austria, it is food that seniors are most concerned about. Noteworthy, the extent to which people feel concerned about food purchasing differs between the three countries (100% of respondents in Germany, 92.3% in Austria and 82% in France).

Although most of the respondents apply similar eco-friendly practices while shopping, the proportions in which they do so are quite different between the partner countries. For example, while in Portugal and Spain, the majority of people limit themselves to buying products which they truly need, between 50% and 60% of people do the same in Germany, France and Austria. Looking at the origin of the products reportedly is the most popular practice in France (100%) and Germany (80%), whereas in Portugal only one fifth of respondents mentioned doing so. Buying seasonal products was the second most popular applied practice in the partner countries, except for Austria where it was indicated by

almost all the respondents (92,3%). Interestingly, none or just a few participants mentioned buying refurbished or repaired products in the partner countries, which demonstrates that more educational actions should be taken in this field.

When it comes to the reasons why our respondents do not apply some of the cited practices, most of them reported not having adequate information to make such choices. Other reasons, such as high price, accessibility, relevance, were also mentioned in different proportions in the partner countries. Interestingly, answering the question why others do not apply such practices, in most cases the respondents cited different reasons to those they gave answering for themselves in the previous question. For instance, only a few or no respondents stated that their actions would have no impact, whereas, reportedly, they believe that others do think so. Other aspects such as accessibility and relevance were also mentioned by the respondents in all the partner countries.

Product lifespan (Questions 13-15)

Overall, the respondents in all the partner countries apply a significant number of good practices for a circular economy. The majority of them sort out waste and recycle & use deposit systems when available. On average, around 80% of them repair their objects instead of throwing them away when they want to part with them.

Nonetheless, a lesser number of people give another life to their items by transforming them/reusing them in another way, i.e., 40% in Portugal, almost 30% in France, around 25% in Spain, 20% in Germany and only 7% in Austria. Surprisingly, whereas 80% of people buy second-hand clothes in Germany, less than 20% do so in the other countries, i.e., Spain, Portugal, Austria and France. Such a difference may be caused by a lesser number of respondents from Germany: this result should therefore be taken with caution as it is not statistically viable.

Similar to the previous section, answering the question why they respondents do not apply some of the practices, seniors did not give the same responses that they attributed to other people. For instance, in France, while more than 60% of the respondents stated other people don't apply these practices because they don't think it's necessary or because they don't think their actions will have an impact, none of them gave it as a reason to why they themselves did not apply some of these practices. In Spain the respondents also stated that such practices require too much effort or that other people believe that these efforts have no impact or people consider it unnecessary.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the respondents in most of the partner countries stated not having enough adequate information to apply some of the proposed practices.

Responsible use of resources (Questions 16-17)

Overall, all countries combined, our respondents apply quite a lot of the listed practices for a more responsible use of resources. The most popular practices amongst our respondents are turning the lights off when leaving a room and trying to reduce the water consumption, with 80% to 100% of respondents applying those practices, depending on the

country. Turning on the heat/AC only when necessary is also quite popular, with between 60% and 92% of respondents saying they apply such a practice. Finally, not letting electronic devices on stand-by mode and using low or non-polluting means of transport when commuting is a bit less popular, with 80% of respondents applying these practices in Germany, but only between 30% and 60% of them in Austria, France, Portugal and Spain.

Regarding the reasons why they don't apply some of these practices, only a few respondents answered. In Austria, France, and Germany, the main reason given is that it takes too much time or effort and is too constraining (33% to 60% of respondents). The fact that they don't think about applying such practices is also a reason mentioned by respondents in these 3 countries, as well as in Portugal. In Spain, the justification for not applying these practices is the lack of adequate information as well as their perception that it is not useful to carry out this type of action.

Conclusion (Questions 18-19, Overall conclusions)









First and foremost, to the question "What do you think are/could be the benefits of the circular economy practices so far mentioned for you?", it is positive to note that no respondents, all countries combined, answered that they saw no benefit to applying such practices. In all partner countries, the top answer to this question was that these practices are better for the environment, and therefore good for the respondents' health and wellbeing (100% of respondents in Austria, France and Germany; 84.6% in Spain; 70% in Portugal). Another popular answer in most countries is that those practices are good for the future of the planet and for the respondents' children and grandchildren. Germany is the exception, with only 20% of respondents having identified this benefit. The other answers are quite varied depending on the country: while most respondents in Austria, France, Germany and Spain replied that circular economy practices helped save money, in Portugal, only 30% of respondents did. Furthermore, while the answer "Applying such practices makes me feel good about myself" was very popular in Austria (92.3% of respondents), this benefit was not identified as much in other partner countries. Finally, only few people answered that applying such practices created a sense of community: up to 60% of respondents in Germany, the highest proportion, but none in Portugal, for instance.

Regarding the obstacles, there were a lot less answers: respondents don't seem to have identified many obstacles in applying circular economy practices. The most common answer was that the information about what is good and what is not is always evolving, which can be confusing: 63.6% of respondents in France, 61.5% in Austria and Spain and 50% in Portugal responded this way. In Spain, many answered that they also didn't have the adequate information to make informed choices (61.5%), that the possibilities to apply these practices were very limited where they live (46.2%), or that applying circular economy practices was too expensive (38.5%). In France and Austria, 35-40% of respondents replied that it was also too constraining, or that it took too much time or effort to apply such practices. Very few respondents answered that they didn't have the necessary interest and curiosity or that they didn't think their individual actions had an impact.

To sum up, the needs analysis conducted in the SEN4CE partner countries demonstrated that our senior respondents, representing different age and gender groups and education

levels, are familiar with this concept and apply some of the circular economy practices, but are still sometimes uncertain and need more adequate information to embrace it in their day-to-day life. Whereas in most countries, the majority of the respondents had heard of the circular economy, their definitions vary and exclude some of the important components of the circular economy. In addition, although the respondents agree that individuals have a role to play in the circular economy, they believe that other people do not think so, which undoubtedly influences their motivation and hinder the community component in the fight against climate change.

These results suggest that while designing the **SEN4CE curriculum**, we should **focus on**:

-  Explaining the importance of circular economy practices and their impact on the environment;
-  Countering the idea that responsible consumption is too limiting or expensive by providing tips on how to easily implement it and even save money in the process;
-  Extending the consideration of the impact of production when buying products outside of household appliances and food (such as clothes, furniture, games and leisure etc.);
-  Transforming or reusing products in other ways as well as buying second hand products (knowledge of platforms & tools);
-  Using low or non-polluting means of transport;
-  Providing insight on how using circular economy practices can create a sense of community and continue to build a positive sense of environmental contribution;
-  Find ways to tackle the barrier of perpetually changing information on the best practices for a more circular economy;
-  Providing the trust-worthy resources to ensure that adequate information remains accessible and accessible for people.