

Social Web Skills for elder people

Country report: Germany

1. Increasing growth of the internet

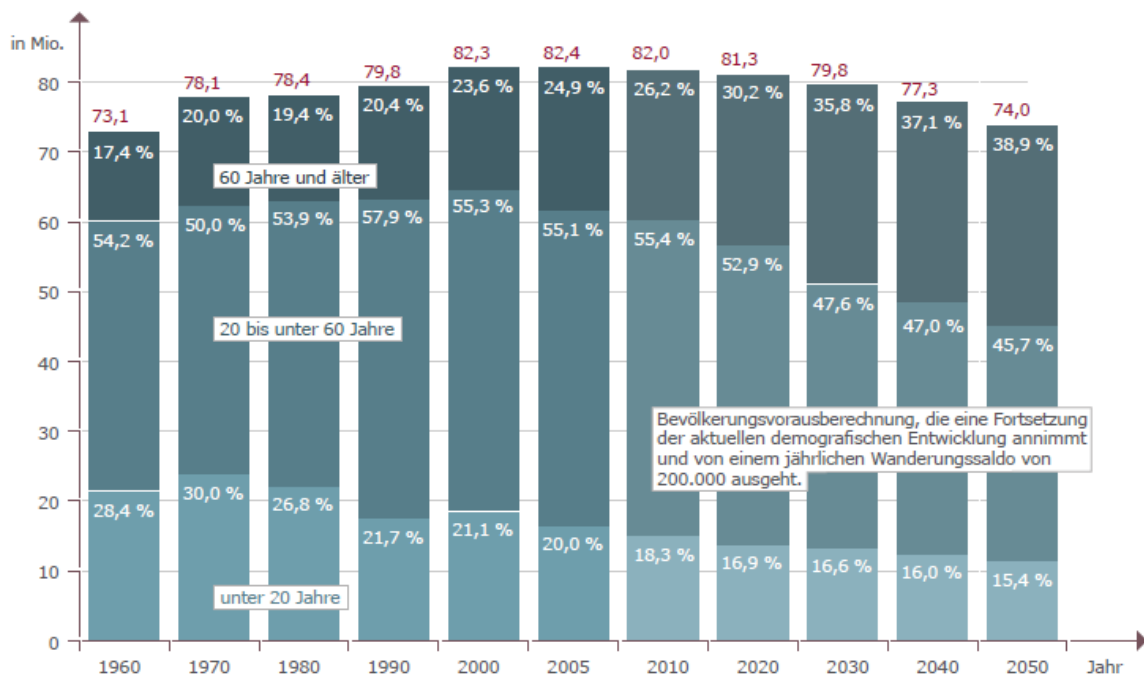
The Miniwatts Marketing Group published on their homepage www.internetworldstats.com statistics about the worldwide internet usage. These statistics show that 2 billion people are using the internet. 475 million users come from Europe, which means that Europe is second after Asia concerning the internet usage. Within Europe, Germany is on the first rank with 65.1 million users; Russia and the UK are following on the second and third rank.

2. Development of the demographic structure of Germany

Currently, over 82 million people are living in Germany. About 20.4 million of them belong to the generation “60 plus”. By the year 2020 this figure will have risen to 24.6 million and in 2050, there will be an estimated number of 28.8 million elderly people. Thus, the percentage of senior citizens in Germany is increasing and there will not be any stagnancy in the near future. According to these figures, an obsolescence of the German population does exist.

■ Bevölkerungsentwicklung und Altersstruktur

Bevölkerung in absoluten Zahlen, Anteile der Altersgruppen in Prozent, 1960 bis 2050, Stand 2006



Quelle: Statistisches Bundesamt: Bevölkerung Deutschlands bis 2050
Lizenz: Creative Commons by-nc-nd/2.0/de
Stand: 2007

Figure 1: The demographic structure of Germany

3. A new trend concerning the internet usage: The age of the “silver surfer”?

The chart (see figure 1) shows, that there will be more and more people over the age of 60 in Germany. Because of this development it is interesting and important to take a look at the internet usage of this generation. Seniors are a new potential target group of the World Wide Web. Up to now, the internet was mainly used by the group of the 14-49 years old, namely 90%. According to a study of the (N)ONLINER Atlas (see figure 2) this will change in the near future. The increase in internet users of the generation 60+, which are called “Silver Surfer”, is enormous. While only 15% of the seniors used the internet in 2005, in 2010 the percentage climbed up to 31%. A further increase is very likely. There are several reasons for this radical change. The first reason is the growing availability of the internet. It is much easier to have an internet access installed than it was 5 years ago. Another reason is that there are more and more attractive portals, websites and applications for seniors available. Furthermore, the costs sank in the last years as there are more attractive offers and flat rates on the market. .

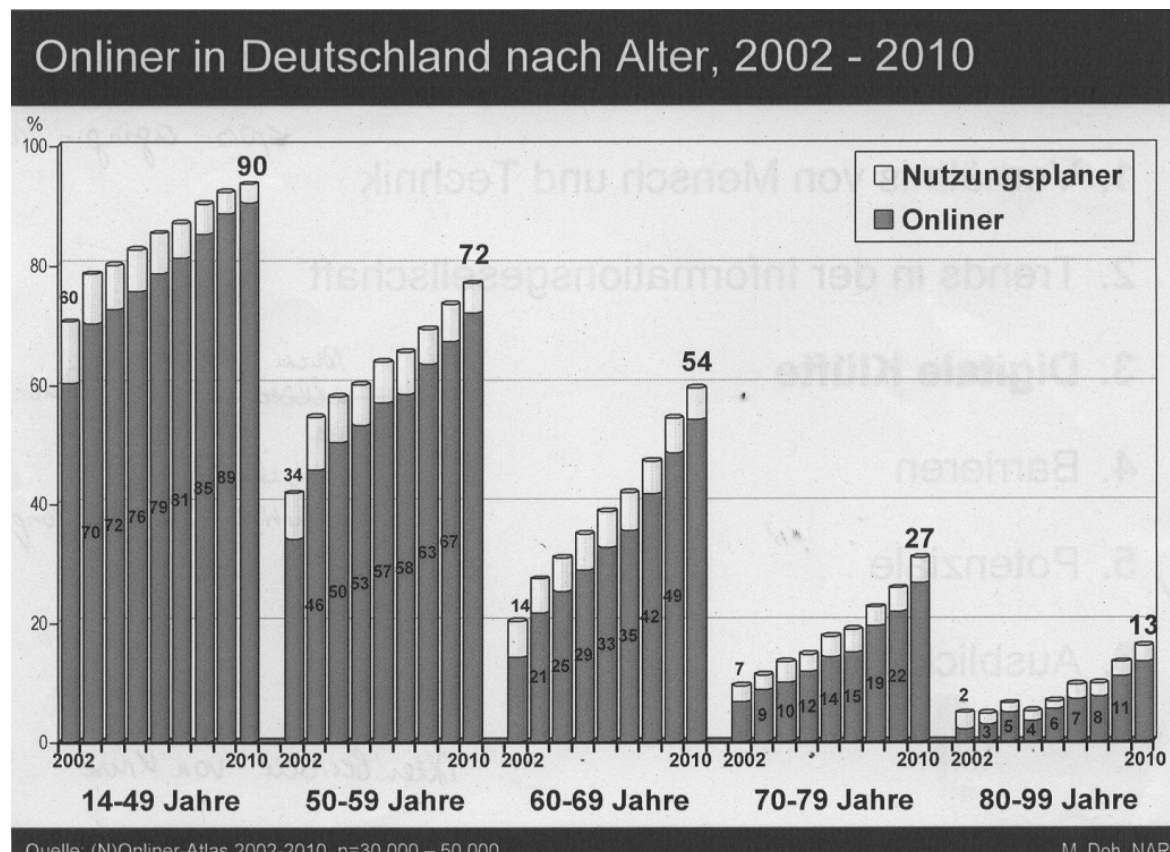


Figure 2: Internet users in Germany 2002-2010, sorted by age; source: (N)Onliner Atlas 2010

4. Habits concerning the internet of seniors: Who used the internet, why, how long and when?

4.1 Which seniors used the internet until now?

Many of the factors already listed are responsible for the differences between the younger and the older generation. The internet usage is influenced by the level of education. There are no special data available for seniors, but as this applies to the younger generation as well, we may transfer the findings to the senior generation.

Jahr	Schüler	Volks-/ Hauptschule	weiterbildende Schule	Abitur/ Studium
2009	97,0 %	52,7 %	73,3 %	87,5 %
2010	97,5 %	56,6 %	76,2 %	88,8 %

Figure 3: Internet usage, sorted by level of education; source: (N)Onliner Atlas 2010

The higher the level of education, the more people use the internet. While people with a lower school qualification often start a practical formation, people with a higher degree often need to use the internet. The same applies for seniors. The higher their level of education, the more often they use the internet. Another influential factor is the place of residence. There are more internet accesses available in bigger cities than in rural areas. There is another interesting difference concerning the internet usage: there are more seniors in the west of Germany than in the east that use the internet. Before the reunification, the western part was more progressive and therefore the people in the west were more used to computers. As the people who were used to computers later used the internet more often, it is clear why people in the former GDR use the internet less often.

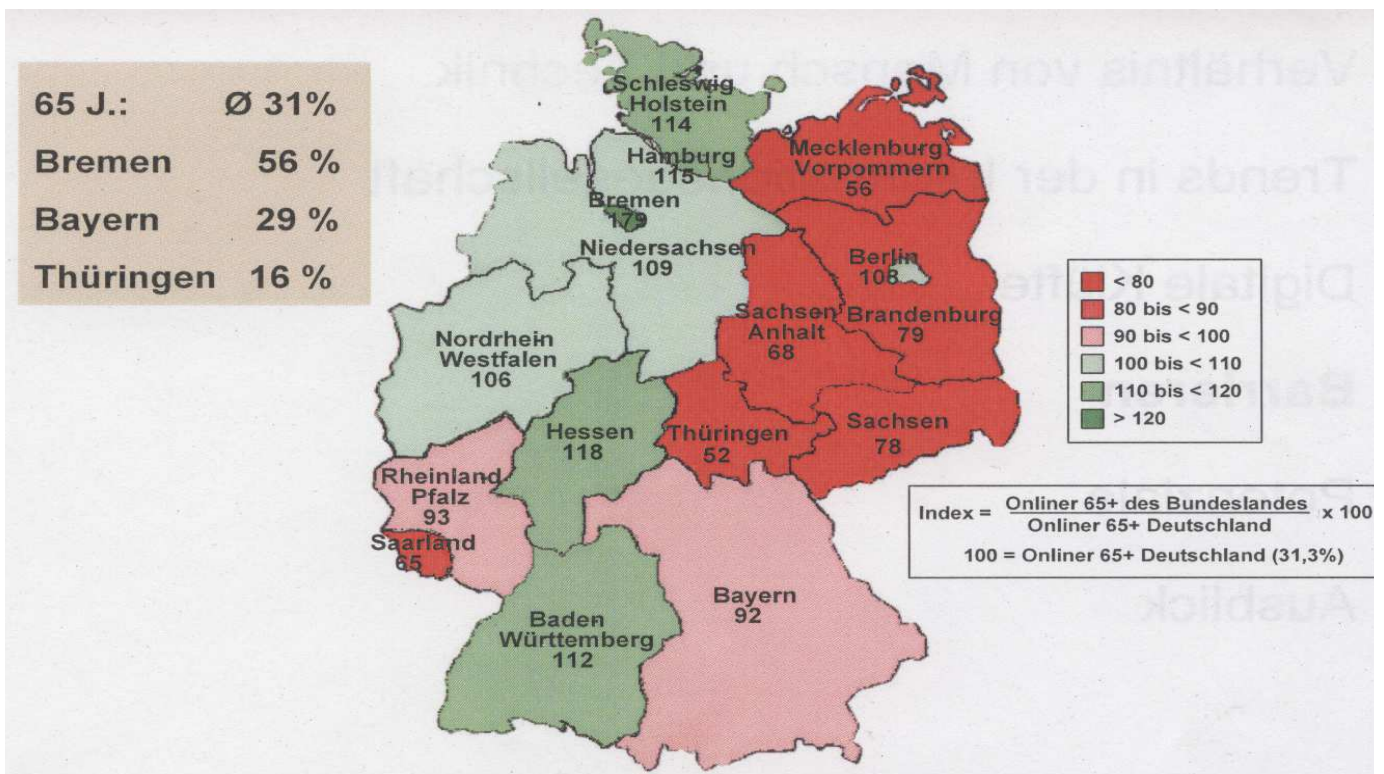


Figure 4: Online users over 65, sorted by federal state; source: (N)Onliner Atlas 2010

Gender is also an important issue that influences the internet usage. There are no special statistics available for seniors but it can be deduced that the same applies to seniors. As figure 5 shows, there are more men using the internet than women in Germany. Only 64,8 % of the users are female, whereas 79,5% are male. It is likely that the number of male users will further increase.

Jahr	Männer	Frauen	Differenz
2009	76,1 %	62,4 %	13,7 %-Punkte
2010	79,5 %	64,8 %	14,7 %-Punkte

Figure 5: Internet users, sorted by gender; source: (N)Onliner Atlas 2010)

To summarize: 84% of male seniors that are from the western part of Germany, have a high level of education, an increased income and do not live alone, have an internet access. On the other hand, only 4% of female seniors that are from the eastern part of Germany, have a low level of education, a low income and live alone, have an internet access.

4.2 What do seniors use the internet for?

There are many advantages for seniors of using the internet. It is faster and cheaper than sending a letter, gives a lot of information, makes news from all over the world available, makes it easier to buy things and gives new opportunities for those who want to meet new

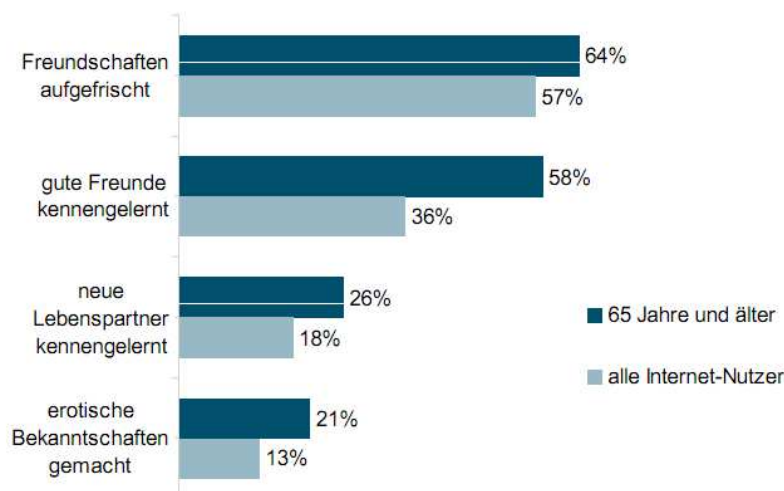
people. The Association for Information technologies, communication and new media (BITKOM) did some research on the internet behaviour of seniors and found out for what the seniors mainly use the internet. Their interests lay mainly in finding general information, health, life style, shopping and travelling. Further fields of interest can be found in figure 6. Especially the communication via internet is interesting for seniors. According to a study of the University of Zurich, most of the seniors use the internet for sending emails, as the usage is very easy and cheaper and faster than by regular mail. Not only emails but also chat rooms show an increase in elder people. As a BITKOM study found out, senior surfers profit above average from the internet when it comes to social contacts. 64% of all silver surfers renewed friendships, 58% made new friends and 26% met their partner online. These numbers are above the German average.

Im Web neue Chancen fürs Privatleben

Ältere Surfer profitieren überdurchschnittlich bei Partnersuche



„Wenn es um Vorteile des Internets geht, welchen Aussagen stimmen Sie zu?“ (persönliche Erfahrungen)



Quelle: BITKOM / ARIS Umfrageforschung, Basis: Internet-Nutzer ab 14 Jahren

Figure 6: Advantages of the internet concerning social contacts; source: BITKOM

Furthermore, 65% of the German senior citizens use the internet for regular information. They look for example for train and bus schedules, book their vacation online and look for specific information from reference books. The internet is very useful as all information is up-to-date and easily accessible.

Every third person is looking for health information online. There are several possibilities to find new information. The seniors might look for symptoms, talk about their own experience and exchange ideas on remedies. They can look for help and give advice at the same time.

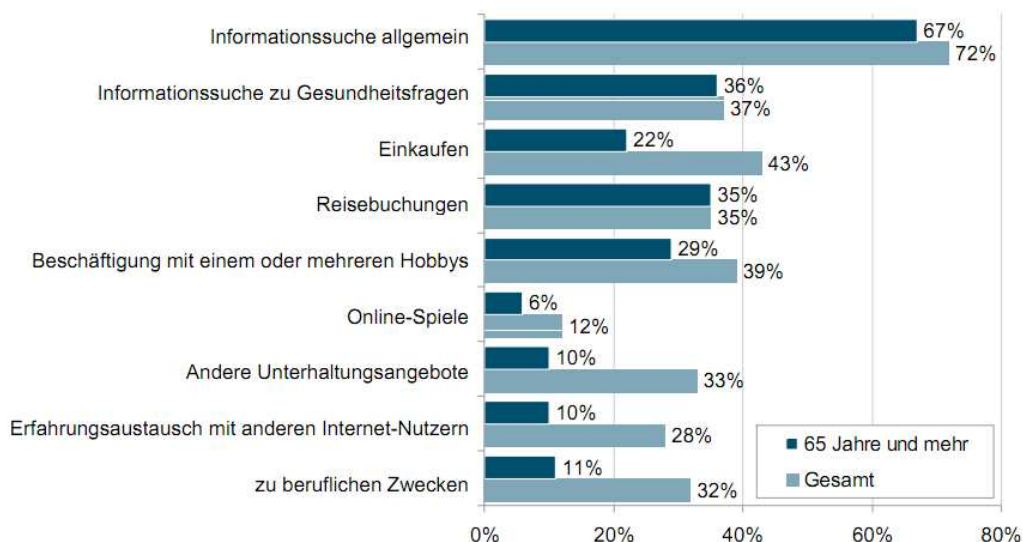
Seniors are a big contributor to the sales figures when it comes to online shopping. A main reason for this is their experience with mail-order selling. Additionally, offers can be compared and the best price can be found easily.

35% of the “silver surfers” make use of online travel bookings. Most of the websites give a great overview and make it easier to compare offers.

Viele Potentiale noch ungenutzt

Jeder Dritte informiert sich im Internet über Gesundheitsfragen

„Wozu nutzen Sie das Internet?“



Quelle: BITKOM/Forsa, Basis: Internet-Nutzer ab 14 Jahren

Figure 7: What do seniors use the internet for?; source: BITKOM

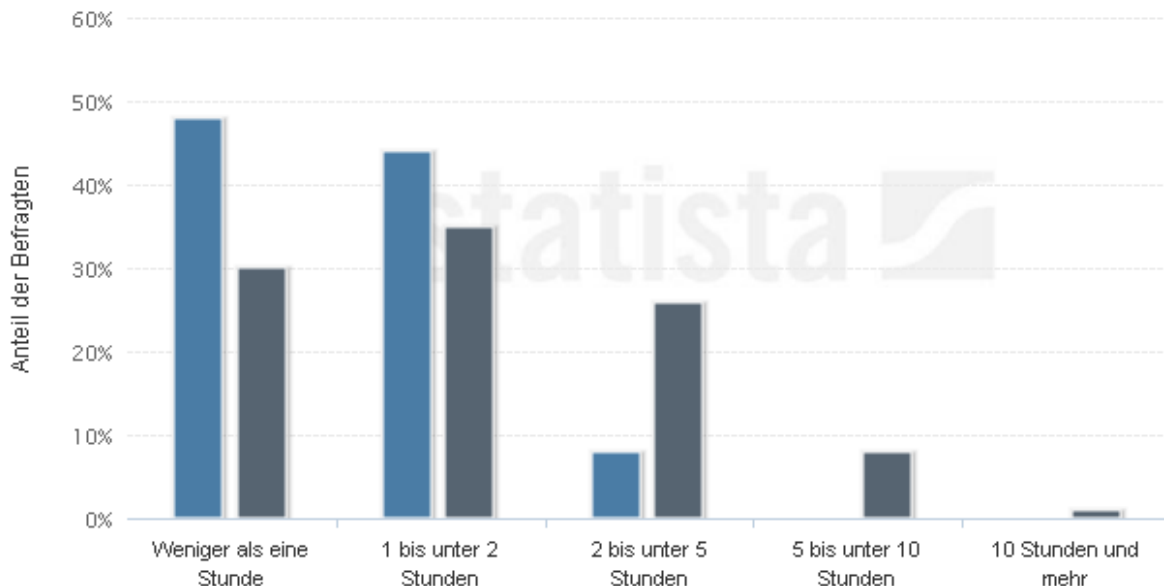
Every sixth user over 65 is a member of a social community. The social communities keep growing and more and more seniors join, too. According to a study of the “Arbeitsgemeinschaft Online Forschung” (AGOF) from 2009, the typical communities especially for seniors are used less than normal communities that are open for everyone. Seniors don’t want to be labelled old and be treated the same as everyone else. “Stayfriends.de” has with 1.2 million the most users who are over 50, followed by “wer-kennt-wen.de” with 920 000 users. Facebook, Skype and twitter still have a big potential when it comes to senior users. 121 000 seniors used Facebook in August 2009; in May 2011 there were already 862 580 users. Skype and twitter are getting more and more popular with senior users. The main reason for this is that they want to stay in touch with their grandchildren, children or other relatives who mainly use social media.

4.3 How long do seniors use the internet?

When the surf behaviour is examined it is also important to take a look at the time of usage. In the course of a BITKOM study, persons of all age were asked about their personal internet usage. One part of the study looked into the duration of the internet usage. The results can be seen in figure 8. The light blue column stands for the seniors whereas the dark blue column stands for the rest of the German population. Compared to the whole population, senior internet users use the internet for a shorter period of time. 48% of the seniors are online less than an hour and 44% use the internet between one and two hours. Only 8% of the silver surfers surf online longer,

namely two to five hours. These results show that seniors use the internet for a specific purpose and then go offline again.

Wie lange nutzen Sie das Internet durchschnittlich am Tag? (Silver Surfer)



i Deutschland; ab 14 Jahre; BITKOM / ARIS
Umfrageforschung; 2010

Quelle: BITKOM

Figure 8: Duration of internet usage; source: BITKOM

4.4 When do seniors use the internet?

Until now there are no specific results concerning the time of internet usage. One can try to deduce from the interests of the seniors the time of usage. As their interests are widely spread, one can say that there is no specific time when seniors use the internet. As they have more time during the day, they can use the internet any time they want.

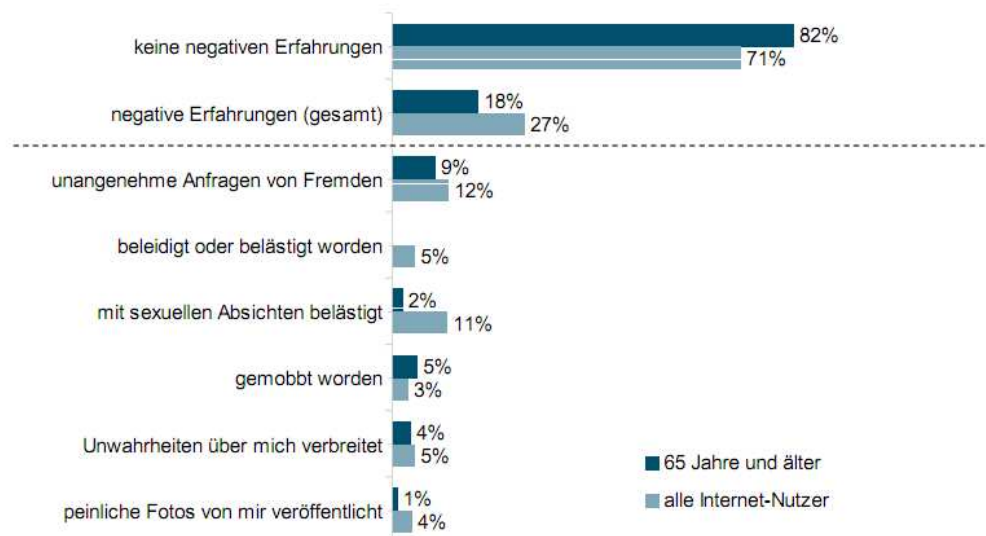
5. Senior's experiences with social media

There are several prejudices and fears concerning social networks among the older generation. They think social networks are dangerous and that it is easy to harass people online. A BITKOM study looked into exactly these prejudices and therefore asked all generations. They found out that seniors in general have less negative experiences than other internet users and that they associate positive experiences with the internet in general. Only 9% of all silver surfers received unwanted requests, almost nobody was insulted online. 5% were bullied, over 4% were confronted with lies about them and from 1% embarrassing pictures were published. All of these numbers are under 10% and show that social communities are mainly an advantage for elder people and that it is very useful to get to know the new social media.

Die meisten machen nur positive Erfahrungen

Senioren haben weniger Negativ-Erlebnisse mit anderen Nutzern

„Welche negativen Erfahrungen haben Sie persönlich im Internet bereits gemacht?“



Quelle: BITKOM / ARIS Umfrageforschung, Basis: Internet-Nutzer ab 14 Jahren
Figure 9: Experiences with other internet users; source: BITKOM

2. Examples of generation-spanning ICT-learning projects

“Junioren zeigen Senioren das Internet” in Schärding

This is a project, where juniors show seniors how to use the internet. Via their self-gained experience, the younger were able to show the senior citizens exactly how to handle the internet.

“Schüler lehren Älteren Informatik” at the technical college for IT in Passau

Within this project, which was the idea of a female teacher, pupils of the technical college for IT skills shared their know-how with a selected test group of seniors. This group consisted of volunteers from the *Frauenbund* (a club for Christian women). These female senior citizens got insight into computer science and could gain new skills. The pupils got the ability to test their skills and pass those skills on to others. The project was an intergenerational exchange with great success.

“Intergenerational Computer Skills” (<http://www.intergenerational-ictskills.eu/cms/index.php?id=103>)

In a Grundtvig learning partnerships, young people should pass on their computer skills to the older generation. It is a transnational partnership between ECC in



Austria, ISCAP in Portugal, SJALF in Iceland, DARVOCE in Italy, and L4L in the Czech Republic. In part one of the project, the situation in the participating countries was analysed in order to find out about the level of awareness of intergenerational learning, the level of ICT skills and the best possible practice examples. In the subsequent work with the target groups, the partnership has discussed and developed this concept:

1. suggestions for a good practice in ICT education for seniors
2. a variety of motivation to start a computer course for seniors
3. the process of teaching ICT to a senior family member – from the point of view of a junior
4. the process of learning ICT skills – from the point of view of a senior
5. importance and benefits of intergenerational ICT learning
6. different aspects of the interviews

The survey leads to a very interesting conclusion. The backgrounds of the participating seniors differ in many aspects:

- age (55 – 98)
- social background (in a retirement home – at home with a multigenerational family)
- educational background (elementary school - university)
- initial motivation (interest of a grandchild in the project –feeling left alone as a senior citizen)
- secondary motivation (buying books – looking for a new partner)
- attitude towards PCs (curiosity – anxiety)
- level of useful computer-skills at the beginning (no skills – typing skills)
- availability of a PC (only in the course – own computer)



INTERGENERATIONAL COMPUTER SKILLS

STORIES – ANALYSIS – GOOD PRACTICE TIPS



Figure 10: Logo 'Intergenerational Computer Skills'; source: <http://www.intergenerational-ictskills.eu/cms/index.php?id=103>