



## ***Deaf Senior Education for Active Living***

**Project Number: 2020-1-IT02-KA204-079227**

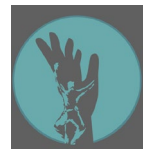
**IO1 - Deaf Senior needs in Europe:  
Analysis and Abstract**

### **INTERNATIONAL REPORT**

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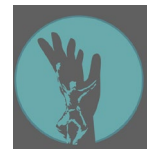
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Organisation: European Union of the Deaf (EUD)  
Equalizent  
IRSAM  
ISTITUTO DEI SORDI DI TORINO



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## INTERNATIONAL BACKGROUND

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### Situation of Deaf seniors in Austria

Precise data on the number of people with hearing impairments is difficult to come by. In 1996, the number of people who were Deaf, hard of hearing or late Deafened was 456 000. This number included 51 000 people who had great difficulty hearing even in a quiet environment, as well as 10 000 people who were fully Deaf (Statistik Austria 2016). On 1 January 2020 in Austria, 1 693 627 people (19% of the population) were 65 years or older. We can make a guesstimate (guess / estimate) of the number of Deaf seniors based on the percentage of Deaf people in Austria as a whole (approx. 10,000) – this means there are 1 900 Deaf seniors in Austria.

Although there are no specific studies about Deaf seniors, according to a publication of Eurostat, Austrians over 75 years old rate their life-satisfaction with 7.6 out of 10 points (Eurostat 2019a). Life satisfaction depends on gender (men are a bit more satisfied) and the degree of education (higher education leads to more satisfaction).

Concerning their state of health, 62.4% of Austrians over 65 state that they suffer from long lasting health problems (Eurostat 2019b). Based on self-evaluation, 44.6% of respondents over 65 say they have a very good or good state of health. One survey claims that nearly a quarter of all people older than 50 are depressed. According to Eurostat, 5% of Austrians over 65 years suffer from symptoms of depression (Eurostat 2019c) and in the over 75 age group, the percentage may be as high as 29.6% (Amann et al 2018).

Nearly 70% of Austrians over 65 engage in physical exercise regularly (Eurostat 2019m). The amount of movement per week of people aged 60-69 is about 11 hours and for those over 70 only about 5 hours (IFES 2017).

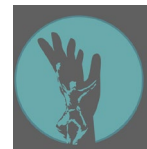
Older people often have difficulties using ICT (Norman/Skinner 2006). The use of ICT declines with age, starting with the over 50s. (Kolland et al 2011). Approximately 80% of Austrians over 50 have an internet connection, but only 47.8% of those over 75.

55% of the population over 55 work as volunteers. The percentage in the age group 60-69 is especially high (58%). Even for people over 80, there is still a high rate of volunteering that only decreases at an even higher age (IFES 2016). A study found the following motives for volunteer work in old age “helping” (81%), “contact” (68%), “using own skills” (58%), “keeping skills” (44%) and “learning something new” (49%) (Kolland et al 2011).

Concerning further education, 8.5% of people aged 55-64 state that they took part in an educational or training activity within the last 4 weeks (Eurostat 2019e).

Seniors, especially female seniors look after people in need of care. Around 1/3 of caring relatives are in the age group 51-60 (Nagl-Cupla et al 2018).

Seniors receive support not only from relatives but also from neighbours and friends. The amount of support they receive decreases with age. Around 6% of people over 80 don't have any contact with their family. 2% have neither contact with family nor with other people (ÖPIA 2018). Very old people have a higher risk of poverty and loneliness (OECD 2017). According to Eurostat, 13.4% of people over 65 are endangered by poverty or social exclusion. Women are more severely affected than men (Eurostat 2019f).



## Situation of Deaf seniors in France

2.5 million people aged over 55 in France are Deaf and hard of hearing.

France has several associations or institutions which support Deaf children and young adults throughout the country.

Technical platforms / resources of professionals trained in Deafness provide early support to Deaf people in France. However, the support of Deaf adults over 65 is in the elderly sector and they are not a priority audience today. So isolated elderly Deaf people may encounter numerous difficulties to their social integration and thus their disability is a source of marked exclusion.

The development of new technologies facilitates access to information for young Deaf who have easily received training / access to these technologies, which is not the case for Deaf elderly who cannot benefit from access to social networks or administrative procedures accessible only via the internet. Elderly Deaf people in France can see their social situation severely impacted by this lack of access and training.

65% of Deaf people over 65 suffer from sometimes severe associated disorders that reduce their degree of autonomy in the actions of daily life. Elderly people who receive help at home are very often faced with professionals who do not master the communication tools adapted to their Deafness and cannot communicate in good conditions with these home helpers.

Many human care systems exist for the elderly in France, but these services do not specialize in Deafness and sometimes have difficulty in supporting isolated elderly Deaf adults. However, there are sign language training centers

Locating these older Deaf adults in need of help is not always easy due to their isolation and lack of access to new technologies.

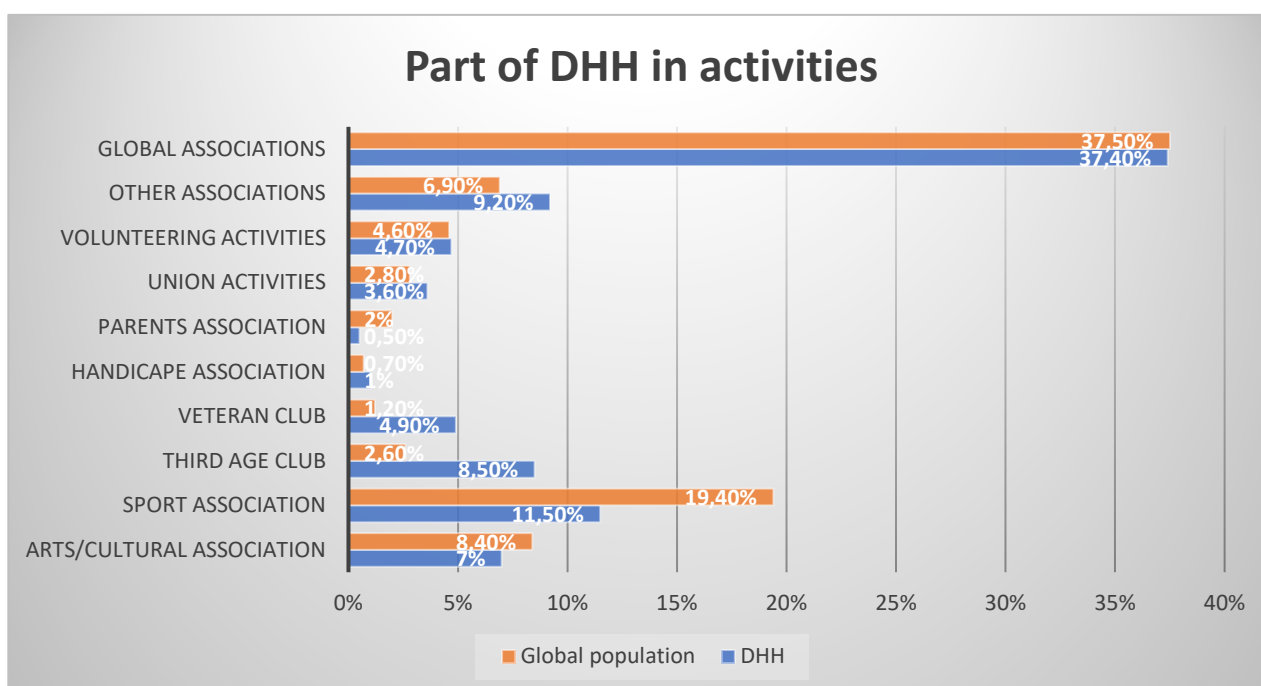


Table 1



## Situation of Deaf seniors in Italy

Only a few and non-specific studies with focus on the Deaf seniors situation have been undertaken in Italy. In fact, the present national background is based on these studies and on the information given from the Institutions and the Deaf community.

According to Eurostat, 22% of the population is 65 years old or older, with a share of elderly who live alone around 30%, whereas 28% still travel after age 65. ICT skills are far under European average (25%). For Italy, longevity figures show one of the oldest European populations. According to the report, the European average life expectancy is 78.2 whereas with 82.7 years, one of the Italian regions is in first place for the longevity of men.

According to ISTAT, the national statistic centre in Italy, over 877,000 people of the peninsula has a form of hearing impairment. The Deaf community has approximately 70.000 members. Despite this, Deafness is still a socially little-known condition and the difficulties it entails, mostly in terms of communication, are often ignored.

In epidemiological terms, the prevalence of hearing impairment in Italy is estimated at 12.1% of the population, around 6 million Italians with hearing loss, hearing impairment or Deafness, with a significant differentiation between age groups and a significant increase with ageing (from percentages of no more than 10% of the 13-45 age group to 25% of those aged 61-80, up to 50% of the over 80s).

According to ISTAT's surveys, there are just over a million people aged 15 and over, 78% of whom are seniors, with a greater percentage of women, who declare Deafness and Deaf-mutism to a greater extent (52.4% against 47.6% of the total).

There are a variety of associations dedicated to Deaf people, but no specific association that focuses on the Deaf seniors. The formation and training for educators, caregivers and assistants is limited either to the support to seniors or to Deaf, but not both of them together.

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## 2. THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND ITS FINDINGS

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The aim of the survey was to find out the needs of Deaf seniors to enable them to better participate in society and have an active life. Therefore, two different surveys for the target group of Deaf seniors and professionals working with Deaf seniors were developed.

As a methodology, an online questionnaire was chosen as this format makes it possible to incorporate sign language videos. The online survey was available in written local language and local sign language. Letters were added to the videos (graphics) to make the answer possibilities clear and visual and enable Deaf seniors to orient themselves more easily. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, in person meetings with seniors were impossible. The survey consisted of mostly closed multiple-choice questions but there were also some open questions. The survey started with some demographic questions and then asked about the topic of the needs of Deaf seniors to live a more active life.

The survey was shared widely within the local Deaf community. Existing contacts to different Deaf associations were used to ask them to forward the survey.

As the survey was conducted during the Covid-19 lockdown, it was impossible to attend meetings of Deaf seniors and go there to introduce the survey to them and help them complete it. In all participating countries, many Deaf seniors don't use ICT, e-mail or social media, therefore it was difficult to gather their answers. This is also the reason why despite our best efforts it was impossible to achieve the indicator of 120 Deaf seniors. In fact, in some countries it was necessary to print the survey and to hand it with the aim of getting responses.

The survey was analysed through a simple statistical analysis. The results were then summarised and interpreted by the project teams using their knowledge and experience of Deaf people in the respective country and the living situation of seniors (as described above).

## • PARTICIPANTS

An overall view of the participants' demographics can help to give a clearer vision of the situation in each country and a general situation of the countries involved in this project.

While in Austria among 20 professional participants the prevalence is female (25% male; 70% female; 5% did not want to give their gender) and we find quite similar results for the 16 participants in Italy (88% women; 12% man), in France we find 13 participants with a balance between male and female (54% women; 46 % man).

Further, talking about professionals, most of participants work with Deaf seniors: 60% in Austria, 84% in France and 88% in Italy. The rest works mostly with people with hearing impairments or Deafness. In Austria, the survey was mostly conducted in Vienna. The responses showed that most of professionals (75%) work in a city with over 100,000 inhabitants, while 20% work in cities with up to 100,000 inhabitants and only a few work in a village (5%). In France most of professional work in a city with up 100,000 inhabitants (54 %), since IRSAM Association distributed the questionnaires mostly in the Lyon area, while 23 % of the professionals surveyed work in a city with over to 100,000 inhabitants. Same result for villages. We find different results In Italy: most of the participants work in a town of 50.000 inhabitants (63%), some of them work in a village (31%), and only one participant in a city of 100.000 inhabitants (6%). These results



give us a great opportunity to compare not only three different countries but also three different kinds of living styles, namely a quite big city in Austria, a medium sized city in France and a village/town in Italy.

Regarding Deaf seniors, in Austria there were 32 participants with a good balance in gender (41% male and 59% female). Most of them were aged between 60 and 80 years old, namely 47% were 60-70 years old and 47% between 70-80 years old. In France we find a similar situation. Out of 30 participants, gender seems quite evenly distributed (57 % female; 37% male; and 7% didn't want to answer). Most of them were aged between 60-70 (57 %) and 70-80 (37%). Only a small percentage of participants in France and Austria were above 80 years old. In Italy 36 Deaf seniors took part in the survey. The distribution of gender was perfectly split: 50% men and 50% women. Most of the participants (69%) are in an age range of 60-70. Moreover, 17% are 70-80 years old and 14% are 80-90 years old.

The living situation of Deaf seniors participating at the survey is as shown in Table 1.

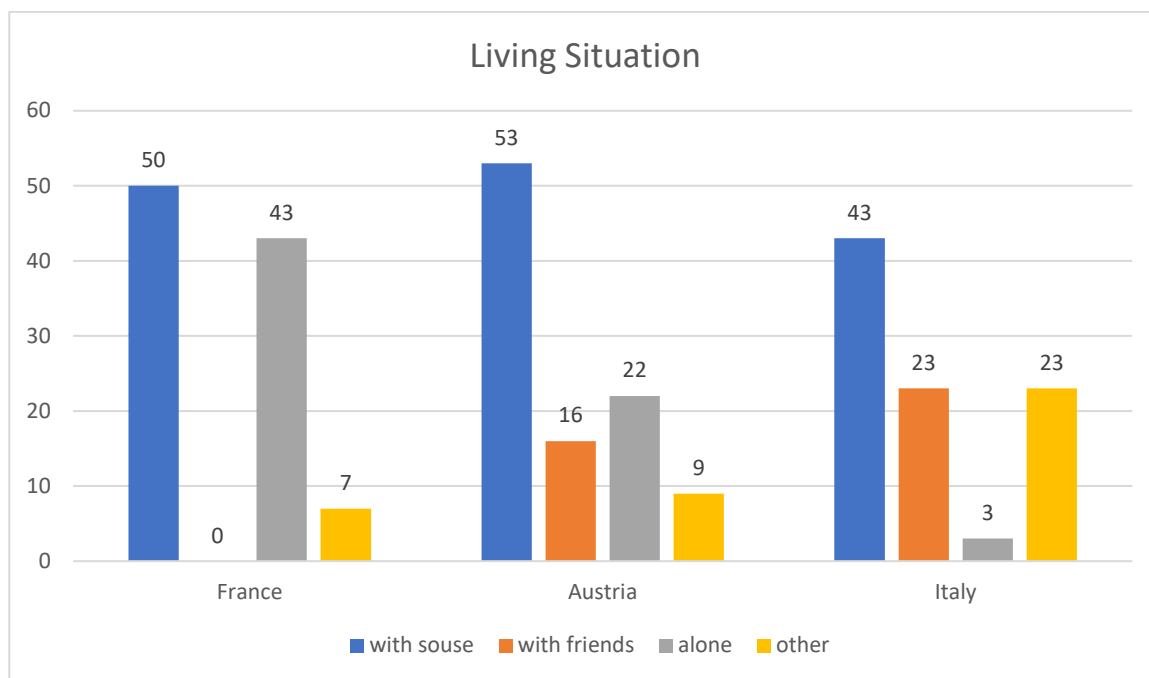


Table 2

As shown, in all countries half of Deaf seniors (50% France, 53% Austria 43% Italy) live with their spouse. Moreover, an interesting aspect is that in France a significant number of participants (43%) live alone, while in Austria (22%) the percentage is more in line with the Eurostat data (23%) and Italy shows a low percentage of Deaf seniors living alone. This could be because of demographics, the city size or family situation. In fact, while in France nobody stated that they live with friends, in Austria (16%) and Italy (23%) some participants live with their friends. Moreover, in Italy, 20% stated other forms of living, mainly living in communities, while in Austria and France these other forms are mainly retirement and nursing homes.

Moreover, Deaf seniors were asked which communication forms they prefer to use. Table 3 shows that except for France, mostly local sign language is the preferred communication form, leaving space for the local language as alternative. Only a few other options like speech accompanying gestures, lip reading or similar were stated.

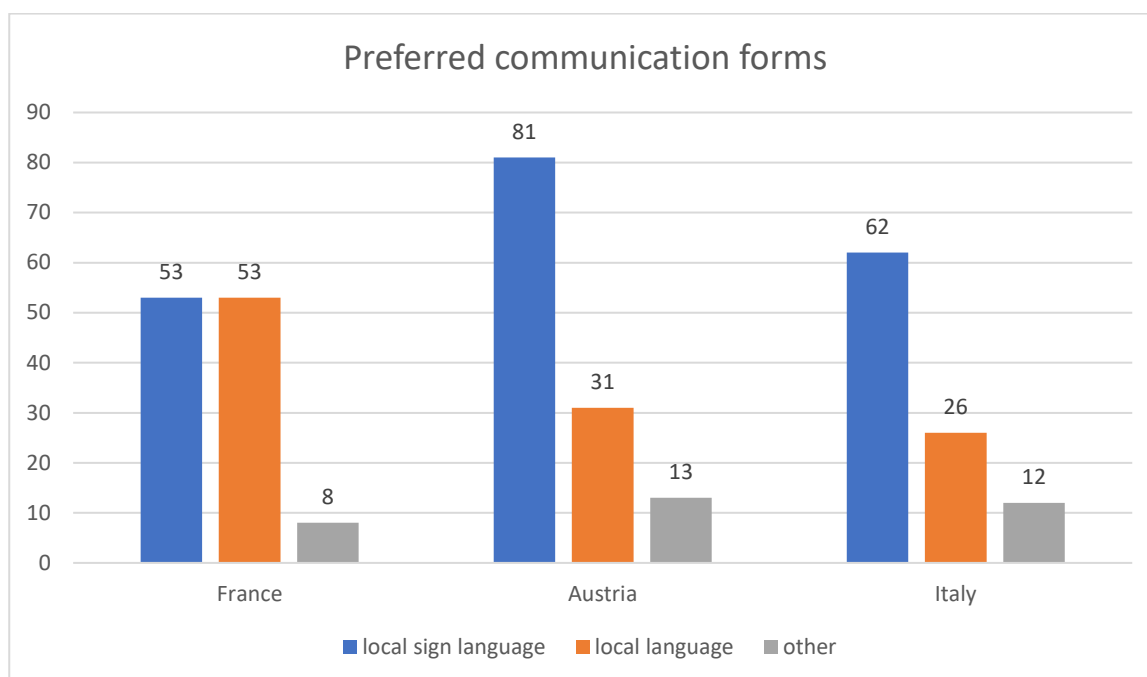


Table 3

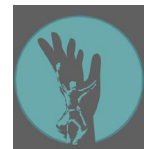
## • Findings:

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### Possibility to go out and reasons why not

Deaf seniors were asked if they feel free to go wherever they want. In addition, it was asked how often they leave their home and why they do or do not. As shown in table 4 Austrian Deaf seniors mostly feel free to move (87%) and Italians too (83%), while in France almost everyone (97%) feels free to go wherever they want. Usually the respondents go out daily (44% Austria, 37% France, 50% Italy) or at least some day of the week (44% Austria, 63% France, 41% Italy). It is interesting to note, that in addition to the participants that stated they cannot go wherever they want (16% Austria, 3% France, 17% Italy) some respondents who actually can, stay at home despite having the possibility to go out (6% Austria, 0% France, 9% Italy). Reasons for not going out in Austria and Italy are the pandemic situation, fatigue, illness and the fear of getting lost. Austria and Italy showed quite similar responses overall, while in France participants seem freer to go wherever they want and do and do not give reasons for staying at home.





## Do you feel able to go wherever you want?



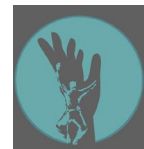
Table 4

### Reasons for Going out and contact with other people

In Austria, concerning the reasons the respondents go out, the most popular reasons are doctors' appointments (75%) and shopping (81%). Meeting friends, going on trips, doing sport and volunteering are also popular. Only 9% go out to participate in courses. The answers to this question show that the most popular reason why Deaf seniors go outside are needs of the daily life, followed by social activities. Education isn't a popular reason to go outside. The most common contacts are family (75%) and friends (72%). In addition, more than half of the participants have regular contact to their local Deaf club (53%). The seniors have less contact to people providing services to them.

In France, the participants have many reasons to leave their residences and all of the possibilities to answer have been ticked. The majority reason to leave home is to go shopping. Not only are the daily issues and social life reason to go out, but also volunteering activities, sports, tourism and education. Other options given are motorcycles, going to museum and movies, going to the church, going to classes. 90% of participants have contact with other people. Family members and friends are the major contacts, then it is Deaf club members and volunteers, health services and cleaning/handyman services, and finally support services. Other options given are neighbours.

Mainly, Deaf seniors in Italy leave home for daily life issues like doctors' appointments, shopping and the supermarket and social life like meeting friends, but interesting to notice that trips and excursions were chosen, too. Sport is a popular activity. Volunteering activities seems to be less popular. Most of the participants (32 out of 36) have contact with other people in their daily lives and most contact for Deaf seniors are family members, friends and Deaf club members, while they have less contact with people they do not know and out of their comfort zone.



Overall, a consideration is made for the percentage of people who stated that they do not have contact to other people. In Italy and France, we have around 10% of the participants being isolated while in Austria 25% of the participants stated not having any contact with other people. This could be related to the size of the city or due to the condition of the participants. This could/should be considered while organising and developing the DESEAL project as Deaf seniors are not always reachable.

### Opportunities for education and activation available for Deaf seniors in the local area

As shown in table 5 Deaf Seniors and professionals were asked if they know about any education or activation activity for Deaf seniors within their local area. The graphic shows, that with an average of 70% for France and Italy and slightly more (85%) for Austria, professionals know about particular opportunities for Deaf Seniors. On the other hand, seniors have a lower average of knowledge of opportunities in their local area (53% Austria, 53% Italy, 60% in France). These two results give us a good hint about the local situation in each country and a general overview of this knowledge. In fact, about 30% of professionals could be more informed about any kind of opportunities for the target group they work with, and on the same time, Deaf Seniors in general should be more aware of any opportunities in their local area, as nearly half of them in each country do not know any. Of course, this project should consider that there could be the possibility that there are not any reachable or accessible opportunities in the local area of the respondents.

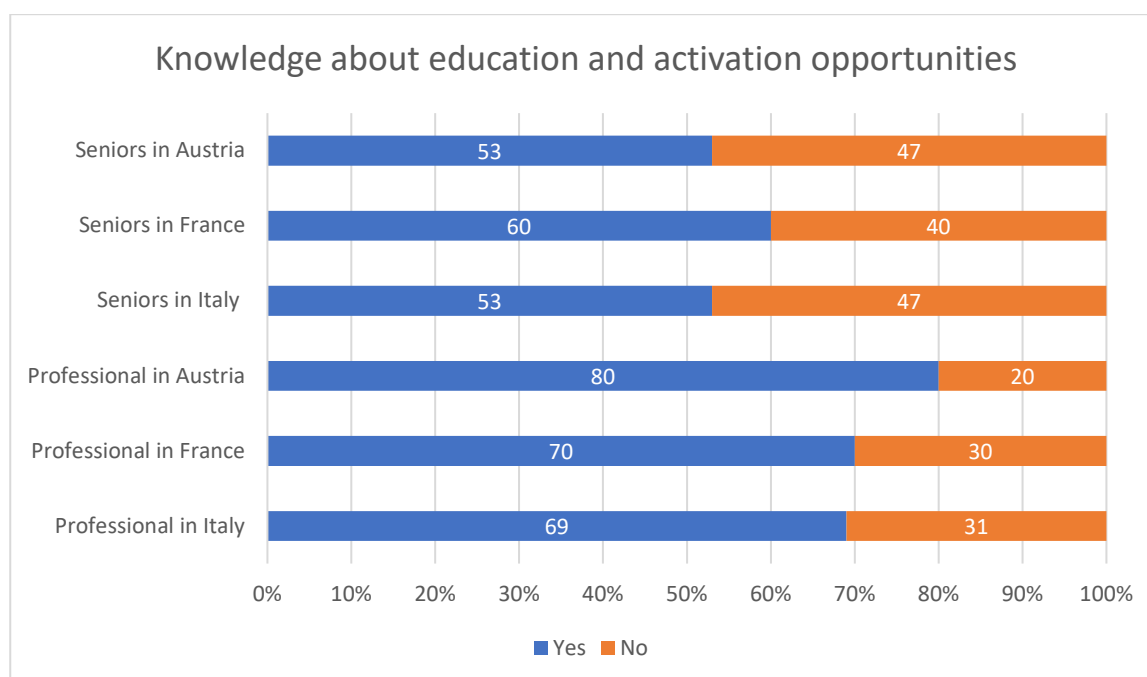
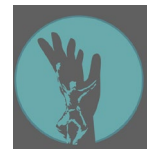


Table 5

Of those professionals, who responded that they know about educational and activation opportunities (70% France, 80% Austria, 70% Italy), table 6 shows the results of the three states as a whole. Three main activities seem to be the most ticked, namely local Deaf club (64%), sport activities (56%) and courses



(47%). Volunteering activities (39%) and arts (33%) have been chosen moderately; all the other activities scored below 25%.

To be more precise, to find a common field for all countries is not always easy. In fact, if we try to compare the three countries for each activity, in France, professionals chose mostly sports activities (61%) local Deaf clubs (53%), volunteering (38%) language classes and courses (30%); third age university, tourism, arts were not chosen. Concerning opportunities that are available in Austria, most professionals stated that there are local Deaf clubs (95%). There is a big difference between the popularity of this and the next most popular answers which are courses (50%); volunteering possibilities (50%); and sport (40%). There are nearly no opportunities offered for seniors with ICT, gardening or third age universities. Other opportunities that were mentioned included: exchange between young and old people. Many different answers were chosen for Italy, giving a distribution of all the provided options, but third age university course (35%) gardening (35%) sporting activities (45%) arts (55%) and courses (45%) were those most chosen.

This distribution is probably for many reasons, most of all probably because of culture. Nevertheless, a common trend in all countries is mostly given for sport activities (average of 40%, France 80%), courses (average 30%, Austria 50%), training in health and wellbeing (average 15%). Moreover, professionals make quite different suggestions on arts (Italy none, France and Austria average of 45%), local Deaf club (10% Italy, 95% Austria, 90% France), volunteering activities (Italy 10%, France 40%, Austria 50%), third age university (none for France and Austria, 35% Italy), gardening (none in Austria, 10% France, 35% Italy), tourism (none in France, 10% in Italy, 30% in Austria), training (10% Italy, 35% Austria, 25% France) and language classes (10% Italy, 15% Austria, 45% France). This is a good overview to have in mind when implementing the DESEAL project.

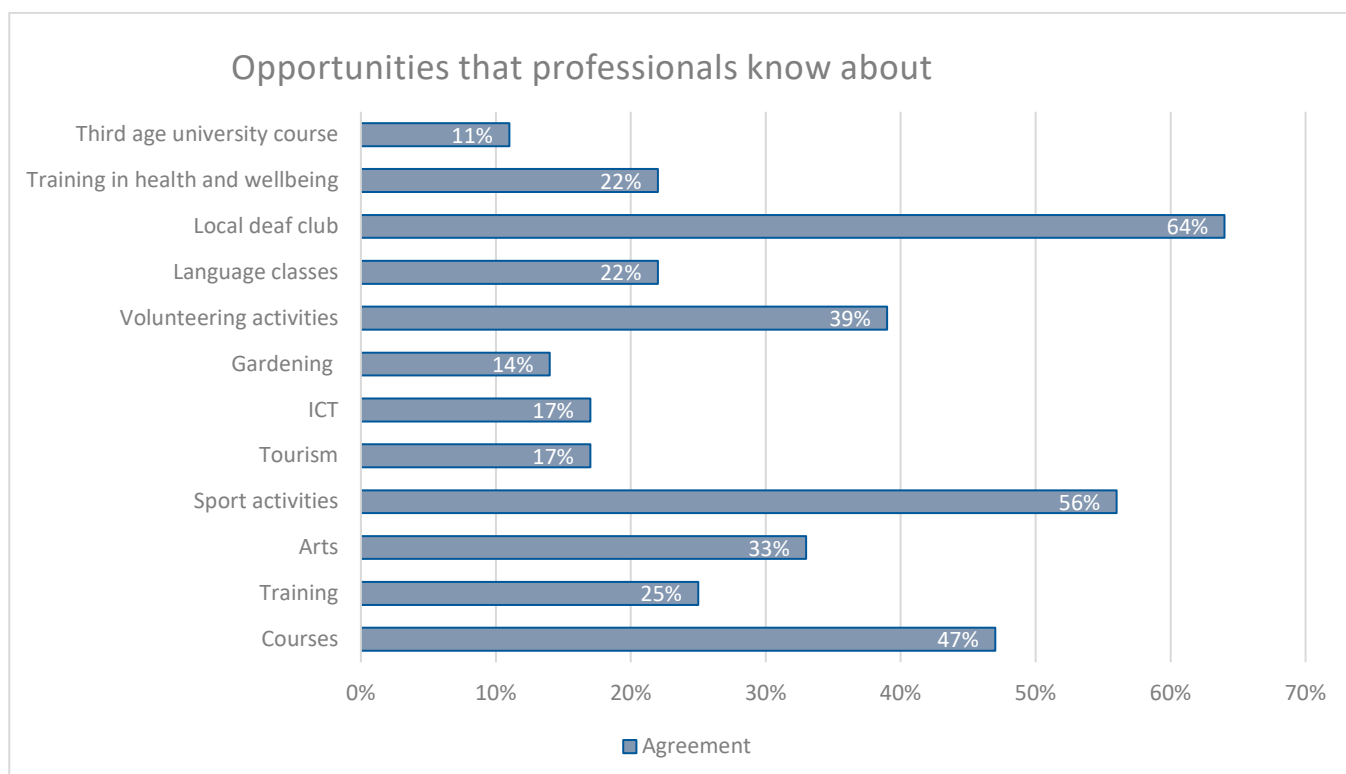
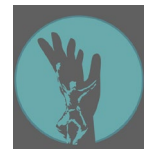


Table 6

Regarding professionals, who responded that they do not know about educational and activation opportunities (30% France, 20% Austria, 30% Italy, table 7 shows the results for the desired one for the three states as a whole. Two main activities seem to be the most ticked, namely sport activities (77%) and



local Deaf club (54%). Tourism (46%), arts (46%), courses (46%), gardening (38%) and volunteering activities (38%) have been chosen moderately; all the other activities scored below 30%.

To be more precise, again to find a common field for all countries is not always easy. In fact, if we try to compare the three countries for each activity, in France, professionals chose mostly sports activities (50%) local Deaf club (50%), home care (50%); education, ITC and support were not chosen. Concerning what activities the professionals in Austria would like to have for Deaf seniors, art (50%), sports (50%), tourism (50%) and identification of isolated seniors (50%) are the most popular answers. Most of the other answer possibilities are in a medium range between 30% and 45%. Only language classes have a score under 20%. Other opportunities that were suggested by the respondents included: support for Deaf seniors in old people's homes who live in rural areas and have few social contacts, support in the field of ICT (online banking, shopping, finding information). In Italy, many different answers were chosen, giving a distribution of all the provided options. Considering that options like "make adaptive technologies available" "home care" "language classes" and "extra support to seniors who have recently lost a spouse" were not chosen, options like sport activities (100%) and courses (100%) were chosen the most.

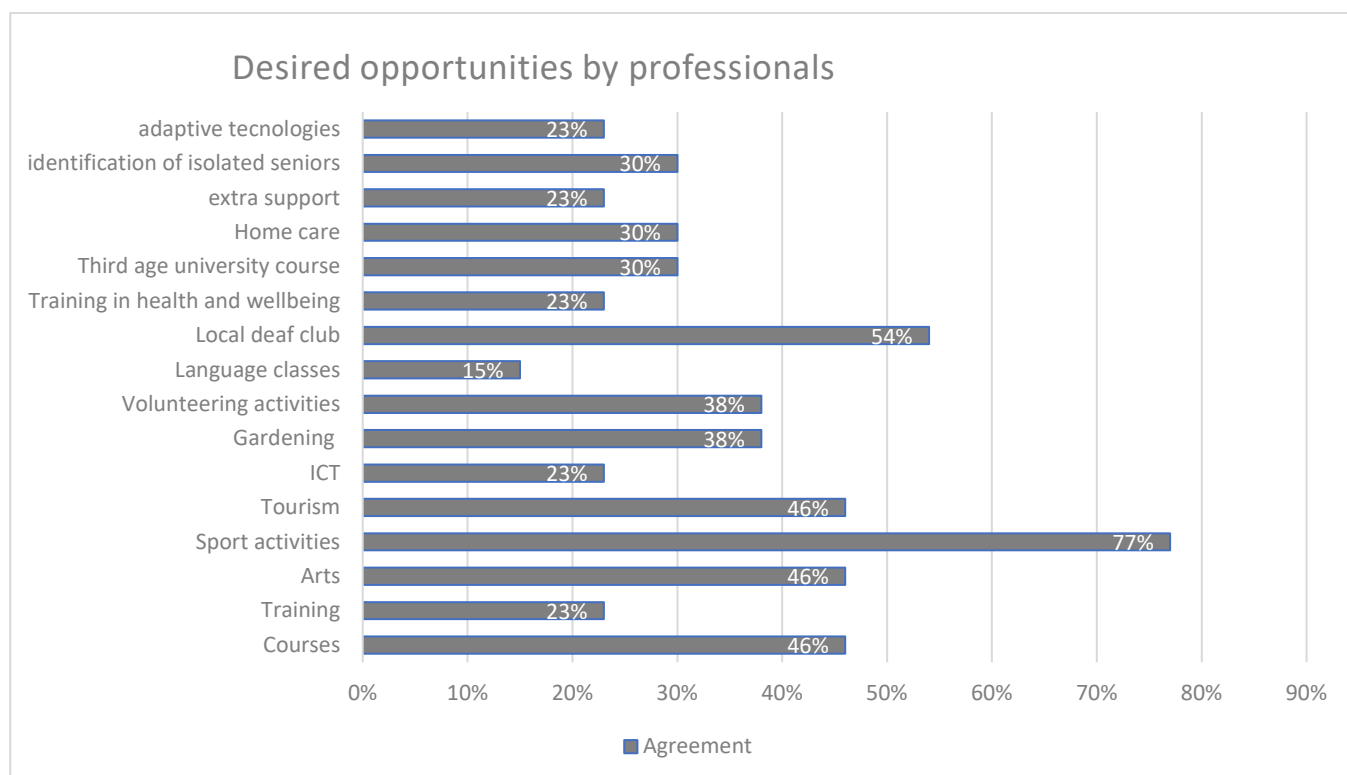


Table 7

Regarding Deaf seniors, who responded that they know and use educational and activation opportunities (33% France, 19% Austria, 30% Italy), table 8 shows the results of the three states as a whole. Two main

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activities seem to be the most ticked, namely sport activities (76%) and local Deaf club (64%). Tourism (52%), gardening (52%), arts (48%), volunteering activities (40%) and courses (28%) have been chosen moderately; all the other activities scored below 20%.

To be more precise, to find a common field for all countries is not always easy. In fact, if we try to compare the three countries for each activity, in France, Deaf seniors chose mostly sports activities (61%), local Deaf club (53%), arts (38%) ICT and gardening (30%); third age university, tourism, arts were not chosen. Concerning opportunities that Deaf seniors use in Austria, of the existing opportunities, sports (38%), volunteering (22%), gardening (19%) and tourism (16%) are most popular. Training, ICT, language classes or health training are nearly not used at all. Many different answers were chosen for Italy, giving a distribution of all the provided options, but in fact, Deaf seniors use several activities like Deaf clubs (63%), sports (36%), arts (36%) tourism (36%), and gardening (36%). They don't use ICT opportunities or third age university courses or trainings in health and wellbeing at all.

Nevertheless, a common trend in all countries is mostly given for most activities.

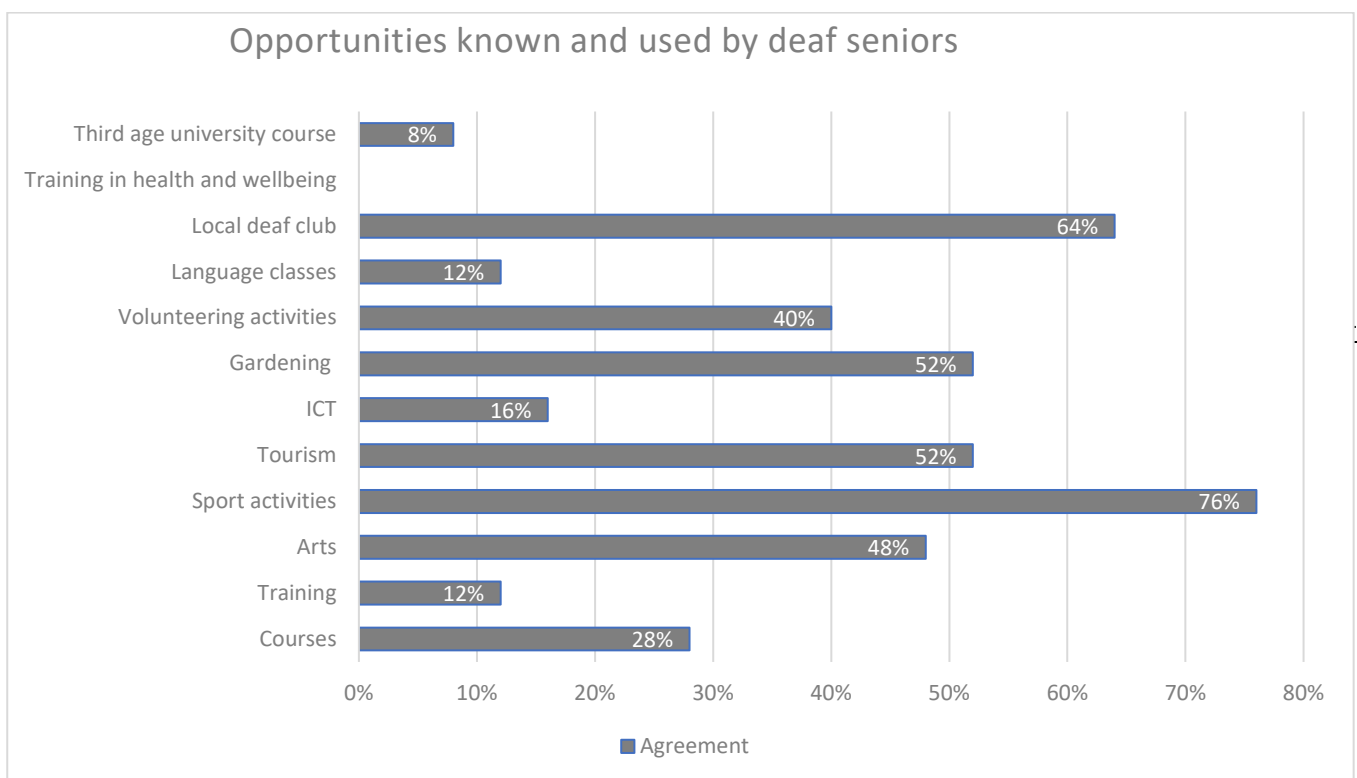


Table 8

Regarding Deaf seniors, who responded that they do not know and do not use educational and activation opportunities (66% France, 81% Austria, 69% Italy – considering also participants knowing opportunities but not using them), table 9 shows the results of the three states as a whole concerning what Deaf seniors would like to have as an opportunity. This because the project aims not only to target Deaf seniors who do

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not know about opportunities in their local area, but also to activate the ones who knows opportunities but do not use them. Two main activities seem to be the most ticked, namely sport activities (45%) and tourism (44%). Local Deaf club (36%), playing cards (35%), arts (31%), and gardening (27%) have been chosen moderately; all the other activities scored below 20%.

If we try to compare the three countries for each activity, in France, Deaf seniors chose mostly sports activities (61%), tourism (44%) and local Deaf club (39%). Other activities were chosen too. Looking at the activities in Austria that the seniors would like to practice but that currently are not offered in the locality, sports (50%), tourism (47%), Deaf clubs (41%) and playing cards (41%) are most popular. The topics ICT (6%), language classes (6%) and sign language classes (6%) are less popular, with all other options ranking between 0 and 3% In Italy, Deaf seniors showed interest mostly in tourism (42%), playing cards (37%), local Deaf clubs (37%), sport activities (31%) and arts (31). Gardening courses and Petanque were moderately chosen. Moreover, language classes, volunteering activities, were not chosen and ICT and third age university courses were nearly not chosen. In general, we can assume that in Italy, Deaf seniors want opportunities that comprise certain activities that are typically more appropriate for seniors on one hand, and some activities like sports and arts that could be more activating.

To be more precise, the average of all the participants of the three countries mostly agree about the answers they gave. In fact, only a few answers showed a consistent difference between countries. For example, ICT (France 33%, Austria 6%, Italy 5%) seems to be more desired in France than in the other two countries. Moreover, volunteering seems completely absent in Italy while in France and Austria there are some responses.

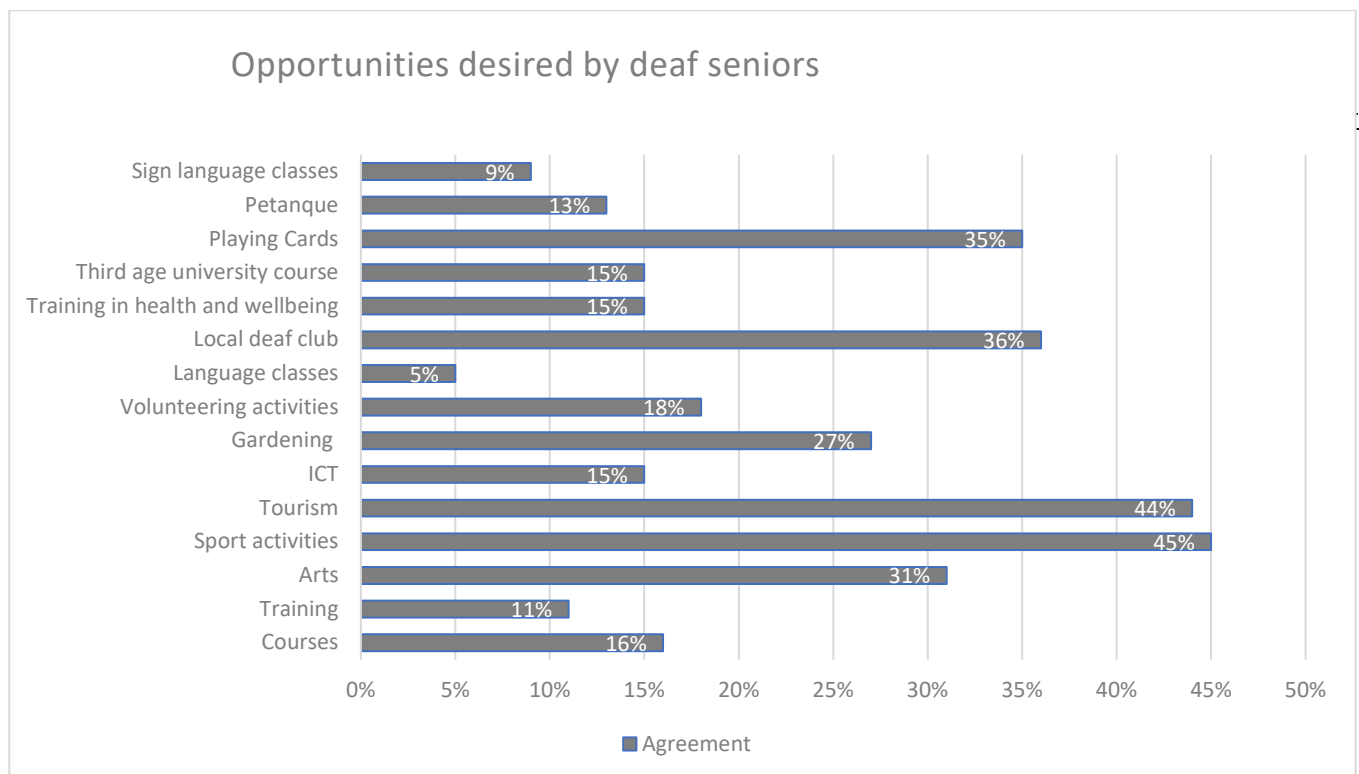
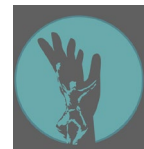


Table 9

A short look is dedicated to the ICT competences used and desired in the three countries, as this opportunity is important for the DESEAL project. In France, some professionals (35%) stated that they know about opportunities for Deaf seniors in the local area, but it does not seem to be an interesting opportunity that the professionals want to highlight for Deaf seniors. Only 10% of seniors in France know and use ICT,



and 20% would like any opportunity. Nearly no Austrian professionals (5%) know about opportunities in this field, but they would like to improve the ICT skills for Deaf seniors (30%). In line with that, few Austrian seniors (3%) know and use ICT, but only 6% of seniors who does not use this kind of opportunity would like it. Italy shows similar results. Professionals know little opportunities (6%) and do not seem to want improvements in this area (3%), while no Deaf senior in this survey knows or uses ICT skills and only 5% would like some opportunity.

Given these facts, challenges for the further development of the DESEAL project could be the low use of internet or interest in developing skills in the IT field by Deaf seniors. Most of the outputs of the DESEAL project will be digital but if Deaf seniors do not have the possibility or interest to access them, this could be problematic. Therefore, the cooperation with professionals working with Deaf seniors and the development of the guidelines and training materials for professionals working with Deaf seniors will be key to familiarising the main target group with the outputs.

### Statement of Deaf seniors regarding their wellbeing and contact with other elderly in Europe

Two questions of the survey regarded the wellbeing of Deaf seniors: "How would you describe your wellbeing at the present time?" and "What activities usually make you happy or satisfied?" While the first one was a multiple-choice answer, the second was an open-ended question. Table 10 shows the sum-up of question number one.

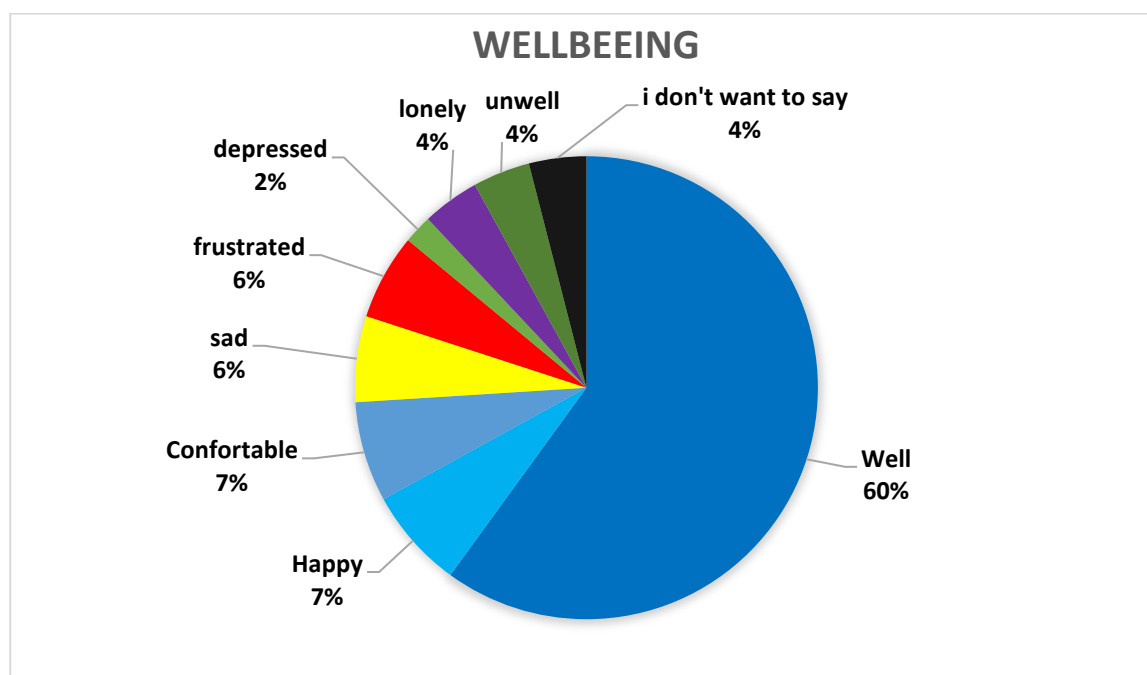
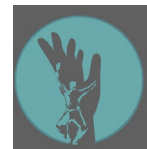


Table 10

Specifically, in France more than half of the participants are feeling well (50 %) and happy (10 %). The other answers are quite similar, but it must be noted that 26 % have a bad feeling (lonely, unwell, frustrated, sad, other). In Austria, by far the most popular answer was well. In addition, other positive emotions like happy and comfortable were quite high. Negative emotions such as depression or frustration were chosen less often. In Italy, most of the participants (75%) state feeling well, happy, and comfortable. 20% of the participants describe their wellbeing with negative emotions like loneliness, sadness and unwell, while two participants preferred not to respond to this question. We can state that 75% of the participants express positive emotions and that 25% do not feel positive about their wellbeing. In general, we can say that the





respondents are quietly content with their current state of wellbeing, with a moderate percentage, around 25% of respondents that feel negative in some way. Moreover, it has also to be taken into consideration that this question might be influenced by social desirability and the respondents do not want to admit if they have negative feelings.

Regarding question number two, we can state that in France, all answers show us that sports, arts, movies, reflexions activities are very popular. Meeting other Deaf people at Deaf clubs is also a popular hobby. In Austria all the responses can be summarised by pointing out that the respondents are happy and satisfied either when they have social contacts (to friends, to family, etc.) or they participate in an activity that they enjoy (sport, hiking, games, gardening, Deaf club, etc.). In Italy, the activities that the participants usually find satisfying are quite broad like some that were mentioned in the survey (tourism, playing cards, Deaf club, arts, sports etc) and some that refer to meeting the family, going for different kind of walks, and watching films.

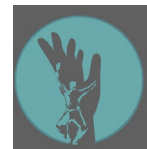
Deaf seniors were asked if they would like to connect with other Deaf elderly people in Europe. In France, 50% has ticked Yes: it shows a desire to open up to the world for half of the participants. 10 % do not know and 40% are not interested. In Austria, more than half of the respondents said they do not know if they want to connect with other Deaf seniors in Europe. 34% said yes and only 13% said no. It is interesting to wonder why so many respondents are not sure about this question. Maybe they do not know because it is not specified how exactly the contact could take place e.g., only contact via video conference or personal meeting somewhere. In Italy, 47% of the participants do not know if they want to connect with other Deaf elderly people in Europe, while 42% agreed on connecting. Only 10% participants answered negatively. Often an elderly senior does not feel comfortable to interact with new people and strangers, even more if linguistic issues are involved. This could lead to answers that are not a strict no, but more a vague answer such as I don't know.

### **Professional's statements regarding changes needed, used methods and desired trainings**

In France, the different answers at these issues can be summarised in a better knowledge of Deafness (handicaps, solutions, ...), a better communication (Sign Language, interpreters available, ...) and also a better localisation of Deaf seniors in order to link them with appropriate support and opportunities for a better active life. Regarding methods used to support Deaf seniors in the developing of their independence, professionals social workers are most used to encouraging social interaction (83%); promoting a sense of purpose (61%); making sure they eat healthy (61%); showing them they are loved; keeping them physically active; entrusting them with a core (53 % each). Moreover, in the field of education and activation, the answers given by participants show us how much openness is important for Deaf seniors in our society: sports, culture, social interaction are the main themes to be developed with the purpose of helping Deaf seniors to open themselves to our society. By doing that, the society will be more inclusive and more aware of Deaf culture. Regarding trainings that French professionals would like, communication seems to be the main issue to support Deaf seniors: answers shows a lot of sign language training but also psychology and age related physical disorders.

In Austria, thinking about local resources and the changes that are needed so that Deaf seniors can participate more willingly and more often in social life, the answers that were given can be grouped into the following categories:





- Demands for more accessible offers, either directly in Sign Language or with sign language interpretation available, as well as more financial support for sign language interpretation and communication assistance.
- Retirement and nursing homes should have offers more suitable to the needs of Deaf seniors especially employees with knowledge of sign language and possibilities for people living there to participate in social activities.
- Support for lonely seniors such as buddies our visiting services.

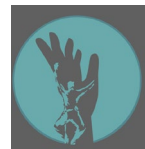
Moreover, concerning the methods that professionals use to support Deaf seniors to give them a sense of purpose (70%), social interaction (75%) and physical activities (75%) are most popular. The less popular answers are helping with a positive body image (25%) and dining together with others (15%). Other methods that are suggested in the open question include: looking for fitting offers by other providers/professionals. In the field of education and activation, the kinds of activities, methods, and forms of support that are most important and need to be developed, it was remarked that many planned activities often fail because of lack of financial support or funding. There were claims that more nursing homes or other forms of accommodation, in which Sign Language is used, should be available. Moreover, in general, all activities, methods and support that are available for hearing society should be also available for Deaf seniors. Regarding what kind of training would they like, the following answers were given: Interactive activities, learning by doing, a lot of practical orientation, enough repetition, individual and group training, activities that are fun and promote community, as many activities as possible, exchange possibilities with young people, walks, game afternoons, artistic workshops, computer courses, brain jogging, sportive activities, possibilities to learn something new, activities depending on the needs of individuals, support with the usage of new technology e.g. social media, new communication forms, nursing homes and divers accommodation forms in Austrian Sign Language, everything that is offered in hearing society.

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Finally, in Italy the three main topics from the question about changes needed are “accessibility”, “involvement” and “awareness”. First comments show there is a need to make opportunities more accessible in order to give the Deaf seniors more possibilities to make experiences. Secondly and connected to the first topic, involvement in activities should be provided so that Deaf seniors do not feel isolated and so that they feel useful for others. The third topic, that is fundamental, is awareness from the “outside”. So, for example it is important to raise awareness among the population about the world of Deafness to make it easier for Deaf people to integrate and be integrated into the social life of the own town/city. Deaf professionals responded to the question about what kind of methods they used to support Deaf seniors in the developing of their psycho-social activity and their independence. Basically, most of the options were selected, considering that “treat sleeping problems”, “make adaptive technologies available”, “encourage a positive body image” were chosen less than other options. The answers to the question what kinds of activities, methods, and forms of support are most important and need to be developed, professionals answered that different kind of activities are important and should be developed. Some of the most important aspects are communication and motor activities. In particular, interpreter and Italian Sign Language should be mandatory for a more inclusive and accessible approach. Moreover, a support to educators (for example volunteers) should be provided. The trainings that professionals would like to attend to work with Deaf seniors are mostly Sing Language classes, both Italian and international, and trainings related to psychology and mindset. Important for the participants are practical competences more than theoretical one. Moreover, professionals want some classes about Deaf culture.

## EUD and its survey



As an umbrella organisation, the EUD invited European NADs to complete a survey on the needs of Deaf seniors regarding activities and training. The EUD was able to collect information from 17 participating NADs across Europe on the actual situation of Deaf seniors in the respective countries. Regional diversity is well balanced in the sample, which includes NADs in countries across Northern, Eastern, Southern, and Western Europe. Since the EUD is an umbrella organisation of NADs, the main focus of the survey is the national level. In some countries, activities and training for Deaf seniors are organised locally rather than nationally and, when there is no national-level organisation, it is time-consuming for NADs to collect information from local levels. One country gave several responses from local Deaf organisations rather than through their NAD participating through Typeform. These responses had to be removed from the survey. These organisational issues may have caused a lower response rate and led to a smaller sample.

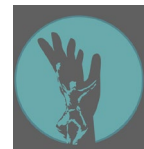
69% reported having more than 40 Deaf seniors in their organisation, while no NADs reported a number between 26 and 40, which leads to the other NADs of this survey with a small number of Deaf seniors: 16 to 25 Deaf seniors, 11 to 15 Deaf seniors and 6 to 10 Deaf seniors was selected 6 % of all NADs for each response. 13% of NADs reported having only 1-5 Deaf senior members.

All NADs answered the question about activities that are mostly organized by NADs, which are computer science (56%); forum (56%); Deaf history (50%); sewing (44%); art such as decoupage or decorating vases or plates (38%); and theatre (38%). The other activities they mentioned are cooking (25%), gymnastics (19%); and gardening (6%). 57% of the NADs also reported organizing other activities; unfortunately, these were not specified.

56.2 % (9 out of 16) had a Deaf seniors' committee or working group; the other 42.8% did not.

"Is there a care home and/or are there any support services for Deaf seniors in your country?" This question was only answered by 9 out of 16 NADs: 55.4% of the participating NADs responded positively, confirming that there is a care home/and or support services for Deaf seniors; 44.4% responded negatively. Only 2 NADs (out of 8) confirmed that the care home or service is partnered with their association.

15 NADs answered the question "The teachers, speakers, and other people (e.g. fellow participants) who are involved in the activities that you provide for Deaf seniors are mostly...". They reported the involvement of Deaf signers (87%), people who knows Sign Language (67%), and bilingual hearing signers (47%). The involvement of hearing people without knowing the Sign Language, but with access to interpreters, was also high (53%). The involvement of hearing people without knowing of Sign Language and without use of an interpreter was reported by 27%, only one NAD reported the involvement of hard-of-hearing non-signers.



## The teachers, speakers, and other people involved in the activities for deaf seniors are mostly...

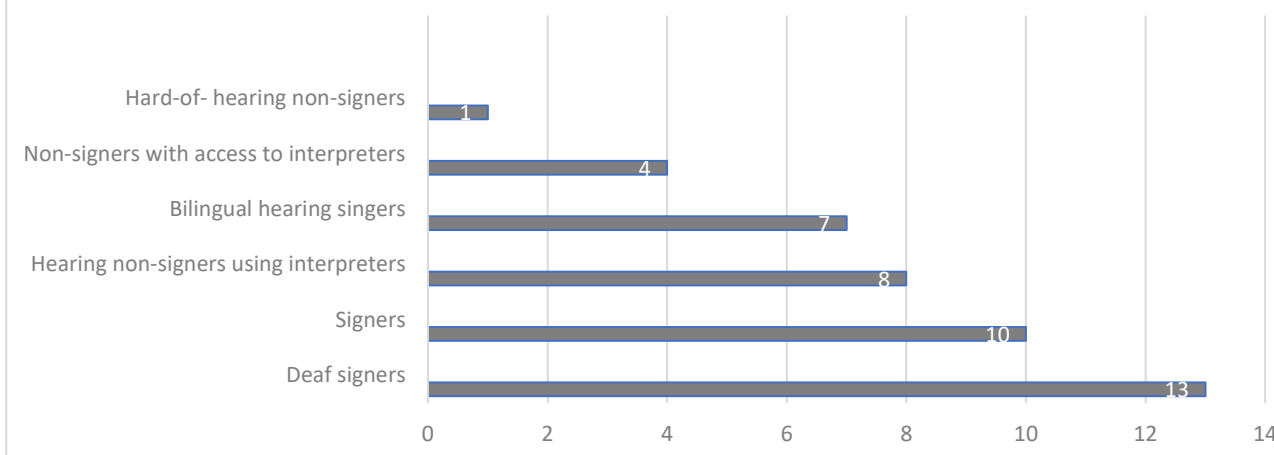


Table 11

80% of NADs reported that Deaf seniors attend activities 1 to 2 times a week; 20% reported that Deaf seniors never attend activities. The boxes for 3-4 times a week and 5-6 times a week were not ticked. 87% of NADs scheduled activities in the afternoon, 60% in the morning, and 40% in the evening. 80% of NADs do not have a minibuss service; 13% mentioned having another form of transport; only 7% NAD reported having a minibuss.

60% of NADs stated that there is not enough money to support Deaf seniors to do activities that they organise, suggesting that there are financial barriers that prevent Deaf seniors attending activities organised by NADs. 40% responded positively.

All 15 reported having Deaf signers in their association, and 67% mention bilingual Deaf people. Heterogeneity among the senior population was identified, with 60% of NADs reporting that their seniors include Deafblind people, Deaf people with Usher syndrome, and Deaf people with physical disabilities. Deaf people with cognitive disabilities were included in 47% of NADs, and oral Deaf people in 33.3%. All but one of them (93%) reported having Deaf senior members who use Sign Language; 80% also mentioned the use of a written national language; and 47% reported the use of a spoken national language.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a majority of 93% said they would like their members to connect with other Deaf seniors in Europe. One NAD responded that they did not know. There were no negative responses. The participants explained why international connection would be beneficial for Deaf seniors: themes that came to the fore in the potential benefits described by the 14 respondents are:

- 1. Empowerment**, e.g. 'This will provide them with the necessary network to empower, enable and inspire them'.
- 2. Networking and meeting other Deaf people**, e.g. 'extending networking and sociocultural exchange opportunities' and 'getting to know the Deaf community in Europe'. One of the NADs mentioned that international exchange is particularly beneficial for their small population: 'The seniors [in our country] are so few, it will be good for them to meet other Deaf seniors.'
- 3. Sharing Deaf senior (cultural) experiences within the EU**, e.g. 'It's important to share our experiences, to learn other Sign Languages in other countries and other cultures.' One of the countries mentioned a good practice in their region: 'We have senior activities in Nordic countries (meetings, gatherings etc.). We would be interested in exchanging information and experiences in



EU countries. Many elderly people [in our country] conceptualise what it is like to live in other European countries. They would benefit from meeting “real” people [in these countries]’.

4. **Exchanging information about Deaf seniors and (barriers to) accessing daily life and support services** is also seen as an aspect of Deaf seniors cultural exchange, e.g. ‘Most Deaf seniors would like to learn and exchange knowledge of cultures and new experiences, for example in relation to accessibility at the day centre and their residences. [This] will help them to learn about the culture of seniors Deaf people and the difficulties they face at the hospital and when communicating with their doctor. They can also meet other Deaf seniors to go shopping and have a good time together’.
5. **Visiting new places, exchanging cultural experiences, and developing new friendships**, e.g. ‘Seniors are usually very interested in history, and the experiences of other people. We think they would be happy to meet Deaf seniors from neighboring countries. [But] maybe it would be difficult to communicate’. While this NAD reports that the use of different Sign Languages may be a barrier, another NAD mentions the opportunity to learn other Sign Languages: ‘It’s important to share our experiences and learn other Sign Languages in other countries and cultures, ...and [keep contact] through video chat etc.’
6. **Physical and mental wellbeing**, e.g. ‘It’s always great to meet other and get to know each other. It is good for both mental and physical health.’

The response of one of the NADs, which has been translated from their national language into English, captures a number of the abovementioned themes: ‘Why [could it be beneficial]? Because international contact facilitates arranging meetings and getting to know towns in Europe and their environments, histories, cultures, and way of life, as well as sharing pleasant moments, overcoming isolation, building morale, and exchanging experiences’.

The good practices NADs mentioned are related to:

- **Volunteer services** for...
  - **Mobility:** ‘We have volunteers who pick up and drive home the elderly who need it, to and from events’
  - **Home visits:** ‘We have a visitor service, where volunteer elderly Deaf people [who are in good health] visit their peers [who may not have much mobility]. For some elderly Deaf people, their volunteer visiting friend is their only chance to have person to sign with’
- **Events for Deaf seniors**
  - Annual Information Day
  - Annual Senior Meeting Day
- **Training programmes**
  - Empowerment training
  - Wellbeing training such as keep-fit exercises
  - A course for enhancing Deaf seniors’ digital skills
- **Activities**
  - Art
  - Dance
  - Gardening
  - Crafts
  - Sharing skills and ideas
  - ‘Activities led by a team of Deaf animators with the aims of fostering social ties among pensioners, stimulating their capacities, preventing the loss of autonomy, offering wellbeing, and supporting their connections with the outside world’
- **Networking**



- 'We have a good network with opportunities to meet each other, for example via Zoom'

13 out of 16 NADs shared their ideas about the six themes that could be identified in their suggestions:

1. **Human/Deaf senior rights information**, in the form of training, and in relation to Deaf leadership, e.g. 'empowering Deaf seniors to become leaders of their communities in the area of Deaf seniors' rights';
2. **Deaf leadership and intergenerational contact**, e.g. 'to be role models for young Deaf people';
3. **International connections**, for sharing experiences with other Deaf seniors and learning about other cultures;
4. **Signed communication**, both in the country and for international exchanges, e.g. 'training in International Sign'; 'travelling and learning different Sign Languages'; and 'It is important for Deaf people to be able to use this Sign Language regularly. It allows them to communicate effectively and to share common experiences with each other';
5. **The use of digital platforms** for learning, networking and facilitating international bonding among peers, e.g. 'to set up a European Zoom group to share experiences, interests and skills, and make friends';
6. **Improving and extending training programmes**, e.g. 'adding senior culture and politics' and 'improvement of the activities program for Deaf adults and Deaf seniors'.

The themes and responses reveal a shared interest in travelling and the empowering and bonding potential of international connections. This is captured in this response: 'Maybe Deaf seniors from abroad could come and meet our seniors, share experiences, and teach something about their culture. That would be something new'.



### 3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

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Overall, the results from surveys (Deaf seniors, professionals working with Deaf seniors and NADs) are mostly in alignment with each other and in every country. Trying to combine these questionnaires, we can state that in the three countries the results seem to be in line with the national background of each country concerning the living situation of Deaf seniors with the necessity to improve their support by specialised organisations.

The surveys show us that Deaf seniors live often with their spouse, but maybe too many of them live alone and do not engage with opportunities around them. However, part of Deaf seniors that actually uses these opportunities have quite an active life: they leave their residence most regularly, do different activities but might have few contacts in their lives except for relatives and friends.

Regarding transport to activities, only one NAD had a minibus, and a few others offered alternative forms of mobility support. The scarcity of transport assistance among NADs may mean that some Deaf seniors are prevented from attending activities. Most NADs (60%) reported that Deaf seniors are also hampered by monetary constraints and cannot participate in activities without financial support. This calls for attention for the financial vulnerability of Deaf seniors and for an inclusive approach in activities in support of active living to make sure that all Deaf seniors can participate.

In terms of organisational structures and resources, only 56% of the NADs confirmed that they have a Deaf senior committee or working group. A slight majority (55%) said that there is a care home/and or support services for Deaf seniors, and in two countries these are partnered with their local NADs. But this means that the Deaf seniors in almost half of the countries do not have any Deaf-centred support services or care homes. It seems to be a point of advocacy.

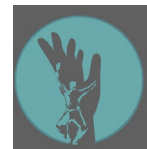
Participants, both seniors and professionals do not know enough about opportunities for education and activation available for Deaf seniors. That confirms also the issue noticed in some national backgrounds: professional social workers are not always specialised in Deafness or elderly Deafness so that they cannot offer them enough support and opportunities to go outside their comfort zone.

Against the background of growing Deaf senior identity and awareness, the limited resources within NADs and Deaf services also point to their vulnerability. The findings on Deaf senior rights and empowerment also call for the involvement of Deaf seniors in the development of training and activities. The NADs report has fostered the exchange of good practices of training, support services and activities, which may be beneficial to NADs in their advocacy. A few best practices of Deaf senior support services and care homes have also been documented in De Clerck (forthcoming), the EUD's fifth volume on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, entitled *UNCRPD Implementation in Europe – a Deaf perspective: Article 9 – Access to information and communication*.

A recurring theme that runs through all results is the importance of Sign Language. Social activities take place for the most part in Deaf clubs, activities offered in Sign Language or with Sign Language interpretation are desired, and also social and health services should be available in Sign Language. Therefore, the DESEAL project will be able to contribute to filling this whole by developing information videos in Sign Language.

On the other hand, Sign Language use is central in the organization of activities within NADs, which is reflected in the backgrounds of the teachers, presenters and Deaf people involved: most of them know Sign Language, and where they do not, it is common for them to work with interpreters. It is remarkable that 27% mentioned involvement of hearing people without knowledge of Sign Language and use of an interpreter.





Moreover, the results of professionals and Deaf seniors give a rather clear and unified picture of what Deaf seniors need to be more included and empowered: more offers in Sign Language in fields related to social interaction and physical activities.

The ideas of NADs confirmed and emphasised needs that already came to the fore in the survey, such as the need for international connections, the use of signed communication, the improvement of training programmes, and the use of digital platforms for learning and networking with peers. The responses also highlighted the issues of human and Deaf seniors' rights and Deaf leadership, which are also related to international connections and intergenerational transmission, advocacy and empowerment. Since local and national Deaf communities are relatively small, and even become smaller when age increases, European interaction with Deaf seniors may meet the Deaf cultural need for peer interaction.

The findings related to the open-ended questions in NADs surveys reveal a strong interest among NADs in facilitating international exchange for their Deaf seniors, and a sense that the benefits that could attract might include empowerment; networking and meeting other Deaf people; sharing cultural experiences; learning about accessibility and support services; developing new friendships; and improving their physical and mental wellbeing. But on the other hand, about connecting with other Deaf elderly people in Europe, it's interesting to wonder why so many respondents are not sure about this question. Often an elderly senior does not feel comfortable to interact with new people and strangers, even more if linguistic issues are involved. This could lead to answers that are not a strict no, but more a vague answer such as I do not know, as it was the case in the surveys in each country.

Another recurring topic is the popularity of local Deaf club. This shows also that Deaf people are a strong community and that they feel more alike to interact with people they know and with whom they can communicate. The informative and rich responses to the open-ended questions also in the NADs questionnaire demonstrate that core Deaf cultural values, such as international peer contacts in support of networking, exchange of information, empowerment, and friendship through digital and face-to-face signed communication are important for Deaf seniors' active living and wellbeing. Signed communication and peer contact are vital for accessing daily life contexts, training and activities, as well as for developing friendships and improving physical and mental wellbeing.

The findings of NADs survey provide insight into the activities organised, which revealed that Computer science, forum and Deaf history were mentioned by more than 50% of them. The activities tend to be held in the daytime, especially the afternoon (80%), and are generally offered 1 or 2 times a week; however, 3 NADs reported that they have no activities for Deaf seniors.

Deaf seniors' respondents were mostly interested in the topics of sports, tourism, Deaf clubs and playing cards. These are activities mainly related to leisure, physical activities and social contacts. Seniors in the three countries expressed less interest in topics related to education, although professionals would like some more activities related to it.

For sure a topic of interest for the DESEAL project is the low use of internet or interest in developing skills in the ICT field by Deaf seniors and professionals. The results of these surveys are in line with each other and also with the national background statistics, and since most of the outputs of the DESEAL project will be digital, this could represent an issue. Therefore, the development of the guidelines and training materials for professionals working with Deaf seniors will be the key to familiarising with the main target group and the outputs. For instance, the inclusion of topics related to digital literacy and ICT is fundamental in the materials to be developed in the DESEAL project as the low results in the survey clearly show that this is a field in which many Deaf seniors have no competences, access, and interest.