

MUGArtS - Cultural Ambassadors: Redefining Adult Education in Cultural Spaces

**How to make museums and art
galleries more engaging for people
aged 55+ not only as visitors but as
active participants in cultural life?
- an overview of research held in
Lithuania, Bulgaria, Greece and
Romania**

Project No. 2025-1-LT01-KA220-ADU-000354739

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1. Introduction

How can museums and art galleries become more welcoming, interesting and engaging for people aged 55+, not only as visitors but also as active participants in cultural life? And what experiences, barriers and needs adults and seniors have when visiting cultural spaces?

These topics are in the focus of our project “Cultural Ambassadors: Redefining Adult Education in Cultural Spaces” (MUGArtS), (2025-1-LT01-KA220-ADU-000354739). The partners are: VSI EDUKACINIAI PROJEKTAI (EDUPRO), Creativity and Educational Studio “ARTIED” from Bulgaria, Bucovina Institute from Romania and MOSAIC from Greece.

The **project’s general objective** is to foster inclusion and civic engagement of seniors by empowering them as cultural ambassadors through non-formal educational activities in museums and art galleries. On the other hand, we want to increase the capacity of cultural institutions and cultural workers and educators on how to better engage these generations in interactive, experiential activities.

To better understand where to start from, the project partners organised a short online survey among people aged 55+ in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania and asked them to share **their experiences in museums or galleries, how often they visit them, what the reasons to do so are, how welcome and included they usually feel, what would encourage them to visit museums or galleries more often, as well as what barriers and challenges they face and what needs and support they would like to receive**. As the project aims to encourage seniors to become Cultural Ambassadors and to support other people their age to more actively engage with cultural life, we also asked them about what kind of participation would suit them best in a cultural activity and what training would be interesting and important for them.

The present report summarises only the opinions of the involved representatives of the target group in the four project countries and reflects their personal experiences on the topic, without pretending to be comprehensive or exhaustive. The survey was done through a common online questionnaire, and each partner was responsible for organising it in their country and to summarise its local results. The present overview was prepared by the Greek partner – MOSAIC. We hope that the collected feedback and insights will help us to initiate a discussion about how the cultural sector and cultural institutions in the partner countries could become more inclusive and engaging for people aged 55+, as well as to better design the MUGArtS Cultural Ambassadors Training Programme, so as to respond to the needs and expectations of seniors interested in culture and to the museum and gallery workers and educators.

2. Executive summary

The cross-border analysis reveals a senior demographic that is culturally motivated but restricted by practical and systemic obstacles. While there is strong enthusiasm for personal enrichment and community-based representation, participation depends heavily on physical accessibility, social cohesion, and clear, narrative-driven content in each country.

Key Findings from the survey in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania

- **Narrative over Information:** Seniors are primarily engaged by the stories behind artworks (averaging over 55% preference), valuing human and historical context over academic theory.
- **Accessibility is a Prerequisite:** Physical barriers (66.70% in Bulgaria) and financial costs are the leading obstacles in front of frequent visits of seniors to cultural venues. Therefore; cultural inclusion is impossible without senior-friendly infrastructure and affordable pricing.
- **Willingness for Peer Advocacy:** There is high interest in the "Cultural Ambassador" role (peaking at 68% in Greece), provided tasks are low-pressure, such as event promotion and social invitations.
- **Rejection of Self-Paced Digital Learning:** Overwhelmingly, respondents prefer in-person, group-based training (up to 71.40% in Lithuania) over self-paced online methods, highlighting the need for social learning environments.
- **Linguistic Inclusion:** In regions with displaced populations (notably Romania), the lack of translated materials is a primary barrier to participation. This makes multilingual support a priority for true inclusivity.

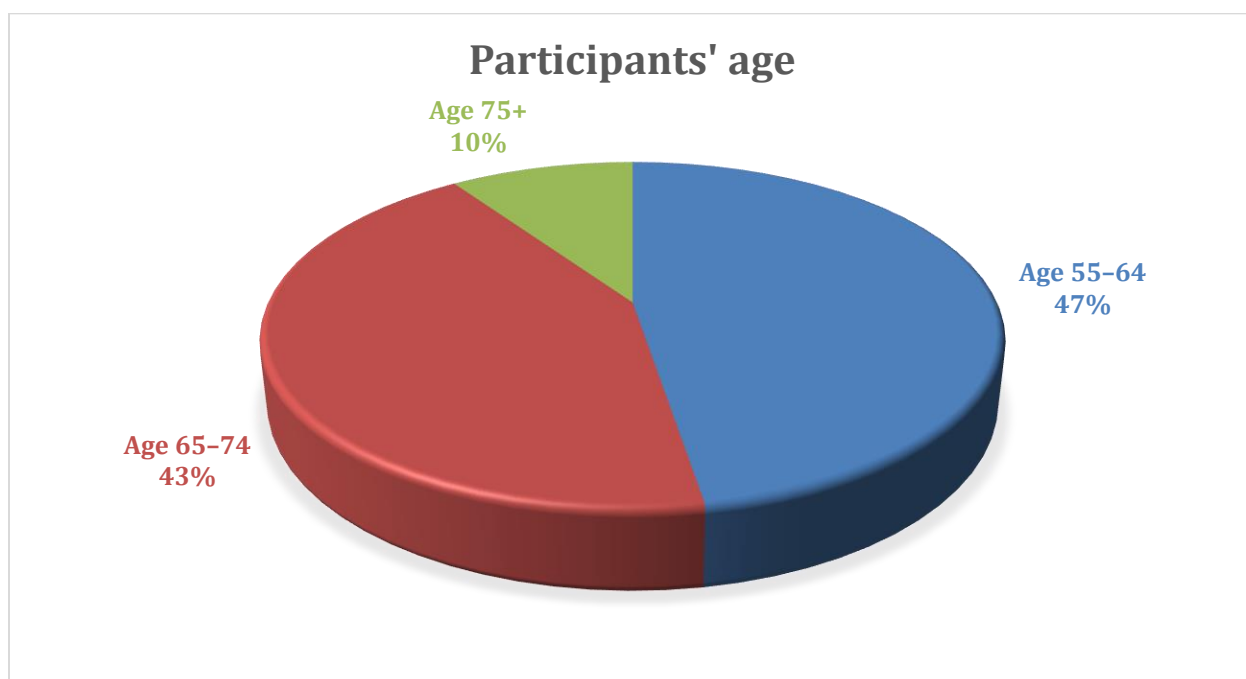
3. Participants' demographics

The survey was done through a commonly designed questionnaire, which was distributed among potential representatives of the project target group – seniors aged 55+. Each partner decided for itself how to organise the process in its country, as long as transparency was ensured and potential respondents had equal access to the questionnaire.

The survey was done in March and April 2026, and the total number of collected questionnaires was 114 (28 in Lithuania, 36 in Bulgaria, 25 in Greece and 25 in Romania).

Age group around the project countries

The combined demographic data reveals a strong concentration of seniors that belong to the younger group across the participating countries, though the specific primary age brackets vary by territory. In the Bulgarian and Greek samples, the 55–64 age group was the most prominent, representing 64% and 68% of respondents respectively, which suggests these perspectives primarily reflect active seniors within the younger spectrum of the target demographic. In contrast, the Lithuanian sample was strongly concentrated in the 65–74 age group at 79%. Across all three regions, the oldest age groups were the most modestly represented: the 75+ group accounted for only 6% of the Bulgarian sample, saw decreased representation in Greece, and stood at 11% in Lithuania.

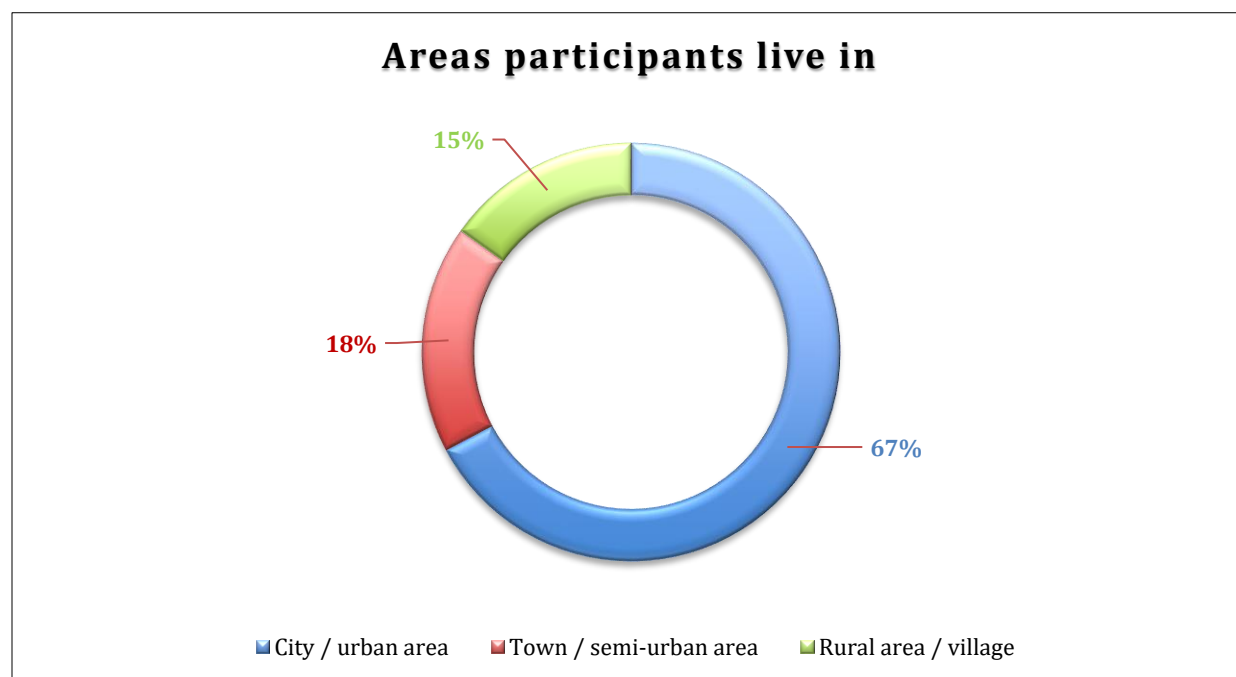


Areas where participants live in

The residential data indicates that the findings primarily represent the perspectives of seniors living in urban environments with easier access to museums and galleries, though with notable regional variations. In Greece and Lithuania, respondents were almost exclusively urban-based, at 84% and 96.40% respectively, suggesting that these participants benefit from relatively easy physical access to cultural hubs and institutions. Bulgaria follows a similar pattern, with over half the respondents (56%) residing in cities and a further 33% in semi-urban towns, collectively reflecting the experiences of those with better proximity to cultural venues. On the other hand, the Romanian sample provides a more geographically balanced perspective; while 48% live in urban areas, a significant 28% reside in rural villages, offering some insights into the practical barriers related to distance and accessibility faced by seniors outside major city centers.

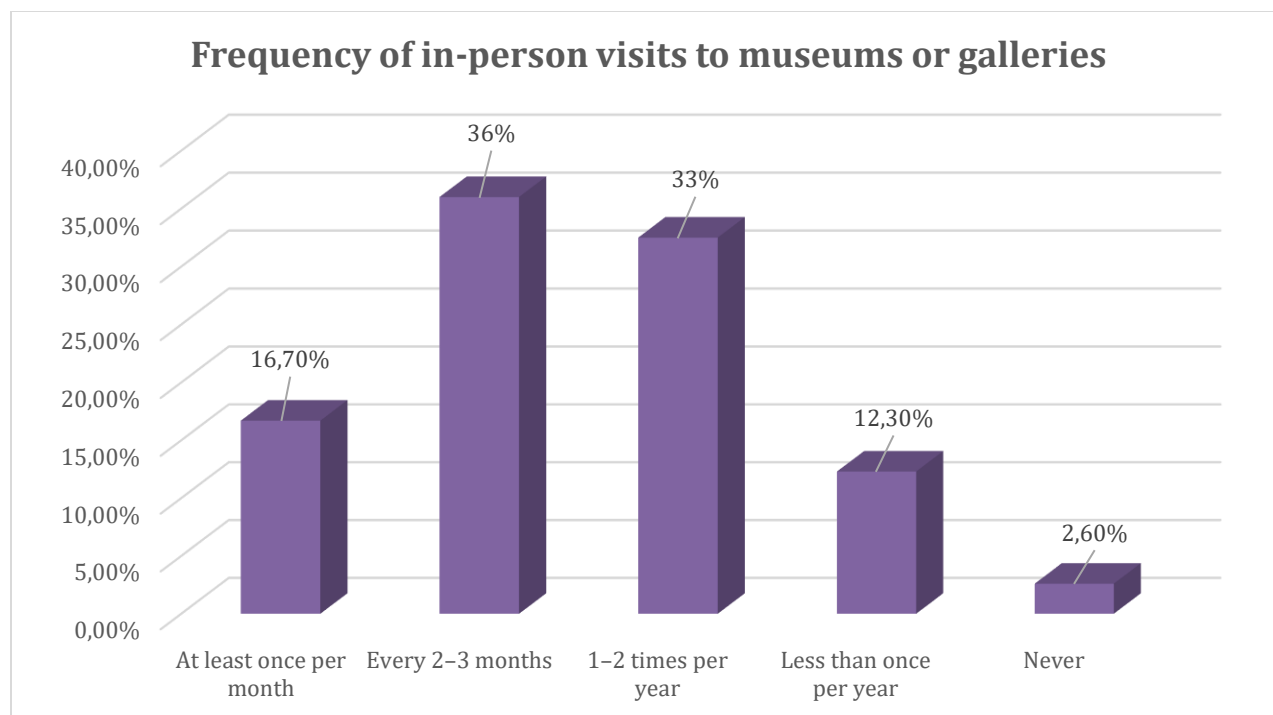
Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the National Agency. Neither the European Union nor National Agency can be held responsible for them.

Collectively, while the survey captures a valuable segment of rural voices, the overall results are strongly shaped by the experiences of urban seniors who already possess a degree of physical access to cultural life.



Frequency of in-person visits to museums and art galleries

The merged data reveals that the research sample consists of culturally active seniors, with nearly all respondents visiting museums or galleries at least once a year. In Lithuania and Bulgaria, attendance is particularly regular, with 67.80% and 55.60% of respondents respectively visiting at least every few months. While the majority of participants in Greece (52%) and Romania (40%) visit more occasionally (1–2 times per year), the absence of "Never" responses in most regions suggests a baseline connection to cultural spaces. Only in the Bulgarian sample did a small segment (8.30%) report never visiting, though their participation in the survey indicates a potential interest in cultural engagement.

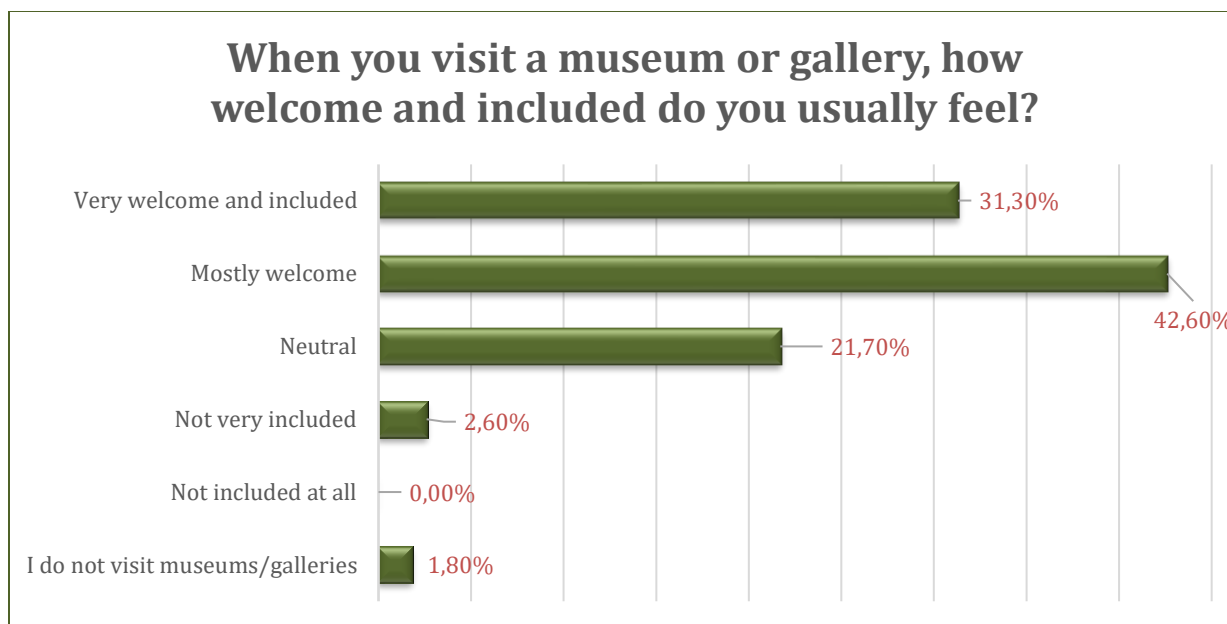


4. Quantitative results from the survey

Seniors' experience in museums and galleries

While the majority of respondents across all regions report feeling positively received while visiting museums and galleries, the data reveals a distinction between basic hospitality and active inclusion. In Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania, between 72% and 91.60% of participants feel "very" or "mostly" welcome, indicating that these institutions generally meet senior visitors' expectations. However, Lithuania presents a contrast where 53.60% of respondents remain neutral, a sentiment echoed by smaller segments in Greece and Romania. This high neutral figure, combined with identified barriers related to language, confidence, and accessibility, suggests that while seniors are not explicitly excluded, cultural spaces still need to transition from passive politeness to more intentional and active strategies for senior inclusion.

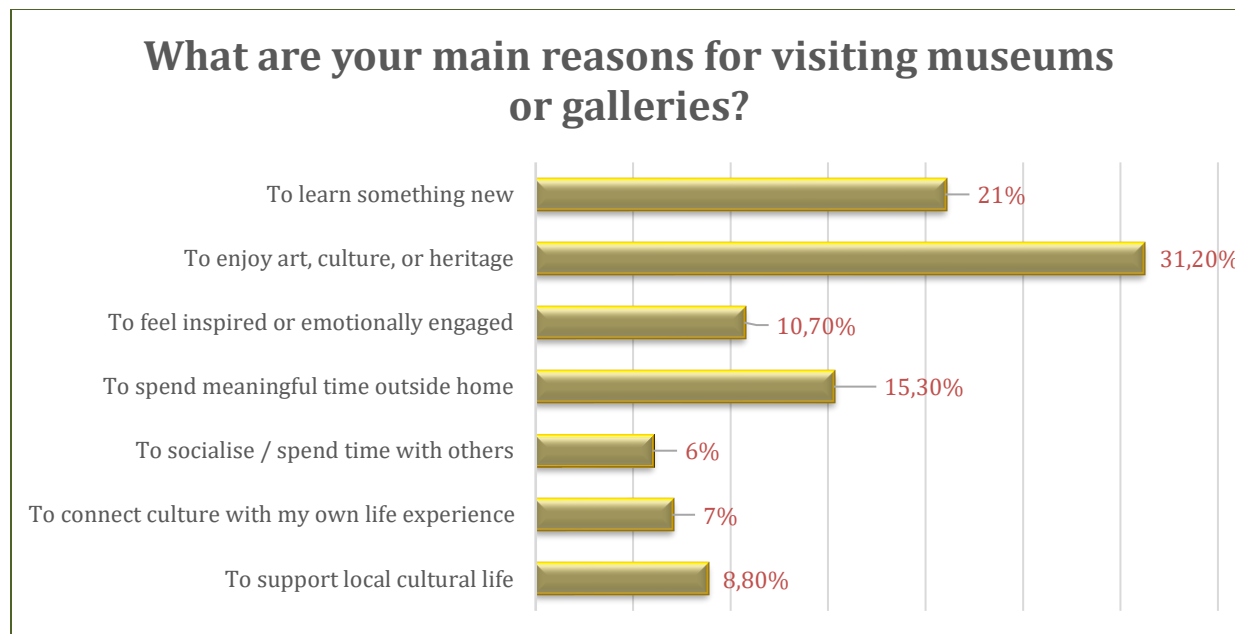
Therefore, when asked about **how welcome and included seniors usually feel when visiting a museum or an art gallery**, the obtained joint results were:



Across all four countries, the primary driver for museum and gallery visits is personal enrichment rather than social interaction. The most significant motivator is the aesthetic enjoyment of art, culture, and heritage, peaking at approximately 67% in Bulgaria and Lithuania. Following this, the desire to learn something new serves as a secondary but consistent motivator, particularly in Bulgaria (52.80%) and Lithuania (39.30%). While spending meaningful time outside home is also a strong incentive, shared by nearly 40% of Lithuanian and 44% of Bulgarian respondents, socialization and connecting culture to personal life experiences consistently rank as the lowest motivators across the sample. Ultimately, these results suggest that seniors view cultural institutions primarily as spaces for solitary or focused intellectual and emotional engagement.

Therefore, when asked about **main reasons for visiting museums or galleries**, the obtained joint results were:

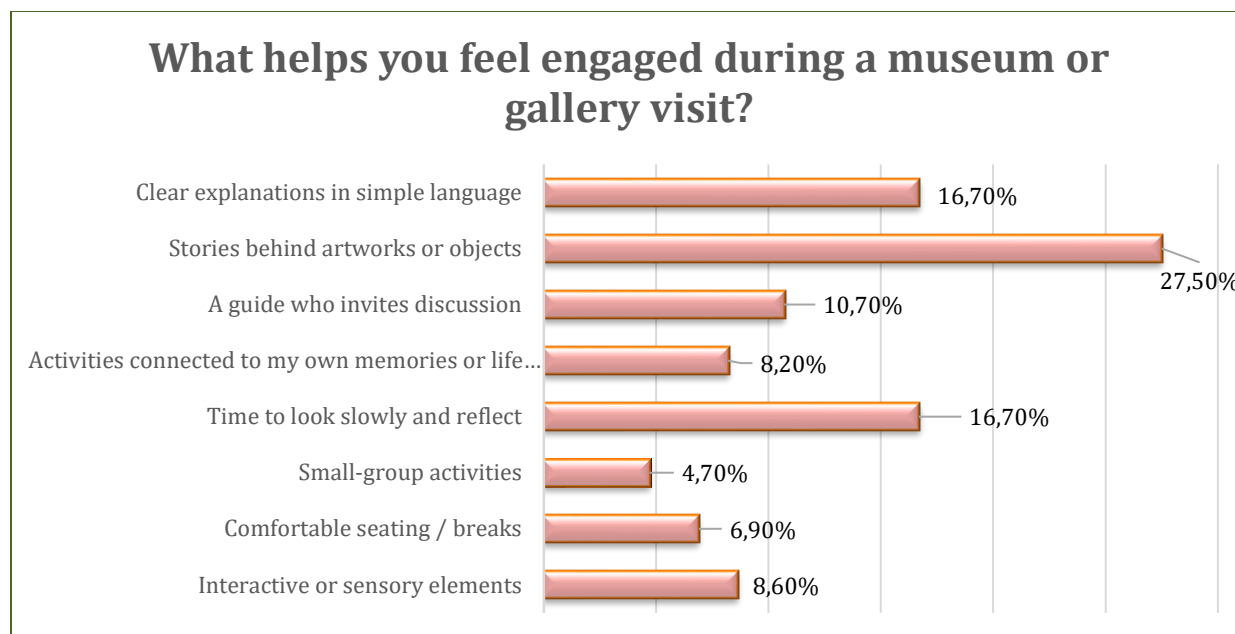
Note: Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer to this question.



Engagement for seniors across all four countries is primarily driven by meaningful interpretation and clear communication. The "stories behind artworks or objects" emerged as the most significant driver for engagement, prioritized by 66.70% of Bulgarian, 64% of Greek, 50% of Lithuanian, and 40% of Romanian respondents. This preference for narrative is closely supported by a high demand for clear explanations in simple language and the provision of time to look and to reflect slowly. While Greek respondents specifically highlighted the importance of guides who facilitate dialogue, the overall data suggests that seniors value understandable, story-driven content over complex informational approaches or highly active small-group tasks.

Therefore, when asked about **what helps them feel engaged during a museum or gallery visit**, the obtained joint results were:

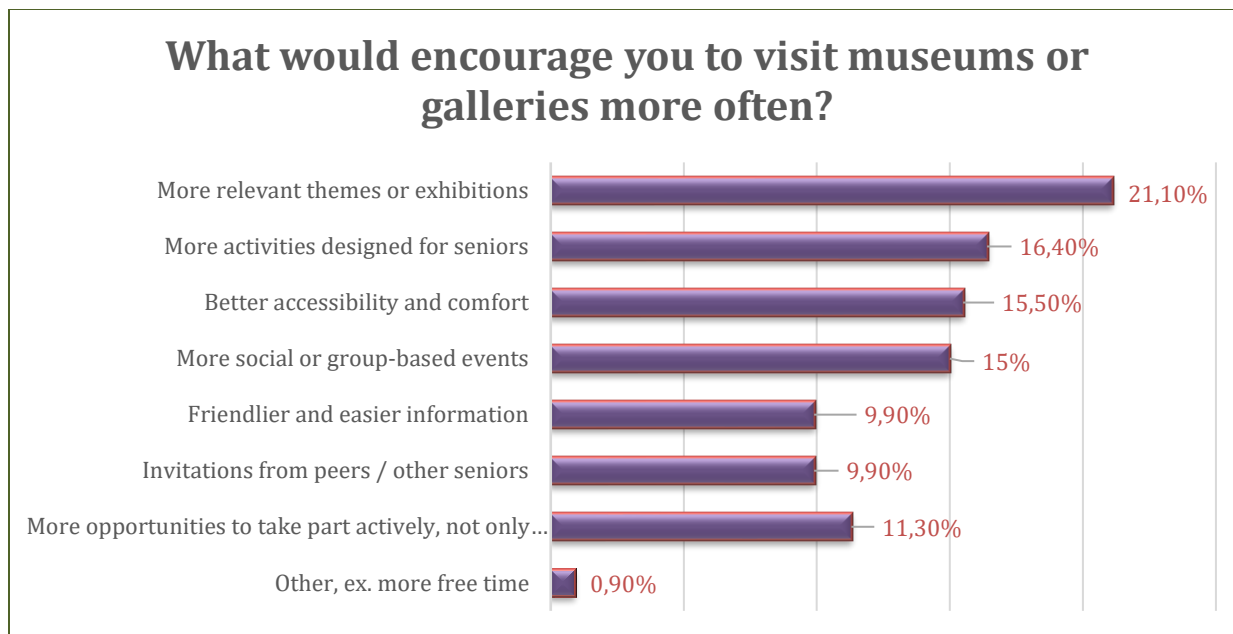
Note: Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer to this question.



To encourage more frequent attendance, museums and galleries must prioritize a combination of tailored content, improved accessibility, and social opportunities. Across the four countries, "more relevant themes or exhibitions" and "activities specifically designed for seniors" emerged as primary motivators, particularly in Greece (52%) and Lithuania (42.90%). Logistical improvements, specifically "better accessibility and comfort," were equally vital, serving as the top driver in Romania (36%) and a significant factor in Bulgaria (33.30%). While social and group-based events are highly valued as a secondary layer of encouragement, the data collectively suggests that increasing senior participation depends on a holistic approach that makes cultural experiences feel both physically accessible and intellectually relevant to their specific life stages.

Therefore, when asked about **what would encourage them to visit museums or galleries more often**, the obtained joint results were:

Note: Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer to this question.

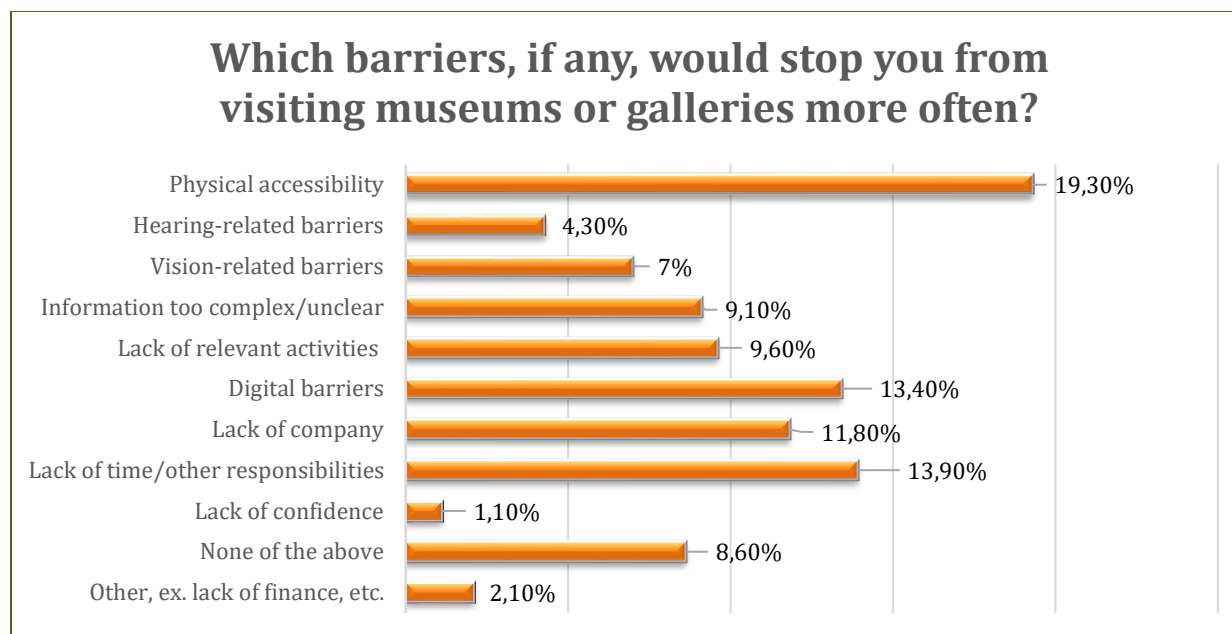


Barriers and support needs when visiting cultural spaces identified by people 55+

Seniors across the four countries face a diverse range of obstacles, ranging from structural issues to personal constraints. Physical accessibility remains a dominant concern, particularly in Bulgaria (66.70%) and Romania (28%), while digital barriers and a lack of companions significantly hinder participation in Lithuania (32.10% each). In contrast, Greek and Romanian respondents identified a lack of time and personal responsibilities as their primary external constraints. Furthermore, the Romanian findings underscore that accessibility must also be viewed through a linguistic lens, as non-native speakers, such as Ukrainian refugees, face unique information gaps. While a segment of respondents reported no barriers, the overall data suggests that participation is heavily influenced by a combination of physical, digital, and intercultural challenges.

Therefore, when asked about **any barriers which would stop seniors from visiting museums or galleries more often**, the obtained joint results were:

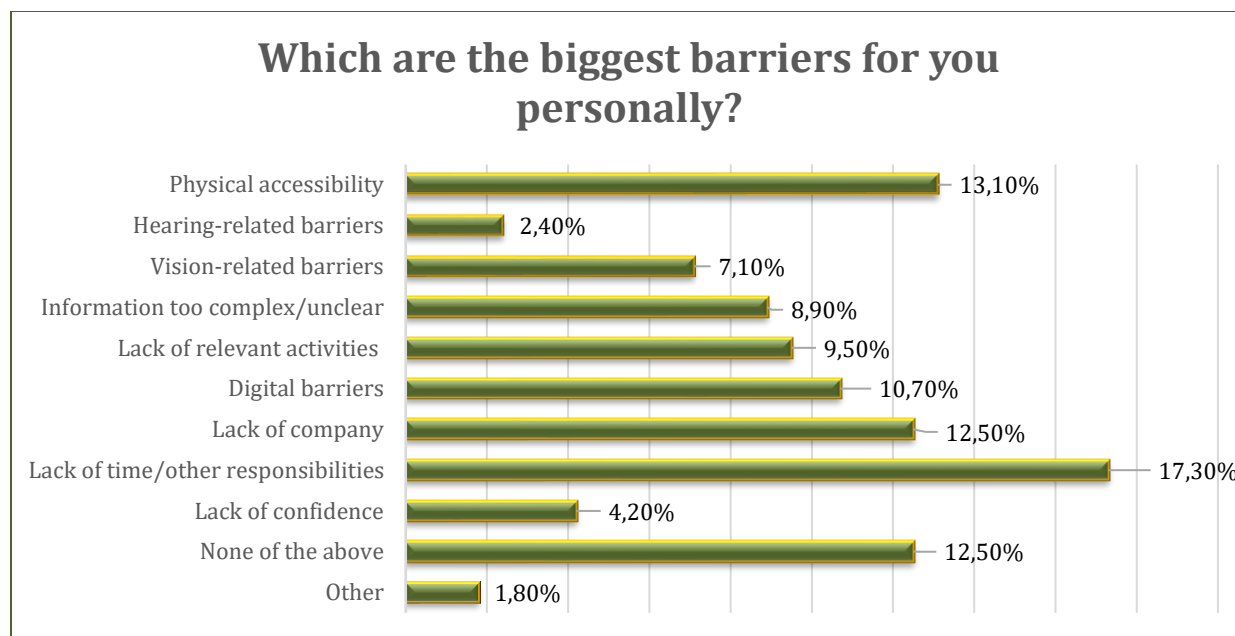
Note: Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer to this question.



Seniors face a wide range of challenges, including both physical accessibility issues and a lack of interest in current cultural activities. Across all regions, "lack of time and personal responsibilities" emerged as a primary obstacle, particularly in Romania (36%) and Greece (28%). Physical accessibility also remains a significant hurdle, shared by roughly a quarter of respondents in both Bulgaria and Romania. However, the data highlights that participation is equally influenced by how approachable the content feels. Digital barriers, complex information, and a lack of social company were consistently identified as key obstacles in Lithuania and Bulgaria. Ultimately, these results suggest that for many seniors, the decision to visit is hindered as much by practical life constraints as by the sense that current cultural offerings do not feel sufficiently meaningful or easy to navigate.

Therefore, when asked about **the biggest personal barriers which would stop them from visiting museums or galleries more often**, the obtained joint results were:

Note: Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer to this question.

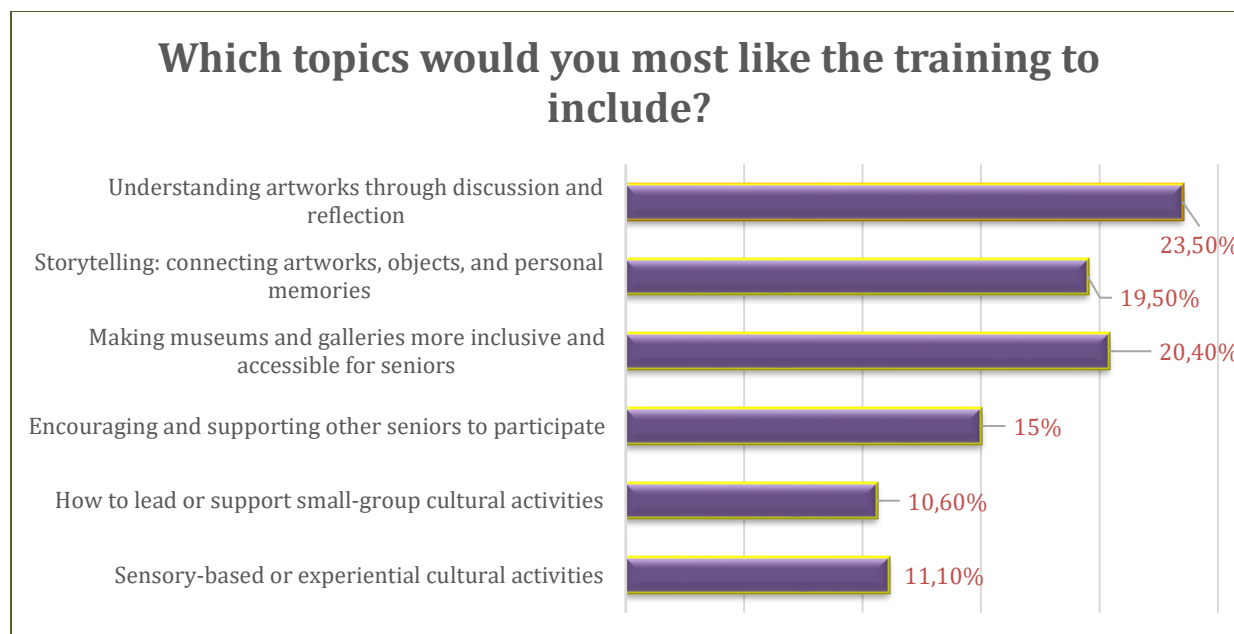


Training topics and formats identified by 55+ people related to cultural visits

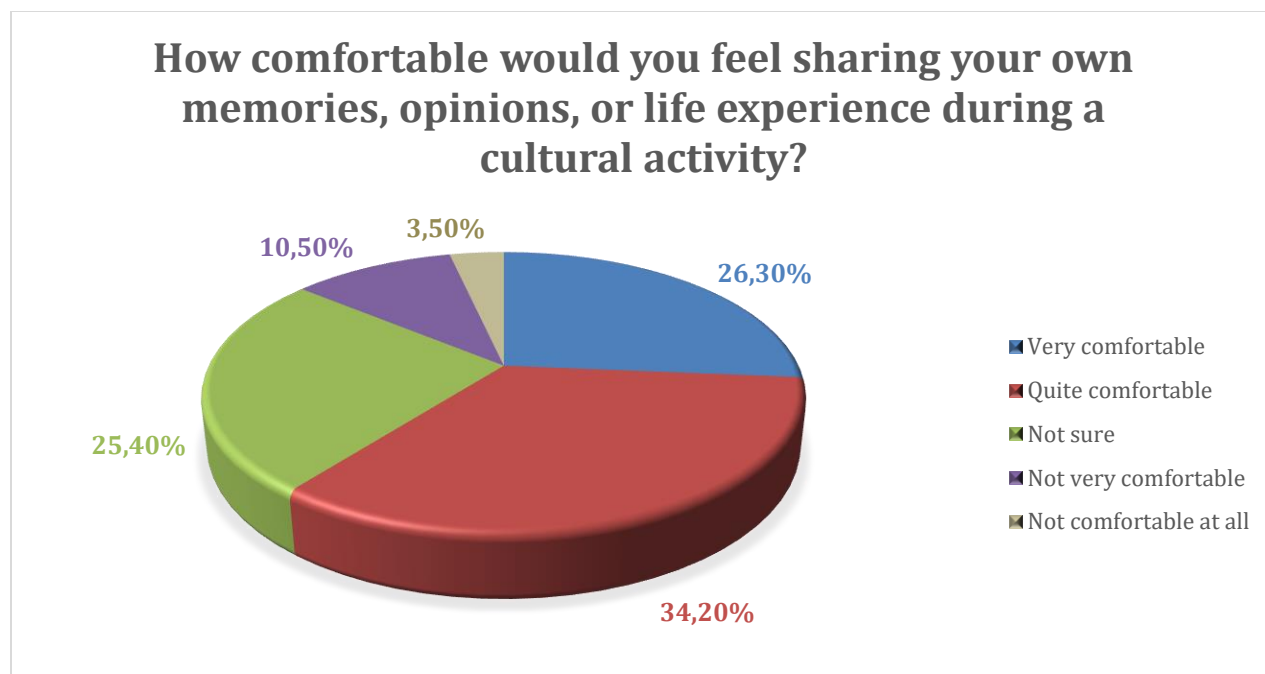
Feedback from the participating countries reflects a clear interest in topics that balance individual intellectual growth with social contribution. The primary focus is on “storytelling and connecting artworks to personal memories,” a top priority in Bulgaria (58.30%), and “understanding artworks through discussion and reflection,” which emerged as the primary interest in Greece (60%) and Lithuania (42.90%). Simultaneously, respondents collectively expressed a significant commitment to “making museums and galleries more inclusive and accessible for seniors,” particularly in Romania (40%) and Bulgaria (47.20%). These results indicate that seniors value a balanced approach that allows them to deepen their own cultural engagement while gaining the tools to bridge the accessibility gap and social participation for their peers.

Therefore, when asked about **the topics which they would like the training to include**, the obtained joint results were:

Note: Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer to this question.



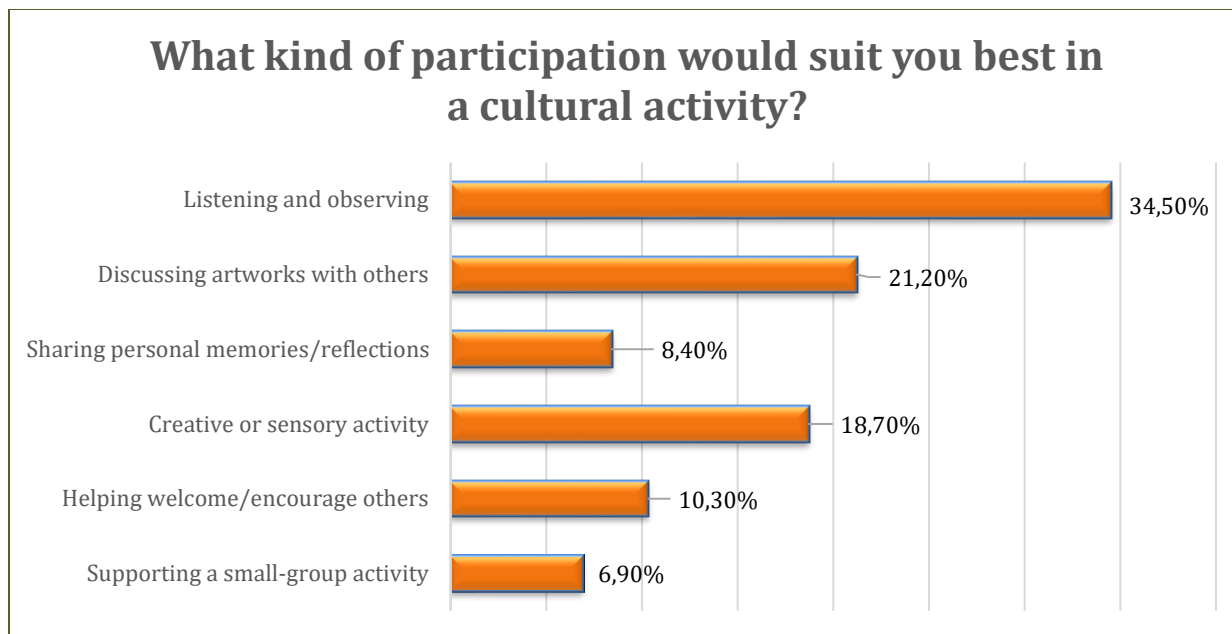
When asked about **how comfortable they would feel sharing their own memories, opinions, or life experience during a cultural activity**, seniors in the partner countries were quite positive. However, the levels vary between the countries based on cultural context and behavioural specifics of each region. For example, 72% of the Greek respondents and 77,80% of Bulgarian ones admitted that they would feel comfortable sharing their own memories, opinions, or life experience, while in Lithuania only 42.90% said so. This suggests a strong potential and readiness for interactive, memory-led programming within cultural activities; however personal sharing should remain optional and gently facilitated.



Across the participating countries, seniors demonstrate a strong preference for low-pressure engagement, with "listening and observing" emerging as the most popular participation mode, reaching 75% in Bulgaria, 67.90% in Lithuania, and 56% in Romania. While Greek respondents show a more balanced interest between traditional observation (40%) and interactive discussions (44%), other regions view more active roles with caution. For instance, creative or sensory activities attract moderate interest (ranging from 32% in Greece to 35.70% in Lithuania), whereas facilitation-based tasks or sharing personal memories are consistently the least preferred options, even receiving 0% support as a stand-alone mode in Lithuania. Overall, these results indicate that cultural programmes should focus on supportive, observational formats rather than high-stakes active facilitation.

Therefore, when asked about **what kind of participation would suit seniors best in a cultural activity**, the obtained joint results were:

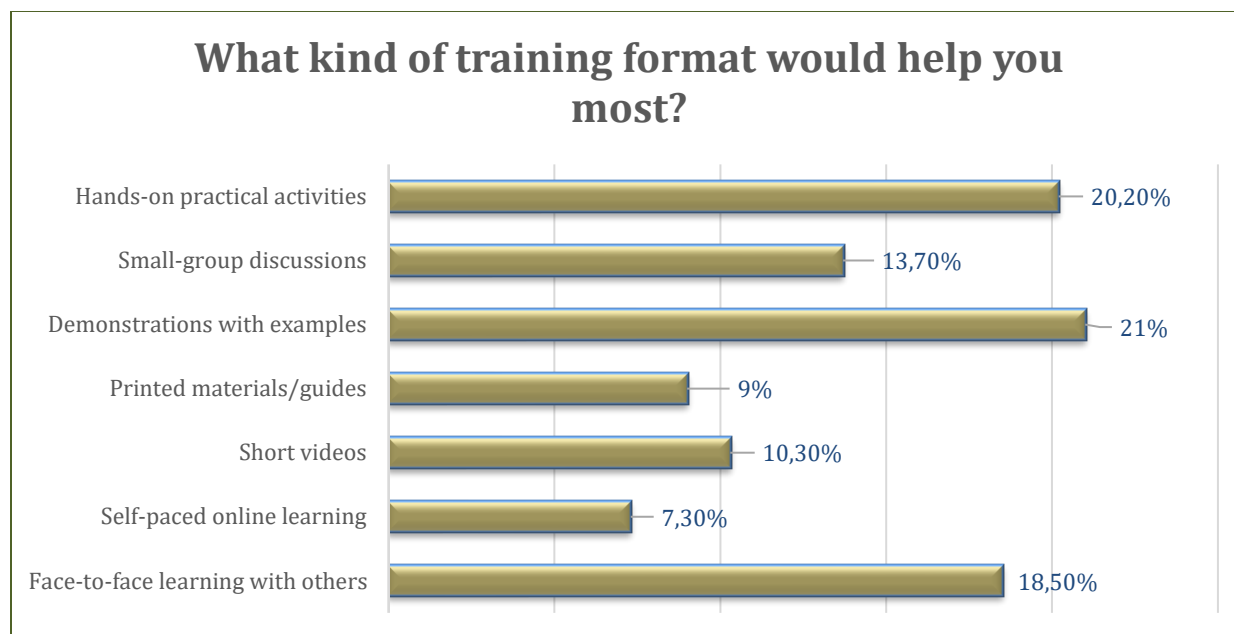
Note: Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer to this question.



Across the surveyed regions, seniors express a clear preference for interactive and socially engaged learning environments over isolated study. "Hands-on practical activities" and "face-to-face learning with others" were top choices in Lithuania (53.60%) and Romania (44%), while Bulgaria showed a significant inclination toward "demonstrations with examples" (55.60%). Although Greek participants stood out by showing considerable interest in the flexibility of "self-paced online learning" (32%), the common perspective across all other countries suggests a notable lack of enthusiasm for independent digital formats. Ultimately, the data indicates that seniors feel most comfortable and motivated when training involves visual modeling, social interaction, and direct practical application.

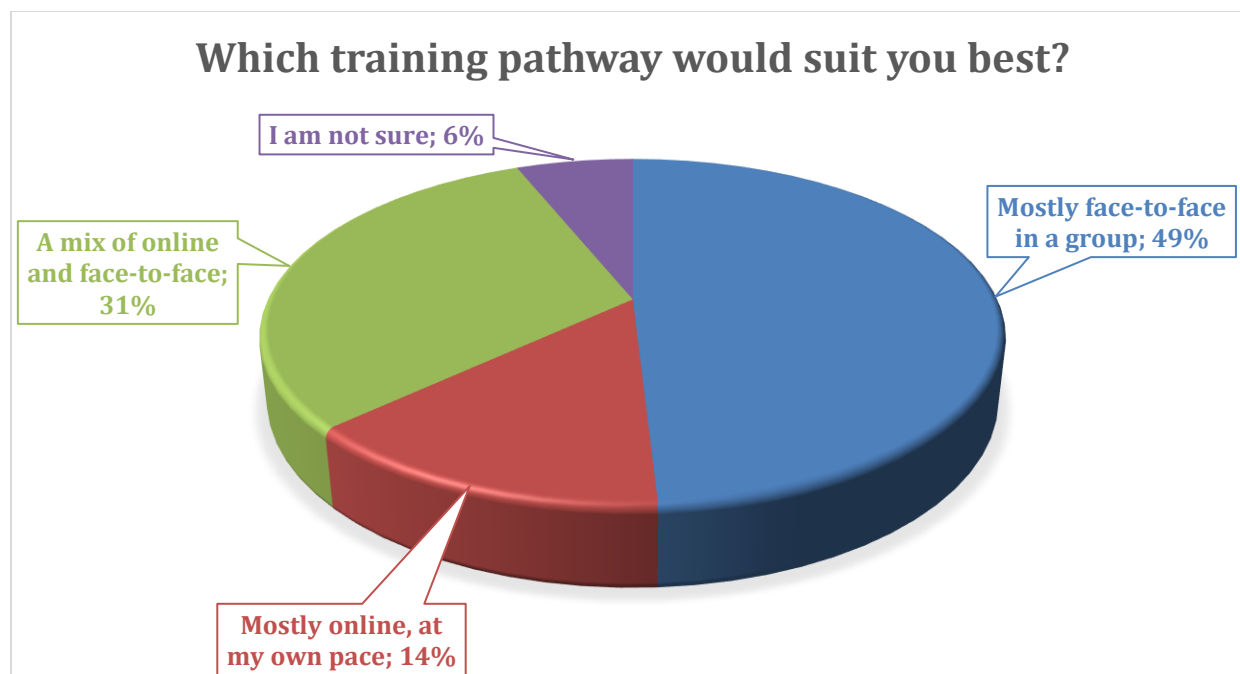
Therefore, when asked about the **training formats which are most preferred by seniors**, the obtained joint results were:

Note: Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer to this question.



Regarding the ideal training method, a blended or in-person approach is widely favored over fully remote learning. A "mix of online and face-to-face" implementation was the primary choice in Bulgaria (38.90%) and saw significant support in Romania (32%). However, an even stronger commitment to social learning emerged in Lithuania and Greece, where "mostly face-to-face in a group" was the preferred method for 71.40% and 48% of respondents, respectively. Across all regions, "mostly online" formats consistently ranked as the least desirable option, reinforcing the conclusion that seniors value the social connection and immediate support found in interactive, group-based environments.

Therefore, when asked about **the most preferred training method**, the obtained joint results were:



5. Cultural Ambassador's role and involvement

With MUGArtS project, a **Cultural Ambassador** is a person, preferably aged 55+, but other generations are also welcome, who is interested in art and culture and like to take the lead and to inspire and support other people at their age to interact more actively with cultural heritage, to visit museums and art galleries and to engage with exhibited artworks and artefacts. The idea is not to substitute for cultural workers and educators but to help cultural institutions to be more inclusive to senior generations and to offer more interesting and engaging activities for them, by being supported by cultural enthusiasts in the field.

To be more effective, we encourage all interested Cultural Ambassadors to be to enroll our **MUGArtS Training Programme**, to go through the 4 modules, to improve their knowledge and skills on how to be more efficient in storytelling, small group facilitation, art appreciation, creative reminiscence, etc. and to validate their competences with the issued certificates.

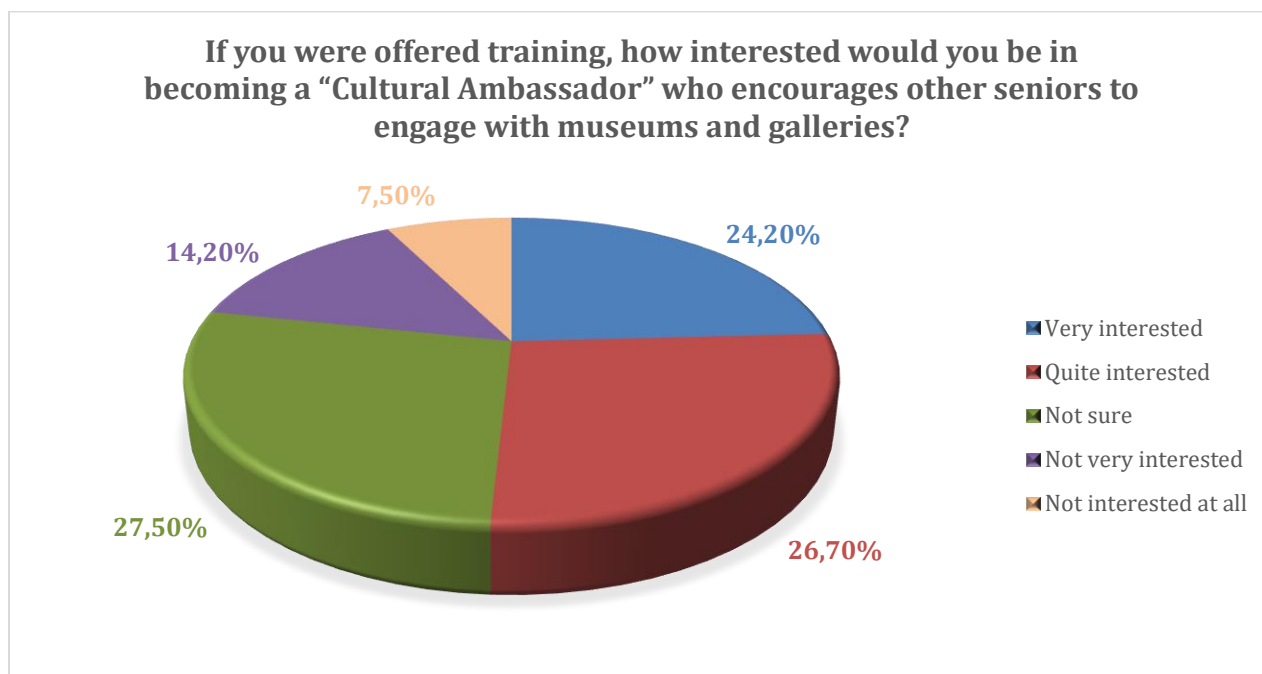
The Training Programme is openly accessible for self-paced online learning. Contact us for more information about how to access the learning materials at www.arti-ed.com or artied.events@gmail.com.

To be more effective when designing and developing the MUGArtS Training Programme and its modules and learning materials, first we turned to potential cultural ambassadors and other

people aged 55+ who are interested in culture, arts and historical heritage and asked them how they see their role, what will be interesting for them to do in a museum, gallery or other cultural organisation and what support they would need to take on such a role.

The survey results clearly show that the interest in the "Cultural Ambassador" role is strong among the participating countries, though it ranges from high enthusiasm to cautious curiosity. Greek respondents showed the most significant motivation, with 68% expressing interest, followed by over half of the participants in Bulgaria and Romania. In contrast, Lithuanian and Romanian seniors were more hesitant, with roughly 36% in each country remaining "unsure" about the commitment. This collective data suggests that while the desire to participate is widespread, a substantial segment of the senior population requires clearer role definitions, practical examples, and confidence-building support before they are ready to fully embrace these responsibilities.

Therefore, when asked about **their interest in becoming a Cultural Ambassador**, the obtained joint results were:

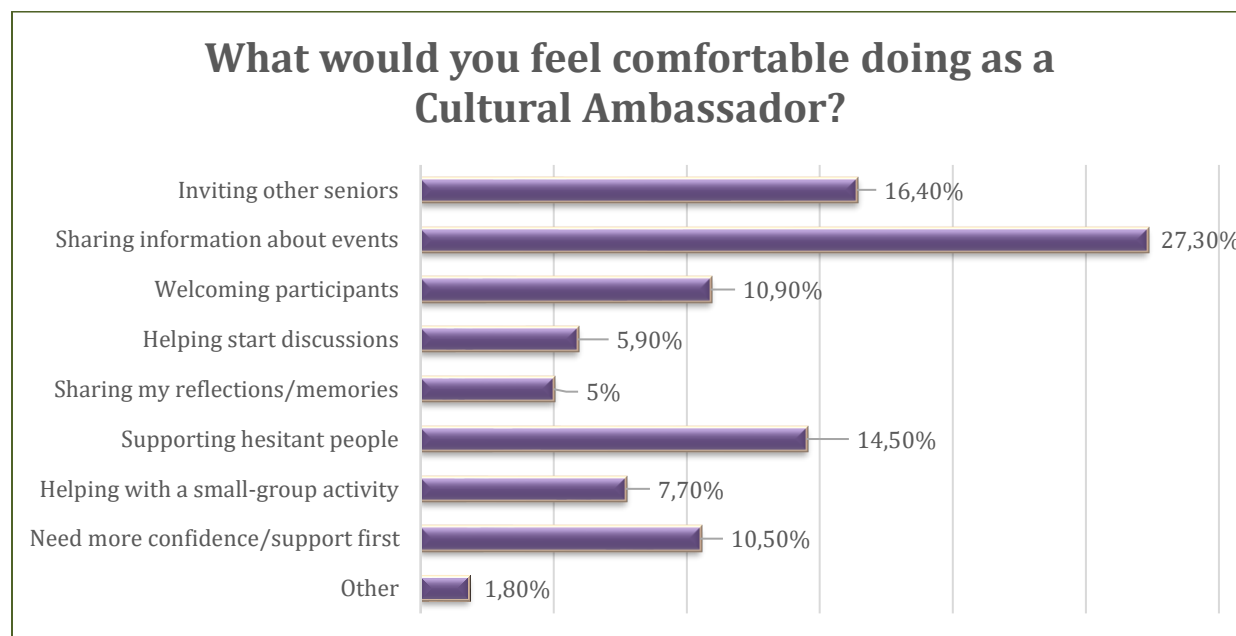


Regarding the specific responsibilities of a Cultural Ambassador, seniors across all regions feel most comfortable in social promotion and peer support roles. The most popular task is "sharing information about events," which was favored by a majority in Bulgaria (66.70%) and Lithuania (57.10%), as well as 40% of respondents in Greece and Romania. Other socially supportive but low-pressure activities, such as inviting peers and helping hesitant individuals, also showed consistent interest. However, more demanding roles like facilitating discussions or leading

groups received significantly less support, particularly in Romania where 36% of participants noted they would need more confidence before starting. This suggests that the Ambassador's role should be introduced through gradual, supportive training that focuses on peer-to-peer communication rather than formal facilitation.

Therefore, when asked about **what role as a Cultural Ambassador they would feel comfortable doing**, the obtained joint results were:

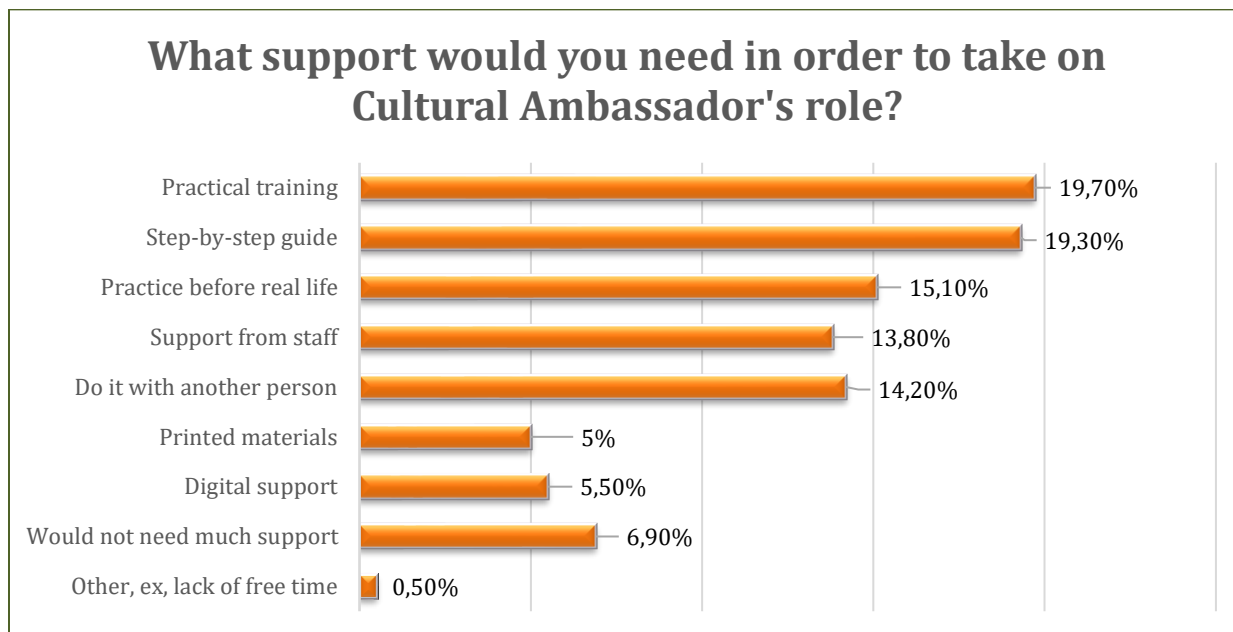
Note: Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer to this question.



To make a successful transition into the Cultural Ambassador's role, seniors prioritize direct assistance and peer collaboration over self-study. The most requested forms of support include "support from museum staff" (50% in Bulgaria) and "practical training," which was a top priority in Lithuania (32.10%) and Romania (40%). There is also high demand for "step-by-step guides" and "practice sessions," particularly noted in Bulgaria and Greece, 41.70% for each of the two countries. Furthermore, a significant number of respondents in Lithuania and Romania (32% each) emphasized a desire to "do the role together with another person," highlighting that peer support is a critical factor for building confidence. Collectively, these preferences suggest that the MUGArtS training approach should focus on hands-on, collaborative experiences and strong institutional guidance rather than digital or independent learning materials.

Therefore, when asked about **what support they would need to take on the role of a Cultural Ambassador**, the obtained joint results were:

Note: Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer to this question.



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