



Co-funded by
the European Union



Inter-Generational
Gender & Sexuality
Education



(un) Forgotten Years: Generational Insights in Sexuality, Gender and Diversity in the Third Age

Insights from Focus Groups & Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions

February 2026



Verein Niedersächsischer
BILDUNGSINITIATIVEN e.V.
| Geschäftsstelle Göttingen |



SOCIETATEA ROMÂNĂ
ALZHEIMER



Centre LGBTI+ de Bordeaux,
Nouvelle Aquitaine



Powered by CARDET





Table of contents

Introduction

Project Overview

Target Audience

Achievements: Implemented Events across Countries

Focus Group Findings: Themes and Perspectives

Session Set-up and Methodology

Participants across Partner Countries

Common Themes: A Shared European Perspective

Divergent Perspectives: Cultural and Historical Nuances

Limitations and Feedback

Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions: Exchanges and Insights

Speed Dating Methodology

Participants across Partner Countries

Results: Common Themes

Divergent Topics and National Curiosities

Key Aha! Moments

Limitations and Feedback

Final Conclusions

Key Takeways

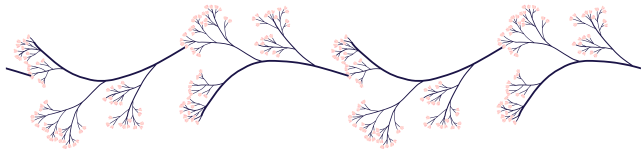
Recommendations for Professionals

Coming Soon

Contacts

Website and Social Media





Introduction

Project Overview

Never Gets Old – Inter-Generational Gender and Sexuality Education is a European Erasmus+ cooperation project addressing the persistent invisibility of sexuality, gender and diversity in later life. Despite demographic ageing across Europe, sexuality and intimacy in older age remain surrounded by silence, stigma and ageist assumptions. The project promotes inclusive, evidence-based and intergenerational approaches that recognise sexuality and identity as lifelong dimensions of human wellbeing. Its core objectives are to challenge stereotypes, strengthen professional competences, empower older adults to voice their needs, and develop practical educational resources, most notably the AgeWise Handbook, that supports inclusive and person-centred practices across adult education, healthcare and social care sectors.

Project Partners

The project is implemented by six partner organisations from Germany, Romania, France, Cyprus and Portugal, bringing together expertise in adult education, health promotion, social inclusion, LGBTQI+ advocacy, research and community-based work with older adults. This partnership combines academic, civil society and practice-oriented perspectives and promotes transnational learning and exchange of good practices in addressing ageing, sexuality and diversity within different cultural and institutional contexts. To learn more about the projects objectives and partners, [click here!](#)

[Click on the logo](#), to learn more about each partner organisation.



Verein Niedersächsischer
BILDUNGSINITIATIVEN e.V.
| Geschäftsstelle Göttingen |



SOCIETATEA ROMÂNĂ
ALZHEIMER





Target Audience

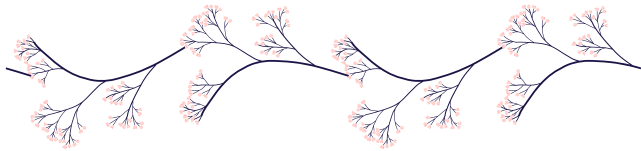
The project primarily addresses adult educators, healthcare professionals, social workers and organisations working with older adults, equipping them with the knowledge, confidence and tools to approach sexuality and diversity in later life in an inclusive and respectful manner. At the same time, older adults themselves constitute a central target group, both as participants in focus groups and intergenerational dialogue sessions and as co-creators of knowledge informing the project outputs. Particular attention is given to vulnerable groups, including LGBTQI+ elders and older adults experiencing social isolation or cognitive decline. Indirect target groups include policy-makers, training institutions and wider community stakeholders who can contribute to promoting inclusive practices at systemic level.



Achievements and Methodology: Implemented Events across Countries

During the first implementation phase, partners organised a total of **10 national focus groups** involving 25 participants and **8 Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions (IDS)** engaging 119 participants across Germany, Romania, France, Cyprus and Portugal.

The focus groups aimed to explore perceptions, experiences and barriers related to sexuality, gender and ageing among professionals and members of National Senior Stakeholder Consultation Groups (NSSCGs). The IDS sessions, structured through facilitated dialogue and interactive formats such as guided discussions and “*speed dating*” exchanges, created safe spaces for meaningful intergenerational conversations between older adults and professionals. Pre- and post-session reflections, qualitative feedback and observation supported data collection. Together, these activities generated rich insights that form the basis for this report, the **IDS Guide** and a foundation for the development of the **AgeWise Handbook** and following Never Gets Old activities.



Focus Group Findings: Themes and Perspectives

The Never Gets Old focus groups, implemented **between March and June 2025**, successfully engaged a diverse cross-section of older adults and health professionals across Germany, Romania, France, Cyprus, and Portugal. While the project initially targeted individuals aged 60 and older, the actual participant age range was broader, spanning from the **mid-40s to over 80 years of age**. This diversity allowed the project to capture perspectives not only from those currently in later life but also from those transitioning into it.

Session Set-up and Methodology

The sessions were designed as safe spaces to facilitate open dialogue on sensitive topics like intimacy and sexual identity. Most countries used a semi-structured moderation guide focusing on core themes: societal images of aging, sexuality in later life, and experiences within healthcare systems.

To ensure comfort and accessibility, partners implemented various formats:

- **Physical Atmosphere:** Sessions were held in familiar locations, such as group rooms with garden views (Germany), a community center (France) or even in the participant's home (Cyprus).
- **Hybrid and Digital Inclusion:** Several partners (Germany, Romania, Portugal) offered online participation via Zoom for those with mobility issues or scheduling conflicts.
- **Data Collection:** With prior consent, sessions were video and audio recorded for thematic analysis and also used to create the Never Gets Old summary video.

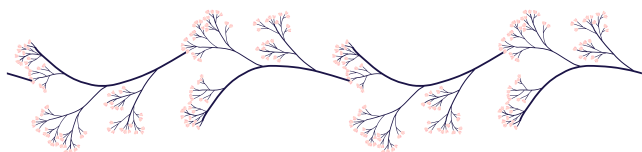


Participants across Partner Countries

The recruitment process varied by country, often leveraging existing networks to reach specific groups:

- **Germany:** Reached 9 participants through a combination of a group discussion (4 participants) and individual interviews (5 participants). The group included retired teachers and nursing professionals with diverse sexual orientations.
- **Romania:** Organised a face-to-face (F2F) focus group with 5 participants and an additional online session for one participant who could not attend the physical meeting. The sessions integrated insights from a psychologist from a national LGBT support association.
- **France:** Conducted four engagements in Bordeaux, including a group discussion, a workshop titled "Sexuality, Gender and Diversity among Seniors" and two individual interviews. Recruitment specifically targeted LGBTQ+ elders to ensure their often-marginalized voices were central.
- **Cyprus:** Engaged 3 participants, including a heterosexual couple in their mid-70s and a working woman in her mid-60s. Challenges were noted in recruiting LGBTQ+ participants due to high levels of local stigma.
- **Portugal:** Conducted two focus group sessions to ensure a minimum of 5 participants was reached, ultimately engaging individuals in their 60s who identified as active and autonomous.





Summary of Focus Group Participation Data

Country	Number	Age Range	Formats used	Participants Profiles
	9	49–75	Group discussion, three interviews (F2F & Online)	Retired teachers, nursing professionals, health specialists (LGBTQ+ & Heterosexual)
	6	28–82	Group discussion, one expert interview (online)	Psychotherapist in training, retrieved veterinarian, nurse, gerontologist, psychologist
	8	67–79	Group discussion, workshop, two interviews (F2F)	Sexual health and inclusion activist, retired doctor, strong representation of LGBTQ+ elders
	3	65–72	Group discussion, one interview (F2F)	Heterosexual couple, working woman
	3	45–62	Group discussion (online), one interview (F2F)	Social workers, educators, active older adults, single mother/grandmother
Total	29	28–82	Mixed: F2F, online, interviews	Diverse: LGBTQ+, Professionals, Couples



Results: Themes and Perspectives

The focus groups served as the first dive into the lived realities of older adults across different European contexts. By engaging participants in safe, reflective environments, the project uncovered the complex emotional and social landscapes of aging. The results reveal a generation that often feels "stuck" between two worlds: a past marked by strict moral taboos and a present that celebrates youth while rendering the aging body invisible. Across all reports, a clear message emerged: sexuality and identity do not have an *expiration date*, but the freedom to express them is frequently stifled by societal stereotypes and institutional neglect.

Country	Key Thematic Areas Identified
Germany	Changing images of aging; Sexuality and dimensions of ageism; Institutional taboos (healthcare/nursing); Queer-aging & "double exclusion"; Invisibility of sexuality & rebellion against norms; Influence of religion, media and social norms.
Romania	Rights & Autonomy in later life; Prejudice against parents' new relationships; Moral and religious frameworks (sex as "sin"); Institutional barriers and lack of privacy; LGBTQ+ challenges.
France	Complex intersections of historical trauma and intimacy; Evolution of personal identity; Double isolation & resilience in LGBTQ+ aging; Intergenerational divides & activism.
Cyprus	Redefining intimacy as emotional closeness/companionship; Cultural silence and embarrassment; Lack of LGBTQ+ visibility; Healthcare system neglect.
Portugal	Insufficient sexual education; Aging as an emotional/physical process; Societal shifts in gender roles; Active ageing as empowerment; Sexual invisibility & professional gaps in care.



Common Themes: A Shared European Narrative

The thematic analysis across all five countries reveals a powerful consensus on the barriers and aspirations of older adults regarding their sexual and gender identities. These five persuasive themes illustrate a shared European struggle against invisibility and the universal desire for dignity in later life.

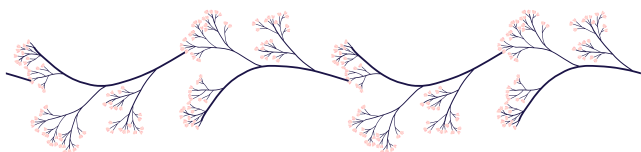
The Redefinition of Intimacy

Across all focus groups, participants shifted the conversation from purely physical performance to a broader, more holistic view of sexuality. For many, sexuality in older age is synonymous with companionship, tenderness, and emotional safety.

"Sometimes
it's just the need for company, for
presence, for touch, to have
someone there who we can trust."
Participant Portugal

"Sexuality was not about physical
acts so much as it was about
being cared for, feeling affection,
and sharing meaningful
connections."
Participant Cyprus

"It can become more diverse, [...] people in the
third stage of life tend to be more open, more
relaxed. They no longer need to fulfil a goal [...].
And you can surrender more to what emerges
when we take off this mask."
Participant Germany



"I am convinced there is still no place for sexuality [...] when you enter a room and surprise people [in a nursing home], immediately they get told off."

Participant France

The Youth Cult and Aesthetic Pressure

There is a shared sentiment that the media and society equate sexual desirability exclusively with youth. This creates an internalised sense of being *unattractive* or *expired* as an intimate being.

"The idea is that the older generation is unattractive [...] and that this would impair the sexual experience, and I think that's a fundamental misconception."

Participant Germany

Institutional Invisibility and Infantilisation

A recurring persuasive theme is the erasure of sexual identity within healthcare and nursing settings. Participants across borders described a system that often treats them like children, effectively "locking them out" of their own adult bodies.

"You hand in your sexuality at the door... you have no sexuality. [...] The nurses say, 'That's not what you're here for' and virtually lock me out of my body."

Participant Germany





The Need for Professional Proactivity

Participants unanimously agreed that healthcare professionals must break the silence. They expressed a desire for doctors and caregivers to initiate conversations about sexual well-being as a standard part of health assessments.

"Prejudices are often internalised by older adults themselves, leading them to behave according to what they believe is expected rather than according to their genuine desires."

Participant Romania

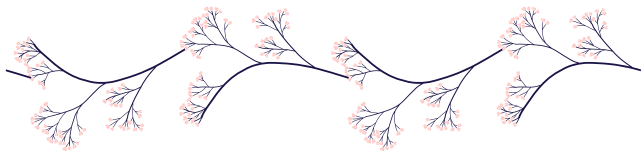
"I think they [health professionals] are there to help, not to judge."

Participant Portugal

"Doctors [should] occasionally ask, 'How is your sex life?'" "Sexuality should simply be a topic that can be talked about openly".

Participants Germany





Empowerment through Storytelling

Despite the barriers, many older adults found the act of speaking out to be greatly empowering. Participating in the project allowed them to reclaim narratives that had been suppressed for decades.

"I'm here talking, I've never really talked about these things [...] Thank you for letting me participate."
Participant Portugal

"[...] a change has taken place and the older generation [...] I think is already talking for itself and about itself."

Participant Germany



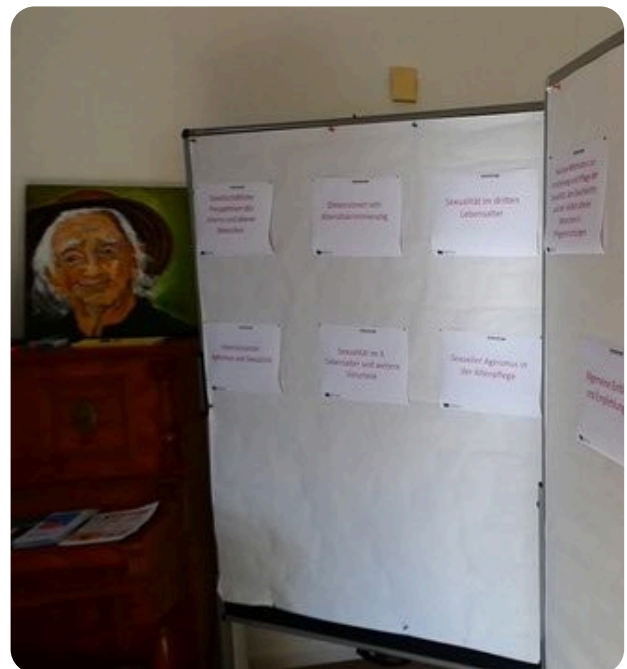
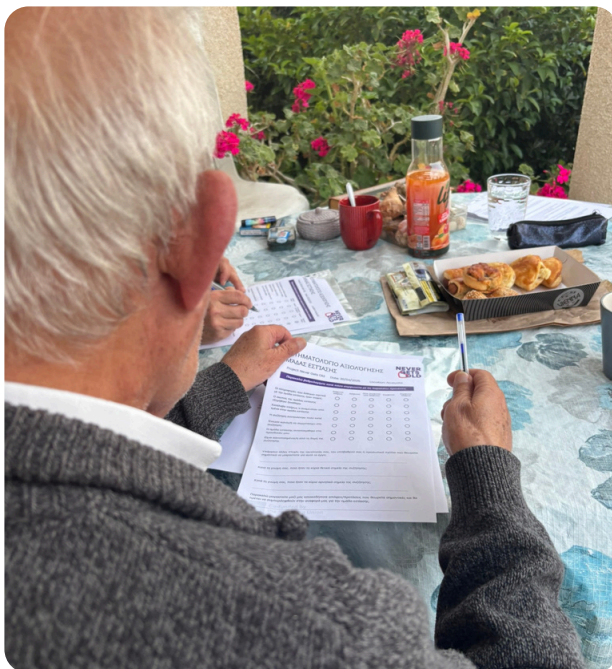
Divergent Perspectives: Cultural and Historical Nuances

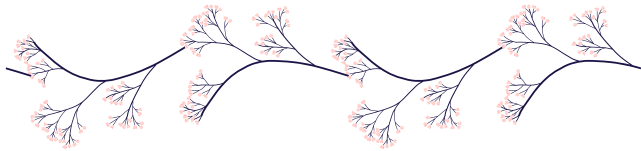
While the commonalities are strong, results showed also for some differences in how aging and sexuality are navigated depending on national history, religious influence, and social openness.

The Weight of Religion vs. Secular Rebellion

In some countries, sexual expression is still heavily filtered through a moral or religious lens, whereas in others, it is seen as a continuation of political and personal freedom.

- **Romanian Perspective:** Discussions are often constrained by "arch-Catholic" or traditional frameworks where sexuality is still viewed as a taboo or potentially a sin. Discussions addressed how the younger generation (the participants' own children) often acts as a moral police, preventing older adults from pursuing new relationships. This sparked a debate on the right to private life versus traditional family expectations.
- **German Perspective:** Many participants linked their current sexual autonomy to the sexual-political freedom struggles of the 1970s, viewing aging as a form of continued rebellion against conservative norms.





Visibility of LGBTQ+ Ageing

The presence, or absence, of queer voices marked a major difference in national reporting, reflecting the safety and level of progress in different regions.

- **French/German Perspective:** Results pointed out a "double isolation" or "double exclusion" (being old and queer), but actively include these voices as central to the project.
- **Cypriot Perspective:** An absence was noted; no LGBTQ+ individual participated within events and they seemed difficult to reach, reflecting a culture where coming out in later life still remains to be connected with stigma and fear.

Internalised Ageism vs. Active Ageing

The emotional reaction to the ageing body varied from *self-discrimination* to a *proactive lifestyle approach*.

- **Portuguese Perspective:** A unique emphasis was placed on the challenges of seeing one's own body change.
- **German Perspective:** Conversely, participants often felt younger than their chronological age and challenged the barrier of 60.

"As a lesbian pensioner, I feel being 'outside' twice."
Participant Germany

"My father was old when he was 50. And if you see 50 at some point today, he's not old."
Participant Germany

"I talk about myself, that I look in the mirror and start to see things I don't like [...] I discriminate against myself."
Participant Portugal



The Concept of *Chosen Family*

Cultural differences in family structures influence how older adults view their support networks.

- **French Perspective:** Strong emphasis was placed on *chosen families* - long-term friends who replace biological kin - especially among gay men of the older generation who often do not have children.
- **Romanian Perspective:** The focus remained more on traditional family dynamics and the prejudices children hold against their parents finding new intimate partners.

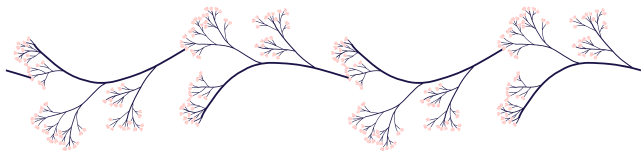


"For gay men of this generation, it was much rarer to have children. This is a major difference because when you are alone without children, it's often a great source of isolation."
Participant France

Access to Knowledge and Education

The perceived gap in education varies from a lack of terminology to a rejection of modern performance standards.

- **Portuguese Perspective:** Noted a systematic *lack of sexual education* from childhood through adulthood, leading to lifelong myths.
- **German Perspective:** Critiqued the media influence of sexuality, arguing that modern definitions are too "orgasm-fixated" and do not account for the tender touches valued in later life.



"Society needs to invest more in this theme; To show people that this is not evil. It's not a sin. That this is a natural thing." "Because, let's face it, what happens is this: you have a biology lesson, and then in biology you learn about the human body, but who talks openly about sexuality? [...] Contextualising, scientifically, there's no such thing [...]
So, you grow on what you think and what you heard."

Participants Portugal

From Historical Trauma to Biographical Rebellion

The French focus group brings to light a profound and often overlooked reality: for many older adults, sexuality is not a neutral topic but one scarred by historical trauma. The transition from silence to disclosure reveals that current intimate blocks are frequently the result of a lack of support systems and concepts of consent during the 1960s and 70s.

"I arrive today at 67 years old, I cannot have a life with a man because as soon as he gets too close, I freeze."

Participant France



Limitations and Feedback

Across countries, **some limitations were identified** that provide important context for the findings.

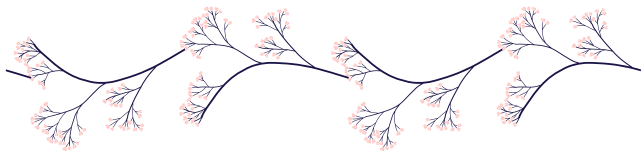
- While providing qualitative insights, the overall sample size is small and cannot be viewed as representative of the entire aging population in Europe.
- Some participants already had a baseline level of professional experience with the topic of sexuality. This means that individuals experiencing deep social isolation or those with more conservative, non-professional backgrounds may be underrepresented.
- In some countries, no LGBTQ+ participants were identified due to ongoing social stigma, while in others, recruitment through networks may have excluded those who are not "out" in their communities.

The **feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive**, highlighting the sessions' role not just as a research activity but as a vital social outlet.

- Participants across several countries consistently rated the clarity of information, moderation, and structure as 5/5.
- Feedback emphasised that the warm, private atmosphere and respectful facilitation allowed participants to overcome initial shame and speak openly.
- Addressing Isolation: Participants used the sessions to address social isolation, viewing the space as both a research setting and a social opportunity.
- Many participants expressed a strong interest in continuing their involvement with the project.

Conclusion

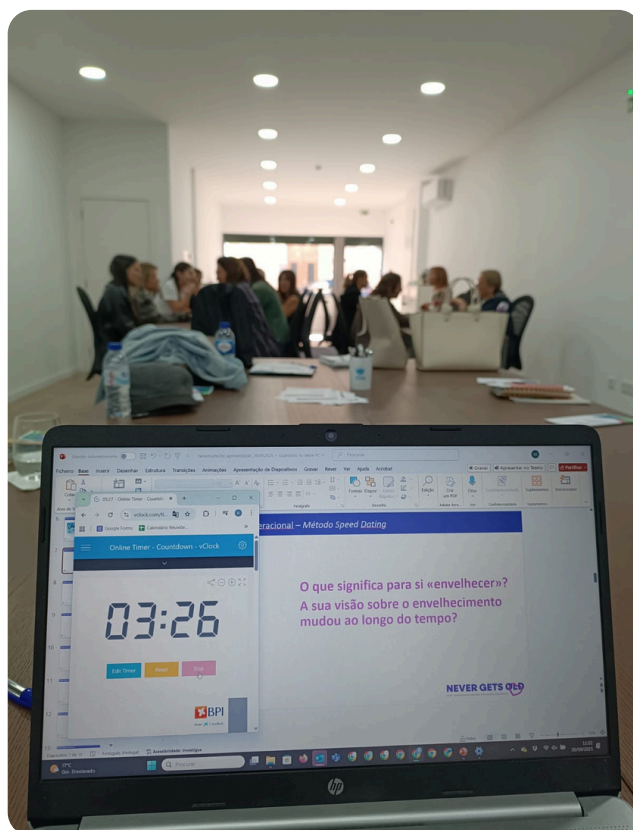
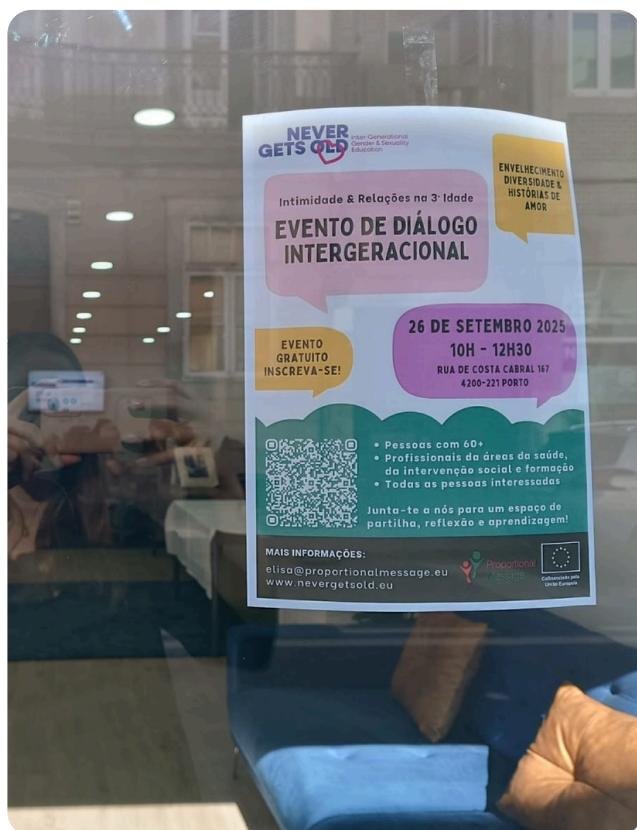
The focus groups demonstrate that while older adults across Europe claim their right to intimacy and sexual identity, they are frequently affected by cultural silence, institutional neglect, and internalised ageism. The "sound barrier" of age - often perceived as 60 - remains a point where society frequently chooses to stop seeing the individual as a sexual being. To move forward, these sessions highlighted that empowerment can only succeed if healthcare, care institutions, and public discourse actively create spaces where sexuality in later life is recognised as an integral part of quality of life.



Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions: Exchanges and Insights

The Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions (IDS), implemented **between September and November 2025**, represented a dynamic phase of the Never Gets Old project, moving from individual reflection to active, cross-generational exchange. These sessions were designed to break the silence surrounding sexuality and aging by bringing together older adults (*experts of experience*) and younger people - primarily healthcare students and young professionals (*experts of future care*).

Using the **Speed Dating Methodology**, the IDS created a unique social laboratory where participants could challenge their own ageist assumptions. The results across all partner countries demonstrate that when a safe, non-judgmental space is provided, generations are eager to learn from one another. Dialogues revealed that while younger people often hold the "technical" vocabulary for modern diversity, older adults provide biographical depth that can support to transform professional care into person-centered support.



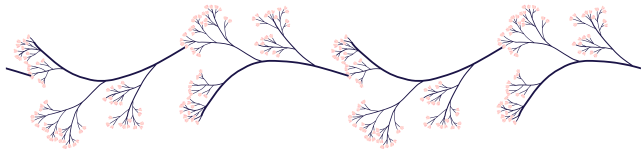


Speed Dating Methodology

The *speed dating* methodology is an interactive dialogue format designed to facilitate conversations between participants. Within the framework of the Never Gets Old project, this method was adapted for IDS to encourage open exchange between older adults and professionals on topics such as ageing, identity, relationships and sexuality.

Participants engaged in a series of short, guided one-to-one conversations, each lasting a fixed amount of time (e.g. 5 minutes), before rotating to a new dialogue partner. Guiding questions supported discussion while allowing personal reflection. This format lowers barriers to participation, reduces pressure associated with large-group discussions, and creates multiple opportunities for diverse perspectives to be heard within a safe and respectful environment.

The speed dating approach proved particularly effective in addressing sensitive topics, as it promotes equality between participants, encourages active listening, and enables the sharing of experiences without requiring exposure to the group. A detailed description of the adapted speed dating methodology can be found in the **Never Gets Old IDS Guide**, which will be published on [the project website](#).



Participants across Partner Countries

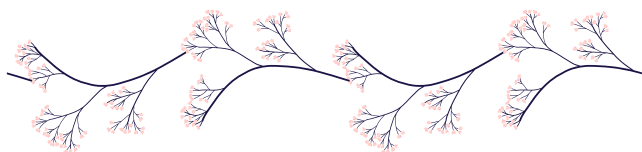
Across Germany, Romania, France, Cyprus, and Portugal, a total of 8 IDS events were organised, engaging **119 participants**. The sessions were characterised by high diversity in age, ranging from 18 to 88 years old, and a strong representation of the healthcare sector.

- **Germany:** Held two distinct sessions. One, organised by the *Verein Niedersächsischer Bildungsinitiativen e.V.*, focused on nursing assistant students in Göttingen, many of whom were migrants, adding a rich intercultural layer to the dialogue. The second one, held by the *Freie Altenarbeit Göttingen e.V.*, was part of the Queer Culture Days, specifically promoting a safe space for LGBTQ+ intergenerational exchange.
- **Romania:** Conducted by *Societatea Română Alzheimer* at a day center for the elderly, pairing beneficiaries with young resident doctors specialising in psychiatry and geriatrics. This clinical-social mix allowed for a direct challenge to the "medicalised" view of aging.
- **France:** Organised a hybrid session in Bordeaux that brought together LGBTQ+ elders and medico-social professionals by *Le Girofard*. Creative icebreakers like *draw your partner* were used to lower barriers before diving into sensitive topics.
- **Cyprus:** *The Learning Edge* paired older adults with young healthcare professionals, focusing on bridging the gap between clinical duty and the emotional needs of older adults.
- **Portugal:** *Proportional Message* carried out three sessions with a mix of professionals and older adults, focusing on self-reflection and the importance of playful approaches to education, such as discussing game-show formats to discuss sex toys.



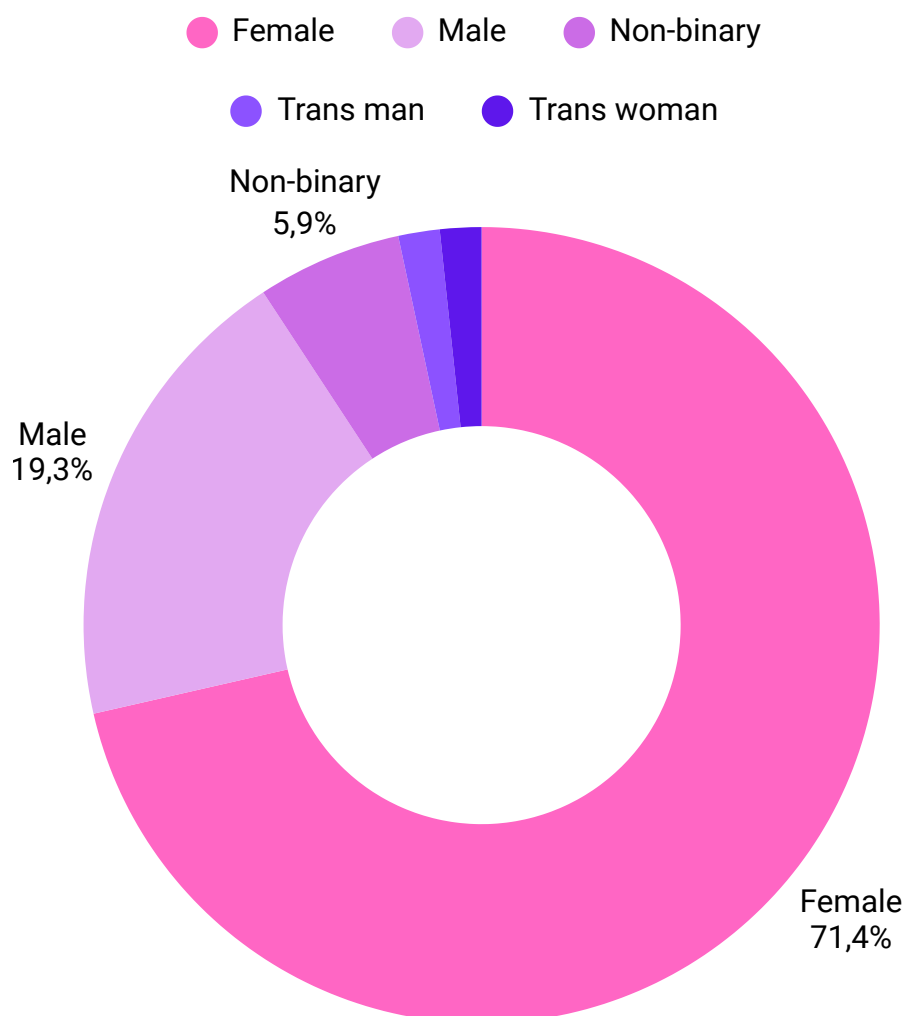
"I was surprised that even very young people have problems talking openly about sexuality."
Participant Germany





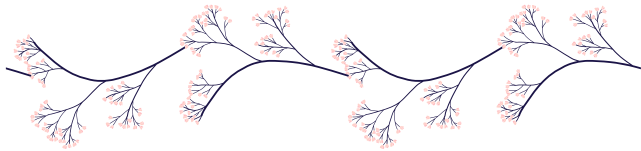
Summary of IDS Participation Data

Country	Number	Age Range	Key Participant Profiles	Setting/Context
	16	29–75	Health care professionals, migrants	Vocational school for nursing care
	19	19–83	Various professionals, LGBTQ+ community	Queer Culture Days
	17	25–87	Resident doctors, elderly beneficiaries	Elderly Day Center
	23	19–82	LGBTQ+ community, social professionals	Hybrid event (F2F + Zoom)
	16	18–80	Healthcare professionals & older adults	Structured workshop
	28	24–88	Social professionals & older adults	Three dedicated IDS events
Total	119	18–88	National variations	National variations



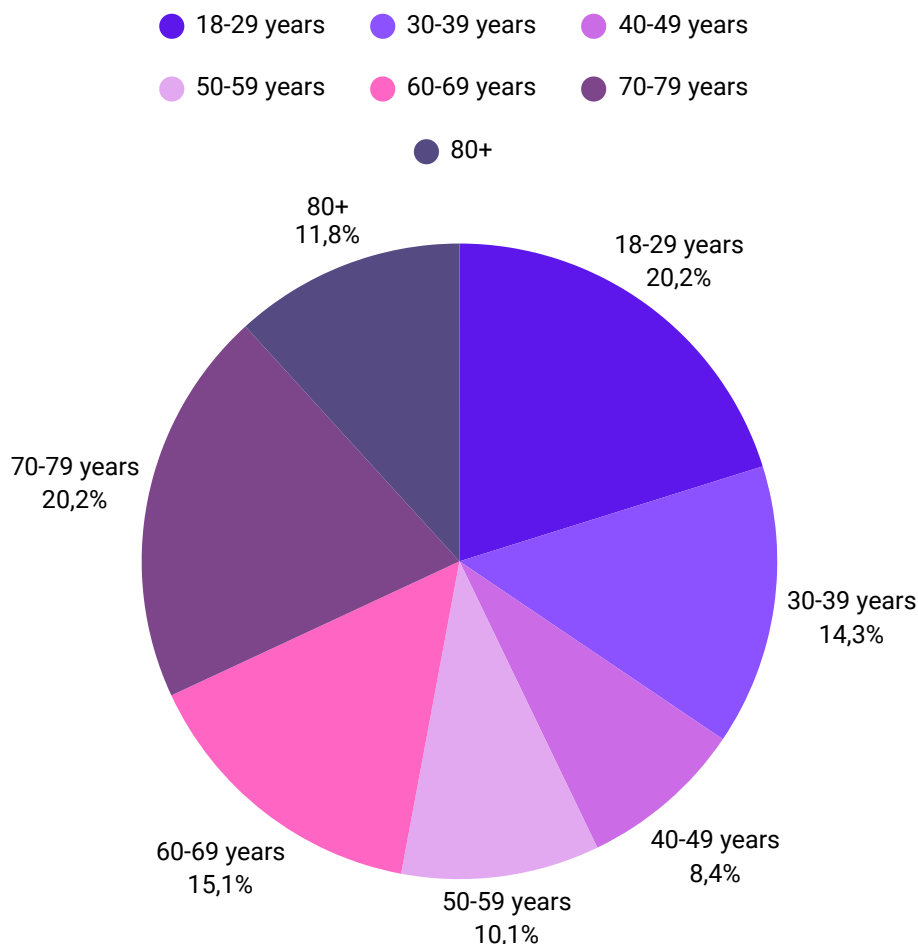
The gender distribution of the 119 participants shows a significant majority of female-identifying individuals (85). This high female participation aligns with broader trends in the healthcare and social care sectors, where women are often overrepresented. While nearly 20% of participants were male (23), the sessions succeeded in creating an inclusive environment for gender-diverse individuals. Across all events, 7 non-binary participants, 2 trans men, and 2 trans women participated.

While these numbers are smaller in absolute terms, their presence is vital for the project's mission of addressing the *double invisibility* faced by LGBTQI+ individuals in later life. This diversity ensured that the dialogues moved beyond a cis-normative framework, allowing for an exchange on how gender identity intersects with the aging process and institutional care.



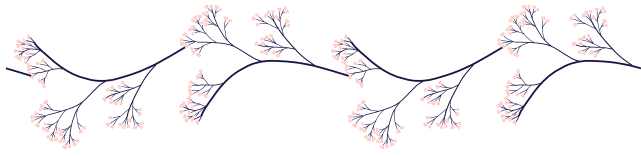
The age distribution of the IDS participants reflects a balanced intergenerational sample. The U-shaped distribution, with high numbers at both the younger and older ends of the spectrum, is the ideal configuration for an intergenerational project. It ensured that the *speed dating* and dialogue formats were supported by a sufficient number of peers from different life stages, allowing for a comparison of how fears, hopes, and societal taboos regarding sexuality evolve over a 60-year age span.

"They [younger queer people] gave me a vocabulary, a way to name things that for years I had inside me but I didn't know how to express."
Participant France





Country	Examples for Questions asked during IDS Events
Germany (VNB)	• Have you ever seen or experienced someone being treated differently because of their age? • Would you feel comfortable talking to nurses and doctors about your sexual identity? • How would you define sexuality after 60?
Germany (FaGö)	• How did you imagine becoming older would be like when you were younger? How was it really? • How did your understanding of sexuality and gender identity change during your lifetime? • In your opinion, how do age discrimination and stereotypes affect the access to sexual health care for older adults?
Romania (SRA)	• Why do you think some people are afraid of the ageing process? How could this fear be transformed into something positive? • What could young people learn from older adults about intimacy, romantic relationships, or even sexuality? Do you think sexuality is discussed today in a different way compared to the past?
France (LG)	• If your grandparents or parents were your age today, what would they think about gender diversity and related events? • What does it mean to you to feel visible and recognised in your identity?
Cyprus (LE)	• What does <i>getting older</i> mean to you? • How would you react if a close family member announces they are gay or trans? • How do the media affect your view of older people?
Portugal (PM)	• Have you noticed any differences in how people talk about ageing depending on their gender, background or sexual orientation? • What would a care home need to consider in order to provide a good service to older LGBTIQ+ people?



Results: Common Themes

The primary outcome was the dismantling of mutual prejudices through direct contact.

- **The Expertise Shift:** Younger participants (often healthcare students or social professionals) brought technical knowledge of modern concepts like gender fluidity and non-binary identities. Older participants provided the biographical narrative, explaining how these identities were lived (or hidden) during decades of different social norms.
- **Universal Fears of Loss:** Both generations shared a profound fear of the loss of autonomy. For the young, this meant for example the freedom to travel or choose their careers; for the old, it was the fear of losing the ability to no longer be able to do many things in old age, losing mobility, or being able to choose intimate partners and privacy in care homes. Loneliness was identified by both groups as a major health risk, with consensus that emotional connection is as vital as medical care. Fear of old age has also been linked to fear of increasing diseases as we age.
- **The Myth of Conservatism:** A major result across Germany, Romania, and Portugal was the surprise expressed by young professionals at how modern and open the older generation's views on sexuality actually were. In Romania, resident doctors were surprised by the elderly's openness to discussing sexuality as a fundamental human right. In Germany, students noted that older adults were often more *relaxed* about diversity than the students' own middle-aged parents.

"I always waited to feel as old as I saw my father when he was 50. That feeling never came. Now I'm slowly getting a sense of it. Today, you no longer feel as old as the number that precedes it."

Participant Germany





Divergent Topics and National Curiosities

While the format was similar, the specific topics that sparked the most debate varied slightly by country.

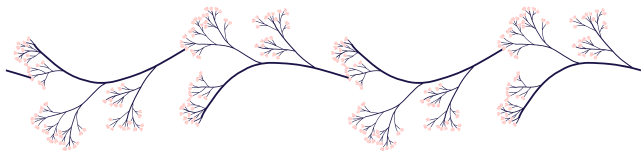
- **Germany:** Because many young nursing students in the German IDS had migrant backgrounds, a unique curiosity arose regarding family structures. Participants discussed how in some cultures, older adults remain central to the household, preventing the "sexual isolation" often seen in Western European nursing homes. After asking the question: *"Imagine you are organising a party for all generations. What would you consider to make everyone feel welcome?"*, it became clear that these aspects are taken more into account in other cultures since that this question does not arise in this form. The "old" are simply always there.

"I think there is a big difference compared to Germany; in our country, sexuality plays a major role; it doesn't matter how old you are, whether you're 60, 70, or 80."

Participant Germany from Dominican Republic

- **Portugal:** A curiosity in the Portuguese sessions was the discussion of pleasure tools (sex toys). This led to a discussion on whether older adults allowed themselves to seek pleasure outside of procreation or traditional marriage. Another focus of the discussion was about the problematic fact, that many LGBTQ+ adults feel like going back into the closet when entering a elderly home.

- **France:** In the French sessions, a key tension (and eventual resolution) was how younger queer people often view older adults as historical relics rather than active peers. On the contrary, younger adults were sometimes perceived as "overly theoretical" or disconnected from historical struggles. The result was a move toward intergenerational solidarity within the queer community. At the same time, the *youth cult* was part of the discussion, since many older gay men reported feeling invisible in gay bars and clubs. Several participants described being told they were "too old" for certain events or spaces. Trans and non-binary participants highlighted unique challenges in accessing appropriate healthcare.



- **Cyprus:** A specific focus in Cyprus was how media creates a *caricature* of older people, either as asexual grandparents or sometimes as hyper-active seniors, leaving no room for the realistic reality of aging and desire. It was noted that older adults are usually portrayed in advertisements for medications, and it is rare to see them depicted as enjoying life or as being healthy couples in romantic or intimate situations.
- **Romania:** A unique result in the Romanian sessions was the tension between the *Expertise of Silence* (the lifelong habit of older adults not discussing intimacy) and the *Professional Duty* of young resident doctors. The dialogue revealed that older participants often wait for a moral permission from professionals to speak about their needs.

"My parents are 60+ and now travel across Europe, yet no TV show or film highlights the carefree years of older people enjoying life through travel and activities." "My parents are still very romantic with each other, they are hugging and kissing, yet on TV we never see this tenderness."

Participants Cyprus





Key Aha! Moments

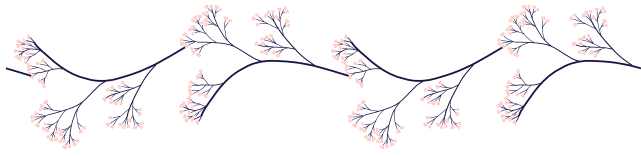
- **The Privacy Realisation:** A student from Germany realised that knocking on a door in a nursing home is not just a formality, but a protection of the resident's right to intimate space; a concept that became real after talking to an older participant about their need for privacy.
- **The Terminology Bridge:** Some older participant struggled with newer terminology (for example non-binary or pansexual). Younger participant were able to help older ones understand these modern terms not as rigid political labels but through experience; similar to using the metaphor of *loving the soul, not the shell*.
- **The Consent Shift:** A younger professional from Portugal realised that consent in a care home isn't just about medical procedures, but about respecting a resident's choice to have a partner visit or to express their gender identity.
- **The Peak of Love:** During a dialogue in Romania on what the younger generation could learn from older adults, a shift in perspective occurred regarding the meaning of intimacy. While younger participants often viewed sexuality through the lens of modern openness or physical health, older participants redefined it as a "chain that strengthens connection." They shared that for them, sexual intimacy is not just an activity but the *peak of love* that must be supported by constant, small demonstrations of affection and humour. This moved the conversation from a clinical or technical discussion to one about lifelong emotional sustainability.

"I expected them to be shocked by talks of non-binary identities, but they were more interested in how it affects a person's happiness. This fact changes how I will approach my future patients."

Nursing Student Germany

"I was afraid to talk because I thought I'd be judged. Instead, I felt like a teacher. It was the first time in years someone asked for my opinion on love."

Participant Portugal



Limitations and Feedback

While the IDS successfully facilitated dialogue, **some limitations** were identified:

- In Germany, Cyprus, and Portugal, the time slots allocated for the *speed dating* rounds were reported as too tight, preventing deeper exploration of sensitive topics.
- Language barriers and the volume of documentation (consent forms, used questionnaires) were noted in Germany and Portugal as potential barriers.
- Several reports highlighted a lack of gender and identity diversity; for example, the Portuguese sessions had very low male representation (2 out of 28).
- In Cyprus, some older participants struggled with abstract or conceptual questions, requiring facilitators to rephrase them in more concrete terms.
- In Romania and Portugal, changing pairs frequently was noted to sometimes limit the continuity of more personal disclosures.





Despite these reports, the **feedback** from participants was overwhelmingly positive:

- Participants in all countries rated the sessions highly, with Romanian and Cypriot participants particularly praising the safe, respectful, and non-judgmental atmosphere.
- In Germany, participants especially valued the exchange between different cultures, noting that it promoted empathy and challenged individual thinking.
- Healthcare professionals in Romania and Cyprus described the sessions as *eye-opening*, noting that the dialogue helped them better understand the emotional and social challenges older adults face
- A recurring theme in the feedback was the request for follow-up events and longer workshops to allow for even more in-depth learning on sexuality and diversity.



Conclusion

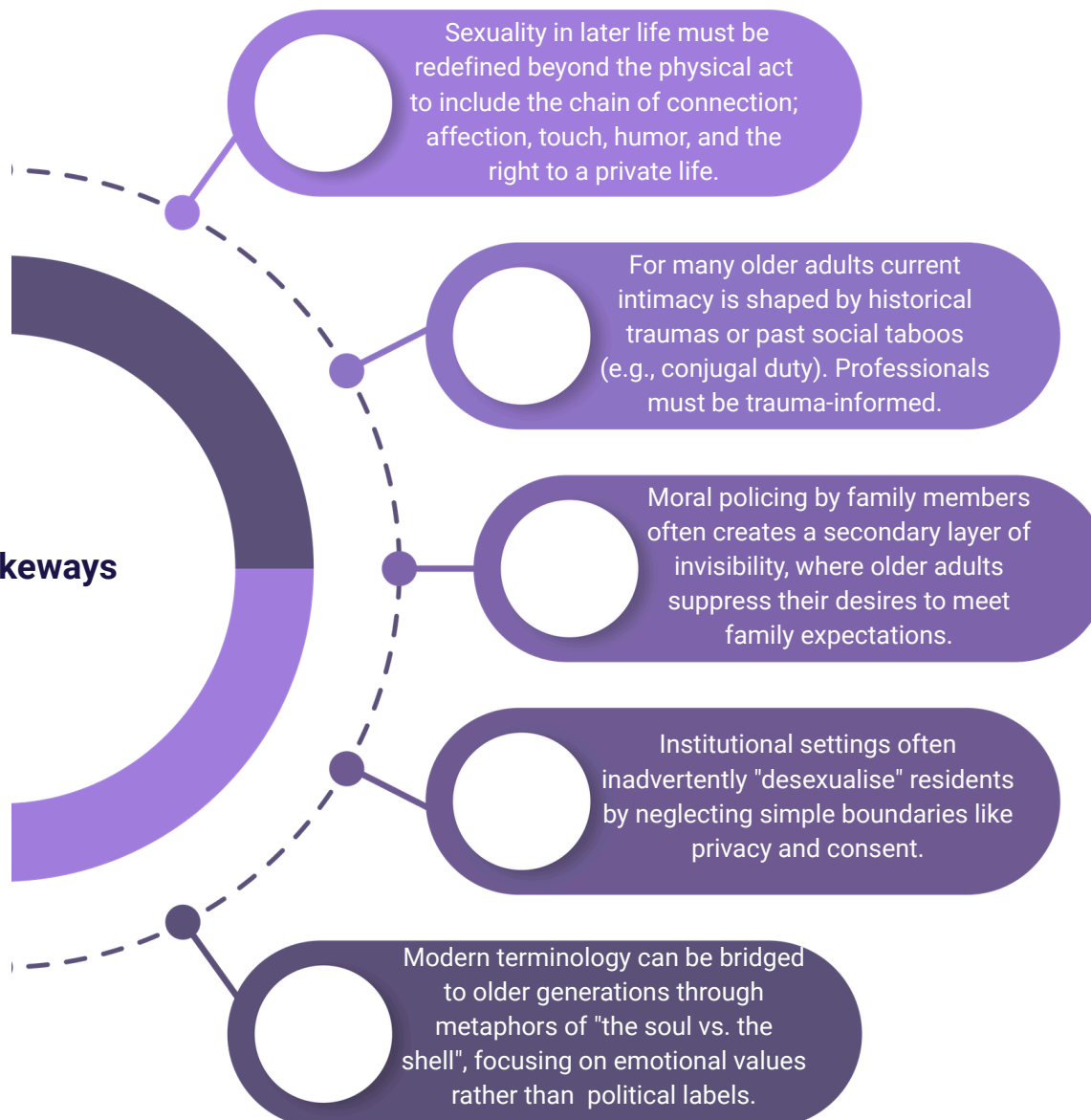
The IDS demonstrated that when a structured and safe environment is provided, generations are eager to bridge the gap of silence regarding sexuality and aging. The events successfully challenged age-related stereotypes, with younger professionals gaining biographical insights and older adults feeling visible. The results underscore a universal need for specialised training that moves beyond clinical care to address the fundamental human rights of intimacy, consent, and identity in later life.

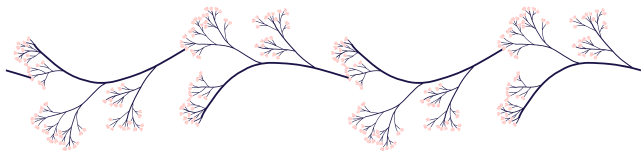


Final Conclusions

The findings from Germany, Romania, France, Cyprus, and Portugal confirm that sexuality and intimacy do not vanish with age; rather, they are often silenced by societal ageist structures. The project demonstrated that the primary barrier is not a lack of interest from older adults, but a lack of safe spaces and a professional language to discuss these needs. While younger generations bring a new vocabulary of *fluidity* and *rights*, older adults provide the *biographical expertise* that proves intimacy is a lifelong pillar of mental health and dignity. The sessions proved that intergenerational dialogue is a powerful intervention tool, reducing professional anxiety in young caregivers while restoring a sense of visibility and social agency to older adults.

Key Takeways





Recommendations for Professionals

Communication	<i>Don't wait, initiate.</i> Use permission-giving language. Instead of waiting for a resident to bring up intimacy, include it as a standard part of quality-of-life assessments.
Privacy	<i>The Knock Rule.</i> Respecting physical space is the first step in respecting sexual autonomy. Ensure that private time is defended as a fundamental right in care settings.
Training	<i>Practical Scripts.</i> Professionals need training not just in theory, but in the practical language of how to respond to sexual expressions or LGBTQ+ identities without judgment.
Family Mediation	<i>Educating the Youth.</i> Work with the families of older adults to challenge the "asexual" grandparent stereotype, helping children support their parents' autonomy.
Inclusivity	<i>Diverse Representation.</i> Ensure that brochures, décor, and intake forms explicitly represent diverse sexual orientations and gender identities to signal a safe space.

COMING SOON:

Building on the insights generated through the **National Focus Groups** and **Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions** (IDS), the Never Gets Old partnership is currently finalising two key outputs that will further strengthen the project's impact and sustainability.

The **IDS Guide** will provide a structured and practical framework for planning, facilitating and evaluating intergenerational dialogue sessions on ageing, sexuality and diversity. It will include methodological guidance, facilitation tips, ethical considerations, ready-to-use materials and practical recommendations derived directly from the experiences gathered across partner countries. The Guide aims to support educators, healthcare professionals and organisations in replicating high-quality dialogue sessions in diverse national and institutional contexts.

The **Never Gets Old Training Programme** will offer a comprehensive learning pathway for adult educators and professionals, integrating eight **AgeWise Handbook** modules into a coherent training format. The programme will combine theoretical input, reflective exercises and applied tools to strengthen inclusive, person-centred practice when addressing sexuality and identity in later life.

Both resources will be published on the [project website](#) and will remain freely accessible, ensuring long-term usability and continued impact beyond the project's duration.



Co-funded by
the European Union



Inter-Generational
Gender & Sexuality
Education

FOLLOW THE PROJECT!



[Never Gets Old](#)



[@nevergetsold.project](#)



[www.nevergetsold.eu](#)



This report by the Never Gets Old project is licensed under CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0. To view a copy of this licence, visit: [Creative Commons – Attribution-Noncommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International – CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). This licence requires that re-users give credit to the creator. It allows re-users to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, for non-commercial purposes only. If others modify or adapt the material, they must license the modified material under identical terms.



Verein Niedersächsischer
BILDUNGSINITIATIVEN e.V.
| Geschäftsstelle Göttingen |



SOCIETATEA ROMÂNĂ
ALZHEIMER



Centre LGBTI+ de Bordeaux,
Nouvelle Aquitaine



Powered by CARDET

