

OLDER ADULT UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES (OUAPS) IN SPAIN: A SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL AND POLITICAL CHALLENGE. RESULTS FROM THE ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES IN SPAIN¹.

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I. INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH PRESENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The first Older Adult University Programmes (OAUPs) started operating in Spain during the 1993-94 academic year. The idea was to satisfy the learning and education needs of citizens over 50 years of age, thus facilitating the response to a growing demand for training among this large social group.

The vast majority of these citizens wished then and still wish now to carry out activities linked to their personal development and to the improvement of their personal and interpersonal relationships, but also to update knowledge, to study, and to use the new languages and tools that can allow them to assume an active role and fulfil the last requirements imposed by the Information and Knowledge Society. Additionally, for some of them, it was an opportunity to attend classes at University for the first time, with no limitations whatsoever and, in many cases, the possibility to access other university studies leading to official degrees and diplomas.

More than ten years later, in 2006, when the *AEPUMA (Análisis y Evaluación de los Programas Universitarios para Mayores* —Analysis and Evaluation of University Programmes for Older Adults—) project was developed, this initiative had become an outstanding socioeconomic phenomenon; so much so that most Spanish universities, both public and private, have incorporated university studies for older adults (53 universities impart OAUPs at present), with a growing demand and acceptance (they serve over 25,000 students over 50 years of age). This demand has very often generated some specific needs in terms of methodology, teaching/learning and academic service management, and organisation which cannot be properly met due to the shortage of resources, which makes it impossible to admit all the members of the population interested to whom these educational schemes are addressed.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Older Adult University Programmes (OAUPs) started operating in the early 1990s with the valuable support of Social Administrations such as: the Ministry for Work and Social Affairs (*IMERSO*); the Social Service Departments of various Autonomous Communities (Regions); and other types of public or private institutions (foundations and banks). Universities became the key tool to implement these projects, a task to which they were supposed to dedicate the academic efforts required for the programmes to develop with enough quality guarantees.

¹ The paper presented here forms part of a research study (AEPUMA) led by the University of Alicante in which 19 Spanish Universities have collaborated: University of Alicante; U. of La Laguna, U. León; U. Jaime I de Castellón; U. Autónoma Madrid; U. Granada; U. Pontificia Salamanca; U. Complutense Madrid; U. Santiago; U. Burgos; U. Lleida; U. Málaga; U. Castilla la Mancha; U. Baleares; U. Girona; U. Extremadura; U. Pontificia de Comillas; U. Miguel Hernández Elche; U. Murcia.

Nearly from the very beginning, a need arose to coordinate the different initiatives in progress. For this reason, it was decided that National Encounters should be held in order to discuss common methodologies and academic management systems and share experiences that could help to solve problems specific to these teaching programmes. Nine National Encounters have been carried out so far, in which all sorts of topics of interest related to the development and operation of OAUPs have been dealt with. Among them stood out as being particularly fruitful those held in Alicante (2002), San Lorenzo de El Escorial (2003) and Coreses –province of Zamora– (2004).

During the 6th National Encounter in Alicante, the participating universities made an attempt to propose and agree a model-framework that could facilitate a consensus on the basic academic and organisational criteria that these training initiatives should follow. The 7th Encounter in San Lorenzo de El Escorial was dedicated to a reflection on possible educational policies that could be undertaken. As for the 8th National Encounter held in Coreses (province of Zamora), it mainly focused on the topic of lifelong learning. In addition to these Encounters, other national and international events such as Seminars, Technical Workshops, Work Meetings (in Granada, Seville, Salamanca, Palma de Mallorca or Murcia, among other places) have been organised for the purpose of dealing with topics of interest related to university studies for older adults in Spain and other countries.

In parallel with the celebration of those Encounters, significant steps were made to encourage the collaboration of universities in these areas. This is why a *Comisión Nacional de Programas Universitarios para Mayores* (National Board for Older Adult University Programmes) was created during the 5th National Encounter held in El Puerto de la Cruz (Tenerife) in 2001. One of the roles of this Board was to try and ensure that these study programmes would be incorporated into the then future Universities Act (*LOU* by the Spanish initials) which was being prepared and about to be approved by the Spanish Government, after which it would be sent to the Parliament for its final approval. The Board included not only the representatives of some selected Universities but also a representative of the IMSERSO and another representative of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (hereinafter, *MECD*, by the Spanish initials). The Board carried out a series of tasks and completed another assignment it had received: to create a national Association, which gathered all the Universities offering Programmes for older adults and interested in working together with the aims of sharing methodological experiences as well as pedagogical and organisational criteria and adopting institutionalisation and harmonisation measures. Some time later, more precisely in February 2004, the *Asociación Estatal de Programas Universitarios para Mayores (AEPUM²)*—National Association of University Programmes for Older Adults— was officially established in the MECD offices. 31 universities (58% of those offering OAUPs in Spain) currently form part of AEPUM, which has as one of its main goals to develop activities that can help to improve this already sufficiently consolidated educational offer.

Therefore, ever since OAUPs started functioning, attempts have been made to set up communication and coordination channels and to collect information about the activities carried out by the different universities in this field. However, we had to wait until 2004 to see the presentation of the first research proposal within the framework of the public call of the *ANECA (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación y Calidad)* —National Evaluation and Quality Agency— an autonomous body linked to the *MECD*. This proposal had as its aim to perform an overall, detailed analysis of the considerable demand for university education that universities were trying to cater for with limited resources and without a

² All the information about national encounters, previous work at universities, background and the constitution of AEPUM can be found at www.AEPUMayores.org

proper regulation (the modification of the Universities Act was about to be completed at the time). The objective was to prepare a global, exhaustive report that could gather all the Spanish universities imparting these programmes so that a regulation for their later development could be established. This report was not successful at the ANECA call, but the work that led to its preparation soon materialised in the organisation of the First Technical Workshop in Alicante³, which turned out to be the starting point for the AEPUMA project. The contributions resulting from that workshop led to the consolidation and definition, in January 2005, of the working proposals made by the universities interested in integrating into their organisational and academic structures specific teaching programmes for students above 50, along with the rest of study programmes associated with lifelong learning. Last but not least, this report sought to elaborate a number of proposals meant to be incorporated into the draft of the reform of the Universities Act and, in due course, to materialise in a series of articles and provisions specifically related to Older Adult University Programmes within that Act.

All these experiences made it possible to deal rigorously with the analysis of the educational, cultural and economic significance of these OAUPs; an accurate assessment of their social repercussion; providing objective and quantifiable data; and developing consistent, reasonable proposals for the treatment, consideration and the necessary institutional support, both public and private, that these studies must have from the society in general and from the university context in particular. This was the principle behind the AEPUMA Project, which was oriented toward the fair assessment of the specific programmes for senior citizens, as an offer that responds to the need of adults over 50 years of age in all possible contexts (science, technology, education, culture, social integration and adaptation to the accelerated changes that characterise the 21st century) and within the university framework. This is done in an attempt to fulfil a particularly relevant social function, namely opening the doors of University to people of all ages, going far beyond the training of professionals, which is another of its important missions.

1.2. GENERAL RESEARCH DATA

Within this framework was published the Call for a “Grant to undertake scientific research and technological development and innovation projects, made following the Resolution by the General Director of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs of June 2, 2005” published in the June 17 issue of the Official Gazette. The AEPUMA⁴ Project was presented to this call under the direction of the University of Alicante and with the participation of 19 universities in all. A great effort was made until the last minute to incorporate all the Spanish universities which develop these programmes but, in the end, the project was presented with the nineteen universities that fulfilled all the requirements of the Call and provided the work carried out in various public and private centres in their different facilities.

We think this is a very relevant contribution because we find ourselves in a crucial moment of the 21st century, with a situation derived from the ageing of the population and the necessary, effective management of the demographic change. Now, more than before, it becomes necessary to evaluate the economic impacts and the social as well as

³ TECHNICAL WORKSHOP: “The challenges of University Programmes for Older Adults before the reform of the Universities Act”. Alicante, December 15-16, 2005. University of Alicante.

⁴ Call: National Programmes of Technologies for Health and Welfare and for Social, Economic and Legal Sciences. National Plan for Scientific Research, Development and Technological Innovation (2004-2007). Programme of Social, Economic and Legal Sciences (Ageing and Dependence): Line and/or subline for research of the sixth section of the Resolution: B.1.5. Planning, Regulation and Evaluation General Directorate, State Department of Social Services, Family and Disability. IMSERSO

educational repercussions of the implementation of a set of studies that have experienced a considerable growth and continue to have a widespread demand in Spain. It must be highlighted in this respect that the project is characterised by the wide range of universities and autonomous communities (regions) represented in it, which additionally brings the possibility of carrying out comparative studies within the different AA.CC. and university institutions.

1.3. OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY AND WORK TEAM

1.3.1 The objectives

The Project proposed to carry out an exhaustive analysis and an evaluation of the specialised teaching programmes for seniors existing at Spanish universities which are offered under the title of Older Adult University Studies.

With a previous approach from our territorial, administrative and sociological reality, the project objectives have been: a) checking the educational levels of the citizens who demand these studies; b) evaluating the new educational needs of the senior population in Spain; c) explaining the present reality of older adult university training in Spain in the areas of academic contents, methodology and teaching, management, infrastructure financing, technical and teaching resources, evaluation and results of the actions regarding students and the impact on the social context; d) analysing the existing older adult training models; e) proposing answers to the potential demand of seniors in the future, within the framework of the European Higher Education Space and lifelong learning, defined in the declarations of the Sorbonne (1998), Bologna (1999) and the Prague communiqué (2001). f) providing the Universities that offer these studies with a management and research tool that can allow them to systematise the information they generate. It all has as its aim to determine the strengths and weaknesses and the lines for improvement of OAUPs and offer suggestions for their development and consolidation by the competent socioeducational institutions.

Regarding methodology and having as a starting point the volume of information and universities that could be affected, as well as the complementariness of the techniques to be used, the following proposals were made:

1.- A quantitative analysis of the data about all the programmes that would be carried out using a questionnaire-survey elaborated after a complex preparation and validation process.

2.- Complemented with a qualitative analysis of the document sources and the data drawn from other comparative sources and from the semi-structured interviews that would be made to a weighted, random group of students and teaching staff belonging to the different programmes in the Spanish national territory. The idea was to make, within the AEPUMA Project, a more complex, exhaustive analysis, performing a global study of all the aspects that affect these studies and generating a database that can allow an objective evaluation and a contrast of this educational and social phenomenon.

This information was prepared by working commissions in accordance with a schedule for the execution, ongoing debate and validation, in sectorial and general sessions and meetings would ultimately be put at the disposal of all the universities involved in the project and of the AEPUM, from the portal of which you will be able to access that information. The main objective is to provide the Universities imparting these teaching programmes with a tool that can allow them to systematise the information they generate; seeking to identify the strengths, the weaknesses, as well as the lines of improvement for

OAUPs and future proposals for development and consolidation by the competent socioeducational bodies and institutions.

A total of 19 universities initially committed themselves to the development of the Project and thus participated in it. Because a considerable number of researchers and a large volume of administrative and technical infrastructures were needed, a decision was made to develop an on-line computer application and platform for the management of the INTRANET AEPUMA project that will meet a wide variety of needs and solve quite a few complications:

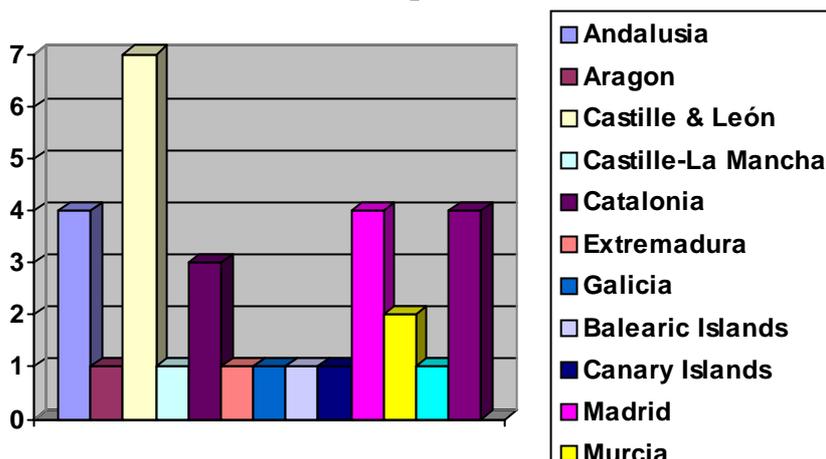
- Geographical distance: The project partners and researchers find themselves in different cities and regions in Spain, which hinders the type and amount of teamwork required.
- The treatment of the data obtained from surveys and reports: The survey questionnaires to be filled in by the universities were very numerous and extensive; therefore, we had to use some computer tool that made it possible for us to treat the data obtained properly.
- Publication of project findings: The goal/aspiration was that, at the end of the project, the results would be available to the general public so that they could be used by all the universities and organisations involved in university programmes for seniors, regardless of whether or not they participated in the research.

Initially, the involvement of this large number of universities meant an added complication but there was a strong conviction that this difficulty would be overcome, taking into account the high performance and the benefit derived from incorporating into the study the widest and most objective possible data that could reinforce the strength and weight of this project. Additionally, the INTRANET AEPUMA has made it possible to bring together data from another 12 universities, which means that AEPUMA analysed 31 Spanish universities located in 13 Autonomous Communities (Regions). To this must be added that the study has evaluated data from another five foreign centres, the ones which responded to the request for collaboration made by the University of Alicante to universities in 15 countries through surveys and interviews.

Table 1. - Participating universities by Autonomous Communities

Autonomous Community	Number
Andalusia	4
Aragon	1
Castille & León	7
Castille-La Mancha	1
Catalonia	3
Extremadura	1
Galicia	1
Balearic Islands	1
Canary Islands	1
Madrid	4
Murcia	2
Basque Country	1
Valencia	4
TOTAL	31

Graph 1



1.3.2. AEPUMA execution calendar and methodology

In order to carry out the study, theme-and-research-area-based work groups with their respective Coordinators were created under UA supervision. Stages were additionally fixed according to an execution calendar:

- *Stage A October 2005- December/January 2006*
- *Stage B – January – April 2006*
- *Stage C– May- June 2006.*
- *Stage D – June –July 2006.*
- *Stage E – July – October 2006.*
- *Stage F – November – December 2006.*
- *January 2007. Delivery of the R&D Project*

Both the methodology and the calendar have been readjusted during the research process, especially due to the diversity of institutions involved in the direct execution of the research and the drawing-up of the reports (19) as well as the complexity and volume of data and the research to be managed (31 Spanish universities and 7 foreign ones). The setting in motion of the computer infrastructure in April, once the questionnaires had been validated and the reports prepared using the information drawn from the database, This favoured a faster, more widespread development of the project.

On-line consultation and work by means of the *INTRANET AEPUMA* have been essential for all researchers. Additionally, we have simultaneously worked in the drawing-up of reports and documents based on the exploitation of data and the bibliographical consultation of documents. The working schedule within the Intranet was structured as follows:

- Validation and filling-in of questionnaires for the elaboration of the database. November 2005 –April 2006.
- Development of a questionnaire-processing application. February-April 2006
- Intranet of the AEPUMA Project. April 2006-January 2007
- Design of a public website for the Project. November-December 2006.
- Operation of the public web of the Project. May 2007.

The process of development and implementation of the computer infrastructure with the aim of obtaining greater profits and a higher performance level has developed in parallel and has gradually been adapted during the research, permitting an agile communication and exchange of data, studies, analyses, result assessments, graph elaboration and final reports. Work during this last stage of the project has focused on the preparation and design of the public website that will incorporate the research findings, after the delivery of the project and the public presentation of the results on May 24 next during a Scientific-Technical Workshop at the IMSERSO Head Office. Likewise, a complete full-text account of the research results base800-page dossier will be published.

Thanks to this methodology, it has been possible to overcome the difficulties in the study related to the territorial scattering (dispersion) of the data sources and locations, the huge amount of information to be handled, the organisation and unification of the criteria and the components of the analysis along with the calendar for the execution and revision of the project. It has also become easier to manage the tasks to be performed under the supervision of the University of Alicante, structured around the diverse study areas established in the project and distributed among the coordinators as follows: 1) University of Alicante (General Coordinator of the Project and the Comparative Study of European Models); 2) Jaume I University of Castellón (Coordinator of the study about educational levels and social impact); 3) Pontificia University of Salamanca and Complutense University of Madrid (Coordinator of the Analysis and Evaluation study: present-day reality of training); 4) University of Santiago (Coordinator of the Work Group: Models for training and proposals for development).

Those coordination units received researchers from the 19 universities involved according to their area of knowledge and their research experience. They have been responsible for the studies and analyses and have taken an active part in the functioning of AEPUMA. The ascription of these researchers was structured in regional groups in order to facilitate their connection and the tasks to be performed, though the working dynamics in the Project, through the *INTRANET AEPUMA*, and the possibility of work on-line, along with the greater or lesser degree of formal involvement by the researchers has defined the final distribution of the work teams. The level of participation in technical workshops, joint working sessions and the drawing-up of reports has been very diverse, to such an extent that some researchers and representatives of the universities which signed the project have only collaborated with the provision of data for the basic questionnaire.

The methodology and calendar of the project have had three central landmarks that have made possible the system of ongoing debates and revisions of the tasks to be performed that has led to the Final Report of the project. We are referring to the Preliminary Workshop and the two Technical Workshops, the work proceedings and contents of which can be found at www.aepumayores.org and the final stage with the celebration of the Scientific-Technical Workshop in Madrid on May 24, 2007, in which the presentation of the results on a national scale will take place.

- The Preliminary Workshop: “The challenges of University Programmes for Older Adults before the reform of the Universities Act”. Alicante, December 15-16, 2005. University of Alicante”.
- 1st Technical Workshop of the AEPUMA project: Alicante, June 28-29 2006. University of Alicante”.
- 2nd Technical Workshop of the AEPUMA project: Alicante, November 16-17, 2006. University of Alicante”.
- Technical-Scientific Workshop: Presentation of the results obtained with the AEPUMA project. IMSERSO – Madrid, May 24, 2007.

The study has been structured in the following subsections that are mentioned in the Final Research Report:

- I. The ageing of the Spanish population; facts and figures about a socio-demographic reality.
- II: Current educational levels and trends for the training of senior citizens in Spain.
- III. Present situation of older adult university training/studies (existing models)
- IV. Existing university training models and proposals for a master model before the reforms of the Universities Act and the European Higher Education Space.
- V. Educational and regulatory conclusions for the future of university training and study programmes for seniors in Spain.
- VI- Appendices: Databases, Legislation, Bibliography and legal proposals.

1.4. FIRST EVALUATIONS OF THE RESULTS DERIVED FROM THE PROJECT.

It can be concluded that this methodology has proved effective regardless of the complexity of the project in question, its ambitious aspirations and the diversity in terms of regional provenance and knowledge area of the researchers that have participated. This represents a real exercise of interdisciplinarity and integration of various research and analysis processes, instruments and criteria. The assessment of the meaning of this project could be summarised in several aspects: a) basic research; b) development of research instruments; and c) applied research.

Following this division, the most relevant results would be:

- a) Basic research:
 1. achievement of basic information with general and specific criteria about OAUPs in Spain, both nationally and internationally.
 2. data that can be verified from a historical and a present-day perspective, referring to the academic, economic and administrative context of university training for seniors.
 3. essential elements for the objective management by the educational institutions.
- b) Development of research instruments:
 1. development of a specific research methodology that can be used now and in the coming years, remaining at the disposal of the public and private institutions affected by older adult training.
 2. design of an objective evaluation tool and instrument for the evaluation of university studies for seniors which can be constantly updated in order to work in real times.
 3. development of a sophisticated and very practical infrastructure for the on-line work of multiple users and researchers, Intranet AEPUMA, into which are dumped all the data and where every university affected by the project can work with the information and the documents and exploit them. This instrument additionally remains useful for the studies and the use of specific university programmes for seniors: <http://www.aepumayores.org/egroupware>.
- c) Applied research:
 1. the possibility of preparing specific reports from these data in order to implement actions and proposals about formative contents, specific pedagogical systems, educational profiles of trainers in these teaching programmes, and the economic

resources and necessary infrastructure and regulatory developments for this training.

2. future actions and studies implementing this research
3. optimisation of the resources available until or the management and research of OAUPs.
4. implementation of the cooperation and research response: a) for the consolidation of most programmes; b) overcoming the institutional and organisational divide which exists in some programmes, due to the fact that they are not official and lack the funding and resources needed for its full development; c) encouragement of the interest in some universities and in a relevant sector of the university community that still has not assumed this training offer as an activity with an intrinsic academic value.
5. preparing of a very useful instrument both for those universities that want to use it and for the AEPUM, as well as for the researchers interested in these topics. This can be regarded as an excellent starting point to continue with the enrichment and improvement through action lines focused on the weaknesses of the research and OAUP programmes which are shown in detail in the study.

II- A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY: AGEING OF THE SPANISH POPULATION AND SPECIFIC DEMANDS FOR OLDER ADULT TRAINING

2.1 SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF THE SENIOR POPULATION

The successive achievement of a greater life expectancy has caused the accelerated increase of the percentage of senior citizens over 65 years of age in Spain, which has passed from 5 % of the population in 1900 to 20 % in 2005. This fact, which is very positive on an individual level, is clearly perverse on a social level because it brings about serious demographic, economic, social and welfare-related and cultural problems, such as: demographic exhaustion due to the absence of a generational replacement, an increased volume of the dependent passive population, increase of welfare-related expenses, prevalence of a conservative mentality, loss of quality of life. This new sociodemographic situation additionally makes it necessary for social policies to stop the classical assignment of activities to the different age groups: education for children and young people, work for the adult age and leisure for the old age.

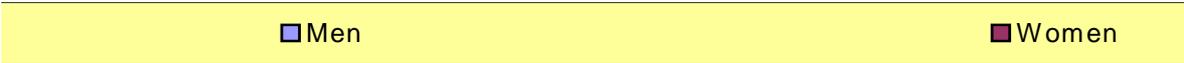
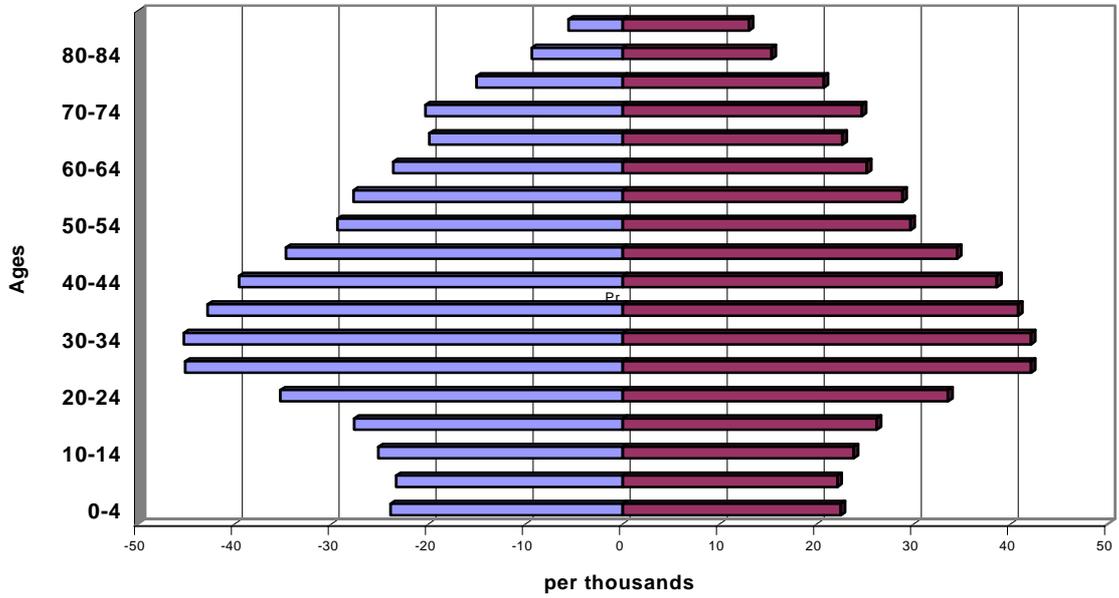
Table 2. - Spain, 1900-2001: Distribution of the population by large group ages.
Source: INE (Spain's National Statistics Institute)

Years	Under 15	Between 15 and 64	Over 64
1900	33.5	61.2	5.2
1930	31.7	62.2	6.1
1960	27.4	64.4	8.2
1981	25.6	63.1	11.3
2001	14.5	68.5	20.0

Life expectancy in Spain is situated at 78 years for males and 83.5 for females. Old age is now more important in socio-demographic terms than it used to be because, at 65 years of age, a person still has 23% of his/her life to live. Therefore, there will be a need to redefine the concept of leisure for the old age and fill it with content to fruitfully occupy the period between the sixty and eighty-odd years that average Spanish citizens currently have as their life expectancy. This population group will represent 30% of the population in 2030.

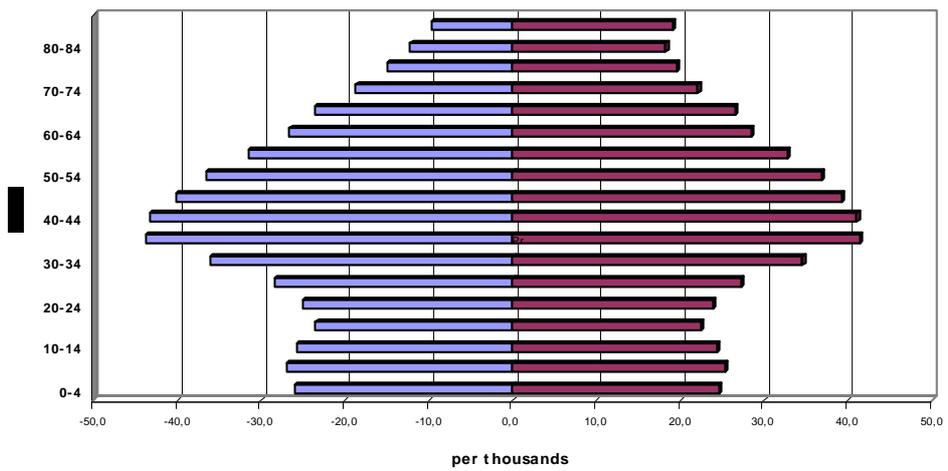
Graph 3

Spain 2005. Total population (average of the statistics)

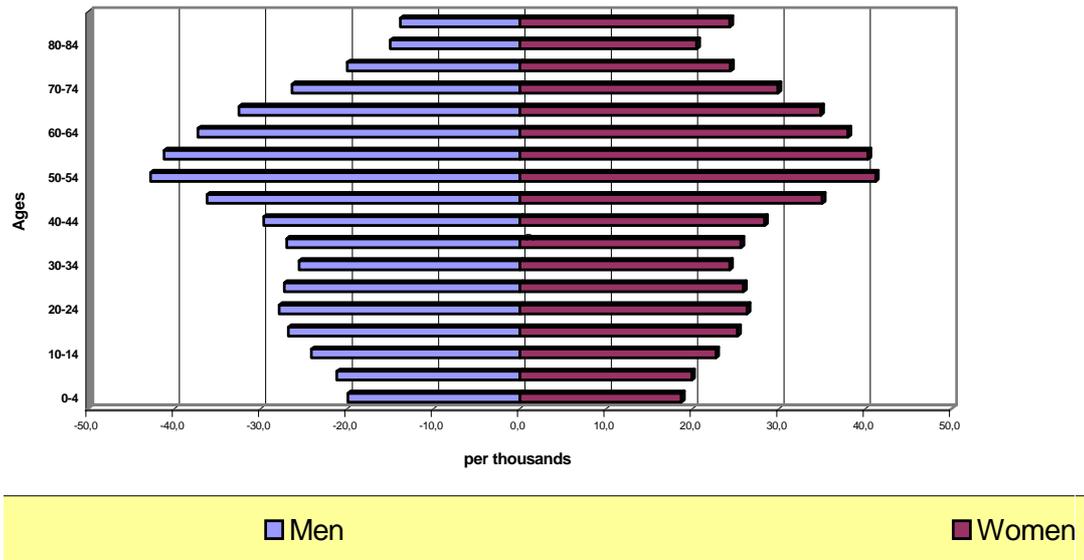


Graph 4

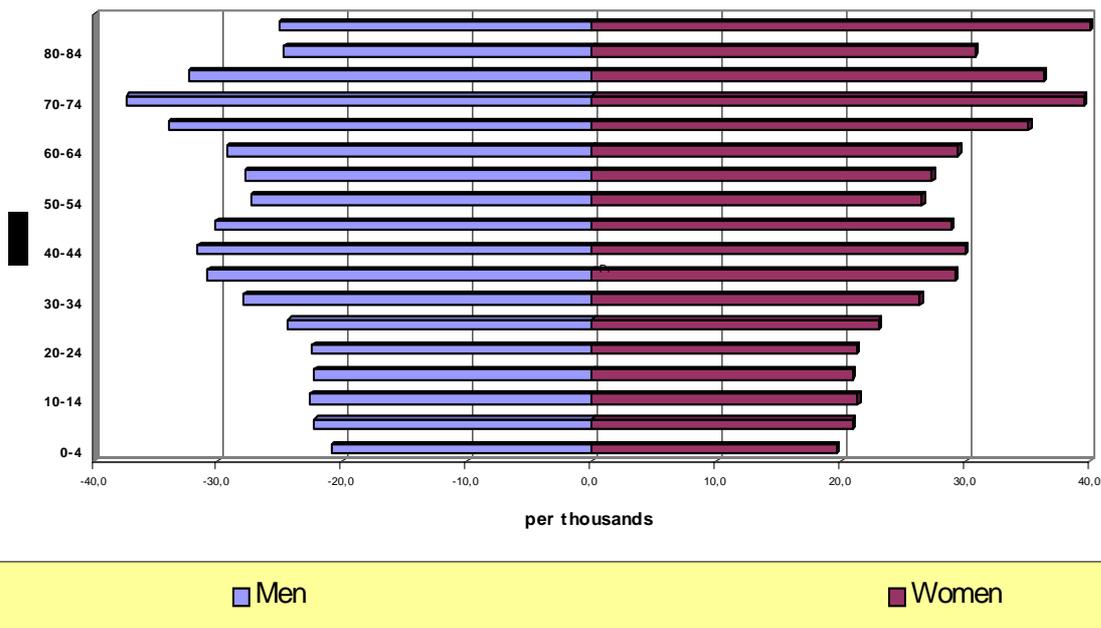
Projection of the population in Spain. Year 2015



Graph 5
Projection of the population in Spain. Year 2030



Graph 6
Projection of the population in Spain. Year 2050



Summing up, the quantitative ageing of the population is a new reality that requires important cultural, social and welfare-related changes. There will be a greater number of senior citizens, with ages above seventy-five, who after their retirement, want to remain integrated into society with a better quality of life, for which they will demand more services, as well as education and new forms of social participation.

If we add the sociological features to these demographic ones, we started even better the urgent necessity of these measures. Thus, from the analysis it can be deduced that people over 65 years of age (which may represent up to 30% of the population by 2030) live in their own home, with their spouses, children and relatives. And they want to keep this autonomous form of life to which the vast majority of the Spanish population aspires.

Another socio-demographic feature worth highlighting is the educational level of these seniors in general, which is low for the whole of the population but, before the social changes registered, the interest in training is growing.

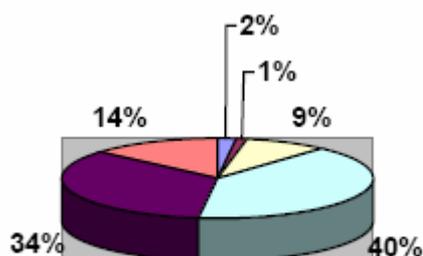
Table 4
Comparative study of training levels between 16 and 65+ years of age

	Illiterate	Incomplete Primary Studies	Primary Studies	Lower Secondary Education	Upper Secondary Education	Higher Studies
16-24	0.1%	1%	9%	41%	35%	14%
25-34	0.5%	1%	8%	30%	23%	38%
35-44	1%	3%	13%	33%	21%	29%
45-54	2%	7%	35%	25%	28%	28%
55-64	5%	15%	45%	16%	8%	11%
>65	10%	27%	45%	7%	4%	7%

The following graphs show age as a limiting factor for the educational level. Age increases the percentage of illiterates, of citizens who have not completed their primary studies; who have completed their primary studies, who have completed the lower secondary education age and who have finished the upper secondary education stages, or who have done higher studies. The indices from 65 years of age onwards show these extremes more distinctly, as can be seen in Table 4 and Graph 9).

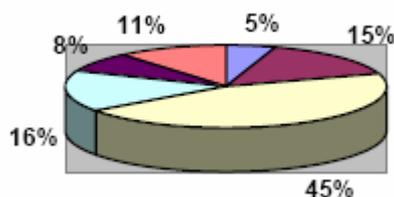
Graph 7
Educational levels between 45 and 54 years of age

2% Illiterates
1% Incomplete Primary Studies
9% Primary Studies
40% Lower Secondary Education
34% Upper Secondary Education
14% Higher Studies



Graph 8
Educational levels between 55 and 64 years of age

5% Illiterates
15% Incomplete Primary Studies
45% Primary Studies
16% Lower Secondary Education
8% Upper Secondary Education
11% Higher Studies

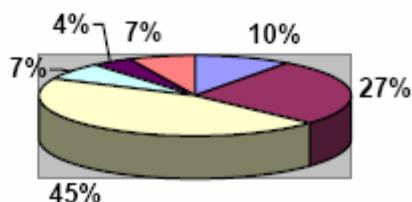


Graph 9

Educational levels above 65 years of age

27% Incomplete Primary Studies
45% Primary Studies
7% Lower Secondary Education
4% Upper Secondary Education
7% Higher Studies
10% Illiterates

The



discrimination in the access to education for reasons of gender in Spain has been another essential issue among the socio-demographic factors resulting from the analysis. Thus, sex-based differences in educational levels seem to be considerable between the low and high levels, as can be inferred from the following table.

Table 5
Sex-based comparative analysis of educational levels. Source: INE 2004.

	Illiterates	Incomplete Primary Studies	Primary Studies	Lower Secondary Education	Upper Secondary Education	Higher Studies
Males	6%	24%	46%	8%	5%	8%
Females	12%	29.5%	46%	6%	2.5%	3%

2.2 POTENTIAL DEMAND FOR LEARNING

The Potential Demand for Learning (PDL) would be formed by the whole population between 16 and 64 years of age that can access formative processes. We are referring to the period of their life cycle during which these people remain “active” as far as work is concerned and consequently need to continue educating themselves to complete their professional development. However, if the population over 65 years of age is included in this projection, PDL figures increase considerably (see Table 1.6).

Table 1.6
Projection of the Potential Demand learning (Spain 2006-2026)

Year	16-64 years No. of inhabts - / %	>65 years No. of inhabts - / %	Total Population
2006	29,707,832 – 67.5 %	7,404,260 – 16.8 %	43,995,007
2016	31,109,452 – 65.1%	8,857,956 – 18.5 %	47,780,709
2026	31,967,404 – 63.5%	10,876,681 – 21.6%	50,287,317

A distinction must be made within the PDL between those groups for which training is directly related to the access and continuity in the job and those in which education forms part of a project oriented toward personal rather professional development. So far, the social group formed by citizens over 65 years of age has been seen as economically unproductive and, therefore, basically as a source of expenditure. But the present challenge consists in understanding that a small investment made in their education today may bring substantial savings in terms of attention to dependency and healthcare

tomorrow, to which must be added that we start realising that it is an all-important sector in the creation of specialised jobs⁵.

To conclude, we can mention that at present, citizens over 50 years of age (the addresses of older adult university programmes) represent one third of the country's total population (33.1 %) and, therefore, their number largely exceeds the figures corresponding to the Spanish schools and university population. And the specific demand related to this social group will undoubtedly grow even more in the next few years.

Universities and OAUPs essentially play a role linked to education, training and integration but, additionally, at this very moment in which the Law for the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and the Attention to Dependants has just come into effect, two key aspects make that role of university training even more relevant:

1) Promotion of Personal Autonomy: an aspect that fosters permanent training because it encourages active citizenship and improves quality of life.

2) Prevention of dependency: the 7,000,000 Spanish people over 65 years of age who are not yet dependants, need a prevention policy (a lifelong training and educational policy) in order to delay the arrival of a dependency situation as much as possible.

It is obvious that no National Dependency System can assume the expenditure related to dependency on its own (without the support of other policies). Educational policies become essential in a preventive system and undoubtedly constitute a palliative solution to ageing symptoms in the country that ages the most in all Europe.

2.2.1 The analysis of the demands from a psycho-social perspective⁶

The study of the needs existing among the senior population becomes essential when the time comes to implement a specific action programme. Among the four types of needs proposed by Witkin (1991) -regulatory, subjective, objective or expressed and relative-, we are now going to examine the regulatory needs confirmed by the Universities for Older Adults.

Regulatory needs: these are the needs coming from the legal texts issued by such organisations and governments as the United Nations Organisation, which has issued the 2nd Madrid International Action Plan on Ageing (MIPAA); the European Union, which has its own adaptation of the MIPAA, along with the Recommendations and Reports of the European Commission and the Council of the Union on lifelong learning within the European Strategy as a whole; or Spain, which has developed a National Gerontology Plan and where each one of the autonomous regions has its own Old Age Plan.

MIPAA-UN, by which most of these are inspired, guarantees the pertinence of OAUPs and is articulated in three Priority Directions, among which stands out the first one: "Seniors and development". It is established in this priority direction that seniors must participate in the development processes and have access to the benefits derived from

⁵ Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, State Office for Social Services, Families and Disability (Seniors and Social Services Institute (IMSERSO)) (2006). The National Dependency System, evaluation of its effects on employment, Synthesis report, Madrid.

⁶ Analysis provided by Rocío Fernández Ballesteros, Autonomous University of Madrid, AEPUMA Project 2007, page 98.

them and no senior can ever be denied the chance to benefit from development. The following OAUP-related Themes and Objectives are thus established:

Theme 1. Active participation in society and in development (Objective 1): recognition of the social, cultural, economic and political contribution made by seniors. It materialises in the following actions:

- Providing opportunities, programmes and support to encourage older adults to participate or continue to participate in cultural, economic and political activities of social life and in lifelong learning.
- Providing information and access to facilitate the participation of older adults in mutual self-help, intergenerational community groups and opportunities to develop their potential fully.

Theme 4: Access to knowledge, education and training. This theme is completely devoted to education and establishes that education is the foundation for an active, self-realised life, which is why we need policies that guarantee lifelong learning and access to education and training, emphasising that ongoing continuous education and training is essential to ensure the productivity of both individuals and nations. Two objectives related to Universities for Seniors are also articulated within this theme:

Objective 1: Equal opportunities throughout life with respect to continuous education, training and re-training as well as to vocational orientation and service positioning.

Objective 2: Complete use of the potential and 'expertise' of people of all ages, recognising the benefits and the increased experience.

Summing up, the UN Instrumental Action Plan on Ageing, as well as all the other European, national and regional programmes, plans and actions directly or indirectly based on it support the execution of the University Programmes for Seniors.

The research undertaken within the AEPUMA Project has revealed from various sections related to ageing and cognitive functioning, learning potential, cognitive activity and everyday life as well as images of seniors that they have enough cognitive resources to follow University Programmes for Seniors. Recent research works have even proved that they have positive effects on health and cognitive functioning itself.

The results presented in this respect represent experimental treatments which have not been applied to all OAUPs. In fact, these are pilot studies that we want to systematise from this AEPUMA project in order to contribute to a better evaluation.

III- THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN TRAINING FOR SENIORS IN SPAIN.

3.1 THE UNIVERSITIES FOR OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR SPECIFIC TRAINING NEEDS.

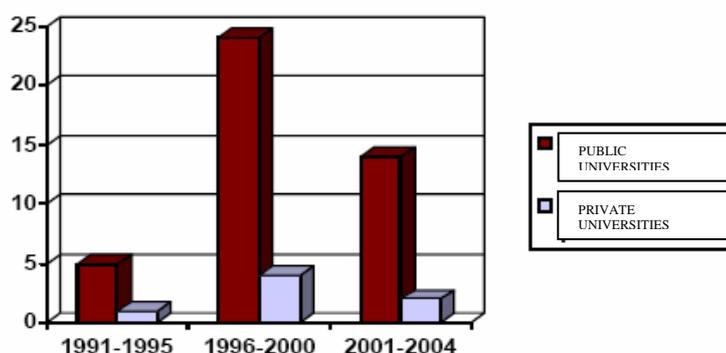
The present scenario is characterised by a massive presence of University Programmes for Seniors, all of them linked to public and private universities. This offer is differentiated from others as can be the *Universidades Populares* (Popular Universities), *las Aulas de la Tercera Edad*⁷ (Third-Age Classrooms), o *Educación Permanente de Adultos*, (Permanent Adult Education) as has been pointed out above. The differentiation is established, among

⁷ AEPUMA project, 2007. page 124.

other reasons by their academic organisation, by the study-linked research and by its international projection.

In general, a significant number of OAUPs started since the 1993-1994 academic year. They tried to meet the educational needs of people over 50, facilitating the possibilities to respond to a growing need for training, as a direct consequence of the improved quality of life levels, the social achievements and the above-mentioned sociodemographic changes which additionally meant the development of non-professionalised ongoing learning with university-level specific programmes. The great acceptance of this initiative means that in 2006, nearly all Spanish universities -53- count on OAUPs (at 40 universities are registered some 25,000 students enrolled on these OAUPs). The growing demand is so big that it is often impossible to attend to all the people interested due to resource shortages. However, the development acquired during the last few years has not been accompanied by an appropriate legislative framework that acknowledges and fosters the role of our Programmes as part of the meant to boost lifelong learning, even though lifelong learning is an important part of the EU educational policy schemes.

Graph 10
Evolution in the number of Programmes between 1991 and 2004



From the perspective of its historical development and, in contrast to what has happened in other countries, these initiatives initially arose with the support of several institutions such as the Ministry for Work and Social Welfare (IMSERSO) or the Departments for Social Welfare and Education of some Autonomous Regions, as well as from other types of public or private institutions. The basic reason for this cooperation has been the demographic phenomenon of accelerated population ageing and the demand for a more active social and cultural participation. These organisations, linked to State Social Administrations, relied on universities and asked them for support, since they are the providers of Higher Education in our country.

The University, especially by means of the Extracurricular Activity Department, has carried out one of its fundamental tasks: becoming the promoter of the creation and dissemination of critical thinking and culture between the university community and the society as a whole, in order to allow students to access an all-round education and integral development in their lifelong learning process. From this perspective, its aims are related to development-oriented cooperation, social and cultural changes, the creation and spread of critical and participative supportive cultural habits, as well as to a continuous, open and plural learning.

University education for older adults has quickly materialised in actions aimed at setting up programmes and projects and provided them with the necessary efforts and resources to develop with the quality assurance required. In order to identify, assess and meet the needs of their surrounding areas, and to contribute to solve the problems that contemporary

societies face, universities played a very significant role in consolidating the type of education demanded by these active older adults, always within their powers and by making good use of their autonomy.

Traditionally universities have been associated with “lifelong learning” in the strict sense of continuous learning, i.e. with a professionalising nature and particularly focused on constantly updating technological, scientific and educational innovation. However, for some time now, some universities have adopted a concept of lifelong education and learning aimed at improving the quality of life of older adults and promoting their participation in their immediate social environment. Yet, if university wants to play a key role in the creation of a lifelong learning culture, it must start by rethinking the structures that define and rule our current learning processes. University should not only offer efficient, appropriate and coherent learning opportunities according to the needs of society, thus building a learning “continuum” from undergraduate to lifelong and post-graduate education, but also contribute to lay the foundations that allow for the development of a society that is learning non-stop. University, as an institution, must become a “lifelong learning community”.

The transformation into genuine lifelong learning institutions requires a holistic approach that: a) supports society and its institutions, so that they can become true lifelong learning communities by themselves; b) includes academic, financial and administrative elements; c) provides structures responsible for the development of organisational, team, student and curriculum matters, and for the community commitment, and d) fine-tunes the different support structures to the new mission that universities will have in the learning and knowledge societies.

Learning must be conceived as an act of will by which older adults play the leading role in their own learning/education process, thus trying to meet their own more specific and contextualised needs. The task of teaching will be understood as the practice to help students to implement the processes in which they will take part and get involved because they want to become part of their cultural and technological environment. This participation demands a continuous socialisation, such as the steady improvement of their quality of life and the social and personal change in different contexts. In older adult education the teacher must be a specialist who cannot forget that his/her teaching task must be adapted to the needs of that specific group, promote an active role of the students and change his working and learning methods to the demands and aims put forward by the older students.

The universities and the Older Adult University Programmes (OAUPs) have met this demand and opened the doors to older adults in a more institutionalised way offering several specific programmes, which are not considered “exclusive” or competitive, but complementary to the existing programmes. To sum up, a new space for university education with a global character and aimed at older adults has been created. It is a type of learning that has nothing to do with “professionalisation” or “competitiveness” in the labour market, although one cannot rule out this possibility depending on the dynamics and changes that the labour market and the social context themselves may go through.

3. 2. FEATURES OF UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES FOR OLDER ADULTS.

3.2.1. Unity and diversity of the OAUPs in Spain.

Everybody knows that universities are “autonomous”⁸ with regard to their legal (academic, research and study freedom) and financial nature (creation, approval and management of their own budgets and assets). It is therefore obvious that each university, complying with the minimum legal requirements established, has approved different curricula both for formal education regulated by the government and for those more freely-structured learning programmes like the OAUPs have no specific rules or legislation stating or precisely indicating their contents.

From this perspective, University Programmes for Older Adults can be defined as the learning offer, preferably aimed at people over 50, in which the university has a direct participation. However, the level of involvement and participation of the university determines the different types of programmes. Therefore, the term OAUP is exclusively used for learning options which are organised by universities, which do not fall within informal education, and are in tune with the proposals of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission (2001) regarding their guidelines about lifelong learning. We are talking about the two most important modalities of learning programmes: a) Formal programmes: organised by specialised learning institutions (universities in our case), which are complemented by b) Non-formal programmes: that have a learning purpose and some sort of structure, but were not set up by universities or any other learning or training centre, instead they were founded by groups of people and non-specialised institutions (alumni associations, entities and trusts) that complement the formal programme with activities out of or in cooperation with universities.

Among the 31 programmes analysed stand out some common facts and defining traits that are going to be specified below, and, even if the diversity of the OAUPs is obvious and distinct, there is a growing trend toward unity in a series of relevant aspects, especially in the last five years. Throughout this period, Spain’s National Association of University Programmes for Older Adults (AEPUM) has tried to standardise a pattern for formal university programmes for older adults characterised by its own identity features.

3.2.2. Social and learning aims:

- Improving quality of life through knowledge and relationships that are established in the university environment in order to facilitate adaptation to technological changes and socio-cultural integration.
- Promoting the development of intergenerational relationships, thus enabling the transfer of knowledge and attitudes through experience.
- Developing the setting-up of volunteering opportunities in cooperation with Social Services and the Community Services, as well as with other institutions.
- Encourage the development of Associationism, both in university and out-of-university fields.
- Providing university education that facilitates the development of self-learning.
- Disseminating, widen or update knowledge and culture amongst older adults.
- Promoting better knowledge of the surrounding area to obtain more benefits from society’s leisure offer (cultural, physical, intellectual...).
- Favours personal development of skills and values amongst older adults from the perspective of lifelong learning.
- Facilitating access to other university studies to those people who, after participating in specific older adult education, can demonstrate sufficient training and knowledge to pursue them.

⁸ (Article 27.10 of the Constitution –B.O.E./ Spanish Official Gazette of 29 December 1978- and Article 2 of the Organic Act on Universities 6/2001 of 21 December–B.O.E./ Spanish Official Gazette of 24 December-)

Finally, it must be brought to light that these programmes have different names, according to these general aims, such as: *University of Experience* (the most widely used), *University for Older Adults*, *Permanent University*, and *Senior University*. A more detailed relation of these universities can be checked up at www.aepumayores.org.

3.2.3. Institutionalisation of aims and structures of the Universities for Older Adults.

Regarding the institutional framework, we are dealing with Higher Education Learning Programmes, considered even in some universities as one of the University's Own Degree Programmes, put forward by a university (public/private) acting as an Institution as defined by the Organic Act on Universities (LOU), in its article 34 approved by its corresponding governing bodies, directed and coordinated by teams appointed by the university, the university being responsible for its development, follow-up, assessment, reform and updating. These programmes are also organised according to the following criteria:

1. They have a well-established Curriculum, if possible including a clear specification of how the different diplomas offered are organised into and linked to the corresponding Knowledge Areas.
2. Their length is established in relation to the academic year, setting the programme's starting and finishing times according to the university calendar.
3. The programme's presentation is complete and thorough, containing different years and levels and including specification of the correct total hours (minimum and maximum) pre-established per academic year.
4. They assess the level of competence acquired by the students, by using the different common procedures of the university context, taking into account the characteristics of the students. It can never be a mere assistance programme.
5. They guarantee a learning level that must be recognised by the university itself, thus awarding the appropriate diploma (particularly University's Own Degree Programmes, article 34.3 of the LOU, if possible, with the academic acknowledgement that allows students to access all other university programmes).

3.2.4. Academic structure and learning framework.

The general and specific aims of university education for older adults are fulfilled by several structures of university bodies and services, most of them, within the institutional field of Vice-Rectorates for University Extension, Post-graduate Studies or the Faculty of Science of Education. The basic structure of university programmes usually focuses on the following issues:

- The General Curriculum usually has a length of several undergraduate courses (around 75% of the universities are organised according to conventional academic years, three years to be completed by students with reduced course options), regardless of having the possibility, or not, of going into a "second cycle" of postgraduate or specialisation studies in a particular field or itinerary (two more years). The remaining 25% of the universities have a series of itineraries, modules or thematic groups from the very beginning, so that students can choose amongst one of them, with more or less flexibility, depending on each specific case.
- Sessions are also distributed within the conventional academic calendar.

- The programme includes subjects distributed according to knowledge areas, thus giving the university departments and centres a convenient key role by the inclusion of the corresponding learning and methodological patterns.
- It provides for the necessary support in terms of facilities, administrative and academic services, and takes care of the assessment of students, teachings and programmes.
- It is complemented by the activities of the University Extension and practice that include workshops and work seminars.
- It maintains and favours active participation of students in the programmes by means of the students associations and representatives belonging to those studies.
- In recent years, the universities have made a bigger effort in coordinating the learning options from a specific centre with academic and scientific capabilities, in developing more cooperation between universities via student exchanges, in creating research groups and carrying out projects within international cooperation networks.

The Programmes' Contents.

The contents taught in the OAUPs are mainly divided into the knowledge areas appearing on Table 7. This table shows the average percentages of each knowledge area and the variation coefficients, in order to distinguish which are the most regular percentages of all the programmes on offer.

The contents related to the Humanities and Social Sciences clearly stand out from the rest. In addition, their percentages are the most regular of all the programmes. Most OAUPs are very similar in this respect. All other knowledge areas have a much smaller percentage, showing insignificant differences in their proportions but being highly variable, depending upon the geographical region or the strategic approach of each particular university or centre. It must be highlighted that this table is not a fair representation of the real presence of ICT and language-related contents, since they appear as cross-curricular themes and complementary activities, thus being optional instrumental subjects in most programmes.

Table 7

Knowledge areas that include the contents of the University Programmes for Older Adults in Spain (average percentages and variation coefficients)*

	Average percentage	Variation coefficient (%)
Humanities and Social Sciences	54.78	40
Health Sciences	11.84	127
Experimental Sciences	9.27	106
Information and Communication Technologies	8.33	111
Legal Sciences	5.62	112
Economical Sciences	4.56	126
Languages	2.24	300
Others	3.36	206

3.2.5. Physical facilities and teaching staff.

With regard to the facilities of the programmes analysed, they take place within the university premises, where the infrastructures of the university (faculties, departments, classrooms) are at the older adults' disposal without any type of discrimination, thus

favouring the interaction between younger and older students. The teaching responsibility of these programmes falls on all the different types of university teaching staff, exactly like in the rest of university programmes. However, it is common for the teaching staff to work together with other experts and people whose knowledge and merits may be useful to teach older adults.

If a conclusion may be drawn from this data, it is that universities, generally speaking, prefer to organise the teaching offer of these programmes from their own structure and, to a much lesser extent, utilise external resources. This can be seen as a sort of institutional implication on these programmes, although the teaching services provided are not usually included in the General Plan of Teaching Organisation of most universities. Instead, they belong to activities described as University Extension or Specialisation courses paid separately. This situation is a consequence of these programmes not being official and students not being funded by the general educational system.

3.2.6. Students and access requirements.

The most general access requirement is age; being over 55 is a necessary condition for around 58% of the programmes. In some cases (6%), this requirement goes up to 60 years of age. In other cases (32%), it is reduced to being 50 or just below 50, whereas some (4%) have not established an age requirement. Several programmes included additional access requirements, thus somehow reflecting different social definitions of “being old”, such as the fact of being retired or not performing a paid job, a condition required at 14% of the OAUPs. Others (11%), demand a prior level of education (always very basic), and a final group (16%) have an access test that must be passed before registering.

With regard to the reasons why older adults wish to access OAUPs, one must point out the following: broaden their knowledge, undertake cultural activities in their free time, personal development and fulfilment and specific interest for the programmes’ contents.

Students attending the OAUPs have very different backgrounds related to the social and demographic characteristics of each region. On the whole, we have relatively young students, particularly for the age cohort of 55 to 64 years old, whose group has the highest number of participants. There are also a larger group of women (see Table 8) with an education level above the older population average. We assume that there are even some programmes in which the percentage of university graduates is 52% (Bachelor/ Master).

Table 8 - OAUP students by gender and age (general percentages)

Students taking part in the OAUPs aged 55 and over			
	(n=1199)		
	Male	Female	Both
55-59 years	8.8	17.8	26.6
60-64 years	10.4	19.5	29.9
65-69 years	7.5	13.6	21.1
70-74 years	5.1	7.8	12.9
75-79 years	2.9	4.9	7.8
80-84 years	0.7	0.6	1.3
85 and over	0.1	0.3	0.4
All	35.5	64.5	100.0

Source: INE, Advance of the Register of 1 January 2005

There are high percentages of single, widow, separate or divorced women that live alone and attend these programmes, which reinforces the view that women were historically excluded on the grounds of gender when accessing university education in Spain. Most of the students had paid jobs and, although they are relatively young, they are retired or early retired. OAUP students' income level is clearly higher than the income of the average citizen. These data confirm the existence of programmes within a particular context linked to historical processes of marginalisation and social isolation. However, its quick development is connected to other dimensions of the social structure such as gender issues and socioeconomic status.

3.2.7. Funding

OAUPs have different types of funding depending on the Autonomous Regions and the universities. In general, there is a mixed budget which mainly depends on the funding gathered by means of student fees (which symbolically cover between 10 to 25% of the learning costs) and the contribution made by the Autonomous Governments (Departments for Education or Social Services). In most cases, universities provide the general facilities and services, which are shared by the rest of the students too. This means that the university provides help directly to the programmes and not through specific funding. In more extreme cases, there are programmes whose funding comes from several public and private institutions (banks, trusts, town councils, universities, regional or central governments and student fees).

3.3. RESEARCH, INTERNATIONALISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF AUTONOMOUS GROUPS AS DEFINING TRAITS OF OAUPs IN ONGOING LEARNING.

When we talk about university programmes for older adults, we must have a clear picture of the features that make them so specific (but not “exclusive”), within the field of older adult education. The current situation in Spain does not have anything in common with the “first generation” programmes (which were cultural programmes in their spare time, the aim of which was to entertain and favour social relationships between older people) and “second generation” programmes (characterised by learning activities meant to improve participation and knowledge of older adults so that they could contribute to solve existing social problems). We are talking about “third or fourth generation” programmes, since some universities have gone up to a level where they already have formal education programmes put forward by the Education Science Department. These programmes have all the formal features of university education, and have even incorporated students into projects and research teams and international networks linked to educational innovation projects. In our country, these features can only be possible within these formal structures and linked to knowledge areas and university research and teaching departments.

The international scope and renown of OAUPs, although not generally applicable to all universities and programmes, is gradually consolidating and constitutes the defining element of older adult education. The core of the European Strategy for the advance and consolidation of Continuous Learning is internationalisation, using the resources, actions and programmes offered by the EU⁹. Internationalisation enables us to assess and analyse, in more detail, the great variety of older adult university structures and models in Europe,

⁹ - Commission communication entitled 'The new generation of Community education and training programmes after 2006'. Brussels, 9.03.2004. Commission of the European Community.

- Decision No. 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning (DOUE L 327/45, 24/11/2006)

thus highlighting the necessary social and learning adjustments of the ageing society of the 21st century. The international scope has showed a capacity to help in the institutionalisation of OAUP learning process at all levels, i.e. the administrative and academic structure, the profiles of teachers, researchers and students, the contents of subjects and programmes. But it also has an effect on non-academic aspects, such as the professional, linguistic and cultural fields.

The new international perspective added to OAUPs has favoured an intercultural, global, interdisciplinary and comparative integration in recent years, in terms of teaching, research and University Extension. It additionally implies that all the participants gain an enriching experience thanks to the intercultural contacts taking place; new curricular and methodological innovations being introduced, and the exchange of international knowledge and experiences being promoted, thus providing results that benefit all the academic systems involved. Learning innovation and good practices in continuous education in general, and in older adult university education in particular, are the focal points in the international dimension of OAUPs.

In any case, most of these international actions go hand in hand with another defining trait of OAUPs: research as a means of setting up learning innovation projects, the main and specific aims of which are learning through research and incorporating older adults to new technologies. Both for participating programmes and universities and for participating groups (teachers and students), these actions deal with a more advanced stage of the learning and education process of older adults that attend university education, taking the maturity and evolution of OAUPs themselves as a starting point.

The basic features of the work carried out and the university research groups that took part in these experiences can be summarised in the following points:

- 1- Among its aims must be highlighted: a) social and cultural integration of older adults in Europe through learning, b) learning through research, c) adaptability of older adults to the new ICTs in the knowledge society; d) self-directed learning and the creation of autonomous groups of older students who keep up their work through non-formal learning actions, e) the development of methodologies, good practices, tools and materials for older adult university teaching.
- 2- They are set up around tutoring/coordinating teachers and groups of students that showed a high level of interest in developing research lines around specific knowledge areas. They tackle top priority and interest topics within the guidelines of the European Strategy and Continuous Education.
- 3- For such purposes they have the backing of OAUPs, University Departments and research groups in Humanities, Social Work, Education and Health Sciences, New Technologies. They provide the academic back-up via the necessary specific training, the guidelines to be followed, tutorship and scientific guidance.
- 4- The programmes are developed within the action framework of the Socrates programme and institutionally supported by Rectorates, Vice-Rectorates for University Extension and Institutional or International Relations Departments. Sometimes they also have the support of other institutions or companies being part of multilateral or cross-sectorial projects.

3.4. THE CONSTRAINTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONSOLIDATION OF OAUPs.

Although the benefits of continuous learning and the OAUPs are obvious, there are still all sorts of snags and obstacles hindering the international scope, amongst which stand out those with a regulatory, institutional, funding-related and structural nature. We could stress the following threatening facts to its development:

- These programmes are seen by many older adult citizens as very similar in their structure to conventional universities, which puzzles those who regard university as an inaccessible and elitist institution.
- There is another percentage of older adults who do not see any advantages in this specific learning since students do not obtain an Official Diploma, but an Academic Certificate for the acquired learning that does not qualify them to carry out the professional activity, which is what they are interested in due to the big effort made at their age.
- In this respect, the Spanish learning legislation on University Education does not envisage the possibility of older adults accessing university, unless they pass the University-Access Test for Students Older than 25 and want to study an official graduate or postgraduate course. The only learning actions for older adults with non-professional aims are OAUPs, but conceived from the University Extension and generally limited to people between 50 and 55 years of age.
- Although OAUPs' importance has been growing steadily since they were set up 15 years ago, their subject range is not usually very widely known by the Spanish older adult population. This fact is linked to the limited interest shown by the Spanish older population in taking part in training or learning actions, and is also due to the low education level of people over 60¹⁰.
- The lack of regulations and of a widely-spread recognition of this type of teachings and programmes results in each particular university determining, according to its own institutional initiatives, the significance, structure, resources, staff and facilities of each university programme. The lack of a regulatory framework for OAUPs means that most of the programmes in Spain and other EU-countries are excluded from and cannot take part in many of the research schemes and the academic cooperation at an international level within the European and international support networks, because they cannot benefit from the general funding and support channels available to formal studies of the European Higher Education Space (EHES).
- The perspective of lifelong learning, from the point of view of OAUPs, bears no much relation to the proposals made by several national and international organisations and institutions, where a utilitarian and market-oriented view of knowledge prevails, a view that is more focused on training a qualified workforce than on carrying out an educational project for the people and furthering personal development.

IV- THE NEED OF SETTING UP RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR OLDER ADULT UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE REFORM FRAMEWORK OF THE LOU AND THE EHES.

Although the above-mentioned constraints do exist, the number of students that attend these types of university courses is growing year after year and, taking into the account the population's life expectancy, it is possible that this steady increase of students will not stop, so that when people get to know their benefits, the social demand will grow, without having prepared the necessary resources and means for such demand.

¹⁰ Observatory for Older People- Survey on Older Adults' Living Conditions. Report IMSESRO 2004.

This is one of the most solid reasons justifying the need for a regulatory model and the development of OAUPs, but it is also necessary to mention and reflect upon the influence of the recommendations and the initiatives set up by those in charge of European cultural and learning policies in order to channel the learning demands that have been expressed by the people for a long time now.

However, the Recommendations and Opinions of the European Commission and the Council of Europe are not binding in secondary community legislation; they contain appeals to observe specific ways of conduct and establish official positions. Such documents provide enough reasons and analysis elements to reinforce the conviction that this type of education demands a legal regulation¹¹.

4.1. FOUNDATIONS FOR THE LEGAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THESE PROGRAMMES.

The new social prospects of older adults have triggered an academic answer from university, an answer that, for years, has been regulated taking into account the sources of the legal system, as stated in section 1.1. of the Spanish Civil Code. Consequently, customs and general legal principles have had a bigger influence on the regulation than the actual law. One must point out that common law tries to fulfil a need unforeseen by the legislator. This means we are talking about the *praeter legem* scenario- customs that regulate situations lacking all kinds of legislation. For several years, older adult university education was only developed as a result of social impetus and lacked *opinio iuris*-opinion to create laws. However, it is a proven fact that this is a historical moment with the necessary social and learning features, as well as the legal qualities of imperativeness, coercibility and generality to make OAUPs an object of legal regulation¹².

The research aim not only illustrates various intellectual concerns, but also tries to show the interaction between the legal framework and the learning situation, thus providing an answer to the constant need for setting the foundations of this reality and securing its future, which has been repeatedly expressed by several universities and social sectors.

Luckily, we are witnessing a historical moment where there is a growing need for understanding the purpose and reason for older adult university education. The legal regulation will not only facilitate its consolidation and spread, but will also allow us to discover the network of physical, symbolic and even emotional relationships which operate on the daily life of these learning programmes and will have a considerable bearing on the behaviour and formal and informal strategies of all the people who play a part in universities. Once it was confirmed that these programmes needed a legal regulation and the opportunity was there, the project was aimed at making an appropriate legal proposal including fundamental elements¹³ that may contribute to give the necessary institutional impetus to Older Adult Programmes.

¹¹ In recent decades, several international organisations such as UNO, UNESCO, the Rome Club, several EU organisations, etc have been firmly committed to meet the need of continuous education within the framework of lifelong learning, for various reasons such as the prevention of older adults being excluded or isolated if they do not have the possibility of continuing learning throughout their lives in a society characterised by accelerated and constant changes in knowledge and the ever growing and generalised use of ICTs.

The new Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, currently going through an approval stage by the member states, also expresses this concern in the same terms when Article II-85, related to the rights of the elderly, states: The Union recognises and respects the rights of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life.

¹² AEPUMA Project 2007 Page 453

¹³ Regulatory Proposal contained in the AEPUMA Project 2007- page 469.

The need for lifelong learning and for adapting to the knowledge and information society in which we live has been recognised at an international level, thus highlighting the necessity of setting up efficient channels and ways to provide access to older adults with their basic right to continue learning while they are interested in doing so. We believe that the Education Authorities, such as the Ministry for Education and Science (MEC), the Autonomous Regions and the Universities themselves, must promote channels with due assurances in order to achieve an older adult education that can be legally guaranteed. For such purposes, the AEPUM has put forward some modifications and amendments to the LOU to make it introduce the specific legal recognition of this type of university programmes. If these proposals agreed by consensus by all the universities that offer OAUPs are not successful among the government institutions, one may get the impression that the aim is to have an older population over 50 that perpetuates a very low education level and to avoid establishing strategies to “recover” this population sector from the educational ostracism and isolation that they have experienced for historical, economic and social reasons.

These proposals put forward the fundamental criteria of continuous learning within the university framework:

- a) These programmes are aimed at opening up university to a population sector that is steadily increasing and democratising knowledge.
- b) They are aimed at improving the education, learning and cultural level of this population to allow them to continue taking part in the specific community they belong to, and in the society as a whole, and at promoting interpersonal and intergenerational relationships. This implies a benefit for older adults, but especially for younger students and the whole society, since future professionals will benefit from all the personal and professional experiences of older students.
- c) Although these programmes are academic and/or learning-oriented in their nature, taking part in them makes older adults remain very active, which implies a better overall quality of life, especially regarding physical and mental health. Significantly improved are illnesses related to or derived from loneliness, such as depression, thus reducing the future dependence of this group and giving them more autonomy.
- d) These programmes will only achieve academic recognition and validity with a non-professionalising diploma that will open up a new way to access formal university education (to undergraduate studies, or Bachelor degrees and the first cycles of current Master degrees).
- e) They will be specific to this age group, which means that they will be exclusively designed and aimed at people over 50 or 55. These programmes will have two or three cycles, a first cycle with academic validity that will provide access to university; a second cycle or even a third cycle for those who do not want to take on formal university education (undergraduate studies). The second cycle will be the specialisation in a particular field or fields, and the third cycle will be the participation in a research project. The final aim is to make it progressively possible for groups of older adults to organise themselves in an autonomous and independent way, with a view to develop self-learning groups and methods, under different learning conditions and traditions.
- f) To sum up, it is all about regulating a series of programmes that have a growing demand on the part of the population involved and meet a social need. Their regulation will allow for certain stability and future prospects that are not subject to the political or economic whims or arbitrariness of universities.

In this respect, we believe that it is a common task of all EU member states to carry out parallel, coordinated actions in this field so that the EHES does not exclude this population group, which is not an isolated case, and, as has been previously stated, centralises and characterises the social and demographic reality of Europe’s future.