

**EUROPEAN SENIORS'
SUMMER ACADEMY 2026
24 – 26 September 2026
Nicosia, Cyprus**

CONFERENCE REPORT

Report

INTRODUCTION

*The 2026 Summer Academy brought together politicians, policymakers, experts, and representatives of civil society to examine two major topics that are in the spotlights today in Europe: the evolving relationship between **migration and democratic change** in Europe, and **loneliness and social isolation**.*

Migration and demographic change are among the defining challenges facing Europe today. Ageing populations, declining birth rates, and growing labour shortages are putting increasing pressure on economies and social systems, particularly in sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, construction, and care services.

***Loneliness and social isolation** are increasingly recognised as major social challenges affecting all generations, although they are particularly visible among older persons. Factors such as living alone, smaller family structures, urbanisation, and the growing digitalisation of society can weaken social bonds and reduce opportunities for meaningful human interaction. Beyond its emotional impact, loneliness can also have significant consequences for mental and physical well-being, social participation, and overall quality of life.*

The Summer Academy 2026 was held from Thursday 24 September, to Saturday 26 September 2026, in the Hilton Park Hotel, Nicosia, Cyprus.

On Thursday 24 September, The Summer Academy opened officially with the **Plenary Opening Ceremony** that included several welcome addresses by political leaders, policymakers, experts, and representatives of civil society, as there are:

- **Antonios Demetriades**, President, OPREPO ;
- **Harris Georgiades**, Chairman, Clerides Institute;
- **Vit Novotny**, Senior Research Officer, Martens Centre;
- **Michalis Hadjipantelas**, MEP (video message);
- **Constantinos Phellas**, Chair of the Cyprus National Bioethics Council ;
- **Stefaan Vercamer**, President, ESU ;
- **Tina Pavlou**, Deputy Minister of Social Welfare of the Republic of Cyprus;
- **Maria Molina**, Policy Director EPP ;
- **Dr Irshad Shaikh**, Special Representative of the WHO Office in Cyprus.

All of the speakers provided different insights on how migration affects the society, especially in Cyprus, that serves as first harbour for migrants from the east and south continents. **Patrick Penninckx**, ESU Secretary-General, moderated the opening ceremony.

The opening ceremony was followed by an **Introductory Plenary session**. The keynote speech was given by **Geertrui Mieke De Ketelaere**, who is a renowned expert on Artificial Intelligence (AI). In her keynote speech “***Alone Together? Seniors, Loneliness and the Rise of AI Companions*** », she stressed that millions of older adults experience loneliness and social isolation. At the same time, AI-powered chatbots are becoming surprisingly empathetic conversation partners. Some seniors describe them as supportive, engaging, and always available. Others worry about what happens when digital companionship begins to replace real relationships.

During this session, she explored both the promise and the pitfalls of AI companions. What needs are these technologies fulfilling? Why do people form emotional bonds with machines? And how can we ensure that technology strengthens human connection rather than weakening it? This was a conversation about aging, belonging, empathy, and what it truly means to feel connected in a digital world.

A Welcome Dinner closed the introductory sessions.

Subtheme 1: Migration and Demographic Sustainability

Friday, 25 September 2026

Opening Session – setting the scene

General introduction

Migration and Demographic Sustainability

Europe's demographic transformation raises an important question: can immigration compensate for an ageing and shrinking population? Immigration can certainly help. Migrants of working age can contribute to the labour force, strengthen economic activity, pay taxes and social-security contributions, and help address shortages in sectors such as healthcare, construction, tourism and agriculture. For countries such as Cyprus, situated on one of the EU's major migration routes in the Eastern Mediterranean, migration is therefore both a demographic and an economic reality.

In his keynote speech ‘***Is immigration the answer to population ageing?***’, **Vit Novotny**, Senior Research Officer of the Wilfried Martens Center, emphasizes that Europe's population is ageing because people are living longer and having fewer children. This results in a smaller share of working-age people and puts pressure on growth, public finances and social-security systems. Immigration has helped offset the EU's natural population decline. However, immigration cannot realistically preserve the ratio of the working-age population to the old-age population because the required numbers of non-EU immigrants would not be politically sustainable. The more sustainable response is to raise labour-force participation: extend working lives through employment of older people, reduce the gender employment gap, and improve the labour-market integration of immigrants and their descendants already living in Europe.

Rob De Lobel, Head of unit within the International Organisation on Migration, confirms in his keynote on ‘***Caring for an aging Europe***’, the aging of the population in Europe, and the

need for accompanying measures; can migration help to resolve this problem, for example, bringing medical and nursing expertise from abroad; however, cultural and language gaps, working conditions could refrain the global care to older persons. Finally, De Lobel plaid for measures that make work attractive for (specialized) migrants.

High Level panel Migration: One Strategy to Cope with Demographic Change?

In his keynote speech, **Nikos Nouris**, former Minister of the Interior in Cyprus, describes Europe's demographic reality, which is 1,34 child / women, and warns for a decline in Europe's population. In Cyprus, migration inflow exceeds migration outflow, Cyprus also has to deal with illegal immigration from Türkiye.

Fernand Boden, former Minister in Luxembourg and actual President of the Luxembourg CSV_Seniors, describes the rate of migration (30%) in his country, especially high-skilled workforce from surrounding countries, and the effects on schooling, housing, and economy.

Peter Mach, Vice-President of ESU, provide afterwards statistic insights on the declining population in Europe. In addition, the immigration level is rising (for 2025: 669400 asylum applicants). The EU's population is therefore rising due to immigration.

Working groups and Workshop

During the afternoon, 3 workgroups and 1 parallel workshop took place, in which attendants participated:

1. Workgroup on 'labour market and ageing'

Panelists:

- **Stefaan Vercamer**, President ESU
- **Fernand Boden**, Chairman, Luxembourg CSV-Seniors Executive Committee ESU

This workgroup discussed how labour markets and societies can adapt to an ageing population while making better use of the potential of older workers. It resulted in the overall message where Europe needs to adapt both the labour market and social systems to longer lives — by removing barriers to work, encouraging lifelong learning, reforming pensions, supporting families and recognising the valuable contribution older people make in both employment and society.

Participants concluded that we need a European strategy that encourages Member States to remove legislative and tax barriers. Moving from full employment to retirement should not be a cliff, but a smooth transition based on flexibility, part-time opportunities and mentorship.

2. Workgroup on 'Integration and intergenerational dialogue'

Panelists:

- **Gnanam Seminck**, Treasurer ESU
- **Kalliopi Marangaki**, Vice-President ESU, Greece

This session gave participants an opportunity to share examples of how European countries support older people. They discussed community meeting places, healthy ageing, activities that bring generations together, volunteering, support for carers and the work of community organisations.

Four main ideas were suggested for further work: creating accessible local meeting places; involving older people in planning and reviewing programmes; developing activities that bring generations together; and providing better support for volunteers and carers.

Participants discussed what would be needed to put these ideas into practice. They considered possible challenges and practical next steps. The aim was to identify useful ideas for further study, not to approve actions or assign responsibilities.

Finally, the session showed that sharing ideas can help Cyprus improve support for older people. Participants focused on accessible community spaces, involving older people in decisions, activities that bring generations together, better support for carers and volunteers, better training for professionals and clearer evidence of results. The next steps are to identify interested partners and choose practical ideas to explore further.

3. Workgroup on 'EU solidarity and border states'

Panelists:

- **Antonios Demetriades**, Vice-President ESU, Cyprus
- **Tatsiana Zelko**, Nasha Pakalenne, Belarus
- **Georg Männik**, Vice President ESU, Estonia

This working group examined how the European Union can ensure genuine solidarity with Member States facing particular migratory pressure because of their geographical position. Countries such as Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain are often the first point of arrival for migrants and asylum seekers, placing particular pressure on their asylum systems, reception facilities, public services and local communities.

Nonetheless, also other countries suffer from (illegal) immigration, for different reasons; Tatsiana Zelko highlighted the problems that she encounters with her homeland, Belarus. However, her country is not considered as an immigration State; nevertheless, immigration exists, especially people from Afghanistan, India, Syria and some African countries, like Ethiopia and Cameroon. Also a limited number of Ukrainian refugees were expected to stay in the country.

However, the Belarussian State Government uses immigrants as a tool to put pressure on surrounding countries, like Poland and Estonia with whom they have common borders. Georg Männik, Estonian citizen, confirms the pressure from Belarus; he considers this type of immigration as a more geopolitical issue, where the Russia Federation serves as principal responsible, by obliging Belarus to put pressure on the borders with NATO / EU countries, in the light of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the support from Western-European countries to Ukraine. Compared to its population, the number of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia is relatively high.

Both speakers consider the challenges on immigration to be not perpetual, but issue to the current geopolitical context.

4. Parallel workshop on ‘Active Steps towards Wellbeing, Movement for Connection and Belonging, as a method to fight loneliness’

Workshop Leader: Ms **Gordana Matolek**

During two sessions held on 25 and 26 September, 24 participants explored how simple movement-based and sensory activities can help address loneliness, strengthen communication and foster a greater sense of belonging. Led by Mrs Gordana Matolek, the workshop combined movement, words, rhythm, music, singing, play and interaction, showing how body and mind can work together to create more open and relaxed forms of communication. Participants experienced how joy and laughter can encourage emotional connection, while sharing the five things that matter most to them in life created opportunities for deeper dialogue, empathy, mutual understanding and discovering common ground.

The workshop built on the previous day’s discussions about the persistence of loneliness despite the growth of online communication. It highlighted the importance of finding a better balance between digital and direct human interaction, with approaches adapted to different generations, families and local communities. Shared experiences and accessible activities can bring people of different ages and backgrounds together, support emotional and physical well-being, reduce social isolation and strengthen relationships and community life. Several participants expressed their intention to introduce similar activities in their own communities.

The central message was that fighting loneliness is not only a theoretical or policy issue – it starts with direct human communication, empathy and shared experiences. The potential to connect these approaches more systematically with ESU policies and activities should be further explored. As one participant summed it up with a smile: “It is a breakaway from the digital screens.”

Reporting back and conclusions

And the end of the subtheme 1-session, **Patrick Penninckx** took the floor to compile the results of the workshops, and provided outstanding food for thoughts to the audience.

Subtheme 2: Combatting Loneliness – The Role of Civil Society

Saturday 26 September 2026

General Introduction

Loneliness is not only a personal experience; it is also a social and community challenge. As societies age and traditional family and community structures change, civil society can play a crucial role in ensuring that people remain connected, active and involved. Voluntary organisations, associations, charities, faith-based organisations, cultural and sports groups and local community initiatives are often closest to people who risk becoming isolated.

This subtheme highlighted how civil society can create opportunities for participation and belonging. Volunteering, community activities, intergenerational projects, cultural initiatives and neighbourhood networks can provide meaningful relationships and give people a sense of purpose and usefulness. Older people should not be seen merely as recipients of support, but also as active contributors and volunteers who can support others.

In his keynote on ***“Understanding and Preventing Loneliness in Ageing Societies”***», Dr. **Jasper De Witte**, Professor at the KULeuven (Belgium), stated that Loneliness is often approached as an individual psychological issue, with interventions primarily aimed at changing personal behaviour or increasing social contact. However, growing evidence shows that loneliness is a much broader societal challenge. It arises from the interaction of individual, relational, and structural factors, including health, income, employment, major life events, social participation, neighbourhood characteristics, and wider social inequalities.

Tackling loneliness therefore requires more than individual-level interventions. Effective strategies must also address the structural conditions that shape social connectedness, such as poverty, social exclusion, housing, mobility, and the quality of local communities. A comprehensive approach that combines individual support with broader social and policy measures is essential to create more connected and inclusive societies.

Dr. Irshad Shaikh, Special Representative of the WHO in Cyprus, emphasized that creating environments for healthy ageing requires a comprehensive, person-centred and life-course approach that goes beyond the provision of health and social care. Age-friendly communities should enable older people to maintain their functional ability, autonomy and social connections by ensuring access to safe and inclusive public spaces, accessible transport, housing, opportunities for physical activity, cultural participation and community services. In countries such as Cyprus, local authorities can build on existing community networks to create neighbourhood environments where older people can remain active, connected and engaged in community life.

Irshad Shaik pointed out that especially young people (13-14 year) feel most lonely, because this is a major transitional period: they are moving from childhood towards adolescence, while their relationships, identity and social environment are changing rapidly. Loneliness at this age does not necessarily mean that a young person has no friends; it can mean that they do not feel understood, accepted or sufficiently connected to others.

The WHO approach gives “Ageing is Living” a particularly strong foundation because healthy ageing is not understood as simply the absence of disease or disability. WHO defines healthy ageing as the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age. For Irshad Shaik, strategic policy actions are taken in order to creating the conditions that allow people to continue to do the things they value: maintaining relationships, moving around safely, learning, making decisions, participating in society and contributing to their communities. This requires age-friendly environments—accessible housing and transport, safe public spaces, opportunities for physical and social activity, digital inclusion and meaningful opportunities for participation. It also requires tackling ageism, because negative stereotypes and discrimination can restrict people's opportunities to participate as much as physical barriers do.

Finally, Irshad Shaik went further into the health care system in Cyprus, and how it combats loneliness.

Round table on “Health consequences of loneliness and Civil Society Responses”, with focus on Vulnerability, Frailty and Dependence in Older People

The second part of the subtheme on loneliness consisted in a round table on health consequences of loneliness and corresponding civil society responses. The starting point was that loneliness and social isolation can have important consequences for the health and well-being of older people. Persistent loneliness may be associated with poorer mental health, reduced physical activity, declining cognitive and physical functioning, and a greater risk of becoming vulnerable or dependent. It can therefore interact with frailty in a reinforcing cycle: declining health can lead to withdrawal and isolation, while isolation can further undermine physical and psychological resilience.

Cor Spreeuwenberg, Vice-president of ESU gave clear examples how the Netherlands deal with combatting loneliness, for example, living together in ‘narrenhuisjes’ which are common intergenerational living places.

Sotiria Moza, Clinical Neuropsychologist at the Materia Group in Cyprus, stated that different types of loneliness exists. In order to combat loneliness, Moza presented the “ROOTS” app, where AI can help countering loneliness; she focused also on the digi-ageing project that is supported by 7 experienced institutions in Cyprus, Austria, Italy, Spain and Lithuania. Since October 2020, the international Digi-Ageing consortium has been working on a comprehensive concept that addresses these challenges and develops appropriate measures to counteract the phenomenon of “loneliness in old age”. One of the main goals is to increase competences in the use of digital tools in the elderly care sector and to create a strong network that develops joint solutions (<http://digi-ageing.eu>).

Interactive Session

The last part of this subtheme was an interactive session between the **ESU Presidency and Executive Committee members** and **Demos Antoniou**, Cyprus Third Age Observatory; moderated by **Kalliopi Marangaki**, Vice-President of ESU. During this session, many ideas and projects from different countries were presented by the participants, and discussed in plenary.

In Estonia, 'activity clubs' bring together elderly people; which is a similar initiative als the 'Kapi' (where elderly people come together) in Cyprus. In Tsjechia, "Life long Learning Universities' activates older persons.

At the end of this session, one important message was given to the audience: initiatives against loneliness cost money.

Closing Session

The closing session marked the end of the conference. **Sotiria Moza, Antonios Demetriades** and **Cor Spreeuwenberg** exchanged ideas and discussed further on the proposals that were put forward during the interactive session.

At the end, **Antonios Demetriades** took the floor and thanked all participants to the Summer Academy.

List of Participants

FAMILY NAME	First name		Position or title
BELLIN MOERIS	Maria	CSP Ostbelgien	Madame
BELOIU	Mircea	Liberal National Seniors	First Vice President
BODEN	Fernand	CSV Senioreen	President CSV Senioreen Luxembourg
CALO	Viorica	Liberal National Seniors	First Vice President
COROZANU	Dorina	Liberal National Seniors	President of Brasov
DEMETRIADES	Antonios	OPREPO	President OPREPO
FLORESCU	Marinel	Liberal National Seniors	Secretary General
HAVLOVA	Hana	SKS _ Association of Christian Seniors of the Czech Rep.	Ing.
LAANEJÄRV	Tiina	Isamaa	Mrs
MACH	Peter	ZKS - ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SENIORS OF SLOVAKIA	President
MÄNNIK	Georg	Estonian Senior's Assotiation of ISAMAA	Chairman, Estonian Senior's Assotiation
MARANGAKI	Kalliopi	ESU	VICE-PRESIDENT
MARGON	Ernest	NSi - krščanski demokrati	Member of executive committee
MARGON	Irena	NSi - krščanski demokrati	Member of executive committee
MUSETESCU	Filofteia	Liberal National Seniors	President of Buzau
NILSEN	Stig Arild	Senior Høyre	Vice-President
PAUL	Edeltraud	Österreichischer Seniorenbund	
POPA	Petrica	Braila	President
QUINTANILLA BARBA	Carmen	AFAMMER	PRESIDENTA NACIONAL AFAMMER
SANDU	Emil	Liberal National Seniors	President of Ilfov
SAVVA	Eleftherios	OPREPO	Member of the board
SPREEUWENBERG	Cor	ESU	Prof. Dr. Vice-President ESU
VAN NISTELROOIJ	Lambert	CDA	voorzitter delegatie CDA Senioreen
DE KETELAERE	Geertrui Mieke		
DE LOBEL	Rob	IOM	
DE WITTE	Jasper	KU Leuven	dr.
MATOLEK	Gordana		
MOLINA	Maria	EPP	
NOVOTNY	Vit	Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies	Senior Research Officer
VERCAMER	Stefaan	ESU-Team	President ESU
PENNINCKX	Patrick	ESU-Team	Secretary General of ESU
SHAIKH	Irshad	WHO	Special Representative
SEMINCK	Gnanam	ESU-Team	Treasurer European Seniors' Union
DE SCHEPPER	Günter	ESU-Team	Counsellor of ESU
VAN DROOGENBROECK	Yolande	ESU-Team	Assistant

FAMILY NAME	First name		Position or title
ZELKO	Tatsiana	Public Union of Belarusian Pensioners "Nasha Pakalenne"	Chair of the board
ZELKO	Alexander		

Participants OPREPO

MATSOUKARIS	Andreas	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
GEORGIU	Yiangous	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
PAPACONSTANTINO	Charitini	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
ZAPITIS	Andreas	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
GREGORIOU	Androulla	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
TSANGIRADES	Stavros	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
ANTONIOU	Michalis	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
FELLAS	Giorgos	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
VATILLIOTIS	Andreas	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
ANTONIOU	Demos	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
VASILARAS	Avivos	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
DEMOSTHENOUS	Fedias	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
SARRIS	Kyriacos	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
SAVVIDES	Nicos	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
KOUNTOURIS	Sovratis	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
YIANGOU	Vasiliki	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
ODYSSEOS	Odisseas	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
CHATZIMANOLI	Andreas	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
HATZIMANOLI	Maria	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
DEMOSTENOUS	Androulla	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
PAPANICOLAOU	Nikos	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
STYLLIANOU	Christella	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
GEORGHIADOU	Froso	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
KORDATOS	Ermis	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
KORDATOU	Marina	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
CHATZIPANDELAS	Pantelis	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO
GEORGHOU	Joanna	Seniors Organisation Cyprus OPREPO

The Summer Academy evaluated

Introduction

One week after the Summer Academy, the ESU-Team launched an evaluation of this event, open to the participants who followed the complete conference. The evaluation was based on specific issues, including preparatory activities and logistics, topics, speakers, and side-activities.

Twelve participants responded and introduced their appreciation and comments. Overall, the 2026 Summer Academy received a strongly positive evaluation.

The questions in detail

Question 1 — General Impression: How would you rate this 2026 Summer Academy?

All 12 respondents answered this question. Nine (75%) rated the Summer Academy Excellent and three (25%) rated it Good; there were no neutral or negative ratings. This establishes a very high overall satisfaction baseline and shows that the event succeeded across different participant perspectives. Because one quarter chose Good rather than Excellent, the result also leaves room for targeted refinements—especially around content delivery, participation, and language support—without suggesting any fundamental problem with the Academy concept.

Question 2 — General Impression: To what extent did the conference meet your expectations?

All 12 respondents provided a rating. After normalising the two entries stored with bracket notation, six respondents (50%) selected Exceptional and six (50%) selected Good. The even split indicates that the conference reliably met expectations and exceeded them substantially for half of the group.

Question 3 — How relevant was the conference theme on 'Migration' (subtheme 1) to your work or interests?

Ten respondents commented and two left the item blank. The theme was generally described as relevant, very relevant, very interesting, excellent, or highly important in relation to demographic change and national work. Context mattered: one participant reported mass migration as a direct operational concern, while another said migration was less significant nationally and noted that Ukrainians were classified differently in official statistics. The responses support retaining migration as a theme while designing sessions to accommodate different national realities and encouraging concrete country examples.

Question 4 — How relevant was the conference theme on 'Loneliness' (subtheme 2) to your work or interests?

Ten respondents commented and two did not answer. Loneliness was consistently viewed as relevant, very useful, interesting, or highly aligned with organisational objectives. The practical workshop led by Gordana Matolek was singled out as an effective novelty because it actively involved participants and translated the topic into methods that could be used with seniors' groups. One respondent wanted more peer examples of work against

loneliness, suggesting that future programming should combine expert input, participatory exercises, and structured exchange of tested national practices.

Question 5 — Organisation & Logistics: How do you rate the overall organisation (registration, schedule, coordination)?

Every respondent rated the overall organisation Excellent. This unanimous result is one of the strongest findings in the survey and indicates that registration, scheduling, and coordination worked smoothly for the full group. The achievement is reinforced by open comments praising the Cypriot organisers and the event's relaxed atmosphere. Future editions should document and reuse the operational practices behind this result, while making only limited changes that do not weaken a proven delivery model.

Question 6 — Organisation & Logistics: How clear and effective was the communication before the event?

All 12 respondents rated communication before the event Very effective, producing a unanimous top assessment. This suggests that participants received the information they needed in a clear and timely manner and that pre-event communication supported a smooth arrival and programme experience. The report therefore treats communication as a practice to preserve rather than redesign; any future additions—such as clearer language-service information or travel guidance—should complement the existing process.

Question 7 — Organisation & logistics: How do you rate the venue and facilities (rooms, catering, technical support)?

All 12 respondents rated the venue and facilities Excellent. Narrative feedback supports the score: accommodation, conference rooms, technical facilities, staff friendliness, and the airport pickup were praised, with one respondent calling the facilities outstanding and another highlighting the very good location. The only travel-related concern was the difficulty of reaching Cyprus, which concerns destination accessibility rather than on-site provision. Maintaining the venue-service standard while strengthening travel planning would preserve this major advantage.

Question 8 — Speakers & Content: How do you rate the overall quality of the speakers?

Five respondents (42%) rated speaker quality Excellent and seven (58%) rated it Good. This is fully positive but less emphatic than the unanimous ratings for logistics. Comments praised the speakers overall, yet one respondent felt a WHO Europe representative was difficult to understand, did not stay sufficiently on topic, and exceeded the allotted time. Future speaker briefing should therefore reinforce relevance, time discipline, audience accessibility, and the practical orientation expected by a pensioners' organisation.

Question 9 — Speakers & Content: How clear and engaging were the presentations?

Six respondents (50%) rated presentation clarity and engagement Excellent, five (42%) Good, and one (8%) Fair. This is the only scaled question to receive a Fair rating and is therefore the clearest quantitative improvement signal. The written explanation points to pronunciation and comprehensibility problems for at least one speaker, while other responses praised participatory content. Speaker coaching, stricter moderation, shorter

inputs, accessible language, and interpretation support could raise consistency without sacrificing the quality of the subject matter.

Question 10 — Did the translation/interpretation meet your expectations?

Ten respondents provided comments and two left the question blank. Experiences varied: some found interpretation appropriate, good, indispensable for Greek speakers, or unnecessary for themselves, while others said it could be improved, requested translation, or specifically asked for simultaneous interpretation so participants could speak naturally in their mother tongue. The mixed feedback reflects different language needs rather than a single service failure. Future registration should capture language requirements in advance and provide simultaneous interpretation for key sessions when demand justifies it.

Question 11 — Impact & Follow-up: Did this Summer Academy provide you with new ideas or insights?

Ten respondents answered and two left the item blank. All ten responses indicated a positive impact, including new ideas, better understanding of EU approaches, insights on migration and demographic change, practical methods for seniors' groups, and intentions to share learning after returning home. The participatory workshop and the connection between multiple challenges and senior policy were highlighted. Follow-up materials should help participants convert these insights into local action and share outcomes with their organisations.

Question 12 — Overall Feedback: What was the most valuable aspect of the Summer Academy?

All 12 respondents identified valuable aspects. The dominant theme was human connection: meeting people, intense contacts, friendship, networking, and opportunities to speak and get to know one another. Participants also valued exchange of ideas and national experience, high audience participation, well-prepared content, documentation, hospitality, common European demographic challenges, and a particularly strong discussion on AI. These answers show that the Academy's value comes from the combination of content and community; future agendas should protect generous interaction time.

Question 13 — General Feedback: What is your general opinion on this 2026 Summer Academy?

Ten respondents provided a general opinion and two left the item blank. The comments were highly positive, describing the event as brilliant, unforgettable, one of the best meetings in recent years, a great job, and a positive experience in a relaxed and comfortable setting. Participants appreciated the location, culture, networking, political content, and direct accounts from national organisations. The only substantive reservation concerned one speaker's focus and delivery, which is specific and actionable rather than evidence of broader dissatisfaction.

Conclusions

Nine of 12 respondents rated the event Excellent and the other three rated it Good; six said it met expectations at an exceptional level and six selected Good. Organisation, pre-event

communication, and venue/facilities achieved unanimous top ratings, making operational delivery the clearest strength. Participants also valued the Academy as a European peer-learning and relationship-building forum: recurring themes were personal contact, exchange of national experiences, practical ideas, hospitality, and a friendly atmosphere.

The principal improvement opportunities are more inclusive participation, deeper and larger working-group discussions, stronger focus on the lived problems of older people and national organisations, tighter speaker discipline and clarity, and reliable simultaneous interpretation where language needs require it.

The Summer Academy Photogallery : Where images are stronger than words...

