Universities of the Third Age at Czech Universities

Petr Adamec, David Kryštof (eds.)
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  Czech Technical University in Prague — Dana Dubnová, Božena Mannová
  Czech University of Life Sciences Prague — Marie Hanušová, Klára Nehodová
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  Masaryk University — Petr Adamec
  Mendel University in Brno — Jana Loukotová, Pavel Máchal
  Palacký University Olomouc — Naděžda Špatenková
  Silesian University in Opava — Dagmar Kalivodová, Gabriela Komendová, Eva Sikorová
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  University of West Bohemia in Pilsen — Magdalena Edlová
  VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava — Martina Polášková, Viola Šebestíková, Iveta Vozňáková
(1)

Education of the elderly in the Czech Republic
Education of the elderly in the Czech Republic dates back much further than the existence of universities of the third age. This is supported by the fact that the Klub aktivního stáří (Club of Active Ageing) was already active in this field. It didn’t work on its own but as part of the activities of the then Czechoslovak Red Cross. The earliest evidence of the activities of the Club of Active Ageing dates back to 1978. The Club was operating mainly in the capital city of Prague but some of the activities were also carried out in the adjacent municipalities. Its main aim was to offer courses concerned with health and social topics and also focused on history, culture and traditions. The Czechoslovak Red Cross founded academies of the third age. These very often cooperated with universities or colleges. The first Czech Akademie třetího věku (Academy of the Third Age) was established in the town of Přerov in 1983.

It was not only the Czechoslovak Red Cross that helped to establish universities of the third age. Česká gerontologická a geriatričká společnost (the Czech Gerontological and Geriatric Society) also played an important role in forming these universities. At the beginning of the 1980s, a special subdivision of the Czech Gerontological and Geriatric Society called Sekce akademii a univerzit třetího věku (the Division of Academies and Universities of the Third Age) was created in order to exchange experience among the individual academies, inform about their activities and later on also about the education of the elderly at the universities of the third age. This division also came up with a principle that is still being used until now, i.e.: activities aimed at educating the elderly are called Universities of the Third Age only when organised by universities or colleges, if organised by any other institution they are described as Academies of the Third Age. The first Czech academies and universities of the third age were directly modelled on the University of the Third Age in Warsaw. It was founded by Halina Szwarcová, who repeatedly shared her experience through giving lectures at the conferences and seminars of the Czechoslovak Gerontological and Geriatric Society. Universities of the Third Age (U3A) started to emerge in the territory of the current Czech Republic in the second half of the 1980s. The first universities were founded and launched their activities in the town of Olomouc (1986) and the city of Prague (1987).

Among those who helped to establish U3A in the Czech Republic were such personalities as Prof. Květoslav Šípr, Prof. Radomír Čihák, Prof. Vladimír Pacovský, Dr. Jaromír Vachutka and Dr. Anna Petřková. U3As were being established over time and it may be surprising that some of them were founded as late as after 2000. The courses offered at a given U3A often correspond to the educational focus of its “parent university” and the professional, intellectual and spatio-technological potential present at the “parent university”. The scope of lectures, courses, scholarly excursions and other forms of education truly encompasses all scientific fields ranging from humanities, natural sciences to technical fields. A wide variety of different sporting activities is not exceptional.

Methodology and form of education is of course adjusted to the course content offered at the U3As. These educational methods reflect current development and scientific findings in adult education and are adequate to the target group in question. At some U3As scholars take care of the lectures, at other U3As teaching is carried out by experienced specialists in a given field and yet other U3As have fellow elderly students as teachers. The last mentioned U3A graduates have gone through special training (the basics of didactics) besides completing their U3A studies. The U3A course curriculum changes over time. Three significant milestones can be found when looking back into the history of U3A courses. After the Velvet revolution in 1989, the original health-centred courses were complemented by a wide range of courses in social...
A lecture within a course called “Human Biology” at the First Faculty of Medicine at the Charles University in Prague; 1988–1990
Education of the elderly in the Czech Republic

sciences, humanities, natural sciences and arts. Technical fields were added approximately in the mid 1990s, and after 2000, ICT courses significantly rose in importance. The field of ICT in particular is strongly influenced by the Association of Universities of the Third Age of the Czech Republic (AU3ACR), which helped to establish over 50 computer classrooms thanks to centralised development projects allocated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. These computer classrooms are used not only by students of U3As but also by full-time students.

As times change, also requirements of the elderly as to the educational content change. The elderly are interested in topics related to leisure activities, healthy lifestyle and current cutting edge technical devices. U3A course structure corresponds to these interests and offers the elderly a helping hand in the areas important for maintaining social contact, legal literacy and finding their way in society as a whole. The admission conditions vary from one U3A to another and each U3A states its own admission conditions. The rule usually valid at U3As is that an elderly person can get enrolled into the education process after he or she reaches the age necessary to be granted an old age pension. However, this is not a hard and fast rule and some U3As also enrol much younger students. The time frame for U3A studies is also individual and ranges from two to four years. U3A education also involves university ceremonies. When commencing their studies, U3A students go through a matriculation ceremony. Upon finishing their studies, U3A students attend a graduation ceremony, at which they are awarded a certificate, an attestation, etc. Education at U3As is usually paid. Prices for U3A education (registration fee, course fee, enrolment fee, conference fee) vary and generally amount to a few hundred Czech crowns per semester. This amount paid by the elderly students is not enough to cover the operation of most schools and therefore the education is often co-financed from other sources. Development projects by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports have represented one such source of funding since 2002. These projects have been carried out by the AU3ACR as the principal investor. This book contains a separate chapter devoted to the activities of the AU3ACR. Support through the aforementioned development project ended in 2011. In some cases also the “parent universities” or “parent colleges” financially contribute to the operation of U3A education from their own budgets. Funding from other sources such as European Union funds, through international cooperation among universities, sponsor donation, etc. is not exceptional.

Education of the elderly is deeply rooted at a wide range of public universities in the Czech Republic. The number of AU3ACR members supports this claim. Considering that people tend to live longer and the fact that the number of people reaching post-productive age is rising, one can presume a further increase of students interested in U3A education. About 1.5 % (35 000 people) of the elderly population of the Czech Republic is currently enrolled in a course at the U3As, which are associated in the AU3ACR. The fact that the elderly are getting university education is proof of the democratization of the Czech educational system. Materialization of this goal in the form of the U3As has a long-standing tradition in the Czech Republic. Let’s hope, it has a lavish future in front of it as well.

The first University of the Third Age in the Czech Republic launched its activities in autumn 1986. U3A participants in the Czech Republic strengthen not only their minds but also their bodies.
Association of Universities of the Third Age of the Czech Republic
In the past, when the universities of the third age started to operate independently within the framework of tertiary education, there was no umbrella organisation or association that would provide a space for discussion about the education of the elderly at universities and colleges. This was one of the reasons that led to the establishment of the Association of Universities of the Third Age of the Czech Republic. 1993 was designated as European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations to honour the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the very first university of the third age in the town of Toulouse, France. In spring 1992, a gremium meeting dealing with the concept of the U3A education in the Czech Republic took place at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic (hereinafter referred to only as MEYSCR) as a part of preparations to commemorate this event. One of the main outcomes of this meeting was to prompt the emergence of new U3As and start cooperating with international organisations. It was also agreed that specialists in theory and research were to be encouraged to deal with this field, so that education of adults of the third age would become a significant and renowned component of lifelong learning. On the 24th February 1993 a meeting of all organisers and those interested in organising U3A was held at the MEYSCR. This particular February meeting became the direct impulse to establish the AU3ACR. The constituent assembly of the Association of Universities of the Third Age held its meeting on the 9th June 1993 in the city of Prague. There were in total 36 representatives of colleges and faculties present at the meeting. This first meeting brought about the approval of the AU3ACR statutes and a committee was entrusted with starting accession talks with the AIUTA organisation (Association Internationale des Universités de Troisième Age). The Association of Universities of the Third Age is a not-for-profit special interest organisation. Its goal is to initiate and support founding of universities of the third age at universities in the Czech Republic and also organise workshops and meetings for schools and faculties involved, so that they can exchange experience and findings. The AU3ACR also aims at coordinating activities of the individual U3As within the Czech Republic, their promotion in the mass media, starting cooperation with similar organisations at an international level and aspiring for membership in these organisations. Since the very beginning of its existence, the AU3ACR has strived for creating the pre-requisites for intergenerational dialogue with strengthening intergenerational solidarity as its ultimate goal.

AU3ACR became a member of the AIUTA in 1993 and in 1994 a member of the EFOS (European Federation of Older Students). Prof. PhDr. RNDr. Helena Haškovcová, CSc. was elected to represent the Czech Republic in the EFOS presidium. AU3ACR is in close contact with the Centre for General Scientific Continuing Education (with the German abbreviation ZAWiW) of the university in the town of Ulm, Germany. The Centre is lead by the academic director Carmen Stadelhofer.

AU3ACR annually organises technical seminars and conferences for its members. These events are frequented
by people from many European countries, mainly from Germany, Spain, Finland, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. The AU3ACR also sent its representatives to the bodies of the European Union. They were present in the expert commission for the preparation of criteria for lifelong learning (2000–2002) and at the Conference on Education of the Elderly in the European parliament (2010).

The AU3ACR not only created a forum, where experience can be exchanged, but has also worked for obtaining financial support from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA). The first project called Rozvoj, podpora a koordinační činnosti univerzit třetího věku na vysokých školách v ČR (Development, Support and Coordination of the Activities of the Universities of the Third Age at Czech Universities) was launched as early as in 1994. The financial means were acquired for the purposes of development, support and coordination of the AU3ACR’s activities, the creation and operation of AU3ACR information systems and also support of research and scholarly activities of teachers and faculties of the Czech Schools and Universities that focus on the issues of lifelong tertiary education.

1999 meant an important turning point. On the occasion that 1999 was designated as the International Year of Older Persons, a special government commission was established. Its members recruited from the representatives of the Ministry of Healthcare, MoLSA, MEYS and also organisations dealing with the issues of older persons. The commission prepared the ground for launching the Národní program přípravy na stárnutí (National Plan of Preparation for Ageing) and also for, among other things, wider financial support from the government towards education of the elderly. The money came from the MoLSA and was accompanied by a humorous remark stating that “for
the state budget it is better to have the elderly seated in lecture halls than in doctors’ waiting rooms”.

The first extensive event organised by the AU3ACR took place in autumn 2004. It was subsidized by the Centralised Development Project of the MEYS. In accordance with the then interest in computer literacy, many computer laboratories were created, which extended the possibilities of teaching people to work on PC. This event started a seven-year period of building a U3A infrastructure at 21 public universities in the Czech Republic. This seven-year period ended in 2011, when the presidium of the AU3ACR stated that the priority was to ensure long term funding of the operation of education of the elderly and that development and innovation are a currently minor part of the U3A’s economic needs.

Throughout 2010 and mainly 2011, a U3A performance measuring methodology was being created at the AU3ACR. This measurement is based on the volume of active tuition multiplied by the number of students in given courses. An information system was set up to determine the tuition volume at the individual schools. This system contains all necessary data for the calculation of the MEYS subsidy for a regular year. It is also necessary to recognize that the membership in many European projects focused on education of the elderly is a momentous result of relentless work of all the AU3ACR members. The AU3ACR is not only a member of the above-mentioned AIUTA, EFOS and ZAWiW, but holds also membership of EUCEN (European University Continuing Education Network). In 2011 the AU3ACR had 34 active members (public universities and/or faculties). Since 2002 it has been chaired by Prof. Ing. Petr Vavřín, DrSc., former rector of Brno University of Technology.

Ensuring institutional support for the U3A activities from the budget of the MEYS was set up as a main goal of the general assembly of AU3ACR in January 2011. The general assembly greatly emphasised also initiating other activities of the Czech universities connected with education of the elderly, which the assembly considers a highly important and socially beneficial activity.
(3) AU3ACR’s Information System
AU3ACR’s information system was launched in the academic year 2010/2011. It is placed on a server of the University of West Bohemia and can be used by all the members of the Association, even those that themselves do not have any information systems for their education statistics, or those that deem their current information system unsatisfactory. This system was primarily created as a source of managerial data for the Association’s administrators, who thus gain access to performance statistics not only of the individual members of the Association but also the Association as a whole. Such data are an indispensable requirement for drawing money for the operation of the Czech U3As from the Ministry of Education. Various kinds of data in different formats can be generated or exported from this system. It is possible to generate a list of courses, a list of students attending a course, attendance sheets, application forms, etc.

Association members can use this system in two modes. The basic mode is used solely for statistical data collection. Collected data are later used for the generation of performance overviews of the individual institutions and their components. This mode is also used for entering basic data about study programmes and courses, their content and form, number of participants and number of hours of active tuition. The extended mode is intended for universities and institutions that do not have an information system for the management of education at U3A or deem their current system unsatisfactory. In those cases the AU3ACR database becomes the only and full database of studies. It contains the full structure of the study programmes offered at a U3A and also students’/participants’ personal data. U3A study department officers use the system to keep records of all the participants and their enrolment on the U3A individual study programmes and courses. They can also print out graduation documents or end-of-course certificates.

The users of the information system are divided into several groups (Study programmes and courses officer, U3A manager in a given institution, AU3ACR presidium member, Unlogged user). Each of the groups was assigned a specific set of rights, which enable access to individual functions of the system. A member of a given group is thus able to view data designated for the particular group: eg. study programmes and courses. Officers can view all study programmes because study programme data is by definition in public domain but as far as modification and creation of new study programmes is concerned, they can perform such actions only for their own centre. Similarly, a manager can view only statistics concerning their own institution and its centres but is not allowed to access the data of other institutions. An AU3ACR presidium member or a MEYS representative is granted supreme access rights, which means that they can view to a full extent all statistical data of every single institution recorded in the system. Several important performance indicators are displayed on the following two pages. These indicators can be observed thanks to the implementation of the information system. The data are predominantly from the academic year 2011/2012.
The academic year 2011/2012, in comparison with the academic year 2010/2011, saw a 9.8% increase in the number of participants on U3A courses.

More than 2/3 of all tuition is carried out in the form of common lectures.
Number of hours of active tuition taught at public universities registered at the AU3A CR

In the academic year 2011/2012 AU3A CR members organised in a total 1 035 courses.

Share of public universities registered in the AU3A CR on the overall performance in the academic year 2010/2011

29 098 hours of direct tuition were taught on the premises of the AU3A CR members in the academic year 2011/12. In the previous academic year 2010/2011 it was 26 133 hours.
Cooperation with foreign U3As – best practice examples
This chapter is included to put an emphasis on the international and crossborder cooperation of Czech universities with partner universities abroad. The Czech U3As take part in various joint projects and study programmes taking place predominantly in Europe. Results of such work are then presented at a wide range of international conferences and gain a very good critical appraisal. Some of the best practice examples are to be found on the following pages.

One such example is that of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering of the Czech Technical University in Prague which cooperates with similarly specialized centres in Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Estonia, Lithuania, Denmark, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. Project seminars started to be taught in 2001. These seminars are annually attended by about 30 seniors. Other projects are also being carried out as a part of this cooperation – an Internet portal for the elderly called Seniors On-line and an Internet publication called History of the Computing Science. The department is also developing cooperation on European projects such as EuCoNet (European Competence Network for Seniors), TownStories, Open gate (Cooperation of seniors within the EU), Golden Age (Electronic communication of seniors) and SENNET (Seniors in Network – a portal for educators of the elderly).


AU3A CR is also an active member of international organizations such as AIUTA, EFOS, ZAWiW or EUCEN.
and Presence 2006–2007). A broad and structured range of courses of various levels according to the level of knowledge, skills and interest of the participants and also the target groups (beginners, advanced, U3A participants and graduates, mentors and teams of seniors) within the framework of the e-LiLL projects was not limited to education only. The two e-LiLL projects called e-Learning in Later Life (2006–2008) and EWA: European Women in Older Age (2010–2012) enabled the participants to co-create and modify study plans of the individual programmes, initiate new and also follow-up study programmes and not only that – they themselves could perform the role of mentors in these programmes. Educators involved in the projects were able to guarantee the “university” nature of education. This multilevel education pattern proved competent and became a tool and a safeguard for the continuous development of education of the elderly as a specific form of life-long learning at the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice.

The goal of a pilot project called Crossborder Cooperation of Seniors of the Technical University of Liberec is to carry out crossborder educational, cultural and social activities with senior citizens within the Czech Republic and the Free State of Saxony. The activities are aimed at getting to know the neighbouring country, its history, culture and language. One of the goals is to start closer cooperation and friendly relationships within the Nisa/Neisse Euroregion. This project was launched in October 2010. Its target group are citizens over 50 years of age, who are either students or graduates at U3A of the Technical University of Liberec in the Czech Republic or students of Seniorkolleg at the University of Applied Sciences in Zittau/Görlitz or of the Akademie für altere in Dreiländereck (Academy for Older Persons in Tripoint) in Saxony. At least 20 seniors from the Czech Republic and 20 seniors from Saxony took part in each of the activities. So far, the activities have taken the form of two-day events full of lectures, seminars and excursions aimed at familiarizing the students with the language, history and culture of the neighbouring country. A U3A ball and conference on the Czech-German relationships in the interwar period also took place. Besides that the participants also engaged in creative arts and their work was exhibited in the library of the town of Liberec and on the premises of the University of Applied Sciences in Zittau/Görlitz. The original aim to bring nearer older people of both sides of the border was thus fulfilled.

In February 2011 the Centre of Continuing Education of the Technical University in Liberec filed an application for a grant project called More Than Neighbours from the Grundtvig programme. The application was filed together with six other institutions from EU member states. These institutions also deal with the education of the elderly and are namely TU Chemnitz in Germany, Universidade da Coruña in Spain, RACIO in Slovenia, Het Perspectief in Belgium, AICCRE in Italy, and Universytet Trzeciego Wieku Lublin in Poland. The goal of the project is not only to enable older persons to work on a common project and learn about the lifestyle of participants in the partner countries but also to develop the English language competence of the participants.

In 2009 the University of the Third Age of Masaryk University launched an intensive cooperation with the university of the third age of Leipzig University called Seniorkolleg. Thanks to this cooperation it was possible to organise the first exchange visit to the town of Leipzig from 11th to 17th October 2010. Liepzig is also a partner town of the city of Brno, the hometown of Masaryk University. Partners from the Leipzig U3A prepared a plentiful educational and cultural programme for the U3A students from Brno. These Masaryk U3A students also brought an exhibition of drawings and photography. The second exchange visit took place from 13th to 18th July 2011 and this time it was the Seniorkolleg students from Leipzig that came to the Czech Republic. One week senior summer school was organised in the summer of 2012 in the town of Telč. Its agenda was more than abundant: there were excursions, joint lectures on Czech-German literature, history, cultural heritage
management and also sporting activities. The whole event was funded and also very positively valued by the Czech German Future Fund.

The organisers of the university of the third age at the Slezská univerzita v Karviné (Silesian university in the town of Karviná) maintain vivid communication namely with their Polish partners. Through a civic association called Trianon, the Silesian University in Karviná engaged seniors in a Virtual University of the Third Age and together with the Senior Internet Euroclub from the town of Český Těšín the university arranges multimedia conferences for older people. It is vital to point out a set of conferences called „Bez bariér, bez hranic“ ("Barrierless, Borderless"). There is an independent cycle of lectures following the conferences, the aim of which is to raise awareness about using the opportunities that are currently at hand to overcome all kinds of barriers – language barriers, knowledge barriers, skills barriers (e.g. in computer skills) and also health-related barriers. Another goal of this cycle of lectures is to collect ideas and impulses from the participants as to how to overcome such barriers in an easier and more efficient manner.

Since the very beginning of U3A at the Brno University of Technology, its employees have put an enormous amount of effort into creating a network of international contacts. They participated in an international conference organised by the ZAWiW in the German town of Ulm as early as in 2001. One part of the conference was dedicated to presentations of work prepared for an international project. This project was launched to explore the history of bread baking in different countries of Europe. In 2002 the representatives of the Brno University of Technology took part at the AIUTA Convention in the city of Geneva for the first time. The main coordinator of the U3A at the Brno University of Technology, Mrs. Lenka Shromáždilová, is a committee member in the European organisation called EFOS (European Federation of Older Students). The active role of the U3A at the Brno University of Technology in such international research projects as EuCoNet, SENNET, ADD-LIFE and VECU, which are funded from the Socrates Grundtvig programme of the European Commission, is extremely beneficial. The importance of all these projects consists mainly in gaining information about forms and methods of university education for older persons in the EU member states and also in countries as far away as China or the countries of Latin America.
Development of Universities of the Third Age in the Czech Republic
The University of the Third age at the Brno University of Technology (BUT) was established in 2000 thanks to the initiative and support of the then rector Prof. Ing. Petr Vavřín, DrSc. Professor Vavřín came up with the idea of the basic structure of the local U3A education. The spine of the U3A is a three-year Základní kurz (Basic Course), which consist of 1 hour lectures taught once a week for six semesters. This makes in total 52 or 54 lectures. Brno University of Technology has 8 faculties. Each faculty thus has a chance to present itself and the most interesting issues concerning seniors. Each of the faculties also offers specialised courses divided by field of study. These courses include laboratory practice and seminars and make up the content of the third year of the Basic Course within the U3A at the BUT. It is key that the lectures are taught by experienced assistant professors and professors, who are able to engage the attention of even a highly differentiated audience. All of the educational activities had to be adapted for elderly students (plentiful audio-visual aids, a pleasant environment, good level of demeanour). This is how the basic structure of the BUT U3A came into being. To complete the three-year Basic Course it is necessary to attend at least 60% of all the assisted educational activities. Completing the Basic Course opens the possibility of continuing U3A education in specialised courses, which are offered in a parallel manner at the BUT U3A.

The first year of the U3A education at BUT was opened in October 2000 and 128 participants enrolled on it. At the same time computing courses for beginners and advanced learners were launched. Standard computer laboratories, which are also used by full-time students, were used for the U3A computing lectures. Lecture blocks offered by the individual faculties touch upon the following topics, e.g. modern ICT, buildings of the century, energetics, architectural and urbanistic heritage of the Czech lands, past and future of aviation, computer technologies applied in engineering and architecture, digital audio-visual systems, computer perception and graphics, business, the stock-exchange and production environments, transportation systems, materials, modern living, technology of the environment, sustainable development, construction of flats, chemistry and human health.

In 2002 BUT took over the management of the Association of Universities of the Third age from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Since then it has been offering information and organisation services at a professional level. These services have been used by more than 35 institutions.

Since day one the U3A personnel have been working to establish international cooperation. As early as in 2001 they took part in a conference organised by the ZAWiW at a university in the German city of Ulm. A presentation of a project exploring the history of bread baking in different countries of Europe was part of this conference in Ulm. In 2002 the BUT representatives took part at the AIUTA Convention in the city of Geneva for the first time.
College of Polytechnics Jihlava

U3A was incorporated into the College of Polytechnics in Jihlava in March 2005. It was founded and promoted by doc. RNDr. Zdeněk Laštovička, CSc. Doc. Laštovička studied geology and worked as a university lecturer. Between 2004 and 2007 he worked as a vice-rector for life-long learning at the College of Polytechnics in Jihlava.

U3A tuition was launched with three two-year courses: Cesta za zdravím (Path to Health), Pracujeme s počítačem (Computing) and Z historie našeho regionu (History of Our Region). The courses were taught either by the academic personnel of the individual departments or their external colleagues with practical experience from working in the mentioned fields (hospital, local archive, etc.). 123 U3A participants enrolled in the first year. In two years 91 of these U3A students took part in the formal graduation ceremony, at which representatives of the town of Jihlava and the Vysočina region were present. At present U3A study programmes last two to three years and are taught in the form of two-hour lectures, seminars, practices and excursions per week. In order to complete the studies successfully, it is necessary to attend at least 60% of the lectures and hand in an essay or participate in a controlled group interview. U3A participants can use the library, computer laboratories, etc. free of charge. Czech citizens over 50 years of age with completed secondary school education are eligible for enrolling in the U3A courses. There is no tuition fee, only admission fee of CZK 500 per semester. Building a computer study room meant an important step forward. The computer room was funded by the College and also by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and is also available to the full-time students. The U3A at the College of Polytechnics in Jihlava currently offers the following courses: Computing (4 semesters), History of Our Region (4 semesters), GPS and its Use in Tourism and Geocaching (2 semesters), Digital Photography (2 semesters), Digital Video (2 semesters), Basics of Law for Seniors (2 semesters), Language Courses for Seniors (6 semesters, 5 languages), Lifestyle of Seniors (4 semesters), Spiritual Hygiene and Human Relationships (4 semesters), Settlements at the Czech-Moravian Highlands from an Archaeology Perspective (2 semesters) and Genealogy. Most U3A course leavers continue studying in other courses. Women are more interested in the U3A studies at the College than men, even in technically oriented courses. Most of the participants are in the age group of 60 to 65 years of age.

Charles University in Prague

Charles University in Prague (the Czech abbreviation is UK) currently has 17 faculties, 14 of which participate in the U3A education. The Central Library of Charles University and more specifically its UK-EDIS department (=Evropské dokumentační a informační středisko Univerzity Karlovy/Charles University European Documentation and Information Centre, Czech abbreviation UK-EDIS) also organises U3A courses. Informačně-poradenské centrum UK (Charles University Information Advisory Centre) annually issues a course index. In the academic year 2011/2012 there are 84 mostly two-semester courses. However, there are also courses such as Everyday Psychology taught at the Faculty of Art, which last six semesters. Most of the U3A courses are actually taught at the Faculty of Arts and on Fridays this faculty
reserved virtually all of its lecture rooms for U3A lectures. There are almost 5 000 older people registered as U3A students. Many of these enrol in more than 1 course and it is not exceptional that they participate in courses taught at different faculties. Charles University is the largest pro-

vider of U3A education in the Czech Republic. Charles University has reached this status gradually over 25 years of hard work for its U3A. The very beginnings of the U3A are linked with the name of MUDr. Vladimír Pacovský, DrSc., who, thanks to his influence, managed to push ahead this type of education in the then socialist conditions.

U3A at Charles University was opened by a formal ma-

triculation of U3A students in the venerable assembly hall of the Karolinum building on 13th October 1987. The U3A structure virtually remained unchanged till the academic year 2008/2009. At that time new, specialised follow-

up seminars, e.g. in psychology, were added to the offer of two-semester and four-semester study programmes. Within its Program na podporu vzdělávání (Education Support Programme) the CDV centre (Centre of Further Educa-

tion) prepared a U3A project called Podpora vzdělávání seniorů (Senior Education Support) at the Faculty of Arts. Among other things, it was created to build a Psychological Consultation Centre for Seniors. A U3A Participants and Graduates Club was also established. The U3A also im-

plemented specialised add-on seminars/ workshops for those that completed the basic study programmes. Some of the add-on seminars are We Train Cognitive Processes for a High-Quality Life, Workshop on Issues of Personal History Research, Writing on Theatre, Poetry of the Antiquity, Social Skills as Prevention of Negative Impacts of Ageing, etc. The U3A study offer got better structured. However, it is not possible to include the wide range of U3A courses and hundreds of lecturers at the individual faculties of Charles University in this short description. This is why only the founding faculties are commented on in this paragraph and some interesting facts mentioned in connection with other faculties. Most of the Charles University courses are closed courses. This means that the same people that enrolled for the course stay throughout the course until its completion. Participants in some multi-year courses can enrol in superior course years but are awarded the Certifi-

cate of Attendance only after completing all courses in the chosen study programme. The language of instruction is Czech. Two courses taught at the Faculty of Social Sciences are lectured in English similarly as was in the past, the course of English Literature at the Faculty of Arts. Partici-

pants enrolled in U3A courses at the Faculty of Humani-

ties, Hussite Theological Faculty and Faculty of Science are allowed to take part also in courses intended for regular students. In some years the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics and Faculty of Science also open intergenerational courses for seniors and those of their grandchildren that are old enough to attend elementary school. The whole of the rich spectrum of courses can be found in a hard copy in the Katalog kurzů U3V (U3A Course Index) and on-line on the web pages of Charles University in Prague.

Czech Technical University in Prague

Being one of the oldest technical universities in Europe, the Czech Technical University in Prague offers technical courses for older people that have already been granted a retirement pension and are not professionally active. Czech Technical University in Prague offers its courses at eight faculties and four higher education institutes.
Courses taught at the U3A are mostly concerned with technical sciences such as civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, nuclear engineering, and biomedical engineering, and there are also courses focused on language learning or healthy sporting activities. The Czech Technical University in Prague arranges its courses in various ways. Some of the courses are designed as one-semester courses, several other courses are two- or more semester courses. They usually take place once a week in two-hour block lectures either in U3A designated computer classrooms or in specialised laboratories.

Computer literacy courses are most sought after and most often attended. Getting familiar with computers and modern technology makes it possible for older people to use the Internet, e-mail and also to process digital photographs.

Most of the U3A education takes place predominantly at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, which is a pioneering faculty in U3A education at the Czech Technical University in Prague. However, the U3A courses are also taught elsewhere at: the Faculty of Nuclear Sciences and Physical Engineering, the Faculty of Biomedical Engineering, the Faculty of Civil Engineering, the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and the Institute of Technical and Applied Sciences.

The first U3A course called Computing was opened in the academic year 1998/1999. The course was attended by 35 frequentants, 30% of which were men and 70% women. The average age of the participants was 66 years. The oldest course leaver was 87 years old. Since then U3A courses have been opened annually and the number of older students interested in such courses keeps growing every year. In the academic year 2010/2011 the U3A attended to 200 seniors in 11 courses called: Don’t Be Afraid of Computers for Beginners, Semi-advanced and Advanced Students, Working with Photographs, Working with Video, Creation of WWW Pages, Computer English, Introduction to Programming, PC Management and also a set of lectures by experts. The Czech Technical University in Prague also runs courses called Don’t Be Afraid of the Microworld and The Laws of the Microworld. The Department of Computer Science and Engineering of the Czech Technical University in Prague staff together with the seniors participate in research dealing with the development of software and hardware for specific user group. One such specific user groups undoubtedly is the older students themselves. Such cooperation is beneficial to both parties. Within the framework of the U3A courses the Department of Computer Science and Engineering cooperates with similarly specialized institutions abroad, e.g. in Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Estonia, Lithuania, Denmark, Slovakia and Great Britain. Other international cooperation activities of this particular school are further described in the corresponding chapter.

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Education of the elderly at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague was introduced in the academic year 1990/1991 with a course called Man, Agriculture and Nature at the then Faculty of Agronomy. Two years later The Faculty of Forestry also joined the U3A and prepared a course called Man and Forest. All the remaining faculties and institutes of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague gradually got involved in U3A education over the following years. Prof. Ing. Jaromír Hubáček, CSc. was the initial creator and supervisor of all the U3A courses. After his death in 2000, Ing. Karel Velda DrSc. became the guarantor.

Currently the U3A students at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague enjoy the opportunity to acquire new knowledge from the fields of economy, agronomy, forestry
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and landscape, technical, agriculture, economy of tropical and subtropical regions and also education. All study programmes are designated a duration of four semesters with the exception of the study programmes called Forests and Wood, which was test-launched in the academic year 2008/2009 with a duration of 5 semesters.

The Czech University of Life Sciences Prague plans to come up with four to six semester-long study programmes in the future. Besides long-term programmes that are concluded by a test and rounded off by a formal graduation ceremony, there are also short-term courses. The short-term courses’ alumni are awarded a certificate of attendance with no formal graduation ceremony.

Faculties and institutions are in full charge of the technical and organisational affairs of all the courses organised at the U3A. The U3A Coordination Centre is responsible for methodology and communication within and outside of the university. Cooperation of the Coordination Centre and the Assessment Centre for Students with Special Educational Needs proved especially fruitful. Thanks to this cooperation it was possible to mount special devices for hearing impaired students, which make it easier for older students to follow lectures. These devices were installed in classrooms, where ordinary as well as U3A lectures are held.

Study programmes offered at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague follow the professional focuses of the individual faculties and institutes. Academic level of education is ensured by a highly qualified team of lecturers recruiting both from the academic personnel of the university and significant professionals. Excursions to purpose-built university workplaces and co-operating workplaces are a welcomed enriching factor. Such excursions enable students to complement in an interesting way their theoretical knowledge gained in the lectures.

A Virtual University of the Third Age (VU3A) is organised and supervised by the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague. VU3A was launched in 2007 and currently provides education opportunities in about a hundred education centres for those older people who, for various reasons, are not able to attend classes in university towns and cities. The VU3A project is based on interactive video lectures shot by professionals in various fields. These lectures are then presented to the students in the education centres by specially trained employees. This process enables students not only to view the video lectures and fill in a test but also to contact the lecturer directly. The fact that the video recordings can be used repeatedly is also an advantage. VU3A offers a wide range of topics such as Astronomy, Magical Geometry, Ethics as a Solution to Society in Crisis, History of Clothing, Forestry, Gamekeeping, Growing and Use of Edible and Healing Mushrooms, Support for Decision-making and Management, The Development and Present State of the European Union, Development of Information Technologies. These lectures are not created only at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague but also at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of the Charles University in Prague and Technical University of Liberec. The Silesian university in Opava also cooperates in the VU3A projects.

Virtual U3A has over 100 branches in non-university towns and municipalities.
Institute of Chemical Technology in Prague

U3A at the Institute of Chemical Technology in Prague (ICTP) was established at the Faculty of Food and Biochemical Technology at the beginning of the 1990s. A course called Food and Nutrition was launched in the academic year 1991/1992. Gradually also other faculties joined the U3A. In the academic year 2005/2006 the Faculty of Chemical Engineering launched a study programme called Život s počítačem (Life With Computers) which revolved around the basic computing skills such as working with the Internet, e-mail, text and chart editors and web site creation. Those enrolled for the course are allowed to borrow digital cameras and use them at home. Each semester is ended with an individual piece of work. A course called Ochrana životního prostředí (Environmental Protection) is taught at the Faculty of Environmental Technology. The course consists of lectures as well as interesting excursions. A two-year study programme called Chemie a živý organismus (Chemistry and Living Organism) is taught at the Faculty of Chemical Technology. The programme introduces chemistry as a field that is omnipresent in our daily lives and touches on such topics as toxicology, poisoning, pharmacology, nanomaterials and medical applications. These subjects can be studied in two to three year programmes. U3A study is ended with a formal exit of U3A students. Academic dignitaries of the individual faculties and the institute as a whole are present at the ceremony. There are a maximum of 20 participants in the individual years of study. This enables teachers to keep an individual approach to each of the older students. The Faculty of Chemical Technology launched a study programme called S počítačem přátelsky (On Friendly Terms with Computers) in 2010. The U3A education at the ICTP is free of charge with the exception of a one-time admission fee. Participants are granted a chip card, which enables them to access all buildings of the Institute and also computer study rooms. An account in the Institute’s computer network and a “school” email are also created for the participants.

Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem

The University of the Third Age at the Jan Evangelista Purkyně (UJEP) was founded in 1994 by virtue of the then UJEP rector Prof. RNDr. Jan Kopka, CSc. Prof. Kopka got inspired to establish U3A at UJEP when visiting the U3A at Masaryk University in the city of Brno. PhDr. Sáva Suchevič also significantly formed the newly emerging U3A at UJEP. PhDr. Sáva Suchevič was a geographer and a historian, who had already had valuable experience from being involved in the organisation of the U3A in the German city of Berlin and the U3A at Charles University in the Czech city of Prague. It was PhDr. Suchevič who, on 10th December 1993, first formulated the design of the UJEP U3A internal structure. PhDr. Suchevič contacted the then dean of the Faculty of Environment Ing. Jaroslav Zahálka, CSc. and the then UJEP vice rector doc. PhDr. Jaroslav Vomáčka, CSc., who passed the U3A ideas onto other high ranking UJEP
employees. Subsequently, a board of advisers was created, who designed the U3A concept and on the 19th April 1994 a declaration establishing the U3A at UJEP was published. The first U3A cycle took place between 1994 and 1997. 54 lectures have been preserved from that era. The second U3A cycle was a two-year one – running from 1997 to 1999 – and offered lectures provided by the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Environment. Since 2005 the whole university has engaged in U3A education. Outputs in the form of essays written at the end of a course were replaced by verbal assessment of the course. The course offer was extended and subdivided into one main two-year study programme and various follow-up courses. Language, ICT, Mathematics and Arts courses were also added to the scope at that time.

At present the U3A offers two-year study programmes full of lectures, seminars, exercises and excursions. Each participant is entitled to enrol onto an unlimited number of courses that are opened in a given semester. Each of the courses is ended by crediting. To get the U3A Certificate of Attendance it is necessary to successfully complete at least 2 courses in each semester. There has been a long-term increase in the number of people interested in the U3A studies at UJEP. Currently there are about 600 people registered. The lowest age threshold is 55 years. On average U3A frequentants participate in two to three courses within one semester. Most of them are interested in lecture-type courses related to humanities. Among the most popular courses there are: History of Art I–IV, Man in History I–IV, Key Issues in the History of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown I–IV, Nature in the Ústecký Region I–IV, Human Senses – Hygiene, Computing and various language courses. Fees paid for the U3A studies vary according to the form in which they are taught and time allocated to the courses. Fees are paid per semester and the price range is from CZK 150 to CZK 900.

The UJEP management takes part in many U3A events such as vernissages and graduation ceremonies. 10 to 14 excursions are usually organised within one semester. U3A participants also attend English theatre performances and cooperate on projects together with the technical University in Liberec. In the future, there is a plan to establish UJEP U3A branches in the towns of Kadaň and Litoměřice.

Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno

Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno (Czech abbreviation JAMU) was the first art school in the Czech Republic to open a University of the Third Age. The very first U3A course was called How Does Theatre Come into Being I (Introduction into Theatre, History, Theory and Practice). This course was launched at the Theatre Faculty on 19th April 2012 and was followed by a course called How Does Theatre Come into Being II (Modern Theatre Development Specifics). The courses are taught by teachers from the Theatre faculty, who are themselves tremendously experienced artists. Most of the lectures are complemented with audiovisual demonstrations. The goal of the U3A...
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programme at JAMU is not only to offer the participants an insight into the origins of theatre in different historical eras, but the courses also aim at making vivid connections between the historical data with the issue of searching for the meaning of theatre in modern society and fulfilment of that meaning. Excursions to the most important theatres with guided backstage tours and display of stage technology with professional commentary are also part of the tuition. Debates with famous artists – directors, actors and theatre and film professionals, who offer their expertise and knowledge to the older students, are surely an extremely interesting part of the tuition.

**Masaryk University**

University of the Third Age at Masaryk University in Brno was founded in 1990 as one of the forms of life-long learning by a decision of then management. Prof. MUDr. Květoslav Šipr, CSc. provided a lion’s share of the founding of the U3A, the U3A ideas were supported by the influence of the then rector Prof. PhDr. Milan Jelínek, CSc. and vice-rector for study affairs doc. RNDr. Otto Říha, CSc. significantly contributed to the U3A activities in its first years of existence.

U3A currently offers programmes for almost 1900 participants. Persons who have reached the age requirement for an old age pension and successfully completed secondary school education can take part in these programmes. U3A education materializes as lectures or even practice classes, seminars and excursions. Lectures take the form of two 45-minute lessons and are held once a fortnight from October to May. A U3A graduate is awarded a certificate at a formal graduation ceremony. All of the nine faculties of Masaryk University take part in U3A education.

The U3A currently offers six courses, which together make up the elementary programme: a **General Course** (duration: 8 semesters; topics: Man and Health, Man and Nature, Man and Art, Man and Society), **Spiritual Dimensions of Man – Live Theology** (duration: 8 semesters, topics: selected issues from theology history, etc.), **History of art** (duration: 6 semesters, takes place in the town of Telč), **Cultural Heritage** (duration: 6 semesters, takes place in the town of Telč), **Crime Prevention** (2 semesters) and a course called **University of the Third Age in the Moravian Museum** (2 semesters). Besides the above described elementary programme, the U3A offers also short term courses and thematically linked excursions focused, e.g. on computer technologies, language learning, sports and relaxation activities and current issues in humanities and natural sciences. A unique and interesting one-week summer project called **Plein Air Art** is held in the town of Telč. Older people are encouraged to engage in photography and drawing in the **Plein Air Art** project. The outputs of their artistic activities are then exhibited within the Czech Republic and abroad.

U3A participants can use a computer room at the Faculty of Education during their studies and also a computer study and practice room at the Faculty of Social Studies. Computers, Internet connection, TV with a DVD, projector and newspaper dailies are available to the participants in these computer rooms. U3A participants can also borrow lecture notes, books, encyclopaedias and science popularization publications. Since 2009 Masaryk University has cooperated with the Univerzitat Leipzig in Germany. Two mutual exchange visits, summer senior school and two artwork exhibitions have been organised so far within this Czech-German cooperation.
Mendel University in Brno

U3A at Mendel University in Brno (MENDELU) dates back to 2003 and is linked to the foundation of the Institute of Lifelong Learning. The then rector Prof. Ing. Stanislav Procházka, DrSc. together with the then vice-rector prof. Ing. Jana Stávková, CSc., and the first manager of the Institute of Lifelong Learning doc. Ing. Karel Menšík, CSc. significantly contributed to the fact that the U3A was founded at Mendel University in Brno, which was then called Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry in Brno. Thanks to the support of the above mentioned personalities, a lecture cycle called *Man and Nature at the Beginning of the XXI Century* was created in a relatively short time and the very first year of the U3A education at the MENDELU was formally opened in October 2003. 115 older students enrolled onto the lecture cycle.

The basic three-year cycle is subdivided into four thematic blocks, each of which encompasses topics dealt with within the study programmes of the individual faculties of MENDELU, i.e. of the Faculty of Agronomy, Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology, Faculty of Business and Economics, Faculty of Horticulture and of the new Faculty of Regional Development and Social Studies established in 2008.

The fact that older people from smaller towns and the countryside were also interested in education brought about the idea of opening U3A branch offices at practice secondary schools in 2006. Five secondary schools in south and north Moravia entered into the project between 2007 and 2009. All five U3A office branches offer lectures. 60% of these lectures are taught by their own professionals: their own teachers. The remaining 40% of lectures are taught and supervised by the MENDELU employees.

Older students of MENDELU are most interested in topics connected with gardening, horticulture and cultivation of fruits and vegetables. Many of the frequentants own a garden or at least take care of a garden. Information of practical use, to which the participants can relate in their daily life, is sought after and undeniably appreciated.

Laboratory practice courses are also very popular. Laboratory practice offers the possibility to carry out, e.g. field assessment of the participants’ own soil. Based on the results of such assessment, a lecturer gives the participants advice as to how and with what materials to fertilize and how to take care of their soil. Another laboratory practice involves microbiological and chemical analysis of participants’ own water. A third laboratory practice is concerned with food. Participants prepare they own cheese and place it aside so the milk souring process passes properly. On the next day they taste their own products and take the cheese home.

Palacký University Olomouc

The University of the Third Age at the Palacký University Olomouc started giving lectures on the 23rd October 1986. It is one of the pioneers of the U3A education within the Czech Republic. The Head Physician of the Faculty Hospital in the town of Olomouc MUDr. Jaromír Vachutka, CSc. significantly contributed to the fact that the U3A was founded at Palacký University. The technical supervisor of education of older students was Palacký University, the then Czechoslovak Red Cross together with other institutions such as the Faculty Hospital Olomouc and the Czech Gerontological Society were responsible for organisational matters. In 1991 the then rector of the Palacký University in Olomouc Prof. PhDr. Josef Jařab, CSc. decided to open the University of the Third Age at the Palacký University. Department of Sociology and Andragogy of the Faculty of Arts at Palacký University got in charge of the newly established U3A. Doc. PhDr. Vladimír Jochmann, doc. PhDr. Věra Bočková, CSc., doc. PhDr. Anna Petřková, CSc., PhDr. Vilém Klega, CSc. united in a team, which created a new concept of education of the elderly. This concept works to this day.

The study programme offered is a two level one. The first level is identical with the first year of study, the second level corresponds to the second and third years of study.
The first level is designed as an introductory year. Lectures deal mostly with the issues of life-long learning and also sociological and psychological aspects of the third age. The second level, i.e. the 2nd and 3rd years of studies, lacks this thematic unity. Seniors attend specialised courses at the respective faculties of Palacký University. The Philosophical Faculty, the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and the Faculty of Physical Culture were the first ones to join the U3A. The Faculty of Science, the Saint Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty, the Faculty of Education joined later. Currently also the Faculty of Health Sciences participates in U3A education. U3A frequentants are most interested in and most willing to enrol on courses dealing with the issues of health and disease. Among these there are courses such as: Člověk ve zdraví a nemoci, Zdravý životní styl, Regenerace lidského organismu pohybem (Healthy and Ill Man, Healthy Lifestyle, Recovery of Human Body through Movement). Another area of great interest is the field of culture. Courses such as Kultura v minulosti a přítomnosti, Setkání civilizací (Culture in the Past and Present, Encounters of Civilisations). Courses dealing with history such as České dějiny, Historie – od pravěku po současnost, Evropa a křesťanství (Czech History, History from the Prehistoric time to the Present, Europe and Christianity) are also highly popular. U3A students show no less interest in psychology. In this field there are courses such as Společenské vědy, Psychosociální studia, Humanitní studia (Social Science, Psychosocial Studies, and Humanities).

Currently there are about 1 200 students enrolled in U3A education at the Palacký University in Olomouc. The education takes place not only in the town of Olomouc itself but also in the towns of Valašské Meziříčí, Uherské Hradiště and Žďár nad Sázavou, where the Palacký University regional centres are situated.

The U3A education timeline is identical with that of the ordinary academic year. The studies are opened with enrolment and formal matriculation and ended with a formal graduation ceremony. Although the actual graduation ceremony is called the formal exit of U3A students, many of them keep coming back and study at the U3A again. There is a U3A student at the Palacký University, who has continuously been studying at the U3A since 1991 without one single interruption of study.

Silesian University in Opava

U3A in the town of Opava was founded in 1995. In the very beginnings the U3A courses stemmed from the professional interest of the employees at the individual institutions at the Faculty of Philosophy and Science. Currently, one of the institutes is responsible for each semester. Frequentants can attend lecture cycles in literature, history, pedagogical and psychological sciences, public administration and regional policies, library science and creative photography. Recently, a University of the Third Age club has been opened.

The department of lifelong learning, which is responsible for the U3A, prepares language courses at various levels of difficulty, computer literacy courses and also courses in management of other electronic devices, sports courses and excursions. U3A has its own library. Collections of syllabi, i.e. the main lecture theses, are published for the

The Czechoslovak Red Cross and the Czechoslovak Gerontological and Geriatric Society were most influential in founding the Czech U3As.
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participants. Seniors themselves prompted the foundation of a chronicle. At present there are about 450 participants in 28 courses. In 2010 a meeting of Czech, Slovak and Polish seniors took place in the Slovak town of Žilina thanks to the support of the Visegrad Fund.

Education of the elderly at the School of Business Administration in Karviná concentrates mostly on economics and practically all technical departments of the faculty are involved in the U3A programme preparation. A great deal of effort is put into getting persons with disabilities involved and is characteristic of the U3A education in the town of Karviná. Prof. Ing. Vítězslav Balhar, CSc. is known as the founder of education of the elderly in Karviná. Prof. Balhar is a former vice-rector of the Silesian University. At that time he lectured on a course called Foundation of Modern Economic Theory. At present a 6-semester course called Economics and Management is taught at the School of Business Administration in Karviná. This course deals with topics from the fields of accounting, taxes, marketing and social sciences. Following this course there is a 4-semester course of the same name which encompasses such topics as law, communication, language culture, statistics, computer literacy, social and retirement policies. There is also a Klub absolventů (U3A Club of Graduates), which holds vivid discussions about economic, social and tax-related issues and, e.g. issues of healthy lifestyle.

Through a civic association called Trianon the U3A in the town of Karviná actively cooperates with its Polish partners. The U3A in Karviná is also a member of the Virtual University of the Third Age. International multimedia conferences are organised in cooperation with a Senior Internet Euro-club in the town of Český Těšín. A significant chapter in the history of this U3A lies in activities linked to the organisation of conferences called Barrierless, Borderless, which are followed by a lecture cycle. Its goal is to raise awareness about using the opportunities that are currently at hand to overcome all kinds of barriers – language barriers, knowledge barriers, skills barriers and also health-related barriers. Another goal of this cycle of lectures is to collect ideas and impulses from the participants as to how to overcome such barriers in an easier and more efficient manner.

The Silesian University is also active in the town of Krnov. The local U3A was launched in 1999. Since 2007 employees of the Silesian University Education Centre in Krnov have been responsible for U3A education in the STRECHA centre (in English called the Centre of Clever Activities) in the town of Vrbno pod Pradědem. In this case the town administration itself called for launching the U3A education in the local centre.

Technical University of Liberec

The University of the Third Age at the Technical University of Liberec (TUL) came into being in the summer semester of the academic year 1998/1999 mainly thanks to doc. Ing. Jiří Vacek, doc. RNDr. Jaroslav Vild and RNDr. Eva Dvořáková, whose department (the then TUL Department of Distance Education) took charge of the education of the elderly. The TUL U3A is not one of the oldest U3As (it has been in operation for 12 years only) but thanks to its dynamic development, it is able to keep pace with institutions that have been working in the field of education of the elderly for a longer time.

In the beginning the U3A was composed only of the study programmes offered at the Faculty of Education. Currently, study programmes and courses for seniors are
also created by the Faculty of Economics, the Faculty of Textile, the Faculty of Architecture, the Faculty of Mechatronics, Informatics and Interdisciplinary Studies, and the Institute of Health Studies.

At present TUL U3A offers basic and follow-up study programmes and also a U3A Students and Graduates Club. The basic study programmes last between 3–5 years and offer a comprehensive view of a chosen topic. U3A students attend 1 compulsory and a maximum of 3 optional subjects in one semester. Nine traditional study programmes were offered in the academic year 2010/2011: English Language, German Language, French Language, Computing, Selected Chapters from the History of Art and Architecture, Foundations of Digital Photography, Communication – Socially-personal Development, Foundations of Psychology and Mythology.

As regards the follow-up programmes, the recommended study duration is 2 years and a participant goes to 2–3 compulsory courses and 1 optional subject within 1 semester. Two pilot follow-up programmes were launched in the academic year 2010/11. Culture-history and Anthropology Studies are a compact two-year study programmes, which offers an insight into cultural history, cultural anthropology, history of art and architecture, history of music and history of clothing culture. A two year programme of Digital Photography enables students to complete and broaden their knowledge in the fields of digital photography, computing basics, landscape photography, macro photography and computer graphics.

Crossborder Cooperation of Seniors is a new pioneering project that was launched in October 2010. The project is financially supported by the European Regional Development Fund. The goal of Crossborder Cooperation of Seniors is to carry out crossborder educational, cultural and social activities to senior citizens within the Czech Republic and the Free State of Saxony. The activities are aimed at getting to know the neighbouring country, its history, culture and language. One of the goals is to start a closer cooperation and friendly relationships within the Nisa/Neisse Euroregion. In February 2011 the TUL Centre of Continuing filed an application for a grant project called More Than Neighbours from the Grundtvig programme. The application was filed together with six other institutions from EU member states. These institutions also deal with education of the elderly and are namely TU Chemnitz in Germany, Universidade da Coruña in Spain, RACIO in Slovenia, Het Perspectief in Belgium, A.I.C.C.R.E. in Italy, Universytet Trzeciego Wieku Lublin in Poland. Both Crossborder Cooperation of Seniors and More Than Neighbours were described in detail in the chapter on international cooperation within the U3A.

Tomas Bata University in Zlín

Tomas Bata University in Zlín (TBU) was founded in January 2001. As early as the beginning of 2002, there was an effort to establish a University of the Third Age Council, which held its very first meeting on 1st March 2002. The Council stipulated the thesis of the local U3A, study content and duration and defined the timeframe of education. The then vice-rector for educational activities doc. PhDr. Ing. Aleš Gregar, CSc. and the dean of the Faculty

Older people from the Technical University of Liberec at the Alexanderplatz square in Berlin

The Czech Universities of the Third Age most often cooperate with universities in German speaking countries.
Development of Universities of the Third Age in the Czech Republic

of Management and Economics Prof. Ing. František Trnka, CSc. were the ones to put through the idea of education of the elderly.

The first year of U3A studies was launched in October 2002. There were 85 participants in two lecture cycles. However, many more people were interested in taking the courses but the school did not have sufficient capacity to accommodate the demand. The first lecture cycles were concerned with sociological and technology and economics issues. A two-year cycle in Arts competed with practice in art studios was added later on. Older people became more and more interested in the U3A studies not only in the town of Zlín itself but also in other towns in the region. Therefore the Střední průmyslová škola strojnická (Secondary School of Engineering) in Vsetín started offering U3A education as a detached workplace of the TBU in 2004. The town Council of the town of Kroměříž together with local library also showed an interest in starting a cooperation with the U3A at TBU. In 2010 U3A education was launched in the town of Uherské Hradiště, which is the seat of the youngest TBU faculties: the Faculty of Logistics and Crisis Management.

Thanks to a new computer room it was possible to open a special cycle concentrating on ICT called Počítače v praxi (Computing in Practice) in the academic year 2005/2006. That year also saw the rise of new study cycles such as Mědia a komunikace (Media and Communications) and Astronomie (Astronomy). In the academic year 2005/2006, the U3A was already attended by 251 participants. New study issues and cycles were gradually added, e.g.: Healthy Man, Healthy Diet, Healthy Planet, Archaeology and Ethnology, Internet and Information Media, Man and Society, Basic Theory of State and Law, the Phenomenon of the Town of Zlín, Spiritual Development and Human Health. The U3A study programme is structured into two-year lecture cycles, which are further subdivided into four semesters. Each of the semesters is ended with crediting. The U3A students begin their studies by an official matriculation with the presence of the TBU representatives and end their studies by attending a formal ceremony, at which they are awarded the Certificate of the Attendance of the U3A at the TBU in Zlín.

At present there are about 600 seniors enrolled on 19 study programmes (lecture cycles and seminars) in the towns of Zlín, Uherské Hradiště, Vsetín and Kroměříž. The U3A at the TBU annually prepares new offers of topics and many of the U3A graduates keep coming back to study. Therefore it is necessary to prepare brand new or restructured study programmes for these returnees.

AU3A CR members are currently educating approximately 1.5% of older people in the Czech Republic.

University of Economics, Prague

U3A at the University of Economics, Prague (UEP) was established in 1988 after the negotiations of the UEP management, more specifically its vice-rector Prof. Ing. Jan Ehleman, CSc., with the 1st Faculty of Medicine at Charles University in Prague. The first U3A graduation ceremony joined the U3A participants of the UEP and U3A participants of Charles University in the historical premises of the Karolinum building. The U3A graduates attended a one-year course Základy práce na počítači (the Basics of Computing). This course was taught and supervised by Prof. Ing. Stanislav Jiren, CSc., with the help of doc. Ing. Jan Pour, CSc., from the Faculty of Management. For the first time in the region older people were trained in computing in economic practice. Some of the graduates even got new jobs thanks to this particular course. Textbooks created at that time were also being used at other institutions that provided services for older people. Job centres of the Středočeský region were contacted with an offer of purpose-built education. An independent integrated computer study room was created solely for U3A purposes thanks to the versatile support of the UEP management and the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports. Twenty students and two teachers were able to use the study room at once. The Internet Senior Club was established. Older people themselves created schedules for the use of the computer study room within the Club. They used the computer study room in gaps between lectures during workdays and on Saturdays. Between 1995 and 2000 the course scope was enlarged by

AU3A CR members are currently educating approximately 1.5% of older people in the Czech Republic.
such courses as Business Administration, Economic and Social Policies of the Czech Republic, Czech Diplomacy, History of Art, Statistics, Banking. Courses in ICT were enriched by Computer Graphics, Presentation Programming, Web Site Creation, Computer Assisted Translation, etc.

The U3A at the UEP also engaged in international cooperation. It cooperated with an education foundation in Upper Saxony, Germany, and one of the U3A participants held a speech at an international conference on education of the elderly in the Czech Republic in Mallorca, Spain. Prof. Ing. Stanislav Jireš, CSc. was in charge of the U3A till 2005. After Prof. Ing. Stanislav Jireš, CSc. retired, the UEP rector Prof. Ing. Richard Hindls, CSc. appointed doc. Ing. Tomáš Kubálek, CSc. as the U3A academic director. To be eligible for U3A studies one must fulfil the requirements for old age or invalidity pension and have successfully completed secondary school education ending in a secondary school leaving exam. Participants register and enrol for the courses electronically via the UEP information system. Tuition fees are paid per semester and are calculated according to the number and kind (social sciences, ICT, sports, foreign languages) of subjects taken. At present the U3A at UEP offers a wide range of courses, which vary depending on student’s interest and availability of teachers. Among other subjects, U3A currently offers: History of Art, Finance, Life Management, International Politics and Diplomacy, Consumer Protection, Business for Seniors, Psychology of Human Communication, Accounting, Basics of Computing, Internet Services, Computer Graphics, Web Site Creation, Get Familiar With Your Notebook, Digital Video, Digital Photography, English language, Spanish language, Sports as a Prevention And as a Part of Healthcare.

U3A in Prague has its own cutting edge lecture room with an interactive board, which enables lecture recording. The Faculty of Management in the town of Jindřichův Hradec is also a part of the U3A at the UEP. U3A at the Faculty of Management was launched in the winter semester of the academic year 2002/2003. U3A participants can choose from three subjects currently taught at the U3A in Jindřichův Hradec: Introduction to Macroeconomy, Psychology and Management in Healthcare and Cultural Anthropology. ICT courses are also taught here and language courses are also highly sought after. Letní škola seniorů (Summer School for Seniors) has already become a tradition. In cooperation with the Czech University of Life Science Prague, the local U3A joined the Virtual University in 2010. Detached workplaces in the towns of Třeboň and Dačice also joined in to the Virtual University later on.

In the academic year 2011/2012 there (in U3As) were 1232 less participants attending computer literacy courses than in the previous academic year.

University of Hradec Králové

It is possible to trace the beginnings of the education of the elderly at the University of Hradec Králové to 1984. A branch of the then Czechoslovak Red Cross in the town of Kolín wanted to start educating older people but needed a university supervisor to guarantee their activities. A scholar from the Biology department doc. RNDr. Josef Louda, CSc., welcomed the idea and together with the Red Cross he managed to lay the foundations of what was later called the University of the Third Age.
Organisational issues including the promotion of U3A education was in the competence of the Red Cross. The Faculty of Education became the technical supervisor of education. About 60 participants enrolled for the very first lecture cycle. Older people gradually grew more and more interested and therefore three faculties: the Faculty of Medicine in Hradec Králové of Charles University, the Faculty of Pharmacy in Hradec Králové, also of Charles University and the Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové agreed to cooperate in the education of the elderly. Each of the faculties supervised one year of studies. The faculty of education reflected the interest of participants in psychological and pedagogical disciplines and offered lectures concentrated on topics from these fields. Regional topics in biology (lectures such as On the Flora of Eastern Bohemia, On the Fauna of Eastern Bohemia, On the Geological Nature of the Region of Eastern Bohemia) and history (lectures such as Jan Kolda of Žampach – Hussite Marshal, Baroque Style in the Town of Hradec Králové, Art Associations and Artists in Eastern Bohemia) were extremely popular in the early days of U3A education in Hradec Králové. As the qualification and age structure of the participants changed over the years, people started to be more interested in general topics and sporting activities within the U3A.

Among the most successful lecture cycles there are Chemistry around Us, Physics, Ecology and Conservation of the Environment, Psychology for Seniors of History of Eastern Bohemia. A lecture cycle called Financial Markets and Us, which was supervised by employees of the Czech National Bank in Prague, was an enormous success.

Short-term courses are focused mainly on computing for beginners and advanced learners, language education (English, German, and French), arts (oil painting, graphics, digital photography) and textile techniques (lace, weaving, etc.) Besides these courses it is also possible to attend courses in psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, etc.

After completing a three-year programme and fulfilling all necessary conditions, participants receive a certificate. Certificates are awarded at a formal ceremony, which is usually accompanied by various cultural events. Those who complete art technique courses regularly exhibit their works in the Gallery of the University of Hradec Králové. The exhibition is usually opened by a vernissage attended by teachers, course leavers and their families. Vernissages are a great example of intergenerational meetings.

University of Pardubice

The detached workplace of the Jan Perner Transport Faculty of the University of Pardubice in the town of Česká Třebová has been running U3A courses since 1999. These U3A courses were preceded by four semester courses taught at the Educational Centre of the Jan Perner Transport Faculty in the city of Prague, which were organised by the manager of the Centre Ing. Milena Foglarová. The courses were focused on transport issues. When the Prague courses “era” was over, the education moved to Česká Třebová as mentioned in the introduction. U3A in Česká Třebová was lead by doc. Ing. Břetislav Till, CSc.

Four semester cycles offered the following topics: Railway Transport and Technology (1999–2001), Modern Transport Technology (2001–2003), Transport in the Third Millennium (2003–2005) and Transport Technology in Contemporary Europe (2005–2007). On average there were 30 participants in each of the semesters. Some of the lectures were taught by the director of the Czech railway company, called České
dráhy. Each of the study programmes is completed by an academic ceremony at which representatives of the faculty and the town of Česká Třebová are present. U3A education is heavily supported by the town council of Česká Třebová and the Jan Perner Foundation. In 2007 restructuring of the courses was carried out as follows. There is the technological cycle, which includes lectures and seminars in material engineering and technical mechanics (History of Steelmaking, Geopolymers – Materials of the Future, Incidents and Breaks of Steel Constructions, Technical Mechanics in Practice, Railway Tracks, Bridges and Tunnels). Then there is a technologically economic cycle with lectures in the fields of technology and managements of road, railroad and air transport (Issues in Funding of the Public Regional Personal Transport, Tariffs and Prices, Insurance). Another of the cycles deals with computing and communications, mainly with applied ICT in Transport and includes lectures such as History and Use of Computers and Transmission Devices in Transport, Findings in Implementation of ICT Systems in the Different Kinds of Transport, Perspectives and Further Developments of ICT Systems in Transport, Digital Photography and Internet Services. And last but not least there is the social sciences cycle touching on such topics as The Region of Pardubice Yesterday and Today, The Personality of Oskar Schindler in the Context of History, J. S. Bach and his Music, Heart Diseases and Their Prevention, Psychiatry through the Ages, Importance of Diet in Human Life. Education takes place in two to three lecture blocks on Friday mornings and afternoons. If possible, some of the subjects are taught in computer rooms or in laboratories. These are, e.g. metallography, electrotechnics and tribology. The courses are still free of charge.

University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice

The history of U3A at the University of South Bohemia began at the Faculty of Health and Social Studies in 1991. Employees of a type III hospital (i.e. faculty type), which had had 15 years of experience with education of medical students postgraduate study programmes for doctors and paramedical staff, together with Faculties of Medicine of the Charles University located in Prague and Pilsen gave the impulse to focus the U3A on health.

The then rector of the University of South Bohemia doc. PhDr. Jiří Divíšek, CSc. and the dean of the Faculty of Health and Social Studies doc. PhDr. Jana Šemberová, CSc. supported the idea of founding and developing a U3A at the University of South Bohemia.

Between 1998 and 2001 the education pattern changed into a two-level one with the possibility of choosing the duration and type of study programme. The first year was introductory and its goal was to get students familiar with study matters. The second and third years were aimed at offering a deeper view into the key topics of the field and also on ICT education. There was a choice of B and C type study programmes, which determined not only the difficulty of the study programme but also the possibility to join national and international project activities and play an active role in them. This three year U3A programme of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice was attended by 28 participants in 1998–2001. Together with six partner countries, this Czech U3A also joined the European education programme SoLiLL: Self organised Learning in Later Life (2000–2002).
Conferences called Contemporary Issues in Education of the Elderly and Learning at an Older Age were held at this U3A in 2002 and 2003. These conferences significantly contributed to deepening the findings about the process of learning at an older age. Later on, a selective course called Quality of Life at an Older Age was also introduced. This programme was quite unique as it incorporated distance elements in the education process and also prepared “mentors” and project managers recruiting from the active senior population. U3A senior teams became researchers on the European CBC Phare projects called Active Living with Friends on Both Sides of the Border 2004–2005; Interreg IIIA: New meetings with Friends on Both Sides of the Border 2005–2006 and Interreg IIIA: Nature and Places of the Czech-Austrian Border Region Linked by Their History and Presence 2006–2007).

A wide and well-structured course offer in the e-LiLL: e-Learning in Later Life (2006–2008) and EWA: European Women in Older Age (2010–2012) projects meant that students had the opportunity to choose courses according to their level of knowledge, interest and also target groups – beginners, advanced learners, participants, U3A graduates, mentors and senior teams. E-LiLL and EWA projects were not limited solely to education. The projects enabled students to co-create and modify study plans of the individual programmes, initiate new and also follow-up study programmes and not only that – they themselves could perform the role of mentors in these programmes. Educators involved in the projects were able to guarantee the “university” nature of education.

The U3A keeps attracting new participants not only through introducing a new lecture cycle called “Šumava známá a neznámá” (The Bohemian Forest Known and Unknown), which is taught by the U3A graduates, but also thanks to extending their consultation and advisory activities for seniors. In the academic year 2010/2011, the University of South Bohemia provided education to 1 141 participants in 35 programmes.

Many AU3A CR members actively join external projects with international participation.
The very first U3A study programme was formally ended by a festive meeting in May 2003. 172 U3A graduates were awarded the Certificate of Attendance at this meeting.

The U3A studies are currently organised as follows: Man and Animal – a four-semester study focused on history and presence of veterinary medicine, the importance of animal keeping for mankind, animal protection, important diseases, treatment principles, prevention, etc., Man and Healthy Foods – a four-semester study concentrating on food safety and security, lifestyle diseases in connection with human diet, important nutrition characteristics of food, quality and technology of food processing, etc. Health and Drugs – a four-semester study focused on pharmaceutical care for patients of an older age, specific treatment preparations, diseases connected to old age, antibiotics, vitamins, cosmetics, etc., Pharmaceutics and Veterinary Medicine – a four-semester study co-run with the Městská veterinární správa v Praze (Municipal Veterinary Administration in Prague). Practical training with teaching aids and samples is carried out in the university departments according to the current needs. Excursions into plants and workplaces are also organised. U3A participants are free to use the university library and an Internet study room. There are about U3A 300 participants per year. They are most interested in the fields of Man and Healthy Foods and Man and Drugs. A factor limiting the admission of new participants is lecture room capacity.

University of West Bohemia in Pilsen

The U3A at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen was launched in 1992. Doc. RNDr. František Ježek, CSc. together with the U3A secretary Mgr. Zdeňka Klepetková prompted the foundation of the U3A. In 2005 doc. Ing. Jan Hán, Ph.D. became the head of the Institute of Life-long Learning and at the same time represented the U3A at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen in the Association of Universities of the Third Age. The U3A education was originally designed as a cycle of lectures from various fields. In 1996 it was re-structured as a three-year study. U3A participants are not limited by age, previous level of education or by deadlines for completion of the U3A studies. The U3A has its own supervisor and methodologist. Education content is organised in two ways. Either as an overview, which enables the participants to find their way in a given subject, or as a collection of findings, which is meant to enable a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Lectures are held once a fortnight and last 90 minutes. This means that there are 8 meetings in one semester. Practices and excursions are included according to the nature of a given field. At the end of a semester participants usually write essays, seminar papers or fill in tests. If they sufficiently fulfill all the requirements, the semester is then recognised as completed. Participants become graduates after completing at least six subjects under the condition that at least four of these subjects are part of one single study programme.

Admission fees vary depending on whether the field of study is theoretical or practical. The first U3A year in 1992 was opened with lecture cycles of Prof. Ing. Jiří Macek, CSc. from the Faculty of Education. His lectures were attended by 85 U3A students. In 2011 the U3A at the University of West Bohemia had about 1000 participants. The fact that the U3A at the University of West Bohemia integrated with the Vysoká škola v Plzni, o.p.s. (College of Pilsen, publicly beneficial company), which at the time operated as the Faculty of Health Care Studies signified an important
milestone. The study programme in Biomedicine containing the subjects of Physical Therapy and Clinical Anatomy are a joint project of the integrated bodies. The U3A also has detached workplaces in the towns of Aš and Cheb. Here it is possible to study Consumer, Tenant, Property Owner Legal Protection, Non-verbal Communication, Computing, Chinese Studies, Marketing in Book Culture, Health and Lifestyle, Cultural Legacy of European Civilisation, An Invitation to Sociology, Socioeconomic Geography of English Speaking Countries, Marketing in the Non-Profit Sector and English in Tourism. The U3A at the University of West Bohemia has so far offered the following courses: History of Art - Theatre, Arts and Music, The World of Computers, Philosophy, History – History of Technology, Archaeology, Anthropology, World and Czech Literature, Historical Sights, Exact Sciences, Psychology, Biology, Active Approach to Natural Sciences, Geography, Architecture, Economics, History, World of Computers, History of Art, Exploring Music, History of Sciences and Technology. Czech Legal History, Anthropology, Garden Architecture, Archaeology, Biology, Biomedicine, History of Applied Art, Active Approach to Natural Science, Photography, Plein Air Drawing, Drawing and Painting are taught as standalone two-semester courses. Interdisciplinary lectures are a new feature of the U3A education. Their goal is energize the participants. There is a manifold offer of the interdisciplinary lectures. Among others there are: Man in the World of Finance, Brain Training, Ancient Civilisations as the Cradle of Law, Health Day, Genealogy, Economic Aspects of Life, Spirituality, Dogmatic and Christian Ethics, Basics of astronomy, European Literature, Dialogues about Mathematics, Active Approach to Natural Sciences, Psychology of Health, History of Applied Art, Small Forms Theatres, Human Biology, Regional History and Archaeology and Family Psychology. University of West Bohemia offers education of seniors also in the towns of Klatovy, Sokolov and Tachov. U3A at the University of West Bohemia is a constant part of the academic environment.

**VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava**

Education of the elderly is currently incorporated into the study programmes of four faculties: the Faculty of Metallurgy and Material Engineering, the Faculty of Mining and Geology, the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Safety Engineering. As U3A education was launched in different years at the different faculties, each of the faculties organised this form of life-long education more or less in its own way. Those in charge of implementing the U3A courses at the individual faculties decided to establish a working group of U3A coordinators and supervisors for the whole VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava (VŠB-TUO). Unification of study conditions and joint work on publicity materials were set up as the main goals of the group. The group also presents the individual U3A faculties on the web pages of the VŠB-TUO. The group meetings are also used as room for exchange of experience and cooperation on projects focused on education of the elderly. However, the course content is fully in the hands of the individual faculties.

The first faculty to educate older people within the U3A was the Faculty of Mining and Geology (FMG). For a long time it was the only faculty providing this type of education.
Information and experience with U3A education at the Faculties of Science at universities in the cities of Prague and Brno prompted the foundation of the FMG U3A study programmes. The first attempt at launching U3A education at FMG was a course in astronomy opened in the academic year 1991/1992 by the Observatory and Planetarium of Johann Palisa, which is one of the FMG’s departments.

In the academic year 2010/2011 the FMG opened 6 courses. There were three courses in geology, one in economics, one in ICT and one course on the use of GPS. Most of the courses last four semesters, some of them just two semesters. Originally, the U3A was designed as individually science popularising lectures, however, at present the FMG managed to tie them up in the form of courses, in which the lectures are placed in the form of blocks. These blocks basically stem from the accredited subjects taught at the FMG. Scholarly excursions are also part of the tuition.

U3A at the Faculty of Metallurgy and Material Engineering started in 2000. In accordance with the faculty’s development plan, most of the lectures dealt with metallurgy, material engineering, quality management and testing.

The Head of the Department of Accounting Prof. Dr. Ing. Renáta Hótová is linked to the U3A foundation at the Faculty of Economics. Prof. Dr. Ing. Renáta Hótová came up with the U3A idea in Spring 2007 and within less than half a year she managed to create a concept and course content for the U3A. At the same time she managed to get teachers, who became supervisors of the subjects offered within the U3A. Thanks to the giant effort of the organisers, more than 150 U3A students enrolled in the very first year of the U3A at the Faculty of Economics of the VŠBTUO in the academic year 2007/2008. The oldest participant was 89 years old.

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(41)
Association of Universities of the Third Age of the Czech Republic members’ list

Association of Universities of the Third Age of the Czech Republic
Brno University of Technology
Rector’s Office
Antonínská 1, 601 90 Brno
http://au3v.vutbr.cz

Brno University of Technology
http://www.lli.vutbr.cz

College of Polytechnics in Jihlava
https://u3v.vspj.cz

Charles University in Prague
1st Faculty of Medicine
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Petr Adamec
Masaryk University
Rector’s Office
adamec@rect.muni.cz

David Kryštof
Palacký University Olomouc
Philosophical Faculty
Department of Sociology and Education of the Adults
david.krystof@upol.cz