

RESEARCH REPORT

**„Analysis of needs on specialistic language courses among  
nurses/hospital attendants”**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Outstanding development of modern technologies and information–share techniques brings about new challenges for well-qualified people representing various vocational groups.

An ability to communicate in foreign languages improves expansion of European labour market as well as opportunities to take advantage of existing laws and liberties resulting from internal mobility of European Union.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This study was elaborated within the confines of international project “English, German, Italian and Spanish foreign languages courses for nurses” conducted by institutions from United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy, Czech Republic and Poland, representing universities and research institutions with multi-year, broad experience in linguistic and nursing fields.

The fundamental goal of the project is to elaborate language courses, which would completely fulfil needs of the target group (nurses and hospital attendants) and improve qualifications, and opportunities in finding employment within European united labour market. Additional project’s objective is a synthetic description of health care systems in partner countries, implemented on a Web – site, as a contribution in popularisation of similarities and differences between these systems, supporting adaptation of nurses and hospital attendants in a new work environment.

The high quality of elaborated course is a result of opinions issued by international advisory panel on the structure and created modules of the training in question. Within the project the following activities are projected to be implement:

- Elaboration of training materials;
- Production of interactive CD’s;
- Creation of training tool in a form of *self-study* course and information package introducing new work-environments.

This elaboration looks into linguistic needs of the specific vocational group – nurses and hospital attendants as well as allows obtaining crucial information on a selection of subject – matter and content – related language course modules elaborated within the project.

## METHODOLOGY

The survey in question was conducted in a first quarter of 2007, in seven countries, among nurses and hospital attendants working in various institutions related to health care sector.

Principal element of the survey was a questionnaire<sup>1</sup> (appendix 1) comprising of 21 questions, most of them, concerning technical aspect, one-answer questions (20 questions), six of them, including multi-answer option (including alternative-ranking answer).

The applied questionnaire related to fundamental subject-matter issues: foreign language educational requirements and content – related subjects of the course in question.

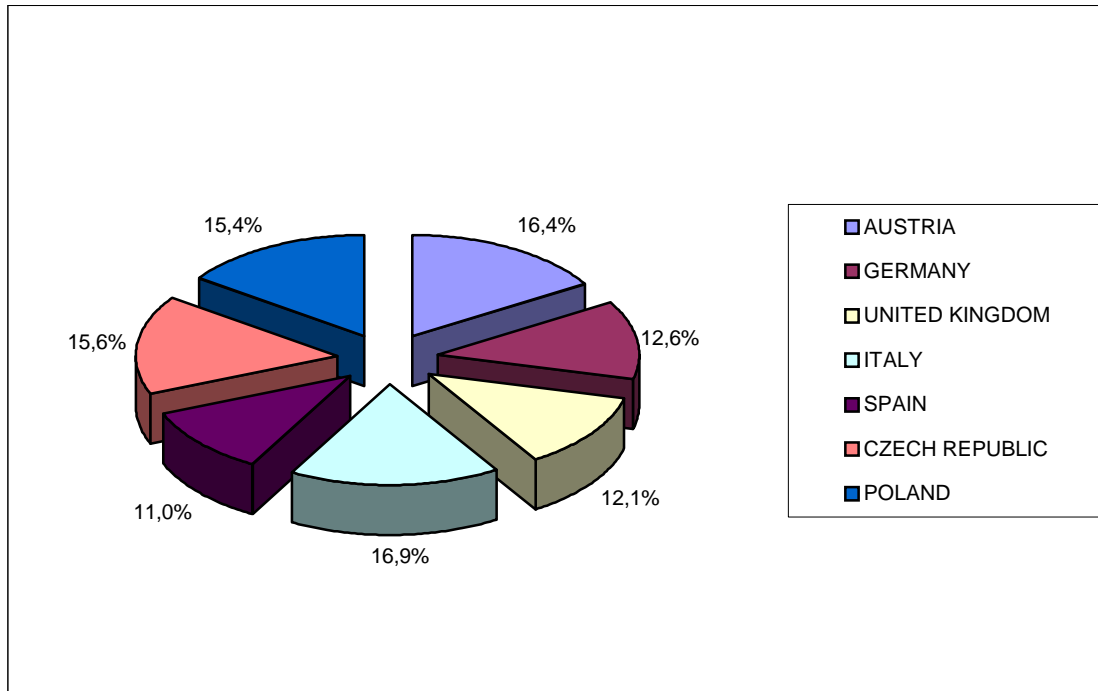
According to the previous agreements, each partner was obligated to conduct survey among 50 respondents, vocationally-connected to nursing; in the survey took part 390 persons, whose points of views and opinions were a helpful base to further considerations and analysis.

Picture 1, established below, presents percentage share of each country taking part in the study. Each partner country had organized similar in a number, surveys which results were collected and elaborated in the report, see below.

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<sup>1</sup> L. A. Gruszczyński, “Questionnaire in sociology. Creating survey-related tools, Śląski University Publishing House, Katowice 2001 p. 10

**Picture 1. Country participants structure (in %)**



Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.

Regarding insignificant number of survey part-takers, this elaboration does not include any sophisticated statistic apparatus, but involves boundary-distribution analysis that is a sufficient method to define subject – matter issues and the final form of the course.

All calculations were worked out with an application of Microsoft Excel 2000.

## STUDY RESULTS

### STRUCTURE OF SURVIVED PERSONS ACCORDING TO A GENDER, AGE AND EDUCATION.

As an introduction to the conducted analyse, the following demographic and social characteristics should be taken into consideration: regarding gender structure (table 1), almost 85,4% of all respondents were women, confirming the all-known stereotype that this profession is dominated by female representatives.

**Figure 1 Gender and age respondents' structure (in %)**

Age group (in years)	women	men	No data	Total
Under 20	9,7%	0,3%	0,0%	<b>10,0%</b>
21- 30	28,5%	5,1%	0,3%	<b>33,8%</b>
31- 40	17,4%	3,3%	0,0%	<b>20,8%</b>

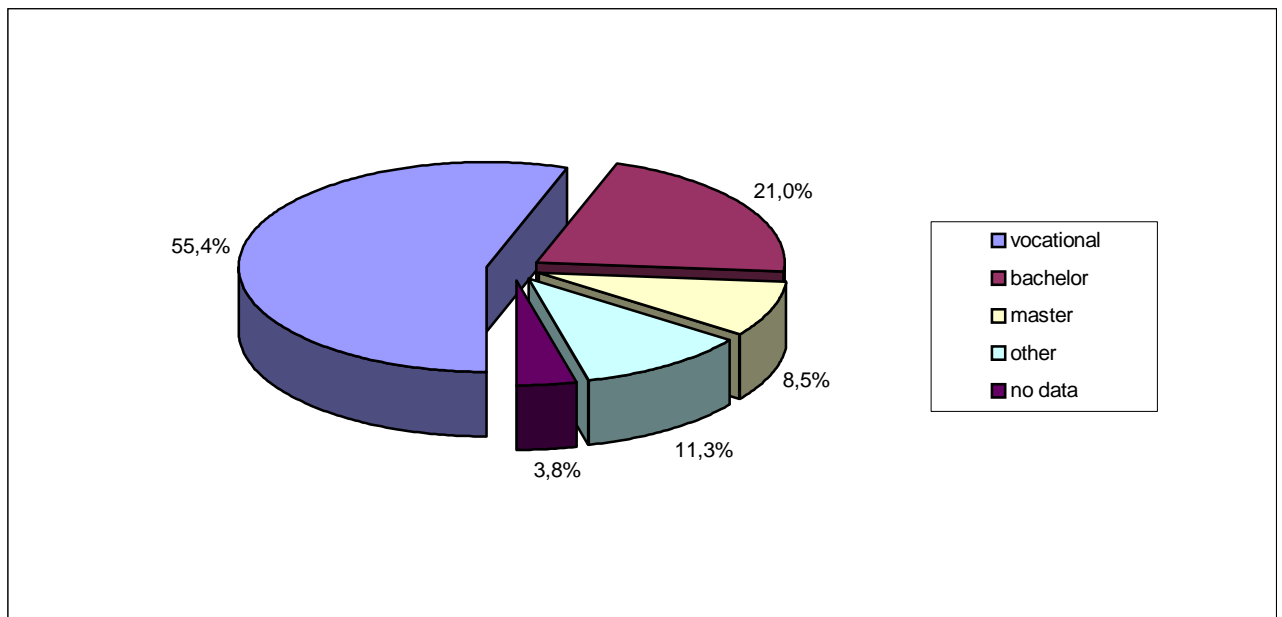
<b>41- 50</b>	16,4%	3,3%	0,0%	<b>19,7%</b>
<b>Over 50</b>	5,6%	0,5%	0,0%	<b>6,2%</b>
<b>No data</b>	7,7%	0,8%	1,0%	<b>9,5%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>85,4%</b>	<b>13,3%</b>	<b>1,3%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.

In a nutshell, taking into consideration age structure, most respondents were between 21 and 30 years (33,8%), only 6,2% were over 50, so the bulk share of attendants represented high level of vocational and place-connected mobility which can be a crucial indicator in a verification of their interests in improvement of linguistic qualifications.

Next key-element of respondents’ characteristic is an education level, presented below – picture 2. More than 55% of survey participants had accomplished vocational level education, 21% - bachelor, 8,5% - master, and other – 11,4%, inter alia vocational secondary and secondary education level; 3,8% of all survived persons were not able to give any answer.

**Picture 2 Nurses and hospital attendants educational structure**



Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.

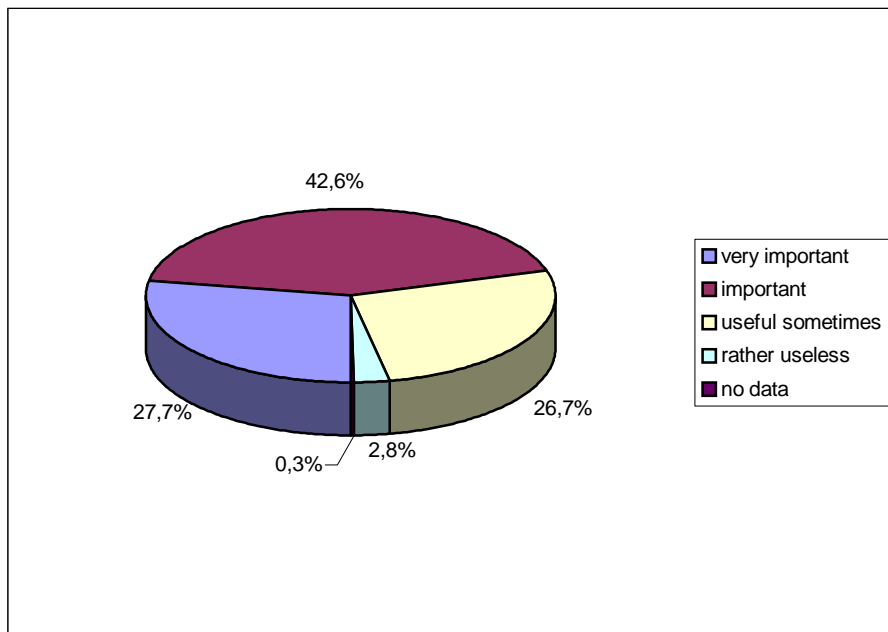
Completing fundamental demographic and social features review, the next part of this elaboration should give an answer on the following question, if there is a demand on vocational nursing-related language courses.

## **ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS AMONG NURSES AND HOSPITAL ATTENDANTS**

This part of established elaboration refers to survey part-takers' preferences in relation to: selection of a language, course's form, motivation to start education and possibilities to apply obtained linguistic skills in a work-oriented environment.

Having undergone the verification of usefulness of foreign language skills among nurses and hospital attendants, final results indicated that majority of all survey part-takers (i.e. 70,3%) regarded foreign language command skills as key element, rest of them concerned this ability as a very important skill (picture 3), but only 26,7% of all involved course attendants (104 persons) admitted that acquaintance of foreign language skills was sometimes useful in their work.

**Picture 3 Foreign language importance level among nurses and hospital attendants (in %)**

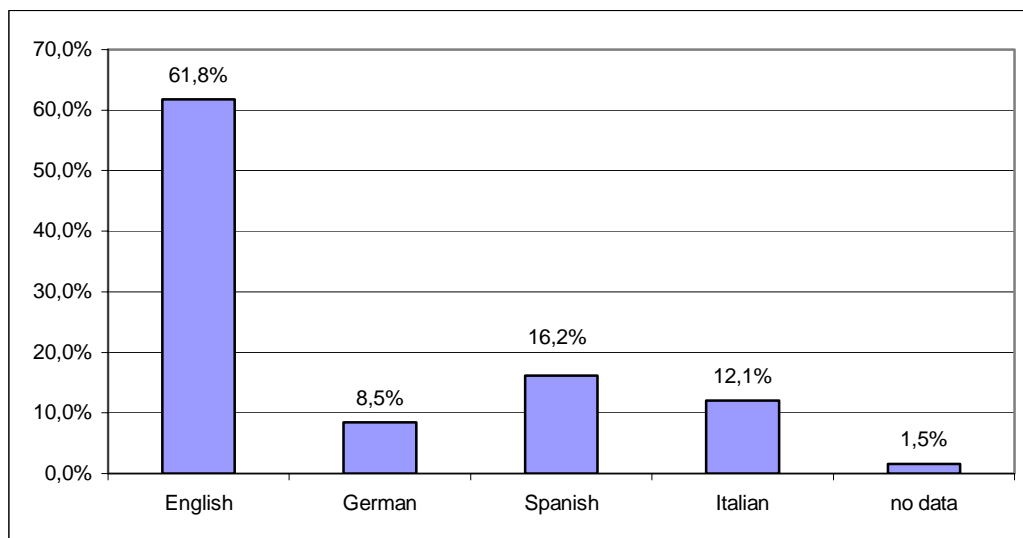


*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

Only 2,8% of all respondents indicated foreign language command skills as a completely useless ability, fortunately it is only an insignificant percentage of the stochastic sample, however 1 person did not give any answer.

Taking into account the respondents’ preferences to acquire and motivation to learn specific foreign language, respondents made the following choice: 61,8% - English (picture 4), Spanish – 16,2% and Italian – 12,1%. Less favourable was German – only 8,6% of all involved in course accomplishment were interested in, however this can be a result of partnership’s structure, in which two partners represented official German speaking countries.

**Picture 4. Demand on foreign language learning (in %)**



*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

Presented foreign-language choice structure gives a clear answer (table 2) that Polish nurses and hospital attendants want to acquire practical knowledge of **English** – 88,3% of all respondents taking part in the survey conducted in Poland. Beside Polish respondents, also Spanish – 83,7%, Italian – 77,3% and Czech Republic – 65,6% representatives of professions in question, showed their interest in learning English, only 8,5% of all respondents from United Kingdom were interested in, which is a really strange situation, because it is an official language in this country; survey part takers probably derived from other countries and came to United Kingdom to improve their living conditions.

Second place was taken by Spanish, most interested in learning of this foreign language were Brits – 51,1%, subsequent Germans – 22,4%, Austrians – 14,1% and Italy – 13,6%, only one person from Spain was interested in acquire Spanish command language skills.

**Figure 2 Demand on foreign language learning in specific countries ( in %)**

Country	languages					Total
	English	German	Spanish	Italian	No data	
<b>Austria</b>	53,1%	1,6%	14,1%	31,3%	0,0%	100,0%
<b>Germany</b>	46,9%	8,2%	22,4%	22,4%	0,0%	100,0%
<b>United Kingdom</b>	8,5%	10,6%	51,1%	21,3%	8,5%	100,0%
<b>Italy</b>	77,3%	7,6%	13,6%	1,5%	0,0%	100,0%
<b>Spain</b>	83,7%	9,3%	2,3%	4,7%	0,0%	100,0%
<b>Czech Republic</b>	65,6%	18,0%	9,8%	3,3%	3,3%	100,0%
<b>Poland</b>	88,3%	5,0%	5,0%	1,7%	0,0%	100,0%

*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

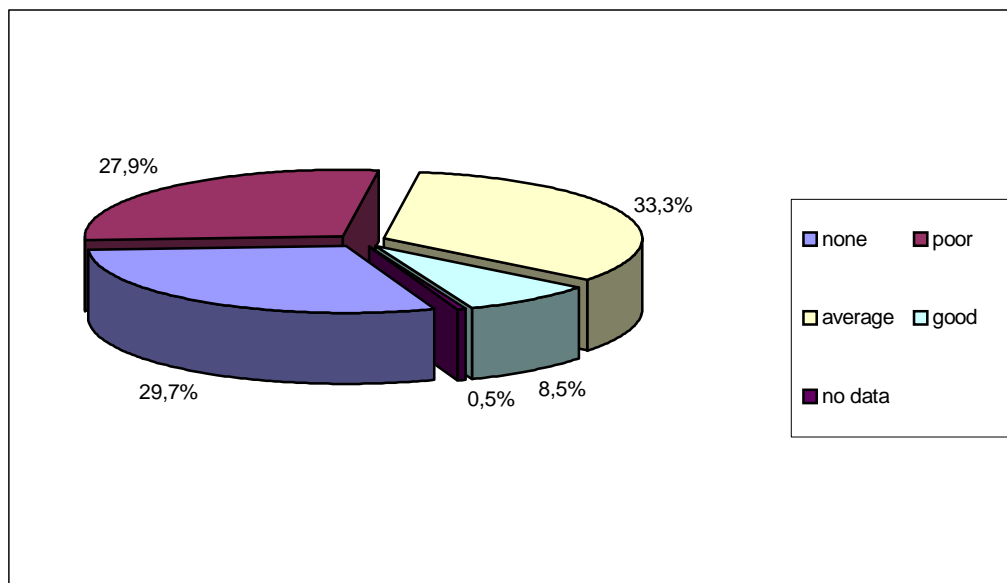
Analysing learning of **Italian**, over 31% of Austrians were interested in learning this language, probably because of Austria is a border country of the Italy, 22,4% of Germans and 21,3% of Brits; less likely to study Italian were Czechs – 4,7% of respondents and Italians – 1,5%.

Beside English, Spanish and Italian languages, also **German** was taken into account; in Czech Republic and in The Great Britain respondents showed their greatest interest in comparison to other partner countries, adequately 18,0% and 10,6%, where demand on German language learning did not exceed 10% level.

Next stage of the study was an identification of foreign language command skills level among nurses and hospitals attendants (picture 5). More than a half of all respondents admitted lack – 29,7% or poor knowledge of any foreign language – 27,9%, almost 33,3% of them possessed elementary language skills, but only 8,5% of all respondents represented of good command level of a foreign language.

In addition, considering statistics, the structure of the course should comprise of specific vocabulary and grammar for beginners, also elementary and pre-intermediate levels.

**Picture 5 Respondents’ linguistic skills (in %)**

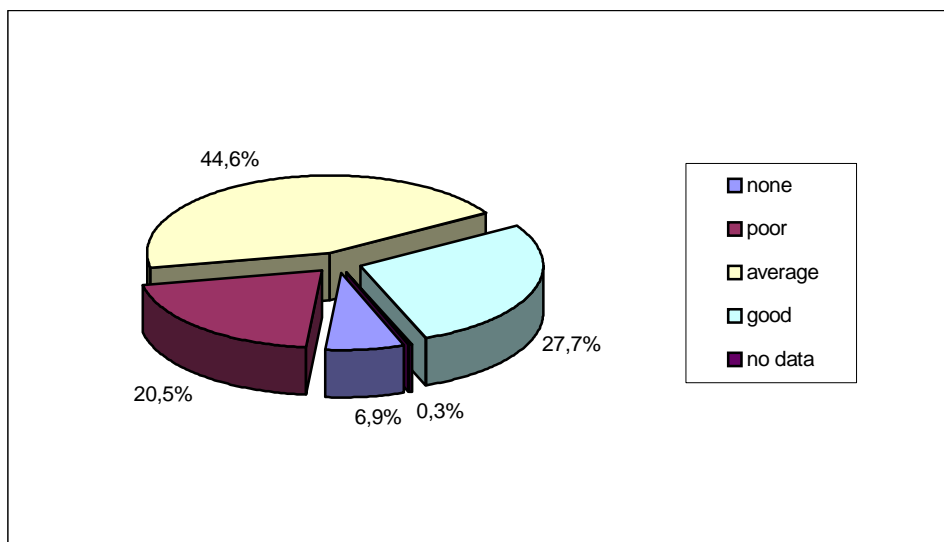


*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

Respondents outlined also that the form of the course is a key – element in reference to learning process – this course applies on-line methodology. In order to specify the final shape of the course, the group of survey part-takers were asked about computer skills and how often they use Internet; assessing also an Internet-use skills and application of modern knowledge-oriented solutions provided through this medium.

Taking into consideration computer skills (Picture 6), 44,6% of all respondents regarded it as good, 20,5% - poor, and lack of these skills is represented by a 6,9% of survey part-takers.

**Picture 6 Computer skills among respondents (in %)**



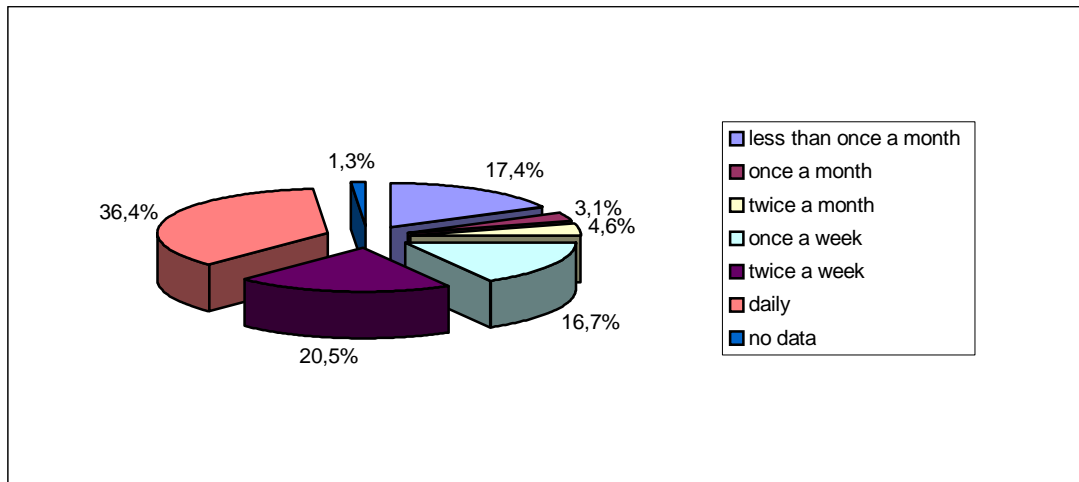
*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

Concerning Internet-use frequency – most questioned answered “every day” – 33,4% (Picture 7), 20,5% - twice a week, 16,7% - once a week, 25,1% - occasionally<sup>2</sup> (4,6% - twice a month, 3,1% - once a month, 17,4% less than once a month), among them 12,3% are people over 30 years old.

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<sup>2</sup> Less than three times a month

**Picture 7 Internet-use among respondents (in %).**



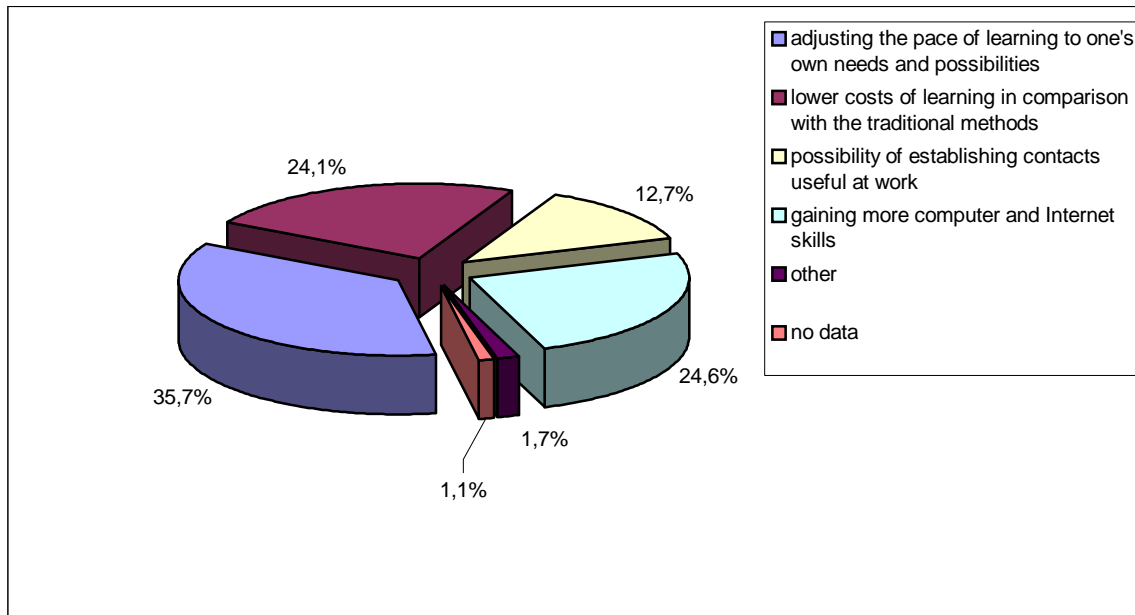
*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

In the next stage of this survey, nurses and hospital attendants were asked about: if they have ever participated in an on-line language course, if they can attend such course and what kind of benefits they can obtain.

According to statistical results, most respondents 53,9% had not participated in a course of this type, rest of survey part-takers confirmed their attendance in it, proving that an on-line form of the course displaces traditional method.

Nurses and hospital attendants asked about projected benefits derived from participation in the course in question, outlined adjusting the pace of learning to one’s own needs and possibilities (35,7%, see Picture 8), improving Internet and computer skills – 24,6% of all respondents and lower financial costs in comparison with traditional methods - 24,1%. Other crucial element for survey part-takers was a possibility to establish, useful at work, contacts – 12,7%; 1,1% of respondents were not able to give any answer.

**Picture 8 Benefits from participation in the on-line course (in %).**

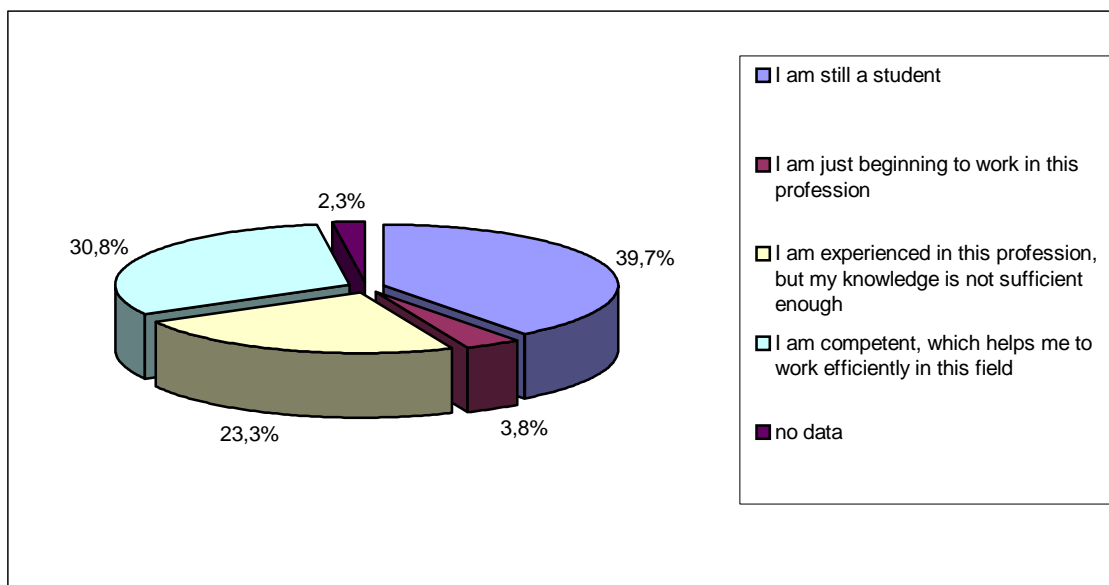


*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

Further, taking into consideration opportunities on participation in an on-line course respondents were asked about inconvenience, which may appear during the course accomplishment. Almost 72% could not identify any obstacles to take part in the course in question, 16% couldn't give any answer, and the rest of respondents, nearly 12% were not able to attend it because of lack of hardware, lack of broadband access, no time, lack of any contact with the teacher, or stating that many exercises creating great burden of acquiring knowledge at home or due to dyslexia, which make difficult to start learning.

Additionally, this survey comprises also an analysis of nursing-related knowledge level (Picture 9) – majority of respondents still were studying (39,7%), almost 31% thought that they were well – qualified to pursue the profession of the nurse or the hospital attendant. Nearly 23% represented some university-degree education, but intended to improve owned nursing-related knowledge. Only about 4% of respondents were represented by persons starting their vocational career; 2,3% of all survey part takers were not able to give any answer.

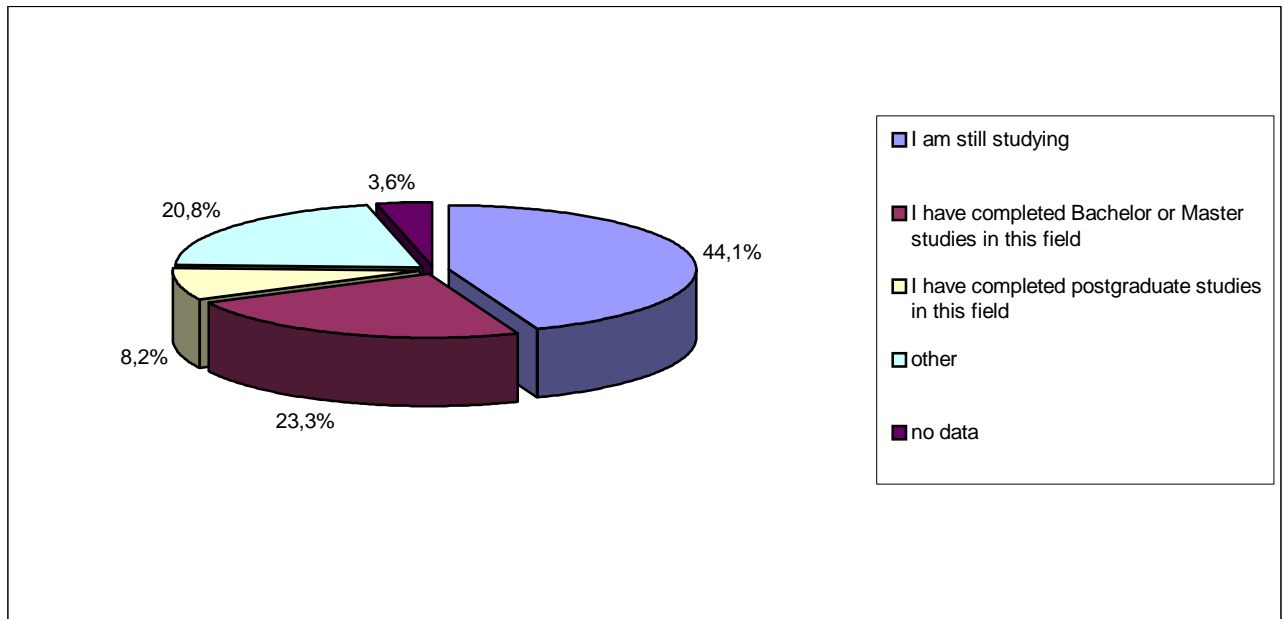
**Picture 9 Nursing-related knowledge levels among respondents (in %)**



*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

Asking survey-attendants about sources of acquiring nursing-related knowledge, most respondents, almost 88% indicated universities, where they obtained or were about to attain the knowledge (Picture 10). Beside academic knowledge, nearly 21% pointed out other sources: symposia, seminars, periodicals, professional nursing courses, medical literature and Internet.

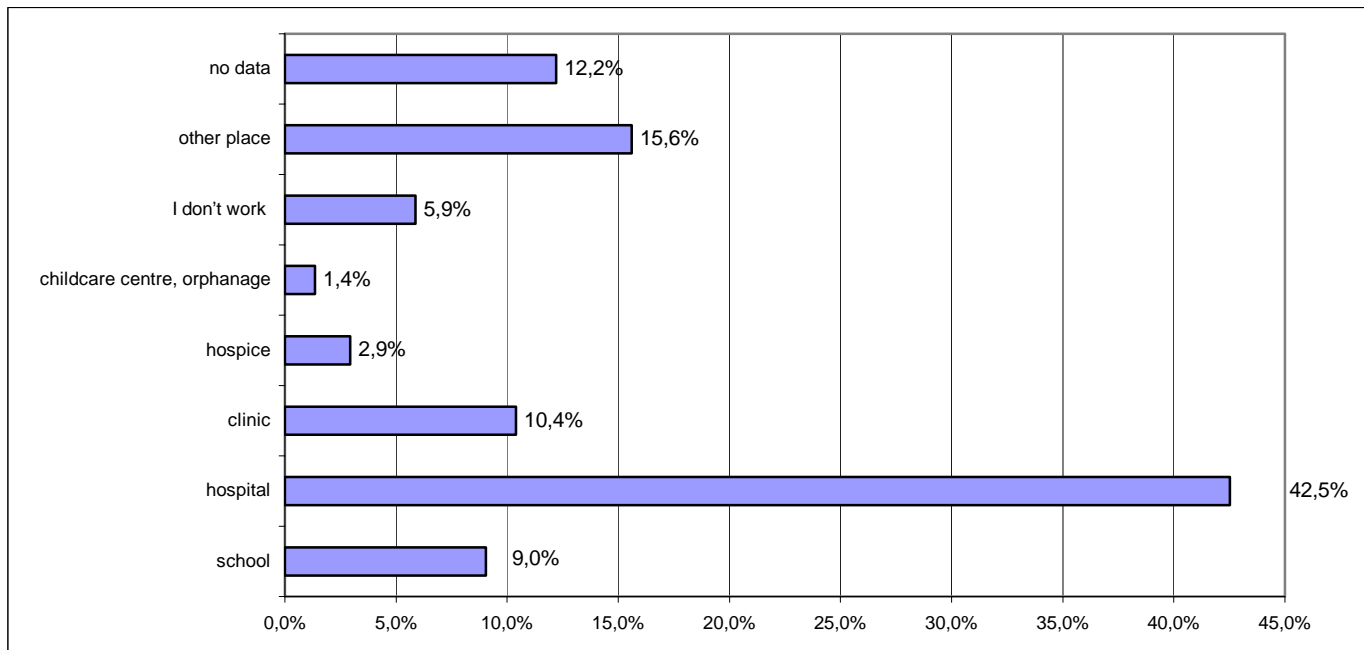
**Picture 10 Nursing connected sources of knowledge (in %).**



Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire..

Further questions allowed defining a work-place (multi-option question) and directions of vocational development, as well as to identify age group they most often contact with at work. Most respondents worked in hospitals – 42,5%, least in childcare centre and orphanages (Picture 11).

**Picture 11 Respondents’ work places (in %).**



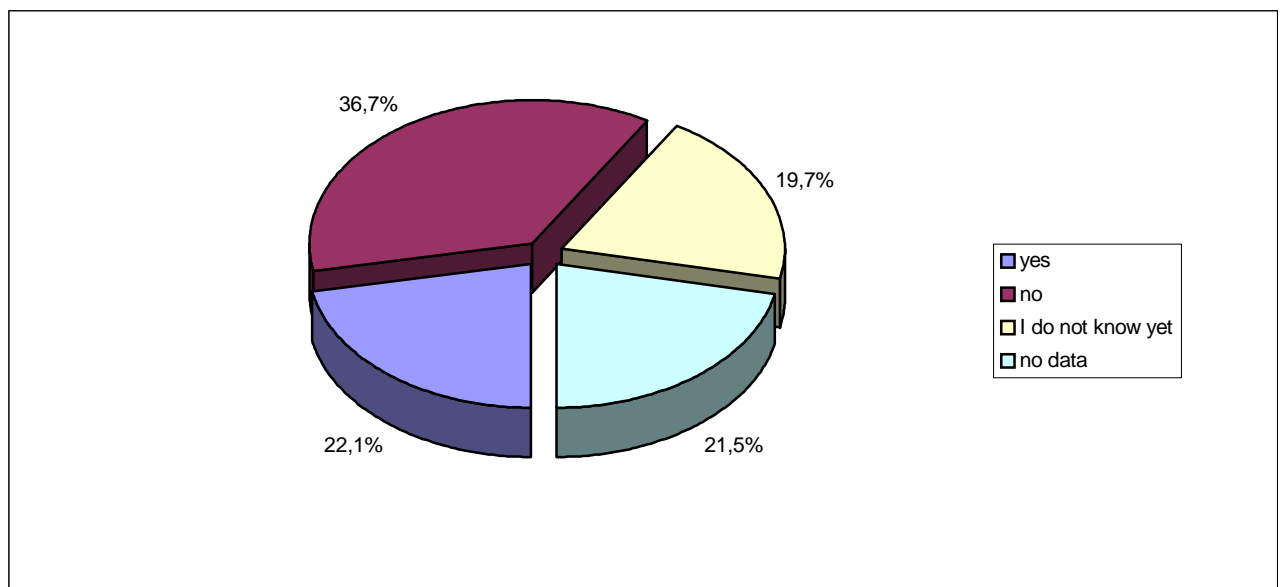
Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.

Other places indicated by respondents are: clinic – 10,4%, school – 9%, hospice – 2,9% and other institutions – 15,6%, such as: medical centres, public health centres, emergency, private clinics, work in patient’s home, 5,9% of all survey part-takers were unemployed.

Additionally, taking into account age – group structure of patients, nurses and hospital attendants provided help and adult care services for people in power of age, almost 37,3 % of all respondents, next, teenagers – 12,7% and children – 10,5%, only 8,4% worked with infants.

Most often, the greatest motivating indicator to learn foreign languages is a profit-oriented travel abroad. So, the survey in question comprised also a question on intentions of respondents related to leaving the mother country to find a job. (Picture 12). More than 36% of survey participators were not interested in leaving a mother country, 22,1% answered positively and 19,7% were sitting on the fence. Curiously, 84 persons did not give any answered at all.

**Picture 12. Profit-oriented migration according to respondents’ answers (in %)**



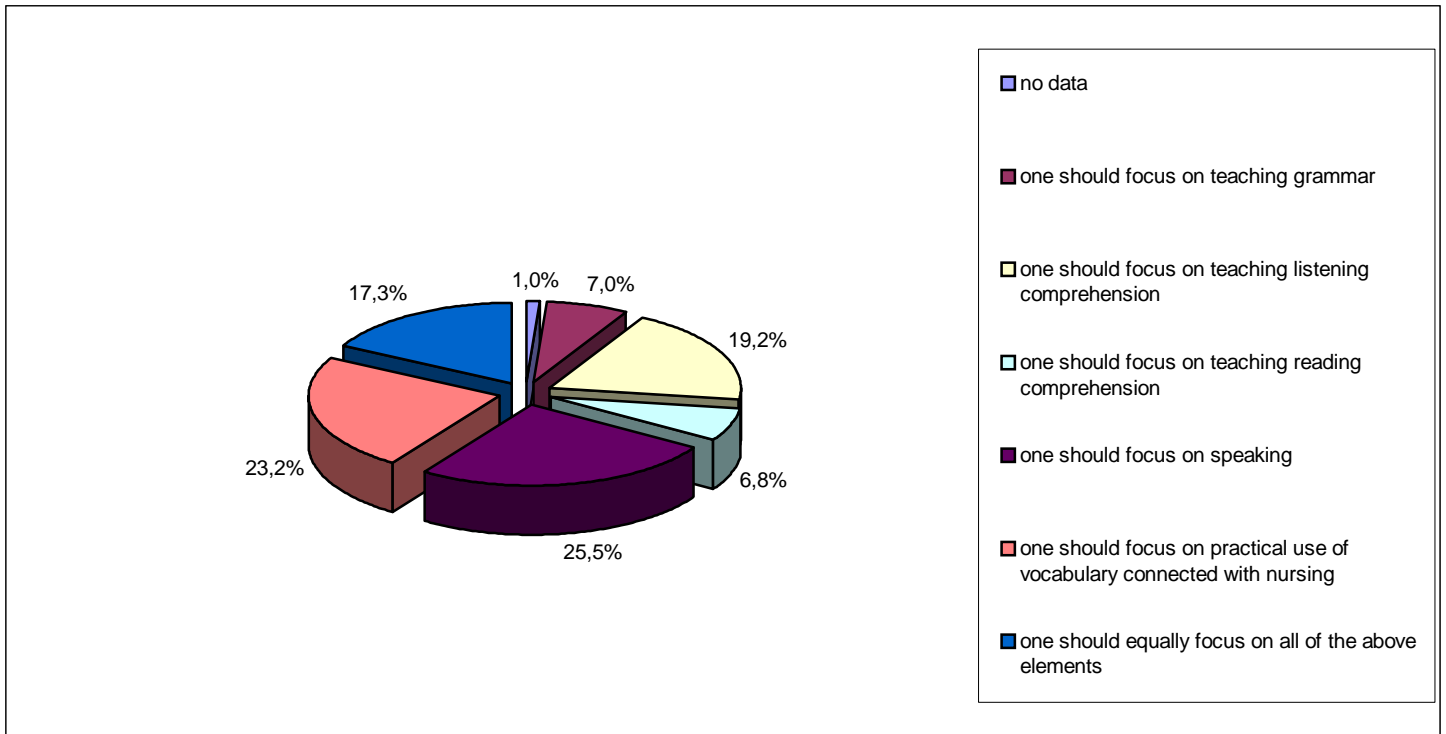
*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

In order to fulfil all respondents’ requirements, next part of the survey was devoted to subject-matter issues, which should be implemented in the course in question, also its structure.

**STRUCTURE AND CONTENT-RELATED ISSUES OF THE COURSE**

Concerning linguistic skills that should be reflected in a language course (picture 13), respondents pointed out day-to-day foreign language communication, 25,2% of all respondents were inclined that this course should focus on speaking comprehensive.

**Picture 13. Linguistic skills of on-line nursing-related course**

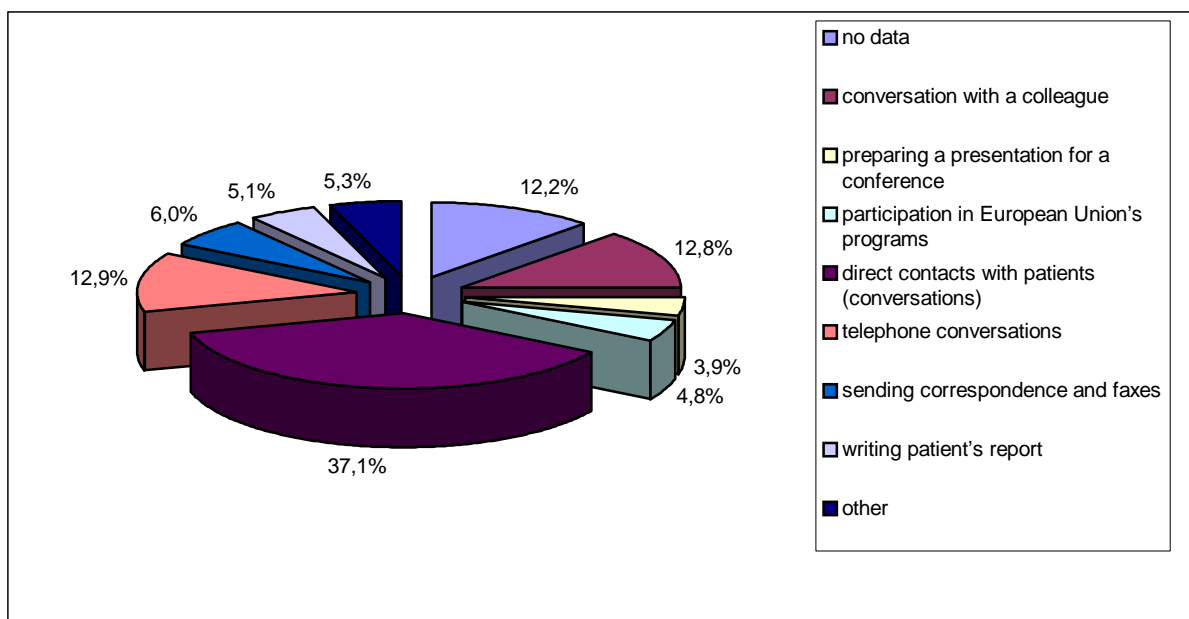


*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

Next, crucial for respondents area of skills was a practical application of nursing-related vocabulary – this option was chosen by 23,2 % of all respondents; following the results: listening comprehensive (19,2% of all respondents), grammar (7,0%), reading comprehensive (6,9%); but 17,3% of survey part-takers think that the course in question should concentrate on all above-mentioned elements.

Answering the question connected to application of foreign languages, 37,1% of respondents inclined that this skill could be implemented in day-to-day, direct contacts with patients (picture 14); following the survey’s outcomes: phone call conversations – 12,9%, discussion with colleagues – 12,8% and patient’s documents maintenance – 12,2%.

**Picture 14. Foreign language in practice**

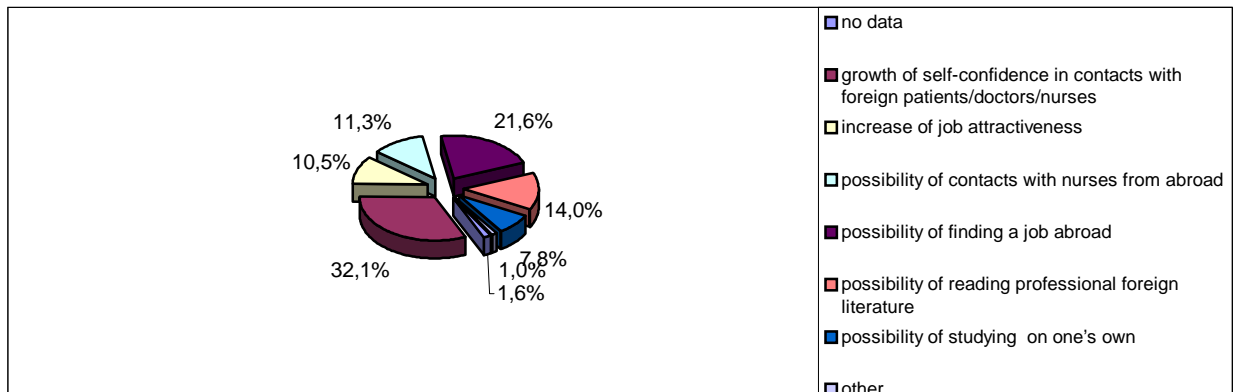


Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.

Additional advantages of foreign language command skills are connected to correspondence and fax sending – 6%, participation in EU programs – 4,8%, preparing conference materials and presentations – 3,9%, keeping contact with work-collaborators, during the journey, reading foreign literature and information in Internet, reading technical instructions to operate medical equipment.

Respondents were also asked to define further benefits deriving from foreign language command skills in relation to the profession they pursue, e.g. self-confidence increase in contacts with foreign patients, doctors and nurses – 32,1% of all respondents (picture 15), finding a job abroad – 21,6%, possibility of reading foreign professional-related literature - 14,0%, keeping contact with foreign partners – 11,3%, work-attraction increase – 10,5% and self-education -7,8%

**Picture 15 Benefits from knowing foreign language for nurses and hospital attendants**



Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.

The last part of the study allows specifying content-related issues of the language course for nurses and hospital attendants – due to application of alternative-ranking answer in the employed questionnaire.

Obtained results are presented below in a form of a thematic field ranking: first and second places, simultaneously, keeping contact with a patient and work collaborators, which require concentration on communication skills, subsequently: examination of patient’s health condition, medical equipment and its application, medicines and further treatment, medical examinations, body parts, which involve specialist nursing vocabulary, next: hygiene principles, pursuing work which require thematic-oriented communication; last places: documents filling – patient’s charts, focusing on reading and listening foreign language skills, vocational ethics and responsibility, medical care related vocabulary in specific social groups (i.e. mentally handicapped, physically handicapped people, drug addicts, alcoholics)

- laboratory tests.

**Figure 3 Subject-related issues ranking in relation to foreign language course.**

Ranking position	Subject-related issues
1	contact with a patient
2	contact with a colleague
3	determining a patient’s condition
4	medical equipment and its use
5	medicines
6	treatment and medical examinations
7	body parts (anatomy)
8	hygiene principles
9	workplace (functioning)

<b>10</b>	filling in documents, patients' charts
<b>11</b>	work ethics, professional responsibility
<b>12</b>	vocabulary on medical care for special social groups (mentally handicapped, physically handicapped people, drug addicts, alcoholics)
<b>13</b>	laboratory tests

*Source: elaborated basing on the questionnaire.*

## **SUMMARY**

Taking into account respondents' opinions, creation of the course is very needed, particularly for representatives of the vocational, project's target group, who regarded (circa 70,3%) language skills as a crucial ability in work-oriented environment. Only 2,8% of all survey part-takers (11 persons) considered language skills as a needless ability to pursue a profession of a nurse or hospital attendant. Most likely, respondents wanted to learn English, next Spanish and Italian, less likely German; however the final results can not be impinge on all achieved outcomes, because in two partner countries involved in project realization, German is an official language.

In addition, language skills analysis of the target group allowed drawing results on construction levels of the course – basic and elementary – because majority of survey-takers do not know, or represent poor command knowledge of foreign languages. Few of survey participants established practical knowledge of foreign languages, representing pre-intermediate level.

Concerning course's form – respondents had not any cons to provide such course on-line, due to possession of practical computer and Internet-use skills, indicating also the appropriate learning process pace, especially in relation to established needs, improvement of computer skills and lower costs of participation.

Majority of survey part-takers had worked in hospitals and clinics providing professional care to adults and old people – which can be a useful tip for course creators to establish accurate vocabulary and subject-related themes, particularly focusing on essential geriatric-connected issues in relation to long-term demographic trends.

In addition, research results allowed specifying skills on which the course in question should concentrate, inter alia: communication, specialistic vocabulary in practice, listening comprehension, but should not skip issues related to grammar and reading skills.

Respondents were also asked to identify foreign language practical application areas; most often survey part takers indicated direct contact with patients and collaborators, also in

situations related to phone call conversations and maintenance of patient's documentation.  
Detailed presentation of issues to implement in the course in question is presented in table 3.

## A SURVEY EXAMINING NEEDS FOR A FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPECIALIST COURSE FOR NURSES

*Dear Sir or Madam,*

*This survey will help us develop e-learning language courses for your profession. The survey aims at gathering information about the needs and expectations connected with foreign language learning thus helping us prepare course materials in a professional way. We would like our product to be as good as possible and tailored to the needs of medical staff. Thus, we ask you to fill in the survey in an honest and attentive way.*

1. What do you think is the importance of learning a foreign language in your vocational field?  
(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *highly important*
- b) *important*
- c) *sometimes useful*
- d) *rather useless*

2. Please choose the language you would like to learn.  
(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *English*
- b) *German*
- c) *Spanish*
- d) *Italian*

3. How would you describe your command of the language you have chosen?  
(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *none*
- b) *poor*
- c) *average*
- d) *good*

4. How do you assess your computer skills?  
(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *none*
- b) *poor*
- c) *average*
- d) *good*

5. How often do you use the Internet?  
(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *less than once a month*
- b) *once a month*
- c) *twice a month*
- d) *once a week*

- e) *twice a week*
- f) *daily*

6. Have you ever taken part in an e-learning course?  
(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *yes*
- b) *no*

7. What benefits can you see in the possibility of participating in an e-learning foreign language course?  
(Please tick maximum 3 answers)

- a) *adjusting the pace of learning to one's own needs and possibilities*
  - b) *lower costs of learning in comparison with the traditional methods*
  - c) *possibility of establishing contacts useful at work*
  - d) *gaining more computer and Internet skills*
  - e) *other benefits.....*
- .....

8. Is participation in an e-learning foreign language course inconvenient to you in any way?  
(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *Yes*  
*Please write what the inconveniences are:*

.....

.....

- b) *no*

9. How do you assess your knowledge level on nursing?  
(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *I am still a student*
- b) *I am just beginning to work in this profession*
- c) *I am experienced in this profession, but my knowledge is not sufficient enough*
- d) *I am competent, which helps me to work efficiently in this field*

10. From what sources do you obtain your knowledge on nursing?  
(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *I am still studying*
- b) *I have completed Bachelor or Master studies in this field*
- c) *I have completed postgraduate studies in this field*
- d) *other sources of knowledge.....*

11. What are your needs for raising qualifications in the scope of nursing?

(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *high*
- b) *average*
- c) *low*
- d) *none*

12. As a nurse in my present workplace I work with:

(You can choose more than one answer)

- a) *infants*
- b) *children*
- c) *teenagers*
- d) *adults*
- e) *elderly people*

13. As a nurse I work in/at:

(Please tick maximum 3 answers)

- a) *school*
- b) *hospital*
- c) *clinic*
- d) *hospice*
- e) *childcare centre, orphanage*
- f) *I don't work*
- g) *other place: .....*

14. Are you thinking of looking for a job abroad in the future?

(Please tick ONE answer only.)

- a) *yes*
- b) *no*
- c) *I don't know yet*

INFORMATION ON THE SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT AND THE COURSE STRUCTURE
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15. In your opinion, which language competences should one focus on while doing 'on-line' foreign language courses in scope of nursing?

(Please tick maximum 3 answers)

- a) one should focus on teaching **grammar**
- b) one should focus on teaching **listening comprehension**
- c) one should focus on teaching **reading comprehension**
- d) one should focus on **speaking**
- e) one should focus on **practical** use of vocabulary connected with nursing
- f) one should equally focus on **all** of the above elements

16. In what situations do you use your foreign language skills in practice most frequently?

(Please tick maximum 3 answers)

- a) conversation with a colleague
- b) preparing a presentation for a conference
- c) participation in European Union's programmes
- d) direct contacts with patients (conversations)
- e) telephone conversations
- f) sending correspondence and faxes
- g) writing patient's report
- h) other .....

17. What are the benefits of knowing foreign languages by nurses?

(Please tick maximum 3 answers)

- a) growth of self-confidence in contacts with foreign patients/doctors/nurses
- b) increase of job attractiveness
- c) possibility of contacts with nurses from abroad
- d) possibility of finding a job abroad
- e) possibility of reading professional foreign literature
- f) possibility of studying on one's own
- g) other .....

18. What is the importance of the thematic fields below? Please mark them from 1 to 15 where:

1 is the most important and

15 the least important

- a) contact with a patient
- b) contact with a colleague
- c) medical equipment and its use
- d) medicines

- e) *body parts (anatomy)*
- f) *workplace (functioning)*
- g) *hygiene principles*
- h) *treatment and medical examination*
- i) *laboratory tests*
- j) *filling in documents, patients' charts*
- k) *determining a patient's condition*
- l) *vocabulary on medical care for special social groups (mentally handicapped, physically handicapped people, drug addicts, alcoholics)*
- m) *work ethics, professional responsibility*
- n) *other* .....
- .....

**M1. Gender:**

- a) *Female*
- b) *Male*

**M2 Age:** .....

**M3 Education:**

- a) *vocational*
- b) *BA, BSc*
- c) *MA, MSc*
- d) *other*.....

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME DEVOTED TO FILLING IN THIS SURVEY**