NEWSLETTER
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"Towards a digital inclusion for those are the milestone of our future..."

The **SILVER CODE Project** intends to create an online training platform to developing digital literacy for elder citizens and especially learning basics on how to program. Elder age being by nature the most resistant to changes, it is also the one most represented across European generations, according to Eurostat forecast of 2060, with more than 2 elderlies for every youngster. To learn coding means to keep up-to-date personal competences and transversal skills, such as problem solving, team work and analytical thinking and make a significant step towards active ageing.

OUR EXPECTED RESULTS

Main expected results of the SILVER CODE project are:
• **ACTIVE AGEING:** the learning platform will be a step up in later life and towards active ageing. It will also help improving older people's digital literacy through learning the basics of coding. It is considered that through learning to code older people will experience the feeling of achievement and increase their life satisfaction.
• **IMPROVEMENT OF PERSONAL SKILLS AND MOTIVATION:** coding enhances creativity, teaches cooperating, increases the ability to work together by overcoming physical and geographical boundaries. It also teaches older people to communicate in a universal language.
• **FAVOURING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION**: in order better understanding of the digital world we live in.
• **PROMOTING NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN ADULTS,** according to the Agenda for Adult Learning, set up by the European Commission.
• **IMPROVED INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING AND SAFER USAGE OF ICT BY YOUNGSTERS AND ELDERS**. By older people's using the practical tools needed to code and play coding with younger people, younger and older generations will get a valuable opportunity to communicate and exchange knowledge and experience the specific culture of each generation.

THE TARGET GROUP

The elder EU citizens from the 27 EU countries are both target group, reached through direct activities (approx. 30 people per partner country will take part in the training activities) and direct beneficiaries, reached through peer-to-peer learning methods and dissemination events (about 100 people per partner country). A relevant number of participants, among elders, will be medium-high skilled, such as retired professionals and old people still having active lives and willing to improve personal knowledge and competencies.

OUR BACKGORUND EXPERIENCE

In the Digital Economy and Society Index 2016, **Austria** ranked 12th out of the 28 EU States. Austrians benefit from affordable internet and a relatively high availability of high-speed internet. Digital technologies are relatively well exploited by businesses, individuals and public institutions: Over 60% of internet users' bank and shop online and 98% of the administrative steps related to major life events can be completed online. At the same time, the OECD estimated (in a study from 2013) that there are 880,000 people (around 15.5 percent) aged between 16 and 65 with insufficient computer skills.

According to the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2015, **Bulgaria** has an overall score of 0.34 and ranks 27th in the DESI rankings.
· 54% of Bulgarians use Internet on a regular basis, but those who do engage in a broader range of online activities: communicate via voice or video calls (82%) and participate in social networks;
· 34% of the population have basic digital skills (sending e-mails, using editing tools, installing new devices, etc.);
There were significant gaps in usage ('digital divides') when looking at age groups and level of formal education. The percentage of regular internet users among younger persons aged 16-24 was 91% while it was only 40% for the age group 55-74 years. Buying over the internet (e-commerce or e-shopping) has become very popular in the EU. Consumers appreciate the convenience of shopping anytime and anywhere, getting better access to information and a broader selection of products, comparing prices or obtaining opinions from other consumers. However, the share of e-shoppers among internet users varied considerably between Member States, ranging from 13 % in Bulgaria.

Although ICT is one of the most developed sectors in Bulgaria, 40% of citizens have never used the Internet.
The recent initiatives in Bulgaria are focused on increasing the level of digital literacy among older population supported by the priorities of Digital Agenda 2020.

In **Italy** a high number of initiatives has been realized especially during European Year of Active Ageing by the Department for Family Policies of the Ministry Presidency. In 2012, Italy, with 148.6 older people per 100 youth, was second ranking in the aging index among 27 European countries, after Germany (Istat, 2014l). In Italy, being one of the oldest countries of Europe, focus on elders is more and more important, being old people possessors of a non-tangible, invisible cultural heritage (experiential knowledge, skills, beliefs, customs, etc.) that needs to be preserved, maintained and passed on to younger generations. Presently, society is wasting a considerable part of the human capital it used to possess and foster, which is a disaster for the information society, based on knowledge.

The past decade in **Poland** could be described as the digital decade. In 2004 only 26% of households had an internet connection; that figure is now at 72%. During the past 10 years, the proportion of social media users surged. Over the same period, the number of sites with Polish domains (.pl) has increased tenfold (from about 250,000 to almost 2.5 million); the Polish version of Wikipedia is now one of the world's largest non-English editions. Despite the progress and several initiatives at local and national level, as well as projects within the framework of Lifelong Learning Programme, there are still worrying statistics (EUROSTAT 2016) regarding the individuals aged 64-74: in this age group 68% declares never use internet. Among the rest 32% of 64-74 years old only 27% has used the Internet within the last 12 months, 11% has sent email with attached file, 5% has posted message to chat rooms, newsgroups or an online discussion.

In **Portugal,** a relevant and successful history about learning in the older age in non-formal contexts is that of the Third Age Universities /U3A, associated in the RUTIS[1] National Network, which promotes active ageing and necessarily digital literacy. Today there are 400 UTIs in Portugal, which represents about 50,000 senior learners and about 8,000 volunteer teachers. The Portuguese population is in an accelerated ageing process, representing in 2015 the population aged 65 and over, 20.3% of the total population, well above the EU-28 average of 18.9%.

Portugal occupies the 15th place in DESI 2017, having significantly improved its score in the different dimensions considered. The greatest progress has been in the good acceptance of fixed and mobile broadband (connectivity) as well as the business use of digital technologies. However, there remains a need to increase the levels of digital literacy of the population in general, and particularly of the elderly. In the age group of 64-74 years, 68% declare never to use the Internet. Among the remaining 32%, only 27% used the internet in the last 12 months, 11% sent email with attached file, 5% posted messages in chat rooms, newsgroups or online discussion.

In **Romania**, the percentage of 65 years old and over people from the total population is 17.4% (from a number of 10.6 in 1991), lower than EU-27 average (Eurostat, 2016) as it is the old-age dependency ratio. The share of population aged 80 and over is 4.1% (EUROSTAT, 2015). There are significant differences in usage when looking at age groups regular internet users: the percentage of regular internet users among younger persons aged 16-24 was 85.3% while it was only 44.5% for the age group 55-74 years. According to the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI 2017), Romania has an overall score of 0.35 and ranks 28th in the ranking.

One of the main finding of the country report is that although Romanians are very interested to engage especially in social networks, they are very reluctant to use digital services. More, despite having access to fast internet broadband, the percentage of Romanian Internet users that use online banking (9.6%), and shop online (18%) are low. There is a great potential in the development of the Romanian digital economy by making the digital services more accessible to the larger population. An additional challenge is to encourage older people to participate in educational programs that aim at reducing the digital divide and empower seniors to develop digital competences.

In **Slovenia**, Slovenian Third Age University is currently involved in bettering digital skills in low educated older people, exploring the teaching methods and learning culture of functionally low literate older learners. A film on learning computer skills for complete beginners in computing and English at the same time was scripted and produced at this University as soon as 1984 and widely used in the first computing classes for older people.

It has been found that old age does not have a particular impact on learning results. How well and quick older people learn digital skills depends mostly on how motivated and experienced learners they have been through life.

While Slovenian Third Age University delivers long educational and training formats there are several other providers of shorter training events in the field of computing for older people (Inštitut Antona Trstenjaka, municipalities, libraries, centres for autonomous learning – Slovenian Institute for Adult education). Some of them have introduced intergenerational ICT learning some years ago while Slovenian Third Age University set up a network of tandem ICT learning called Each-One-Teach-One. There has been no experience in the field of coding with and for older people in this country so far.

The ultimate aim is the adoption of the proposed tool throughout Europe!

[1] http://www.rutis.org/

Senior trainees on Coding
2016-1-BG01-KA204-023736 (October 2016 – September 2018)

THE PARTNERSHIP

The coordinating organisation is the ZNANIE ASSOCIATION (Bulgaria).

Partners – EUROCREA MERCHANT (Italy), SLOVENIAN THIRD AGE UNIVERSITY (Slovenia), DIE BERATER (Austria), AIDLEARN (Portugal), UPT (Romania), UNIWERSYTET WROCLAWSKI (Poland).

Keep in touch!

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