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**„Keep going, reach goals, get an award: empowering senior volunteerism“**

**No. 2020-1-LT01-KA204-077966**

## **The Senior Award Program**

*You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream*

C.S. Lewis, author and poet

*The program has been developed under the Erasmus+ project “Keep going, reach goals, get an Award: empowering Senior Volunteerism” (No. 2020-1-LT01-KA204-077966) and can be implemented by non-formal education providers such as Third Age Universities, libraries, adult education centers, cultural houses, local communities, small local enterprises, and volunteer accepting organizations. Its concept is similar to the Duke of Edinburg’s Award, an international program for young people.*

### **Introduction**

Population ageing is a phenomenon that affects almost every developed country in the world, with both the number and proportion of older people growing across the globe. As Europeans expect to live increasingly long lives, their attention turns to how they can make the most of life after retirement. Retirement can be a challenging time of life as people become vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness due to the death of a spouse, separation from family, and the loss of social contacts and friends. Loneliness in retirement often results in low self-esteem and lack of purpose, which then lead to depression, mental health problems and physical illnesses. To tackle loneliness, the retirees are often advised to stay social, explore new interests and stay positive. Indeed, studies show that people who engage in meaningful, productive activities with others tend to live longer, boost their mood, and find a sense of purpose. The elderly citizens, who engage in community social gatherings, church or U3A activities, feel happier, however, most of them lack self-fulfillment, and miss the opportunities to share their knowledge, competences and capacities which they have accumulated throughout their lifespan.

**The aim:** The Senior Award Program is tailored to meet the needs of older adults to stay active beyond retirement and empower them to engage in meaningful **lifelong learning and volunteering activities**. It also aims at motivating them to pursue their hobbies and interests, stay healthy both physically and mentally, and participate in outdoor activities (educational journeys, field trips, excursions).

Being visible, heard, accepted and appreciated helps people feel good about them. In retirement one may miss the respect once gained for the purposeful contribution in the workplace, but there are other sources of acknowledgement. The Senior Award Program is meant to help one find the purpose in life after retirement, set new goals, reach them and get an award to validate the efforts and personal achievements.

**Target group:** older adults, aged 55+ (retired or semi-retired ones)

**The importance, benefits of the program to the participants.** The development of this program stems from the need of the older adults to stay active in the age-friendly urban and rural environments, to age safely where they want to be, to be protected, to continue to develop personally and professionally, to be included and to participate and contribute to their communities while retaining their autonomy, dignity, health and well-being.

### **Support to participant of the Program**

The program provides the participants with the necessary assistance by adult educators who will guide (facilitate) the participant either face-to-face or online. The Guidelines for adult educators on how to run/implement the Senior Award Program are provided as a supplement to the program in a separate file. The online volunteer's/ participant's guide contains inspirational real life written and video stories, provided by the participants who have tested the Program.

### **Structure of the program**

**The Senior Award Program focuses on setting and overcoming personal challenges and comprises the following fields of activities:**

- Engaging in volunteering activities
- Personal development (learning a new skill/ obtaining new knowledge, taking on a new hobby)
- Getting fit (taking on some physical activity)
- Engaging in an educational tourism (excursion, hiking trip, etc.)

Each participant enrolls in the program individually, although some activities, e.g. volunteering, may involve working in groups. The Senior Award Program is designed to acknowledge personal achievements of each individual starting from the time of enrollment into the program, not to count his/her previous deeds/activities.

There is a progression of three ascending levels: bronze, silver, gold. All participants are requested to start at the Bronze level. After accomplishment of one level, one may proceed to the next.

### **Requirements for completing the chosen award level**

#### **Timescales**

	<b>Volunteering in the chosen field of activity*</b>	<b>Personal development (exercising the existing or gaining new skills)**</b>	<b>Physical activity***</b>	<b>Participation in educational tourism****</b>
Bronze	3 months	3 months	3 months	3 months
Silver	6 months	6 months	6 months	6 months
Gold	12 months	12 months	12 months	12 months

#### **Frequency**

	<b>Volunteering in the chosen field of activity*</b>	<b>Personal development (exercising the existing or gaining new skills)**</b>	<b>Physical activity***</b>	<b>Participation in educational tourism****</b>
Bronze	8 hours per month	8 hours per month	8 hours per month	1 time per 3 months
Silver	8 hours per month	8 hours per month	8 hours per month	2 times per 6 months
Gold	8 hours per month	8 hours per month	8 hours per month	2-3 times per 12 months

- \*Annex 1 Types of volunteering activities
- \*\*Annex 2 Ideas for personal development activities
- \*\*\*Annex 3 Types of physical activities
- \*\*\*\*Annex 4 Participation in educational tourism

There are timescales established during which the activities should be completed. The timescales should be respected, however, if the participant needs extra time, it should be treated flexibly.

Each participant should look for an activity which not only appeals, but also provides a challenge.

Upon decision to engage in the Program the participant should sign an Agreement, binding them in honour only and not legally. Nevertheless in countries where Law on Volunteering has been adopted, the Agreement should follow the legal requirements. Participation in the program during the project lifetime is free of charge. Each participant is to be supported by adult educator (facilitate) either face-to-face or online. To Record the progress and achievements the participant will have to fill in the log/ journal (Annex 5): defining the aim, describing the activities undertaken, taking the days/hours, providing self-reflection.

### **Evaluation**

The participant's achievements will be monitored and evaluated resulting in acknowledgement of one's efforts by the award.

The evaluation will be performed by the Board of adult educators, in charge of the Program. They will study the participant's journal and read the recommendation/ comments of the facilitate/coach. Having completed all the activities and achieved the planned goals, the participant will be entitled to the award. The award ceremony to be held upon once or twice a year. To highlight the importance of volunteering we suggest organizing it on 5 December which is called the International Volunteer Day (United Nations) <https://www.un.org/en/observances/volunteer-day>

*We make a living by what we get we make a life by what we give*  
Winston Churchill

The Senior Award program puts great value on volunteering activities. The partnership has created a resource library to help older people find the places where to volunteer. Also, provides a brochure with inspirational stories from project partner countries to boost older adult's motivation to engage in volunteerism. The brochure is available on the project website in English and 5 project partner languages: Bulgarian, Dutch, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Slovenian: [www.gogetaward.eu](http://www.gogetaward.eu)

**TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES:**

- Animal welfare (waking animals from animal shelters)
- Charity (collecting goods for refugees, helping with information,
- Community service (e.g. creating a neighborhood discussion group, guiding a woman's keep fit group, leading the community club of knitters, book readers, art lovers, etc.)
- Fire and Rescue Voluntary service
- Police Voluntary Service
- Environmental (forest regeneration, conservation projects)
- Health (visiting hospital patients e.g. children, and reading, playing with them)
- Education (teaching, coaching, childcare, e.g. organizing a story time to pre-school/ primary school children; offering learning assistance for the COVID dropouts from school)
- Cultural (guides in museums, the town/ city; contributing knowledge and skills to a community center library; organizing a local community hiking related to a topic like a historic event; participating in staging a play in local village; translating local stories to support cultural tourism in local community)
- Media (newspaper, website U3a, etc.) e.g. acting as a civil society journalist, writing articles, participating in radio shows
- Voluntary service to other people, i.e. identifying people in need (e.g. friend, disadvantaged, prison, etc.) and organizing help for them, e.g. shopping for food, medicine; fetching books from the library, chats over the phone, waking for people who are alone at home; working with migrants, refugees)

**More ideas where to volunteer in the Resource library:** <http://gogetaward.eu/recource-library/>

## IDEAS FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Personal development activities (within the framework of this project) emphasize older people's engagement in lifelong learning, i.e. learning a new skill, obtaining new knowledge, taking on a new hobby. These activities may be and should be diverse meeting each **individual's** needs and aspirations. Ideally, the activities will be also beneficial for the development of communities to which older people belong.

Hobbies can be a perfect way to master something new or to raise old abilities to new highlights. Find things you enjoy and there's a good chance that your confidence and self-esteem will grow along with your accomplishments.

Here are some ideas to consider:

- Baking and cake decorating, studying local cuisine
- Building models (boats, planes, trains, houses)
- Candle making
- Cross-stitching
- Felting
- Getting new knowledge for participating in decision making processes (participate urbanism)
- Jewelry making
- Knitting and Crocheting
- Learning to play a musical instrument
- Learning a new language
- Making flower arrangements
- Making home-made wine or beer
- Mosaic making
- Origami folding
- Painting
- Paper cutting
- Paper cutting (Kirigami)
- Pottery
- Quilting and patchwork
- Sewing and embroidery
- Singing in the choir
- Taking photos of village neighbors and creating an exhibition
- Translating local stories to support cultural tourism in local community
- Woodwork
- Writing memoirs/ a diary/ a book

## **TYPES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES**

Keeping physically active has positive effects now only on one's body, but also on the spirits. There are plenty of activities to help you keep fit. Consider the following:

- Waking
- Jogging
- Hiking
- Gardening
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Doing yoga
- Skiing
- Dancing, etc.

**Participation in the community life, educational tourism (fields/trips/excursions) (optional)**

After retirement it is important to keep social and civic bonds in the local community. This participation could be defined as taking part in community events, educational and cultural trips/programs, learning about one's or a foreign town, city, country, etc.

Taking part in such activities is meant to boost the participant's self-confidence, and add to the sense of belonging to the community, positive emotional state of mind, etc.

**The Participant’s Journal**

**Participant’s name, surname:**

**e-mail:**

**tel. no.:**

**Goal** (set by the participants themselves, separate for each activity)

**Start date:**

**Activity Log** (shortly describe the activity undertaken, indicating the date, scope and venue (if relevant), providing self-reflection)

Date	Activity undertaken, self reflection (achievements, feelings, aims)	Duration	Participant’s reflection and/or comments	Facilitator’s signature
...	...	...	...	
...	...	...	...	

**End date**

**Adult educator’s (facilitator’s) name, surname, email., tel.no.**

**Adult educator’s (facilitator’s) coments and recommendation for the award.**

**This form can be filled out on the computer or by hand. When possible, please add pictures for proof.**