



Funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



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

No. 2020-1-LT01-KA204-077966

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

HOW TO ENGAGE IN THE SENIOR AWARD PROGRAM, START VOLUNTEERING AND GET AN AWARD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. What is the purpose of the *Senior Award Program*?
2. The reasons why I should get involved in the *Senior Award Program* and start volunteering.
3. Why do people start volunteering in the old age?
4. How to choose volunteering activities?
5. How to find the volunteer host organization?
6. Why do I need to set personal goals?
7. Where to apply if I want to take part in the *Senior Award Program*?
8. Where can I find inspiration?

The Senior Award Program has been developed under the Erasmus+ project **“Keep going, reach goals, get and Award: Empowering Senior Volunteerism”** (No. 2020-1-LT01-KA204-077966). It offers the possibility for older people to set personal goals for learning and volunteering as well as get acknowledgement for their efforts and achievements. To become active members of their local communities, to feel needed, valued and appreciated in the old age.

The aim of this online guide is to explain older people, how to engage in the *Senior Award Program* and get an award for their achievements.

1. What is the purpose of the *Senior Award Program*?

The Senior Award Program is tailored to meet the needs of older adults, aged 55+ (retired or semi-retired ones) 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.

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.

2. The *Senior Award Program* includes:

Obligatory activities: volunteering and learning (personal development) activities. But also, *optional activities*: engaging in physical activities and educational tourism.

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 each participant’s personal achievements starting from the time of enrolment into the program excluding any previous deeds/activities.

Participants start meeting the requirements at the bronze level, but they may proceed to higher (silver and gold) levels. Read more about the *Senior Award Program* and its requirements: [About the Program – gogetaward](#)

3. The reasons why I should get involved in the *Senior Award Program* and start volunteering:

- To help others
- To be useful, needed and valued
- To share knowledge and experience
- To be active
- To reflect learning experience
- To depend to the local/ national/ international volunteers' community
- To defend the cause I believe in
- To find a new purpose in life
- To stay healthy, both physically and emotionally
- To meet new people.

4. Why do people start volunteering in the old age?

There could be no uniform answer, the reasons can be varied. To get motivated please read the success stories which have been developed by project partners and present the volunteers' experiences from 5 project partner countries. The stories are available in English and 5 national languages: Bulgarian, Dutch, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Slovenian. The Success stories are presented in the brochure ["Volunteering in the old age. Why not?"](#) which is downloadable from the project website.

5. How to choose volunteering activities?

You can volunteer at local, national, regional, or international level and in quite different areas: culture, arts, education, sports, health, local development, cultural heritage, science, sustainable development, animal protection, social inclusion, humanitarian work, transportation, environment, etc. You can do caritative work, of course, but you can be active in most diverse areas of life, on condition you find a relevant host volunteering organisation catering for organised volunteering.

You can choose the field of volunteering according to your interests, hobbies, to meet the local community's needs, to join the educational/ cultural activities of your town/ region, etc.

6. How to find the volunteer host organization?

Please visit the project [Resource library](#) to find volunteering ideas and the volunteer host organizations in 5 project partner countries: Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Slovenia. The Resource library is available in English and 5 national languages on the project website under the button ["Explore"](#).

It is advisable to choose one volunteer host organization; however, it is not a must. The volunteering activities may include your participating in different fields/ organizations.

7. Why do I need to set personal goals?

To get actively involved in the *Senior Award Program* it is important to set **INDIVIDUAL** goals for each field of activity: volunteering, learning, physical activity and educational tourism.

You should know what your goal is and how long it may take to achieve it. Goals are not activities; goals are a change you would like to produce. Goals help you measure your achievements and give you a sense of direction. *You should know what leads towards a goal and what distracts you and you should act accordingly.* Before you start setting your goals think what *you would like to achieve.*

It is important to pay attention that the goals should be **SMART**. “SMART is an acronym that stands for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely. Therefore, a SMART goal incorporates all of these criteria to help focus your efforts and increase the chances of achieving your goal.” (<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/smart-goal/>)

To make a goal **SPECIFIC**, the five “W” questions must be considered:

1. Who: Who is involved in this goal?
2. What: What do I want to accomplish?
3. Where: Where is this goal to be achieved?
4. When: When do I want to achieve this goal?
5. Why: Why do I want to achieve this goal?

To make a goal **MEASURABLE**, ask yourself:

1. How many/much?
2. How do I know if I have reached my goal?
3. What is my indicator of progress?

To make your goal **ACHIEVABLE**, ask yourself:

1. Do I have the resources and capabilities to achieve the goal? If not, what am I missing?
2. Have others done it successfully before?

To make your goal **REALISTIC**, ask yourself:

1. Is the goal realistic and within reach?
2. Is the goal reachable, given the time and resources?
3. Are you able to commit to achieving the goal?

To make your goal **TIMELY**, ask yourself:

1. Does my goal have a deadline?
2. By when do you want to achieve your goal?"

Example of a SMART goal:

✗ “To volunteer for 3 months” is not a suitable goal.

✓ “To teach 3 adult students painting at the local library once a week for 3 months” is a suitable goal.

8. Where to apply if I want to take part in the *Senior Award Program*?

Participation in the program is *free of charge*. The person who wants to engage in the Senior Award Program is to contact to a non-formal adult education organization. The participant should negotiate *a written/oral agreement* with the adult education organization. Each participant is supported either face-to-face or on-line by an adult educator.

The participants’ achievements are monitored and evaluated. The results are measured by the *Board of adult educators*, who examine the *Participant’s Journal* and comments contributed by the mentor/coach. You can download the *Participant’s Journal* from the project website. It is available as [Annex 5](#) of the *Senior Award Program*. After the results are measured and evaluated, the participant receives the award: bronze, silver or gold.

Please contact your local adult education organization (e.g. Educational center or Third Age University) which implements the *Senior Award Program* for help and support.

9. Where can I find inspiration?

Please read the impressions/ experiences of the participants of the *Senior Award Program* in 5 project partner countries: Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Slovenia. The 10 video and 10 written testimonies are available in English and 5 national languages on the project website under the button “[Get Inspired](#)”. If these stories are not available in your language, please use online mobile tools/ mobilie apps to translate the texts.

Wishing you best of luck in the Senior Award Program!