

# SENIORS FOR SENIORS

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## Peer tutoring in cyber security project

**The topic of cybercrime is considered important, and the fight against it involves more and more institutions every year. Unfortunately, the effects of this fight, especially among the elderly, are negligible. A change in approach is more than needed. If you prevent seniors from digital exclusion our society will benefit.**

Having in mind all the above, the staff from two organizations (Poland: Akademia Nauk Stosowanych im. Gołuchowskiego; Lithuania: "Kėdainių rajono besimokančiųjų suaugusiųjų iniciatyva "Tezaurus") decided to take a new approach and change looking at seniors education.

We came to the conclusion that seniors should be encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves and their local societies. Which is what they need and sometimes already do. Our experience showed that some Third Ages Universities created a specific non-formal platform of peer tutoring: seniors exchanged info about calls and messages that were scams. Combining this with the fact that we have experienced teachers who work with seniors the idea for the Project started to take shape.

The Project "Seniors for Seniors" two pillars are the course "Strong in the Net" and the Seniors Educators Network.

1. The course has 6 modules, which includes: the techniques that cybercriminals use to deceive so many people, types of cyber crimes, the methods of protecting while using the Internet, GDPR, and consumer protection, social media platform, threats and chances connected with using.

2. Seniors Educators Network, which gathers all seniors who participated in the course.

At the beginning of 2023, we trained 35 seniors, 15 in Lithuania and 20 in Poland. After the course, they had a few months to spread the knowledge in their local societies and inform their families, colleagues, and friends who did not participate in the Project. We put much effort into encouraging seniors to share their new abilities, show received material discuss safety issues with other people. Why? Because we believe that peer tutoring is the most efficient and helps to create a bottom-up change.

We weren't wrong then. The number shows that we straightened the digital competencies of seniors, and we reduced the feelings of discomfort, fear, and danger among them while using the Internet. Also, we created an accessible to all, easy to communicative, and simple educational course in the field of cybercrime, which covered important issues, such as psychological aspects of cyber criminals' activities; examples and analysis of e-mails, and fake news. And most important 35 seniors transfer the knowledge to almost 700 people.

We asked seniors to evaluate how other people reacted to the Project and even for us interest was enormous. To clarify we measured how people who did not participate in the Project reacted, did they show interest, did they ask questions, and did they see the material?



**The results were:**

**1. The module 1 of the course:** Techniques that cybercriminals use to deceive so many people, was rated almost 5 in both countries. on a 6-point scale.

2. The **Module 2:** Types of cyber crimes was rated 5 on a 6-point scale, Polish result at 5,0, Lithuanian result at 5,15.

**Module 3:** methods of protecting while using the Internet were rated in Poland 4,15, and in Lithuania 4,88 on a 6-point scale.

**Module 4:** GDPR and consumer protection was rated 3,61 in Poland, and 5,01 in Lithuania.

**Model 5:** social media platforms, threats, and chances connected with using were rated in Poland 3,67, and in Lithuanian 5,04.

In general, the course in Poland was rated at 4,2, and in Lithuania 4,83.

We received quite good rates from seniors who participated in the course but it could be obvious. They were in fact very motivated, wanted to learn new things, and feel safer. This all in our opinion translates into the success of their engagement to spread knowledge. All those seniors could show their friends and families new things, and feel more useful, independent, and effective. Other people could feel that, could feel that new knowledge is not something hard, expressed in a specialized language, but something close, easy, and helpful.

The Seniors for Seniors Project was held in close cooperation with Third Age Universities, we knew that we could not reach seniors without senior institutions. We can not impose something on them, but rather let them feel to are part of it. We incorporate them into every step. They evaluated the course and were part of an international meeting. It was very fruitful to the project, and the built trust paid off. We revived a very honest feedback, disciplined group of participants. In the end, we even heard that our course should be conducted in each age group.

The Project results can be used by other parties as well, and we do not only speak about the course. The answers to the question, which was asked at the very beginning of cooperation between Partners: “Why do we still observe scandalous and audacious methods of extorting data and money? Why TV campaigns do not work? We can say, we have some answers.



First of all: seniors claimed that they received too much info, and sometimes they feel frightened. Prefer not to use the internet, not knowing, hoping it will prevent them from being a victim of a cybercrime. The information they receive is not clear to them, short statements e.g. “Do not do that”, and “Verify it!” are not understandable, and raise more questions, and more confusion. TV news often do something worse like laughing at people who were victims, blaming them for being trusting. Comments on the Net are also cruel and full of hate. We noticed that a lot of campaigns are simply not useful, they do not give tools to prevent from being a victim. How does the poster or short TV commercial, where we can “verify the message sender” help if we simply don’t know how to verify?

After 24 months of our course we can advise to not look down on the target group, do not assume that age or disease affects intelligence. And if some solutions do not work, maybe the solutions already known and repeated are wrong.

We also strongly advise giving the target group as much independence as we can. Especially, when we work with elderly people. In our Project seniors from Third Age University were engaged in all actions. We do not only focus on having experts but also on hearing the voices of people who are the most important: the seniors.

Seniors, want, to be independent for as long as possible, and take activities in a way that is convenient for them. We see the power of seniors initiatives, they can unite and act together for the whole society.

## MEDIA CONTACTS

### Contact Information

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