



Newsletter

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In a rapidly evolving digital landscape where connectivity and online engagement have become an integral part of everyday life, it's important to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, has the opportunity to navigate and thrive in the digital world. However, statistics reveal a notable digital divide between generations, with older adults often lagging behind in their use of digital technologies. According to EUROSTAT's Community survey on ICT usage in 2019, a significant percentage of the EU-27 population aged 65-74 remained disconnected from the internet (the Community survey on ICT usage, EUROSTAT, 2019). Despite efforts to bridge this gap, older people continue to face barriers in adopting new technologies, particularly in areas such as social media engagement and digital content creation.

SENIOR VLOG

"Exploring Senior Mentoring: Insights from our pilot programme"

Recognising the importance of empowering older adults to fully embrace the digital space, the SeniorVlog project is emerging as a beacon of innovation and inclusivity. By offering structured training and mentoring programmes specifically tailored to the needs of seniors, SeniorVlog aims to equip older people with the essential digital skills and knowledge needed to become active participants in the online community. Through initiatives such as the SeniorVlog Training and Mentoring Programme (SV-TMP), seniors are not only given the tools to navigate the digital landscape with confidence, but are also empowered to share their stories, passions and expertise through the art of vlogging.

At the heart of SeniorVlog is a commitment to promoting social inclusion, encouraging lifelong learning and bridging the generation gap. By harnessing the power of digital storytelling, SeniorVlog aims to amplify the voices of older adults and ensure that their experiences and contributions are celebrated and valued online. As we embark on this transformative journey, let us come together to embrace the potential of digital technology to enrich the lives of seniors and foster a more connected and inclusive society for all.

THE MENTORING PROGRAM

Mentoring has long been recognised as a valuable methodology, but there is still a lack of detailed information on mentoring-specific outcomes, particularly in the context of promoting VLOG skills among older people. Mentors often find themselves navigating this terrain with limited guidance, leading to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about their role.

To address this gap, our programme focuses on creating specific guidelines for mentors, accompanied by tailored workshops designed to equip them with the necessary skills and confidence to effectively support seniors in their vlogging journey. By increasing mentors' sense of self-efficacy and providing high quality support, we aim to optimise the learning experience for seniors, empowering them to fully embrace digital storytelling and thrive in the online community.

We're pleased to report that the mentoring programme has been piloted in partner countries including Poland, Italy, Greece, Portugal and Cyprus. This extensive pilot phase has allowed us to gather valuable insights and feedback from different cultural contexts, enriching the development of the programme. In this newsletter, we're happy to share with you the experiences and lessons learned from this collaborative effort, shedding light on the impact of the mentoring programme in different countries.

PILOT EXPERIENCE IN POLAND

In Poland, mentoring among seniors for improvement and development isn't widely practised. For many seniors participating in the course "Internet without secrets - how to become a vlogger" it was their first contact with this form of personal development support. As a result, they needed a thorough introduction to the mentoring process and detailed information about what to expect during the months of working with their mentors.

While the mentoring programme aimed to support the seniors in improving their vlogging skills and motivation, most of the participants mainly needed technical support in recording and editing videos. This was the key observation made by the six mentors during a meeting to evaluate the mentoring process for the programme participants in Poland.

During the one-to-one sessions, the seniors expressed a desire to deepen the knowledge they had acquired during the course, especially regarding vlogging equipment and video editing software. They eagerly practised various editing techniques such as adding music, subtitles and combining shots. Each senior attended at least four sessions.

In addition, the seniors sought guidance in navigating the Internet, particularly in tasks such as uploading videos to YouTube, adding descriptions and adjusting privacy settings. These activities were completely new to them and required repeated practice to improve their skills.

Overall, the mentoring process proved instrumental in improving seniors' vlogging skills, particularly in terms of technical support and developing their digital literacy.

PILOT EXPERIENCE IN GREECE

The mentoring programme for people aged 65 and over in Greece was a resounding success, highlighting the profound impact of mentorship in cultivating video creation skills and fostering personal growth. Participants eagerly took part in a series of sessions designed to impart practical knowledge and inspire creativity under the expert guidance of experienced mentors.

Feedback from participants underscored the effectiveness of the programme in addressing their specific learning needs and instilling a newfound confidence in video creation. Many expressed gratitude for the hands-on approach, noting that the interactive nature of the sessions enhanced their understanding and retention of key concepts. One participant commented, "I never thought I could learn so much about video production at my age. This programme has opened up a whole new world of creativity for me".

Mentors also praised the commitment and enthusiasm shown by mentees throughout the programme. They highlighted the joy of seeing the mentees' progress and the satisfaction of seeing their newfound skills translate into tangible results. One mentor said: "It is incredibly rewarding to see how far the participants have come in just a few weeks. Their eagerness to learn and willingness to experiment is truly inspiring".

As with any endeavour, the mentoring programme provided valuable lessons for both mentors and mentees. Mentors learned the importance of adapting teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles, while mentees discovered the power of collaboration and peer feedback to foster growth. Together, they forged meaningful connections and created a supportive community where creativity flourished.

The mentoring programme exemplified the transformative potential of mentorship in empowering older adults to embrace new technologies and pursue their creative passions. By providing a nurturing environment for learning and collaboration, the programme equipped participants with the skills and confidence to thrive in the digital age, enriching their lives and communities in the process

PILOT EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL

In Portugal, 4 mentors participated in the mentoring programme, 3 of whom were actively involved in the mentoring process from November to December 2023. Of the 12 participants, 8 opted for mentoring, which took place over 4 sessions of approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes each. Sessions were conducted both individually and in small groups, depending on the preferences of the participants.

The objectives of the mentoring sessions varied between individuals, with some focusing on video creation and editing, while others prioritised improving their digital skills. Consistent tools, such as contracts and profile definitions, were used with all mentees. In addition, both mentors and mentees completed mid-term and final evaluations, which showed an increase in participants' confidence in using the internet.

Despite the positive results, participants expressed a desire for more time and sessions to further their learning and practical experience, highlighting the potential for continued growth and development in future iterations of the programme.

PILOT EXPERIENCE IN CYPRUS

In Cyprus, the mentoring process proved to be an important component during the pilot programme, fostering a strong bond between mentors and mentees and enhancing the overall learning experience. Each of the four mentors was assigned two mentees, with interactions taking place during or after each module. The outcomes of the mentoring programme were remarkable, as mentees reported feeling more confident and knowledgeable about using the internet, including video creation, while mentors gained valuable insights into their role as tutors.

Both mentors and mentees highlighted the importance of the bond formed throughout the mentoring process, emphasising its role in facilitating learning and support. The need for additional time for the process was evident in both groups, highlighting the potential for extended engagement in future iterations.

In addition to the formal mentoring programme, a chat group was set up on Messenger to provide a platform for mentees to exchange views, seek help with homework and receive ongoing support with video creation issues. This initiative has continued since, serving as a valuable resource for older people navigating digital challenges.

The impact of the programme went beyond video creation, addressing gaps in various internet skills among seniors. For many of the mentees, this was their first exposure to an ICT education programme and mentoring process, making it a positive and enjoyable experience. Their support for the programme's expansion into other educational initiatives underlines its potential to enrich the learning journey of seniors in a variety of areas.

PILOT EXPERIENCE IN ITALY

In Italy, the concept of mentoring is not yet widely accepted and mentors faced challenges in engaging participants in the pilot programme. They found that they needed support from the supervisor to overcome these initial hurdles. However, despite these obstacles, those who chose to embark on the journey greatly valued the support provided by the mentoring programme.

One of the main needs that emerged was a desire for more comprehensive technical support in developing the vlogging plan and establishing an effective online presence for the project. Participants were looking for practical guidance on the technical complexities of creating and publishing video content.

In addition to the technical support, the personal support provided by the mentors was also highly valued. This form of support helped to stimulate reflection on the themes to be explored in the videos and on the development of the vlogging concept and project. The mentors took an empathetic and individualised approach, encouraging participants to explore their passions and cultivate an authentic voice in the digital space. Mentoring has proven to be a valuable opportunity for participants to receive personalised and targeted support.

The following feedback highlights the tangible benefits of the programme:

"I have come to realise the significant potential it holds in overcoming the barriers of social isolation."

"I now feel more confident and competent in using social media and the internet".

These testimonials highlight how mentoring has effectively addressed the challenges of social isolation, while increasing confidence in using social media and the internet.

WHAT TAKEAWAYS DO WE HAVE?

In conclusion, the pilot phase of our Senior Mentoring Programme across Europe has provided invaluable insights and demonstrated the transformative power of mentorship in promoting digital literacy and creative expression among older adults. Despite initial challenges, feedback from mentors and mentees alike underlines the positive impact of the programme in bridging generational divides, enhancing technical skills and promoting social connectedness. As we reflect on the successes and lessons learned from this pilot, we look forward to refining and expanding our mentoring initiatives to empower more seniors to navigate the digital landscape with confidence and creativity. Together, we are building a more inclusive and digitally empowered community where all generations can thrive.

Stay tuned to find out what comes next!

To learn more about the project and to get involved in our future activities, visit our [website](#) or follow us on the most popular social networks with the hashtag #SENIORVLOG