



**Senior  
Explorers  
of Urban  
Environments**

**Older people discover the  
neighbourhood digitally**



**THE PROJECT**



**Many older people are at risk of digital exclusion which also threatens their social inclusion. With our project **SEE U**, we contribute to closing the digital gap.**



Digital literacy is the key to the world of today. Not only do digital devices, applications and services help keep us informed, they also enable us to participate, make use of a variety of services and stay in contact with friends and family. Many older people are at risk of digital exclusion, and this also threatens their social inclusion. With our project SEE U, we are contributing to closing the digital gap. We are developing learning environments that inspire and support older learners to master the technologies that were intended to advance and connect us rather than to exclude us. Like everybody else older people need to learn how to master these new technologies by using them for meaningful tasks and in meaningful situations. And we know that learning to use new technologies is like learning a language. Learning is a social act and learning has to be continuous.


## WHY WE DO IT

### DIGITAL PARTICIPATION IS SOCIAL PARTICIPATION.

Digital tools have become an integral part of our lives. They help us in our communications possibilities or open up new ones; they help us organise our everyday lives via the internet, and bring art, culture and social life into our home. They also simplify many processes, such as dealing with authorities or service providers. Digital participation can contribute significantly to maintaining and increasing the quality of life in old age as it enables older people to have an independent lifestyle. As we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic, technology can help reduce social isolation and helps us stay in contact with family and friends – but it also helps with learning, doing sports and other activities.



**“Digitalisation brings the world into our homes.”**



Ivica Ž., student of architecture and urbanism at Slovenian Third Age University

## THE DIGITAL GAP HAS TO BE CLOSED.

Europe is the most digitally connected region in the world. Almost 90 per cent of the population are online<sup>1</sup> and the digital participation of the older population has increased considerably over the last few years. However, many older Europeans are at risk of being left behind.<sup>2</sup> Within the older population there are certain groups that are at an even higher risk of digital exclusion, among which are women: They experience even more barriers and inequalities which are the results of “accumulated disadvantages throughout their life course that put them at a higher risk of social exclusion and dependency on others to access essential digital services.”<sup>3</sup>

Digital literacy is a key competence in our time. Older people at risk of digital exclusion are also at risk of social exclusion. The digital gap threatens their participation – their ability to use services, find information, participate in public debates, stay in contact with others etc. – the gap has to be closed or at least minimised.

## SPECIFIC LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS ARE NEEDED.

Studies have shown that learning in later life is important for older people and society. It is like breathing. It is not only essential for social inclusion but also for health and well-being.<sup>4</sup>

**“I wouldn’t like to be left behind.”**

Alojz T., student of English at Slovenian Third Age University

- <sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Digital\\_economy\\_and\\_society\\_statistics\\_-\\_households\\_and\\_individuals](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Digital_economy_and_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals)
- <sup>2</sup> E.g. [www.statista.com/statistics/1241896/european-countries-internet-users-use-accessed-internet-daily-age/](http://www.statista.com/statistics/1241896/european-countries-internet-users-use-accessed-internet-daily-age/) und [www.age-platform.eu/special-briefing/growing-old-digital-world](http://www.age-platform.eu/special-briefing/growing-old-digital-world)
- <sup>3</sup> [www.age-platform.eu/special-briefing/complex-gender-face-digital-exclusion-old-age](http://www.age-platform.eu/special-briefing/complex-gender-face-digital-exclusion-old-age)
- <sup>4</sup> E.g. Cory Noble et al. (2021): How Does Participation in Formal Education or Learning for Older People Affect Well-being and Cognition? A Systematic Literature Review and Meta-Analysis. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2333721420986027>





**In SEE U, older people explore their neighbourhoods with the help of digital tools. They develop and carry out app-based walks in their living environments. We support them in this developmental process and facilitate their use of a variety of digital devices. The learning environments are open, flexible and inspiring. Each learner participates according to their own interests and possibilities.**

### **However, older learners need learning environments that:**

- 👁️ awaken their curiosity and passion for learning,
- 👁️ breed confidence,
- 👁️ take into account their attitudes (e. g. towards technology),
- 👁️ respect their wishes and possibilities,
- 👁️ enable self-directed *and* interactive (peer) learning,
- 👁️ embrace the diversity of the target group and
- 👁️ are free of ageist stereotypes.

## OLDER LEARNERS CHALLENGE STEREOTYPES AND COMBAT AGEISM.

Shortcomings in digital participation are not the only threat to the social inclusion of older people. Ageism – stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination based on age are equally harmful. “Ageism can change how others and how we view ourselves. It can erode solidarity between generations, devalue or limit our ability to benefit from what both younger and older people can contribute. It affects health, longevity and well-being [...]”<sup>5</sup> Older learners, who are co-creators and role models challenge societal stereotypes of ageing and old age, They contribute to open, equal and an age-friendly society.



**Like everybody else, older people need to learn how to master new technologies by using them for meaningful tasks and in meaningful situations. In the SEE U project, we develop learning environments that inspire and support older learners to use technologies that were made to advance and connect and not to exclude us.**

**“Active older people change the traditional image of old age and provide new scenarios for living in old age.”**

Dušana Findelsen,  
Slovenian Third  
Age University

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ageing-ageismquestions-and-answers/item/ageing-ageism>



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## HOW WE DO IT

### The SEE U approach

In **SEE U**, older people explore their neighbourhoods with the help of digital tools. They develop and carry out app-based walks in their living environments. The **SEE U** project teams support older learners in this developmental process and facilitate their use of a variety of digital devices and tools that are helpful/necessary for this process. The learning environments are open, flexible and inspiring. Each learner participates according to their own interests and possibilities. Peer learning is encouraged, so the value of the walks is tested together with older people and are made sustainably accessible to others.

## THE SEE U WORKSHOPS

### What do we want to achieve?

### **With the SEE U workshops our project teams:**

- 👁 invite older women and men to get involved with digital tools and applications,
- 👁 awaken their curiosity about the chances offered by digital tools and applications to the extent that they want to try them out,
- 👁 support older learners to develop their own walks and tours according to their world, their interests and their needs,
- 👁 strengthen the sense of community to allow for mutual learning (peer learning) and collaboration,
- 👁 develop and test innovative and effective methods of translation between the real world and the digital sphere (and vice versa) to establish connections between these spheres specifically for older learners.

**“There are so many things to learn all the time.”**

Franček H.,  
student at  
Slovenian Third  
Age University

### Who do we want to reach?

In the **SEE U** workshops, the participants develop and test their own app-based tours. In these tours, they explore their neighbourhoods with the help of digital tools. The workshops are co-created together with older learners who are interested in:

- 👁 developing walks and tours based on their common interests,
- 👁 exploring their neighbourhoods together with others,
- 👁 dealing with digital means and (new) tools,
- 👁 learning something new and helping their peers to learn,
- 👁 taking part in the tours and testing them, and
- 👁 providing guided tours for other older citizens.

### How are the workshops carried out?

The participants do not have to meet all of the above criteria. The **SEE U** workshops will be open to every older learner. No one will be excluded because they are, for example, “only” interested in participating in tours (and maybe not in developing them). On the contrary: As we want to reach out to rather diverse groups of learners, the **SEE U** workshops will empower all of them at all stages of previous knowledge. The workshops will allow them to join the development of the tours and conduct them at any stage of the process. This in turn means that the workshops are highly flexible and organised around the experiences, needs and interests of older learners.

**“I can learn something new in this project, in a playful bite-by-bite manner.”**

Karin F.,  
SEE U participant  
in Austria



Our low-threshold workshop concept enables participants and allows them to enter the tour development process at any stage. They are invited to participate as actively as they wish with their individual contributions. The workshop concept is modular and the participants can take part in the modules according to their interests and experiences. The modules are not necessarily provided in linear order. Depending on the context, the profile of the learners and the group dynamics, the modules can be sequenced differently or may even be simultaneous. The workshops can be organised and carried out with groups of 2–10 people, the number of workshop dates may vary according to the needs and rhythm of the respective group.

## THE WORKSHOP MODULES AT A GLANCE



## 1. Getting together

The participants get to know each other and the SEE U project. They are encouraged to bring themselves and their interests and expertise to the project.

## 2. Identifying topics

Topics for potential tours are collected, discussed, agreed, and further developed by the group.

## 3. Developing

The participants learn about different possible elements of a tour (e. g. info bites, gamification elements). They try out different methods and make a selection for their own tour(s).

## 4. Uploading

The elements of the tour that have been worked out in analogue form are now uploaded into the *Actionbound* app. Depending on the interests and knowledge of the group, this can be done individually or supported by the project team.

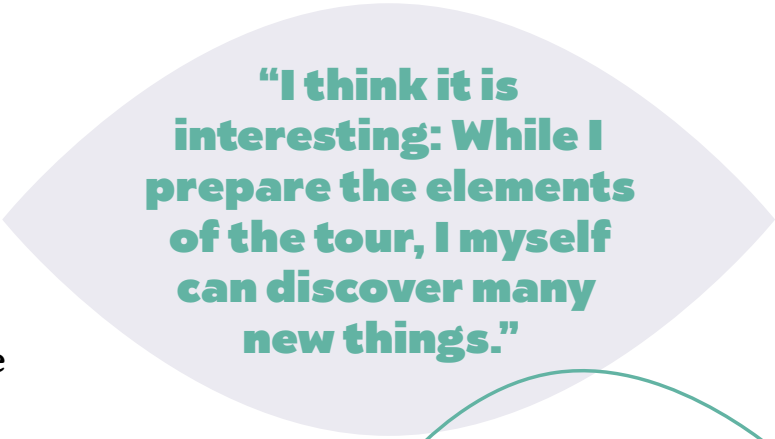
## 5. Testing

The digital tours are tested by the group or individual tour developers and then discussed. Feedback is collected and discussed.


## 6. Finalising

Ideas for improvements and changes are incorporated into the tour(s).

In each of the modules, the older learners are encouraged and supported to use devices, the hardware (e. g. smartphone, tablet, laptop) and applications (e. g. maps, search engines, social media, databases, video/ audio recording apps, *Actionbound* app) that are relevant for the development of the tours and the topics that interest them. Self-organised learning and learning from each other (peer learning) are encouraged and facilitated.



**"I think it is interesting: While I prepare the elements of the tour, I myself can discover many new things."**



Karin F.,  
SEE U participant  
in Austria

**“Don’t stop walking.  
If you stop  
walking, it’s bad.”**

Jitka F., SEE U  
participant in  
Czech Republic

### What are SEE U walks or tours?

The topics of the walks or tours are decided upon by the older learners and co-creators of the **SEE U** workshops. They are based on their interests, talents and their stories. For example:

- 👁️ “Spaces/Places”: Our favourite spots or views in the neighbourhood.
- 👁️ “Do you remember?” Our neighbourhood now and then (e. g. forgotten cinemas).
- 👁️ Special issues, e.g. “How about... sustainability, climate change, sport... in our neighbourhood?”

### The SEE U products

We want the experiences and results from **SEE U** to be both inspiring and helpful to others interested in the digital participation of older people. To this end we will not only develop and apply the **WORKSHOP CONCEPT** to support our participants in designing their web-based tours and exploring their neighbourhoods with others, we will also take care of the availability of our participants’ **DIGITAL TOURS** and develop and disseminate an **ONLINE MANUAL** with information and resources for the creation of web-based tours, specifically focusing on the target group of older people. The manual addresses organisations working with/for older people, adult education providers, neighbourhood initiatives and older citizens/volunteers interested in developing and providing comparable tours in their neighbourhoods. In addition to these mainly practically oriented products, we will provide a **HANDBOOK** and free **WEBINARS** to raise awareness on the importance of the digital inclusion of older citizens and to inspire with examples and experiences.

## WHAT INSPIRES US

The development of **SEE U** was inspired not only by our desktop research of the digital exclusion/inclusion of older Europeans, but even more perhaps by a variety of projects that deal with the same field as **SEE U** does (or aspects of it), namely technology, space and social participation of older people.

We have selected four interesting examples from four different countries and asked the respective project coordinators and participants to guide us through their experiences, provide exclusive insights into the most important aspects of the projects and tell us about what they learned from them.

*We decided to anonymise the names of the participants to protect their privacy. The project leaders are mentioned with their full names.*



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**In Hemishofen, older people took part in participatory site visits. With the help of an app they explored the question “How age-friendly is my municipality?”**



# App as a survey tool

## App-based tours in Hemishofen, Switzerland

### Profile

**Project name:** Age-friendly Community Programme

**Funding:** Canton of Schaffhausen and Municipality of Hemishofen

**Organisations:** GERONTOLOGIE CH and Dost Stadtentwicklung

**City, country:** Hemishofen, Switzerland

**Objective:** Participative analysis of the community

**Target group:** All residents (414 persons)

**Websites:** [www.stadtsache.de](http://www.stadtsache.de),  
<https://altersfreundliche-gemeinde.ch>

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The small municipality of Hemishofen with just over 400 inhabitants carried out a participatory site visit as part of a settlement development project. The older citizens explored the question “How age-friendly is my municipality?” and recorded their feedback with the app **stadtsache**. The repurposing of the former school building was discussed, and they had many ideas on how to instil new life into this space.

*Simon, you organised site inspection and supported citizens of Hemishofen in assessing the age-friendliness of their village. What was special about this activity?*

**Simon Stocker:** The site visit is part of the Age-friendly Community Programme that we at GERONTOLOGIE CH are implementing in the Canton of Schaffhausen. Its aim is to impart knowledge about age policy to the municipality and to accompany them on their way to becoming age-friendlier. It is very important for us to involve the older population in developing and implementing the measures.

*Violette, you participated in the site inspection. Why did you decide to join?*

**Violette T.:** We have lived in the village for 30 years and are involved in voluntary work. I was very pleased that the municipality invited us. The format with the site visits also appealed to me. Since I would like to live in the municipality when I am older, it is important to me that it is age-friendly. It was therefore clear that I would like to participate in shaping the future.

*You also used the app stadtsache to explore your neighbourhood with the support of a digital tool? What were your experiences?*

**Violette T.:** I was surprised at how fun and playful the app was to use. The structure “what I like”, “what I don’t like”, “where should the municipality improve” was logical and easy to fill in. It also allowed me to take a closer look at places in the village and

think about safety, improvements of the village image or disturbing elements. I am still enthusiastic about the digital possibilities.

*Why do you think it is so important to make (older) people familiar with the digital world?*

**Simon Stocker:** Participation is very important to us and when we see an opportunity to approach a digital tool in a playful way, we use it. In the case of Hemishofen, it was the app, which is very easy to use. It was possible

for the participants to provide more photos and input even after the inspection.

*What did you personally take away from the inspections and the use of digital tools?*

**Violette T.:** I am very curious and I always want to learn more. After the on-site instruction, the app was very easy to use; it was great fun and reduced my fear of digital tools once again. The site visit tour also encouraged conversations and we even made new friends.



**“After the on-site instruction, the app was very easy to use, which was great fun and reduced my fear of digital tools once again. The site visit tour also encouraged conversations and we even made new friends.”** (Violette T.)

*During the inspections, what surprised you the most?*

**Simon Stocker:** It was the first time we used an app and we didn't know how it would be received by the participants. And they had great fun! Specific concerns about public spaces can be captured perfectly with photos.

*What do you take with you for future projects on digitalisation and older people?*

**Simon Stocker:** Digital tools are helpful. But they are always a means to an end: bringing people together. In this case, the app was also useful to show different perspectives of the community. In the end, however, it was the exchange between people and the resulting measures for a better coexistence that were important.

## Personal Town Tours

### Profile

**Funding:** European Union – Grundtvig programme

**Years:** 2012–2014

**Organisation:** Slovenian Third Age University (U3A)

**City, country:** Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Objective:** Older people develop city tours based on their personal stories, interests and knowledge of architecture and urbanism.

**Target group:** Students of the Third Age University of Ljubljana

*“I could even say that I’m not only a student. I have become a researcher,” said Mira, one of your older students. What exactly did she have in mind?*

**Meta Kutin:** In *Personal Town Tours* practically everything was new to us – my older students and myself. Being an architect, I was educated and trained to think primarily about technical and aesthetic aspects of architecture and places. But: Towns are people! People with their hidden stories from the past, present and, why not, the future.

*How did you start collecting stories?*

**Meta Kutin:** My students were exploring their personal memories, then memories of family members, school mates, friends, former co-workers and neighbours. In short,

memories of their older generations. They did research in archives. Finally, we decided on three thematic tours. At the same time, we became aware that our tours had to be well sequenced, walkable and feasible in a limited space and time. No longer than an hour! My students collected fragments of personal stories that would best illustrate thematic itineraries and also continued searching for older people who had information. In the social network of our students there were also older people who were well known. Mateja, for instance, was a ballet dancer. She and the former director of the opera of Ljubljana told us how students used to wait for the ballet dancers in front of the opera with bouquets of flowers. How beautiful the beech tree next to the building was ... etc.

*So you developed only walkable itineraries?*

**Meta Kutin:** Yes, that's right. The tours have to be walkable, not too long and above all: valuable. Social value has to be attributed to the selected areas, buildings and spaces. It is important that places have meaning for people, how they feel about them. When we were developing thematic itineraries such as *Between culture and friends* we discovered that some of us had great personal memories of the Viennese cafes that used to be in our town. This information had to be shaped into an interesting text or film, etc.

*Vida, you are one of Meta's students and you participated in the very first project Personal Town Tours, didn't you?*

**"With our learning, our self-confidence is growing as well. Being self-confident is essential to preserve control over our lives and...to enjoy life. Older people should have more social roles connecting them with their communities."**

(Vida V.P., participant in the project Personal Town Tours)

**Vida V. P.:** Yes, I participated in *Personal Town Tours* but also in some other related projects. For instance, we researched the street where our U3A is located. We based our research on theories, memories we collected, our experiences, data from radio programmes, etc. We combined different sources, particularly older peoples' narratives and collective memories. Our findings



© Meta Kutin





**“Towns are people! People with their hidden stories from the past, present and, why not, the future.”** (Meta Kutin, architect and lecturer at U3A)

**In Ljubljana, students of the U3A developed personal town tours based on their interests and memories.**



can help architects, urbanists and decision-makers to change their views of older people. This happened in the *Dreamlike Neighbourhood* project. Now, *Personal Town Tours* gave me an opportunity to improve my knowledge of architecture. But what I particularly liked was working in a team. We had never met before, but we became friends. We were

learning not only about the topic but also about how to be together.

*Which topic did you choose and how did you develop your tour?*

**Vida V. P.:** Our group, for example, prepared the so called *Plečnik and Lettuce Tour*. It featured Jože Plečnik, the internationally famous Slovenian architect and urbanist,

who grew lettuce near his house in the district of Trnovo. The salad is still being transported from there to the central open market by cart every day. In the 20th century, Plečnik heavily impacted the development of the town and urban life in Ljubljana. We connected Plečnik's architecture with the story of the salad grown in the old town.

*Meta, what did you take away from the project for your work with older people?*

**Meta Kutin:** For specialists like architects, urbanists, space sociologists and psychologists etc. such projects are an amazing source of information about how a town can and could be used by older people and what it means to them. In *Personal Town Tours* I learned how to communicate with older people and how to put myself in their shoes. This impacted my work as an architect.

*Vida, what did you personally take away from the project work?*

**Vida V. P.:** In later life, we come across new issues like ageing, changes in the way of life, changes in family life, etc. One of the possible ways to adjust to them is project work and education that relate us to others and which give us the feeling of not only being a learner but also an achiever. With our learning, our self-confidence is growing as well. Being self-confident is essential to preserve control over our lives and...to enjoy life. Anyway, older people should have more social roles connecting them with their communities.



**In the MobileAge project, older people were involved in the development process of online applications as experts of their own lifeworld. They actively contributed to the improvement of self-determined participation in public life.**

## MobileAge

### Profile

**Funding:** European Union – Horizon 2020

**Organisations:** In Germany, this EU project was implemented by the Institute for Information Management Bremen GmbH at the University of Bremen and the Research Institute Technology and Disability (FTB).

**City, country:** Bremen, Germany

**Objective:** Older people co-develop online applications to improve their self-determined participation in public life.

**Target group:** Citizens of the districts of Osterholz and Hemelingen in Bremen

**Website:** [www.mobile-age.eu](http://www.mobile-age.eu)

The **MobileAge** project supported older people in accessing information and services through the use of mobile technologies (e. g. smartphones and tablets). Senior citizens were involved in the development of online applications as experts of their own lifeworld and thus actively contributed to the improvement of self-determined participation in public life.



*Juliane, as a researcher in the field of digitalisation, ageing society and participatory design, you led the implementation of the project in Bremen. What was special for you about MobileAge?*

**Juliane Jarke:** It was very special and particularly because technology development not only talked about older people and saw them as those who need technical support for their everyday life. Older people were actively involved in the design process. Our participants had very different technical expertise. However, it quickly became clear that technical knowledge was not the core expertise they brought with them, the fact that they were experts in their everyday world was the

core expertise and this contributed greatly to the project. People often talk about older people, but not with them. This participatory research approach was very special.

*As part of the project, digital district guides were developed in Bremen together with older people. Why and how did the walks come about?*

**Juliane Jarke:** In the Osterholz district of Bremen, it became clear rather quickly that older people felt restricted in their mobility. They experienced a lot of uncertainty when they wanted to go somewhere else. Questions like “What is there for me?” or “Are there toilets?” preoccupied them. But there



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was no accessible information on this. Therefore, we made an overview map of important places for older people in Osterholz. But then we realised that it would also be interesting to show how to get to these places and how to get around. This is how the barrier-free district walks came about. The participants defined what information was relevant for the walks and also worked out the content of the walks. By creating videos of the walks together, the participants got to know and worked with digital media and apps.

*What do you think were the (most) important experiences of the joint development (co-creation) process?*

**Juliane Jarke:** If you take participation seriously, it is time-consuming, and you have to assume a very high level of commitment of the participants. It also requires a high level of reflection and skills that not everyone has. It is important to remember that you have an ethical responsibility. This means that you have to think about how to involve people and which methods you use to reflect their reality of life. For example, we used self-documentation methods such as maps and diaries with older people to reflect where they are in their living environment. This worked very well with one group. They realised that they are no longer as active in their neighbourhood as they would like

**“Digital tools can encourage people to go out. For some of our participants, it was important to know where they could go safely. For others, the virtual walks were opportunities to go to places they would otherwise not go to. The fact that you can not only physically but also virtually visit places is attractive.”**

(Juliane Jarke, MobileAge)

to be. As a result, they bought trackers and did more. Residents in a senior citizens' home, on the other hand, became aware of their own immobility. And it was not only because of them. For example, they didn't have a bus stop in front of their home and couldn't get around on their own. You have to be very sensitive when you work with different groups. All in all, participation needs a trusting relationship and that takes time.

*Why do you think it is important to link mobility and the digital?*

**Juliane Jarke:** Digital tools can encourage people to go out. For some of our participants, it was important to know where they could go safely. For others, the virtual walks were opportunities to go to places they would otherwise not go to. The fact that you can not only physically but also virtually visit places is attractive. The project has also made it clear to me why the debate around "Ageing in Place" is so central. Namely that people can grow older where they are rooted. When you go on walks with older people, you realise how much history and memory is attached to the places. Local integration is very important, especially to prevent social isolation and loneliness.

*What do you personally take away from the project? What has remained in your memory?*

**Juliane Jarke:** First of all, the nice atmosphere with the participants. We have been working with the groups for a while, almost

a year, and a very trusting atmosphere has developed. We also learned a lot about the lives of the participants, which changed my image of ageing and that of older women in particular. Hearing from older women how they navigated their lives in a very different time was very impressive. This discussion has had a great impact on me personally and as a researcher.

# Excursions to the virtual reality

## Profile

**Project name:** Dreamlike Neighbourhood

**Funding:** European Union – Erasmus+

**Years:** 2020–2022

**Organisation:** Letokruh

**City, country:** Prague, Czech Republic

**Objective:** In Dreamlike Neighbourhood, neighbourhood groups of/with older and very old people were facilitated and supported. In such groups, the participants meet regularly and support each other

(re-)detecting and bringing in their ideas and talents. They make new experiences, empower each other and actively contribute to the group and the community.

**Target group:** Older volunteers of Letokruh

**Websites:** [www.dreamlike-neighbourhood.eu](http://www.dreamlike-neighbourhood.eu), [www.letokruh.cz](http://www.letokruh.cz)

**“I went to the Virtual Reality game room because it was organised by Letokruh and I was very pleasantly surprised. In fact, it was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I managed to jump 80 metres from a skyscraper. I found the courage to jump. I’m proud of myself for overcoming fear.” (Jiří G.)**



In *Dreamlike Neighbourhood*, neighbourhood group participants met regularly in different places. The idea was to offer a variety of activities, perspectives and information so that participants were encouraged to think outside the box and become familiar with new issues. One excursion led them to a Virtual Reality game room. This visit was a completely new experience and led to lively discussions afterwards.

*Vladka and Katka, you facilitated the neighbourhood group and together with participants inter alia organised excursions, such as the visit of the Virtual Reality game room. Why do you think it is so important to make older people familiar with the digital world?*

**Vladka Dvořáková and Katka Karbanová:**

The digital world is an integral part of our world today. In *Letokruh* we try to bring it closer to older volunteers, to find a suitable way to use technology in our activities to enrich their lives, to show them what a positive role it can play, what new experiences and possibilities it can bring and how it strengthens their confidence.

The level of use varies from one to another, but it has been our experience that the circumstances and events at *Letokruh* can be used to increase the adoption of digital technology, for example online meetings or computer-based yoga or English classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Phone calls with older people when they cannot visit in

**Letokruh tries to bring the digital world closer to its older volunteers. In the Dreamlike Neighbourhood project, they visited a Virtual Reality game room. This visit was a completely new experience and led to lively discussions afterwards.**

person are still taking place. Exchanges of experiences, invitations to events, photos of activities are already common in the *Letokruh* WhatsApp channel. As part of *Dreamlike Neighbourhood*, we used virtual reality as a theme of one of the group's meetings. Our participants visited the game room, and they were able to experience something that they would hardly be able to do otherwise given their age and travel capabilities – like jumping off a skyscraper, walking through Death Valley, swimming with dolphins and more.

*Jiří, you participated in the Dreamlike Neighbourhood group and also in the excursion to the Virtual Reality game room. What was special about it?*





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**Jiří G.:** I normally don't use technology. I don't have time for it. Technology is nice for younger people. I missed the train, even my daughter-in-law tells me there is no point in starting now. Yet I admire those who master technology. I went to the Virtual Reality game room because it was organised by *Letokruh* and I was very pleasantly surprised, in fact it was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I managed to jump 80 metres down from a skyscraper. I found the courage to jump. I'm proud of myself for overcoming fear.

*We especially like your joyful approach of "learning by playing". What did you take away from the excursions for your work with older people?*

**Vladka Dvořáková and Katka Karbanová:**

In our daily work with older people we realise that it is very important to support them in using the information available in the digital world and to distinguishing between right and wrong. Thus, the excursions for us were not only about becoming familiar with digital devices and new technologies but also to start an exchange about social media, learn how they work, about opportunities and threats. Without social media, in our case the WhatsApp group, they would miss information, photos and experiences about our activities.

*During the excursions and meetings, what surprised you the most?*

**Vladka Dvořáková and Katka Karbanová:**

That older people can get excited about digital technology when it makes sense to them. They find out that technology may be their servant and not their master – with support, introduction and training. That it can bring them experiences they wouldn't otherwise have and enable sharing them. They realise that digital communication is actually very simple at its core. They themselves can become ambassadors for others and set an example.

*Jitka, what did you personally take away from the experience of Virtual Reality and new technologies? What impact did you perceive on the group?*

**Jitka F.:** I wouldn't go to a Virtual Reality game room in my normal life, nor would I go with my grandchildren. I can almost hear it: "Come on, Grandma, it's not for you."

*Letokruh* dragged me out there and it was a great experience and an adrenaline rush. I outdid myself. I drove over a narrow bridge over a deep valley above the river. I would never have done that in my life. Swimming in the sea with dolphins was something I always wanted to do. I didn't get to do it in Dubai, here we caught up.



**SEE U SOON HERE:** [www.see-u-project.eu](http://www.see-u-project.eu)



## WHO WE ARE

**SEE U** is an *Erasmus+* project (Cooperation Partnerships for Cooperation, adult education) running from December 2022 until November 2024. The project is carried out by five partner organisations:

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**Letokruh**



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