



The „Climate for Reading” Erasmus+ project develops library activities addressing the important topic of promoting reading among adults in the context of growing secondary illiteracy and the need to develop key competencies.

City and University Library Osijek has decided to focus on seniors as a group of adults who do not read or read only casually. Considering their health, level of education, and social needs, we tried to interest them in reading in an appropriate way and organized a series of library activities for them.

## ACTIVITIES PROMOTING A LIBRARY TO SENIORS IN CITY AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OSIJEK

*The aim is to show how libraries can become safe and inspiring places for senior citizens, encouraging reading habits, social inclusion and lifelong learning. The following examples from the practice of the City and University Library Osijek (GISKO) demonstrate different approaches and models of cooperation.*

### **1. GISKO and the Faculty of Humanities and social sciences in Osijek “Dementia-Friendly Libraries”**

*The City and University Library Osijek, in cooperation with the Faculty of Humanities and social sciences in Osijek (Department of Information Sciences), is participating in the project „Building dementia-friendly public libraries: theoretical and practical assumptions”.*

*We hope that the information collected will empower people with Alzheimer’s disease and their families and/or caregivers, improve the quality of their lives and make it easier for them to cope with the challenges they face every day. The aim is to improve the quality of life of people with dementia through adapted library services and content and to shape the library as a safe and supportive place in the community.*

### **2. Book and Reading Clubs at the Home for the Elderly and Disabled on Drinska**

*GISKO, in collaboration with the Home for the Elderly and Disabled in Osijek – Drinska, runs reading clubs for elderly users.*

- **The Book club group “The Book Friends”**

*This group is intended for anyone who is capable of reading independently and who is cognitively functional and able to participate in the discussion.*

*The group should not have a large number of members, the optimal number of participants would be between 10-15 members of the reading club. The reason for this is a pleasant atmosphere that provides a sense of acceptance and security, as well as a quality discussion in which each participant can participate equally*

- **The reading aloud group**

*The second group is based on reading aloud to members who are unable to read independently due to impaired vision, and to those who love company and need social interaction. Materials suitable for this type of activity include poetry, short stories, and shorter excerpts that can capture the resident’s attention without disrupting concentration and attention.*

*Unlike the first group, the second group is not limited in terms of the number of participants and lasts approximately half an hour. The dates are planned to be twice a month, but the final agreement depends on the capabilities of the participants and the institution itself.*

### **3. Additional workshops**

*Additional workshops include activities related to certain events within the framework of anniversaries and significant dates important to library activities. Cooperation with homes for the elderly and disabled and work with librarians of the institutions in question is linked to the very purpose of the public library, including its mission, tasks and goals. Librarians, depending on the capabilities of their own institution and the resources available, collaborate with homes on a previously developed plan. The plan includes guidelines and ideas that are achieved through organization and flexibility, and above all, the imagination and creativity of the employees themselves, whose engagement contributes to the satisfaction, happiness, fulfillment and health of those who need it most.*



#### 4. Library on the doorstep

The Osijek City and University Library has a bibliocombi that provides access to books and cultural content to people who, due to distance, health restrictions or mobility, cannot regularly come to the library.

The goal is to ensure equal access to library services for all citizens, especially the elderly and people with reduced mobility, and to create socializing and a warm meeting point in the community.

#### 5. Workshops for senior citizens

- **“Keeping up with the times – computer basics”**

The Osijek City and University Library conducts basic computer and digital literacy courses, specially designed for older people who want to master basic digital skills. The program is designed to reduce the digital gap and enable senior users to access information, library digital resources and online communication independently.

Program goal is to enable older adults to use computers and the Internet in a basic way, to increase the availability of digital library services, including e-books and online catalogs and to empower older users to independently obtain information and engage in the digital world.

By providing a safe environment for learning without fear, the program contributes to the social inclusion and self-confidence of older users in the digital environment.

- **Knitting workshops**

The Osijek City and University Library organizes knitting workshops and other creative activities for older users. The program is designed as a way of social inclusion, encouraging creativity and maintaining manual skills, while at the same time connecting users through common interests and socializing.

The main goals of the program are to encourage older people to express themselves creatively and actively participate in social activities, and to strengthen social ties and a sense of community through group activities.

- **“Keeping Up with the Times - English Language”**

The Osijek City and University Library and the Women’s Association „IZVOR” organized a free English language course for senior citizens called „Keeping Up with the Times - English Language”. The workshops began in 2016 and they are continued till this day.

The general English course is intended for people over 65 who want to improve all four language skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking), practice grammatical structures and expand their vocabulary.

The aim of the course is to enable participants to communicate in English according to the chosen level of knowledge and to enable them to spend their free time in a quality way.

- **“Book club “Matilda”**

In June 2021, the Adult Lending Department established the adult reading club “Matilda”. The club is organized into two groups, one of which is intended for senior users, who are eager to socialize and gain new knowledge in a stimulating and relaxing atmosphere.

The goal of the City and University Library Osijek, by establishing the club, is to strengthen the community of its users.

“Matilda” is a place of trust, respect for diversity, a break from reality, which is achieved through quality communication with plenty of joy, a dose of humor and the exchange of new ideas.

#### 6. Workshop Program for Seniors

The planned workshops will include: creative activities (crafts, drawing, music, dancing, writing, family tree), health educational programs (memory and mobility exercises, healthy eating), digital culture (use of smartphones, e-books, online library services, safe use of the Internet), social and cultural meetings (reading clubs, film nights, board games), and intergenerational programs that connect older and younger generations.



### **Examples of future workshops for seniors:**

- Music Workshops – stimulating memories, expressing emotions, reducing stress and feelings of loneliness, awakening the joy of life
- Poetry Workshops – encouraging expression through poetry, awakening imagination and memories, creating a sense of community
- AI (artificial intelligence) workshops for seniors – AI can make everyday life easier, encourage mental activity and curiosity, strengthen self-confidence in the digital world and to create a sense of connection
- “Memoirs of my life” – writing personal stories, which the library can preserve as part of local history
- Book and tea – a relaxing social program combining book discussion and herbal tea tasting
- “Grandma reads fairy tales” – seniors read to children in the library or kindergarten
- “Let’s learn from each other” – workshops where seniors transfer knowledge (eg knitting, cooking, soap making) while the younger ones teach them digital skills
- “Stories and recipes of our grandmothers” – joint collection and publication of a booklet
- “Brain exercises” (quizzes, crosswords, brain teasers, memories of old times)
- Digital literacy for 60+ – how to use a smartphone, e-materials, audiobooks and e-library
- Health and books – a combination of lectures on health and book recommendations on healthy living
- A creative workshop inspired by a book
- A workshop for recording stories and poetry
- Books and Memories with Music
- A workshop in which older participants show younger participants old crafts and skills – knitting, crocheting, hand-writing, making ornaments or home repairs. In turn, the young people show them how to make digital versions of these items

By implementing these programs, the library wants to position itself as a place of support, learning and socializing, emphasizing its role as a center of community and active aging.

### **6. Concrete actions in the library to make it more senior-friendly**

- Adapting the space for comfort and accessibility – decorating a corner with comfortable chairs, larger font and arm lighting makes the library a pleasant place for the elderly.
- Adapted collection and selection of materials – acquisition of large-print books, audiobooks, memoirs and titles on health and hobbies tailored to the interests of the elderly.
- Special benefits and visible messages – a special ID card, longer loan periods and clear communication show that the elderly are welcome and appreciated.
- Thematic shelves and visible corners – a permanent section or a special shelf labeled “Recommendations for the golden years” makes it easier to find relevant materials.
- Warm and personal communication – phone calls or in-person conversations for recommendations and reminders create a sense of care and connection.
- Promotion of materials – posts on social networks, newsletters and posters in the library and the local community highlight novelties and recommendations for the elderly.
- Easier digital support – help with using the e-catalog, e-books and the internet allows the elderly to feel safe in the digital space of the library.
- Regular rhythm of events – monthly times for socializing and workshops create a habit and trust among elderly users.
- Promotion of the collection that interests them – special shelves and online recommendations with books adapted for the elderly encourage reading and exploring the library collection.



- Introduction of a sound and relaxation zone – a corner for listening to audiobooks allows those with poor vision or limited mobility to enjoy literature.
- Strengthening the volunteer spirit within the library – older members involved as volunteers become active participants in library life and foster community.
- Facilitated accessibility – extended loan periods, reservations by phone or web and home delivery of books increase access to materials.
- Reading corner – comfortable chairs, good lighting and a quiet space within the library encourage pleasant reading and spending time.
- Education and workshops – workshops on the use of e-books, the digital catalog and presentations of new titles enable the active participation of older members.

### 7. Promoting reading and library activities for seniors

Promoting activities aimed at older people is not just about inviting them to read, but also creating a sense of belonging and warmth. Through pleasant gatherings, book discussions, workshops and shared moments, the library becomes a haven that nurtures memories and stimulates curiosity.

It is important to approach older people with respect and a personal touch – through invitations, phone calls, warm posts on social networks and articles in local media. Campaigns should highlight the beauty of mature years, wisdom and wealth of experience, with messages that arouse emotion and optimism. The library is thus promoted not only as a place of books, but as a living space of stories, friendships and new beginnings, where every page opens up the possibility for conversation, memory and a smile.

#### Examples of campaigns to promote reading for seniors:

- Photos and short stories of senior readers with their favorite books encourage emotional connection.
- “Five Minutes of Reading” – A challenge that encourages daily reading and sharing quotes or photos to create an online community.
- Recording memories and stories of senior members and sharing them in audio or video form.
- Delivering books to seniors who have difficulty coming to the library, with recommendations and motivating quotes.
- “Let’s Read Together” – Regular meetings to read poetry or stories together with discussion and socializing.
- Posts about books that have marked the lives of senior members with short comments and quotes.

### CONCLUSION

The City and University Library Osijek examples show that libraries, through cooperation with the academic community, social and health institutions, can become key actors in supporting older people. Whether it is through systematic projects, regular programs or participation in national events, libraries strengthen reading habits, social inclusion and the quality of life of older citizens.

This examples shows different approaches: education, cultural events, mobile libraries, creative workshops and digital skills, all with a focus on older users and their active involvement.

