

Facilitating intergenerational
solidarity and learning through
building friendships between
youngsters and elderly



Annex F

National Report



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ANNEX F – NATIONAL REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

The global ageing process and its consequences concern not only Europe, but also Poland. According to demographic projections of the Central Statistical Office, in Poland in 2050 the share of people at working age in the population in 2050 will be 57%, over 65 years of age - as much as 32.7%, while in the pre-working age - about 10%. The number of seniors is increasing every year, while Poland is only 76th in the ranking of over 90 countries suitable for the elderly [according to the Global AgeWatch Index]. The statistics are stark: one in four seniors does not leave home to meet other people, three in ten seniors over 80 do not go out at all, and one in ten

One in ten is never or hardly ever visited at home. There are many forms of social support for older people where they live. Some of them have existed for several decades, others have been created more recently. The diversity of the practiced forms of support is therefore significant, but the scale of implementation of these activities is unsatisfactory. The best situation in terms of saturation of the local environment with institutions supporting the elderly is in large cities.

In Poland, there are various institutional solutions of support for the elderly provided in the home environment and outside the home: services provided in apartments, temporary and day care institutions, a few multifunctional social service centers (e.g. Social Services and Social Welfare Staff Training Centre "Nowolipie Centre" in Warsaw), an application - SeniorApp, social welfare homes, family welfare homes, long-term care institutions in the health care system.

2. REPORT FROM THE GOOD PRACTICES

Table 1. Good Practice no. 1

Title	SeniorApp
Location	Poland, Lodz
Organisation	SeniorApp Sp. z o.o.
Website	https://seniorapp.pl
Overview	SeniorApp is a web-based platform and mobile application designed for all people in need of assistance and their families, looking for support in care and matters of everyday life. The creators want to develop the technology

	<p>in such a way as to fight social exclusion and help people in need by implementing the idea of corporate social responsibility. The project was inspired by personal experience in caring for people in need of help. The mission has become to create a tool that will connect people who use it into a community and provide a mutually beneficial, simple way to communicate with each other. It creates a community of people from different fields who are willing and able to share their time and skills to help others. SeniorApp plans to constantly develop the platform and adapt it to the needs of Seniors and people who need help and care.</p> <p>SeniorApp is the winner of the main prize in the competition “Mam Pomysł na Startup”, edition 2020. International experts and partners have recognized and rewarded the huge potential in building a community around people who need support in their daily lives in everyday life. The SeniorApp platform is an excellent example of using technology for innovative building of safe relations among recipients. The implementation of services through mobile devices is part of the idea of preventing and combating the threat of COVID-19. However, SeniorApp will not end with the coronavirus outbreak, because the problems of the elderly and needy will not disappear.</p>
Impact	<p>SeniorApp entered the Polish market in March 2021 and as of November 2021, the number of total users was 13267 and the number of verified caregivers was 3342. SeniorApp is an application that can be installed for free on any smartphone. With SeniorApp, seniors can select a service for themselves with a few clicks, such as cleaning the garden, a visit to a physiotherapist or even companionship during a walk. Using the app also brings a lot of benefits to elderly caregivers, who can more easily and accurately meet the needs of their loved ones. Everyone using the app has an impact on its development and can suggest what else they need. The application solves real problems that seniors and their caregivers face every day. The appearance of the application is adapted to the capabilities of the elderly, and the way of using it is intuitive. With a few clicks you can ask for support for yourself or someone close to you, choosing not a specific service, but a specific person verified by the platform staff. This is especially appreciated by people who are separated by a large distance from their charges and are not able to take care of them on a daily basis.</p>
Innovation	<p>Thanks to the application, you can order, for example, an appointment with a family doctor or physiotherapist, psychological consultation, night care, but also window cleaning, massage, computer emergency service or handyman. You can easily order a beautician, hairdresser or gardener to your home! Interestingly, the application takes care of all levels of seniors' needs and even provides opportunities for socializing and personal development. Examples of this include walking companionship, Smartphone Education or language learning. These are just some of the vast capabilities of the app.</p> <p>Innovative aspects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. installation of the application is fast and intuitive, 2. use of the application is free of charge and available throughout Poland,



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. the application is adapted to the needs and abilities of the elderly (contrast, large letters) 4. the application can be used by people of any age - you can create an account as a user of the application or as a user offering help 5. payments are cashless and safe - secured through BlueMedia system, 6. in case of questions or problems everyone has support: hotline, e-mail, as well as chat in the application and on the website 7. everyone has influence on the direction of application development e.g. by offering services.
Sustainability	<p>SeniorApp is constantly evolving and the key to its continued growth is undoubtedly its unique values:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) security: in terms of payment security as well as data protection, b) human connection: global solutions for local communities, c) user satisfaction: satisfying and fulfilling customer needs, d) tolerance: every person is different, but all are equal and equally, e) deserve respect and support when needed, f) ethical: acting in accordance with the law and good morals, g) innovation: using technology for the greater good. <p>The SeniorApp undoubtedly needs caregivers and the promotion of a widening range of services to sustain user growth in order to achieve a safe number of regular engaged users with a fair proportion of caregivers. In 2022, another company - SeniorApp - joined the portfolio of the Pracuj Ventures fund. The fund took a minority stake in this company, pointing to the prospective market, the challenges of an aging population and the gig economy trend as the main arguments. SeniorApp is the eighth company in Pracuj Ventures' portfolio. At the time of the transaction, SeniorApp had more than 16,000 users.</p>
Transferability	<p>SeniorApp is the first such application for seniors in Poland. It mainly uses the involvement of people who want to help the elderly. There are other applications for seniors, but SeniorApp definitely has a competitive advantage due to the scope of services being a niche in Poland. Other applications may be created in Poland with a similar mechanism, however, it may be a challenge to implement another application and to attract new or "old" users already using SeniorApp. However, the mechanism can be successfully used by other organizations to provide services in other area. SeniorApp is currently developing only in Poland, but the concept of entering other European markets seems to be a good strategy. However, it requires good preparation and adaptation to specific needs due to large differences between countries in terms of the number of seniors, services provided by the state, etc. factors.</p>
Additional info	<p>Although SeniorApp has been on the market for less than a year, it has managed to gather a large and constantly growing group of users. Currently, it can be fully used in 25 major Polish cities, but the company's goal is to increase the number of SeniorApp users and the platform's reach to cover the whole country. There are two main arguments behind the investment decision of Pracuj Ventures. First of all, SeniorApp operates on a very prospective market. Due to the current demographic trends and the</p>



	<p>progressing aging of society, the market for services for seniors will consistently increase in value. According to the CSO, at the end of 2020 the number of people aged 60 and over exceeded 9.8 and accounted for 25.6 percent of the population. The CSO forecast indicates that the number of people aged 60 and over in Poland will increase to 10.7 million in 2030 and will reach 13.7 million in 2050. These people will make up about 40 percent of Poland's total population.</p>
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Table 2. Good Practice no. 2

Title	Program TWOJA OBECNOŚĆ POMAGA MI ŻYĆ (OBECNOŚĆ) - The program YOU HELP ME LIVE (OBEDIENCE)
Location	Poland, Warsaw
Organisation	Stowarzyszenie mali bracia Ubogich - Little Brothers of the Poor
Website	https://www.malibracia.org.pl/
Overview	<p>The idea of the Little Brothers of the Poor was born in 1939, finding its realization 7 years later, already after the war. The association was founded in 1946 by Armand Marquiset. It gathered young people ready to help the poorest. Right after the end of the Second World War, the poorest people were the elderly - lonely, abandoned, without any chance for help. That is why the Association decided to help this most needy part of the society. This is why "les petits frères des Pauvres" (the little brothers of the poor) attach the greatest importance to the relationship built through accompanying and listening to the elderly - this is the meaning of the Association's motto: flowers before bread. The association "les petits frères des Pauvres" exists worldwide and is active in 10 countries: France, Spain, Ireland, Canada, Germany, United States, Switzerland, Poland, Mexico and Romania.</p> <p>The Polish Association of Little Brothers of the Poor was established on 1 December 2002. The Little Brothers of the Poor Association in Poland operates in: Warsaw, Poznań, Lublin, Wrocław, Kraków, Łódź, Pruszków, Świdnik, Gniezno and Tarnów. In response to the deepening loneliness of the elderly the Association Little Brothers of the Poor created the Program YOU HELP ME LIVE (OBEDIENCE). Program is an organized accompanying voluntary service consisting of regular visits by volunteers to the homes of the residents of the Little Brothers of the Poor, through which an unusual relationship based on friendship and trust is built between the volunteer and the lonely senior. Hundreds of volunteers take part in the Program, giving lonely seniors support and a sense of security every day.</p>



Impact	<p>The volunteers of this organization (there are over 500 of them) are not only helpers of the elderly, but most of all their friends. They visit people living alone, take care of their health and mental condition. They accompany seniors every day, talk to them, go for walks, visit the theatre or exhibitions. They organize short trips out of town. They remember about birthdays and name days of their charges. They also do not forget about lonely seniors at Christmas (every year, thanks to the Donors, the Association organizes Christmas meetings, taking care of decorations, food and a warm atmosphere).</p> <p>In all their activities, the volunteers and employees are guided by the motto: flowers before bread. This motto emphasizes the importance of creating relationships based on friendship and empathy between the volunteer and the client.</p> <p>The aim is to reach out to people who need our help the most, to those for whom loneliness is the biggest problem and to improve the quality of life of the elderly by counteracting their isolation and social alienation.</p>
Innovation	<p>Volunteers are recruited to participate in the Program and each volunteer is assigned to one mentee whom they visit regularly. In this way, bonds are formed, close relationships and even intergenerational friendships for many years - an innovative approach. The charges are offered not only the company and support of a volunteer, but also: intergenerational meetings, vacation meetings (Easter), the opportunity to spend holidays together (One Day Holiday), various forms of group activity (Small Volunteer Initiatives), ad hoc help in exceptionally difficult situations. The association implements and engages in projects to help seniors get out of isolation. Here is a selection of special programs it has developed for isolated elderly people, which complement the program described above in a comprehensive and innovative way:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. accompanying volunteerism, i.e., visits by volunteers to the homes of lonely seniors. 2. ‚Support. Awareness. Dignity‘, which involves organizing individual support for seniors, intergenerational meetings, recording memories of seniors 3. Alzheimer's Stop - an initiative aimed at supporting carers of people with dementia through various activities including workshops and lectures. 4. Project for Veteran, which aims to support soldiers of the Warsaw Uprising and other veterans to counteract their loneliness. This project is realized together with Cultura Memoriae Foundation. 5. Helpline for elderly people. Experienced psychologists are on duty on the phone. Calling 22 635 09 54 one can convince oneself that worries and troubles shared with another person decrease by half.
Sustainability	<p>The quintessential activity is structured companion volunteering, which involves regular visits by qualified and trained volunteers to the homes of seniors. This professional system of long-term volunteering provides regular support and builds a sense of security, especially important for an elderly person living alone. Currently, the Little Brothers of the Poor Association has 450 residents from Poznań, Warsaw, Lublin, Wrocław, Kraków, Świdnik, Pruszków and Gniezno under its wings. Regular financial support</p>



	<p>is crucial and indispensable for the sustainability of the activities undertaken for all the residents. There are different possibilities of support: a one-time payment, a monthly payment of 32 PLN, 64 PLN or more, as well as donating 1% of your tax.</p> <p>The Little Brothers of the Poor Association has been operating in Poland since 2002, conducting recognizable, nationwide social campaigns with the following message to the companies: "Strengthen the social responsibility of your business by introducing cooperative programs for employees. Plan your activities with us based on the proposed programs or contact us to plan a solution that meets the needs of your business and the Association's charges." The results are impressive: 5000 engaged employees and 200000 PLN of raised funds.</p>
Transferability	<p>This practice can, of course, be applied in another area and with the appropriate involvement of volunteers and financial resources it can be successful. The effects of the activities of the organization described above are connected to many years of work, social campaigns, cooperation with partners it has acquired over the years, with companies and individual donors. There are other organizations that follow similar practices, but there are still too few of them in Poland. Therefore, it seems most appropriate to support the largest organizations and work with others on a cooperative basis. Certainly the competitive advantage is the long experience, recognition, non-standard approach in business and a wide range of activities.</p>
Additional info	<p>Example of partners' action:</p> <p>Starcom Polska and BBDO Warszawa prepared charity campaigns aimed at raising funds to organize Christmas for elderly lonely people. Starcom Polska ensured contact with a wide group of campaign recipients by providing media-diversified communication. On the other hand, cooperation with BBDO Warsaw allowed to prepare a coherent communication idea and professional tools, including spots.</p> <p>The social and fundraising campaigns PODARUJ WIGILIĘ ORAZ CICHĄ NOC. The campaigns reminded that during this joyful Christmas time, many lonely people need support.</p> <p>This is an example of unique cooperation where the combined forces of two agencies reinforced each other's actions giving a synergy effect. We reached with our message several million recipients making them aware of the presence of elderly lonely people in our society and their needs. Communicating measurable effects of support in proof of which the PODARUJ WIGILIĘ campaign won the silver EFFIE 2017 statuette.</p>



3. FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

a) Findings from the interviews with youth

There were three respondents in the youth study, ages 20, 25, and 28 (two female and one male). One respondent had a high school education, one a bachelor's degree and one a master's degree. All respondents had experience in volunteering - WOSP, orphanage, Noble parcel. No one had experience volunteering for the elderly, only two people had cared for a family or neighbor. One person surveyed had heard of a specific organization - SeniorApp dealing with befriending services, the others have insufficient knowledge on this topic. To the question "What do you think motivates young people to participate in befriending services for elderly people?" there were different answers: "Definitely an opportunity to engage in useful activities that are much needed by others and are not very expensive for volunteers.

Each of us will be an elderly person someday...", "There are a lot of young people who get involved in various initiatives run by foundations - it's becoming more and more popular and normal", "The SeniorApp shows that there are a lot of seniors who need a variety of help and this certainly stimulates a lot of people to take action". Respondents see benefits for young people in helping seniors and strongly agree that training in communication or psychology is needed. Respondents point to a lack of information about organizations working in this area, and there is a lack of public campaigns, social media information.

All of the respondents strongly express their willingness to try to help the elderly by providing their company and volunteering their time. They believe that it would be beneficial for their skills development. The general conclusion is that unfortunately most of us do not notice or forget about the problems of elderly people who live alone and have no one to turn to for help. Often they may not want to ask for help, and during a pandemic one of the reasons was certainly the fear of getting sick.

b) Findings from the interviews with the elderly

There were three respondents in the elderly study, ages 66, 68, and 75 (two female and one male). Two respondents had a master's degree, one a bachelor's degree.

The first respondent is retired and said that her family only helps her and that is enough. She has never heard of befriending services. She thinks there can be sheer benefits of such services for single people who, even without a pandemic, are struggling with many of the issues of daily life. She indicated concern about paying fees for befriending services. She has never heard of any befriending services for elderly people in her local community. In her opinion there are not enough intergenerational services in Poland. She has never used a befriending service, but in autumn and winter she would like to try the best befriending service, if the pandemic situation allows it. In her opinion the range of services should include shopping and other helpful daily life services.

The second respondent is also retired (she is 75 years old) and said that her neighbors help her. She has heard about befriending services on TV and thinks they are only



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available in large urban areas. She thinks befriending services would be very helpful, but "the barrier will definitely be the aversion to scammers and the fear of some problems. Older people do not like change". There are no befriending services for elderly people in her local community. When asked "Would you be interested in taking part in befriending services?" she replied that she has a hearing problem and as this can be a problem she is not sure if she would like to use such services.

The third respondent is a man aged 68, retired. He has received a Christmas basket several times from children who participated in an activity at school. He has heard of befriending services, can't remember their names and thinks they are for people over 75. If he were to use them, he would like the scope to be broader than just meeting with volunteers e.g. transportation to the doctor, help with shopping. He feels that there are not enough organizations of any kind providing services to the elderly. He spends a great deal of time alone, his family rarely visits him, they live far away. He would love to talk to someone or go for a walk in the park.

4. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The global ageing process and its consequences concern not only Europe, but also Poland. According to demographic projections of the Central Statistical Office, in Poland in 2050 the share of people at working age in the population in 2050 will be 57%, over 65 years of age - as much as 32.7%, while in the pre-working age - about 10%.

The first good practice in Poland is SeniorApp - web-based platform and mobile application designed for all people in need of assistance and their families, looking for support in care and matters of everyday life. SeniorApp is the winner of the main prize in the competition "Mam Pomysł na Startup", edition 2020.

The second good practice is The program YOU HELP ME LIVE (OBEDIENCE). Program is an organized accompanying voluntary service consisting of regular visits by volunteers to the homes of the residents of the Little Brothers of the Poor, through which an unusual relationship based on friendship and trust is built between the volunteer and the lonely senior.

There were three respondents in the youth study. All respondents had experience in volunteering, but no one had experience volunteering for the elderly. One person surveyed had heard of a specific organization - SeniorApp dealing with befriending services, the others have insufficient knowledge on this topic. There were three respondents in the elderly study. They agreed that befriending services would certainly be helpful, as long as they were not costly. According to them, assistance for seniors in Poland is insufficient, certainly outside large urban areas. There is a lack of social campaigns and real help.

In order to improve befriending services in Poland, it seems crucial to reach young people through the information channels they use - namely social media. The SeniorApp also seems an ideal direction. In addition, social campaigns that appeal to young people and specific organizations focused on sustainable, long-term assistance are key.



