

Different regions, Germany



## Smart Surfer



Keyword(s):

**Digital Education and Training**

**Disadvantaged Groups of Learners**

**Empowerment**

### Introduction

The "Smart Surfer - Fit in everyday digital life" project supports people of the 50+ generation on their way to becoming smart Internet users. With the educational programme, seniors can gradually learn about the topics of communication, entertainment, data security, consumer protection and ethics on the Internet in nine modules. The project "Smart Surfer - Fit in everyday digital life" was designed on the basis of the previous project "Silver Surfer" which was designed for persons above 65 years to acquire basic skills concerning the use of the Internet. The new programme was expanded to include a wide range of current and additional content.

### Main challenge

Anyone who has not grown up with digital media often finds it more difficult to deal with it than the younger generation. People, therefore, tend to be insecure and keep a distance to media rather than take the challenge to get familiar with it. A main challenge was to overcome concerns and reach a significant number of senior citizens in order to achieve significant impacts with view to the increase of digital skills.

## **Timing**

For the 65+ generation, the consumer advice center and state media authority of the German Bundesland of Rheinland-Pfalz had already launched the successful “Silver Surfer” project as a nationwide pioneer in 2011. These introductory trainings to the use of the Internet have been expanded to include the latest content and has been extended to the 50 plus generation in the course of the year 2020. Under the title "Smart Surfer - Fit in everyday digital life", new topics such as communication, entertainment, data security, consumer protection and ethics on the Internet have been integrated in nine modules. Since the outbreak of the corona pandemic, digitisation has been progressing faster than ever, and thus the education programme has been further developed also in this context.

## **Objective**

The 50 plus generation was socialized in an analogue world, but has to deal more and more with digital challenges privately and professionally. With the new and significantly expanded “Smart Surfer” modules, the trainings shall help to close the gap between young and old and ensure that people over 50 stay connected.

Especially people who did not grow up digitally often still need support to deal with digital media safely and confidently. With the concept “Smart Surfer”, those for whom computers and the Internet are already part of everyday life, but who still have many questions about digital networking, online banking or online shopping, shall learn how to use tools in a safe and professional way.

## **Target group**

Target groups are adults above 50 years of age.

## **Geographical range**

The projects “Silver Surfer” and “Smart Surfer” were developed in the German Bundesland of Rheinland-Pfalz. The project “Smart Surfers” has also been implemented in the regions of Baden-Württemberg, Brandenburg Schleswig-Holstein, Berlin, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Bayern and Brandenburg.

## **Stakeholders and partners**

The programme was developed by different stakeholders, coordinated by the Verbraucherzentraler (Consumer Centre) Rheinland-Pfalz. Cooperation partners are the media authority of Rhineland-Palatinate, the Stiftung MedienKompetenz Forum Südwest, the state commissioner for data protection and freedom of information and the media competence clearing house of the German Bishops' Conference at the Catholic University of Mainz. They all contributed their expertise.

During the implementation, both in Rheinland-Pfalz and other regions, the success of the concept was based on the cooperation of different stakeholders, too. These include the sectors of adult education (Volkshochschulen, church-based adult education etc.), associations of seniors, media competence services, consumer services etc.

## **Strategy / materials**

With the educational module “Smart Surfer – Fit in everyday digital life”, people of the 50+ generation can gradually learn about the topics of communication, entertainment, data security, consumer protection and ethics on the Internet in nine modules.

The individual modules provide information on the following topics:

Module 1: What is the Internet?

Module 2: How to use the Internet

Module 3: Entertainment options on the Internet

Module 4: How to avoid risks on the web

Module 5: The world of mobile internet

Module 6: Data Protection on the Internet

Module 7: Communication in the network

Module 8: Social Media on the Net

Module 9: A look into the future of the Internet

Module 10: Digital Sustainability

In these modules, information on keywords such as networks, browsers, search engines, media libraries, streaming services, gaming, online shopping and banking via smart devices, cloud computing, backups, data protection and secure passwords,

messengers, forums, digital heritage, blogs and influencers, but also hate speech and digital stress, big data, Web 3.0 etc. are integrated.

As a basis of the trainings, learning material was developed in a printed version (file with text and work book for each of the nine modules, different regional versions available) and regionalised digital platforms (e.g. <https://www.lfk.de/medienkompetenz/seniorinnen-und-senioren/smart-surfer> for Baden-Württemberg).

To promote the trainings, online promotion material, websites, regional education databases were used. Common texts were developed to equip these online sources with content.

## **Resources**

The concept development and the trainings in the different German Bundesländer were financed, among others, by the consumer protection ministries of the states of Rhineland-Palatinate, Baden-Württemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, Brandenburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Berlin, and the State Office for Communication Baden-Württemberg.

## **Compliance with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)**

The project is in line with SDG 4 and others.

## **Innovation(s)**

The training programme is innovated regularly and shall provide latest content on digital tools and skills needed to use them. IT, thus, accompanies innovation in society through capacity building of citizens.

It offers profound and well-structured learning scenarios, tailored to the current needs of the target groups.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation is carried out through regular reports of the project partners to the sponsors of the trainings. Through evaluation forms, feedback of participants is collected.

## **Success parameters**

Number of activities and persons involved, feedback of participants above a certain level of satisfaction.

## **Impact**

Being implemented in different German regions, a clear regional and even nationwide impact of the activity is visible. Trainings and information are provided by well-known stakeholders and thus a brought coverage is guaranteed.

## **Impediments**

Main challenges were:

- the corona pandemic that made personal trainings impossible. In online classes, only people could participate that already possessed some basic digital skills and that were able to enter online conference systems
- the target group doesn't realise own training needs that go beyond just using digital tools
- the new target group of people 50+ is very diverse and difficult to reach

These challenges were addressed by common campaigns and the cooperation with different stakeholders.

## **Replicability**

The concept was replicated in different German regions and could be easily amended to regional needs. With view to the international replicability of the German concept, the contents of the different modules and the learning material could be translated and further developed.

## **Concluding remarks**

The new approach of empowerment was an eye-opener and game-changer for many partners in Stuttgart. To make refugees actors and stakeholders for their own matters in all fields: (social, cultural, educational, sports, health and psychological care) is a promising approach with many positive long-term effects.

## **Website/Social Media profile(s) of the initiative**

<https://www.verbraucherzentrale-rlp.de/smart-surfer-fit-im-digitalen-alltag-52275>  
(central website)

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