

What does it feel to be old?

What does it feel to be old? It is a question whose answers youth can only imagine. Old age seems so far away that they are not even trying to imagine or search for these answers.

But we do! Deses-3, even though a youth association, we promote intergenerational learning as an instrument to reduce intergenerational gap and to foster dialogue and exchange of ideas and skills between youth and elders.

Supporting Elders Is Our Responsibility, acronymed SENIOR is a Strategic Partnership for innovation project, financed by the European Commission in which we are partners. And we are proud of it! The elders need us and the community needs them. And youngsters need them even more! Elders help us not to lose our roots, sense of identity and heritage. It is our responsibility to help them to be an active part of the community! But how can we do it? The first step is getting to know them and understanding their needs and issues they face.

That is why last week, Deses-3 organized an Empathy workshop, in the framework of the project SENIOR.

During this workshop 25 youngsters have experienced some of the physical issues the elders need to face daily. They have been introduced to the concepts of intergenerational gap and intergenerational learning after which they have been asked to think about some challenges elders face.



After each group exposed their opinions, the simulation exercise started.

Following the instructions of the trainers, they have used different materials to simulate several impairments such as visual, auditory, walking & tactile.

They have stepped into the shoes of elders for some minutes through the following challenges:

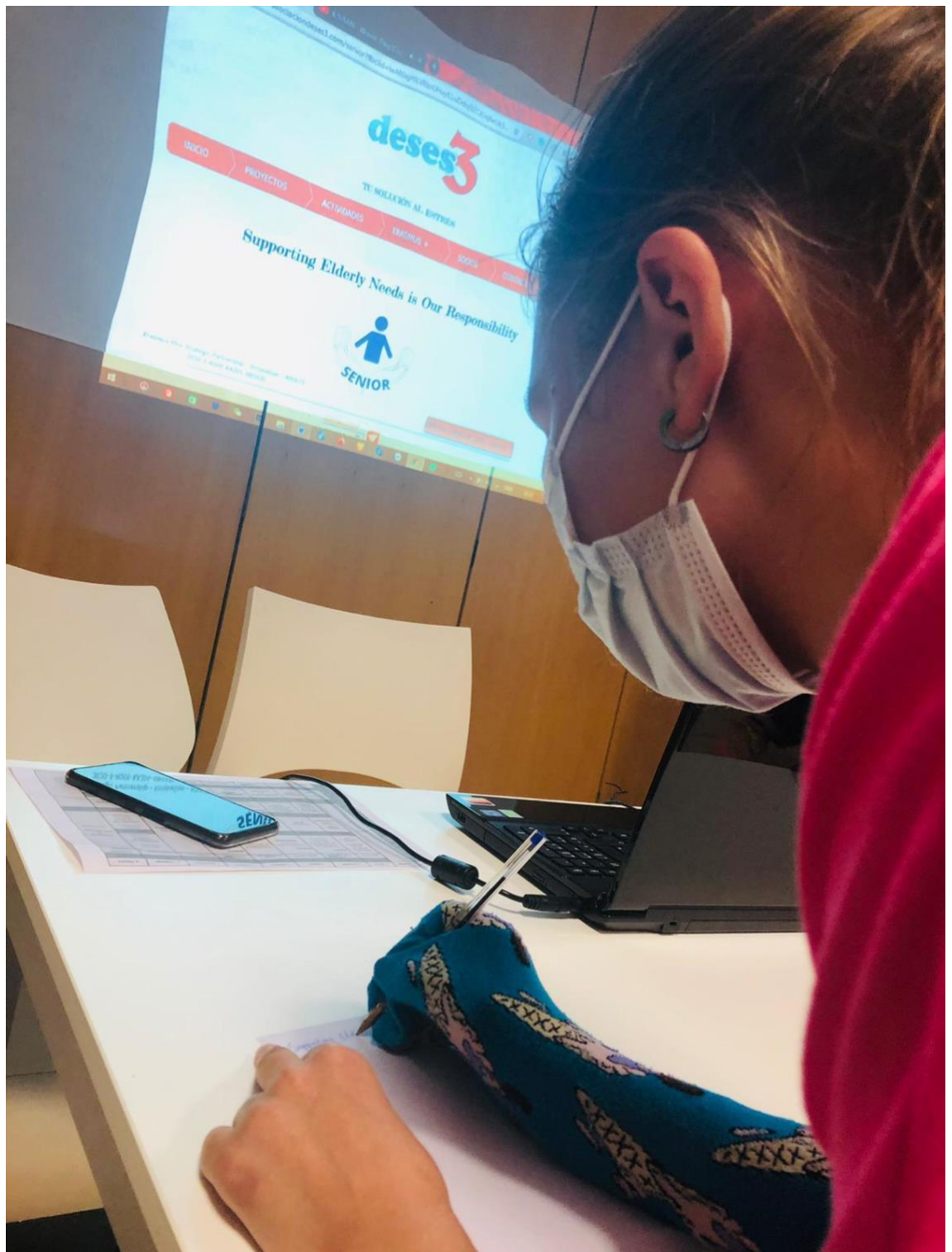
1. Earplugs were placed in their ears



2. Small rocks were placed in their shoes.



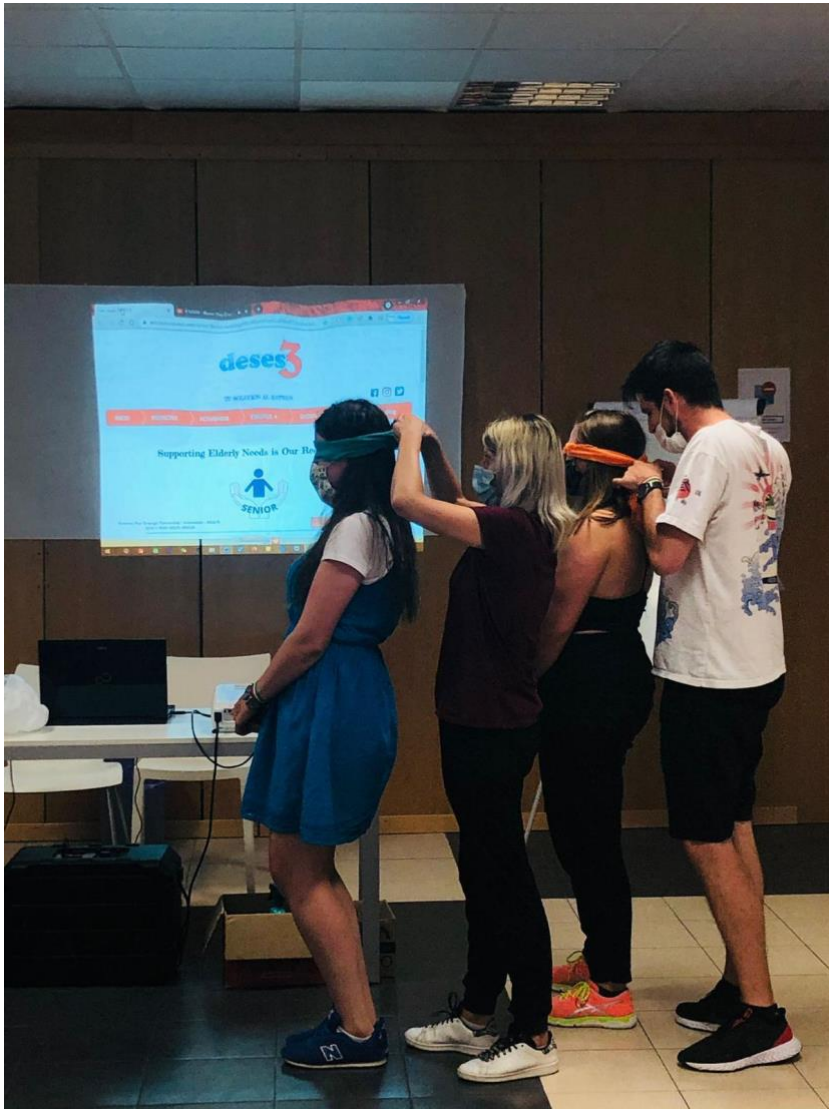
3. Gloves in their hand that would simulate neuropathy (numbing), in their hands.



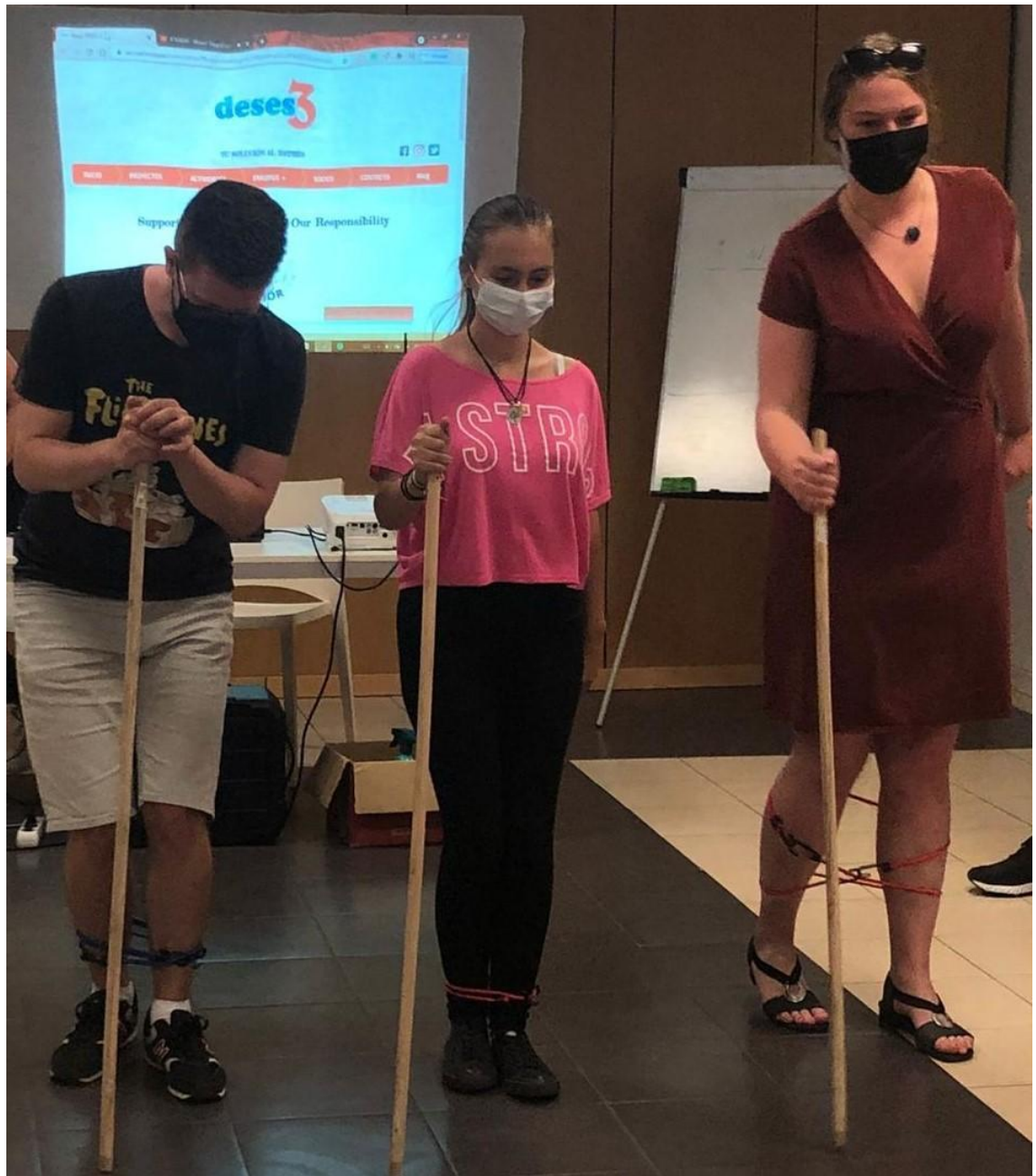
4. Bands around both ankles, to mimic impaired walking.



5. Eye bands to simulate eye problems that can occur with aging and illness



6. Walking cane as a walking support



After getting “tuned” their tasks were to walk down the hall a few meters, recognise some sounds, some pictures and write down some words. And believe or not these were not easy tasks at all.

When asked how they feel and whether it was a useful exercise to understand how old people feel, youth have come up with meaningful answers. During the simulation exercise they have experienced feelings such as being scared, frustrated, useless even a bit paranoid. Imagine..all these STRONG feelings and it was only a simulation!

They realized how challenging the elders' life is and what they need to deal with on a daily basis. Not easy! Not fair! But still a reality and it is in our hands to make their life better even if just with a small conversation.