

HOST – Smart technologies for self-service to seniors in social housing

Project summary

The main purpose of the HOST project is to provide easy-to-use technologies and services in social housing flats to allow a better quality of communication and a better access to package services by the elders, by experimenting a European model of “connected flats” for elderly people, characterised by specific equipments enabling easier relations with, family, service providers and housing operators.

Through enriched media support (images, text, voice, documents) the project should:

- Bring more comfort of living to the elders;
- Reinforce social inclusion (with friends, family, administrations, social operators...);
- Allow a longer stay in their house.

In the modern digital society, people can access an increasing number of products, services, contents and information mainly on demand, via the Internet. This new self-serve society is founded on the common use of ICT but also on the ability to successfully have at your disposal the right channels on a free choice basis. Nowadays, the complex skills needed to benefit from the current technological framework, tend to exclude an increasing number of elderly people. They do not have a sufficient IT education to use the proposed technologies, so they remain confined to their usual circle of habits. Such constraints can prevent elderly people to make the most of technological opportunities to help them in their everyday life, having for potential consequence a critical and unacceptable digital exclusion. In this context, social housing constitutes an application field to offer ICT services to the individuals with specific needs and who cannot afford standard market prices and complicated interfaces. This population is mostly composed of seniors with low incomes. In the UE there are several organisations that gather social housing operators. Nowadays, the organisations belonging to the European Social Housing Federation, named CECODHAS network, group together about 29 millions residences and families.

The social housing sector in Europe does not provide only flats. Its mission is evolving towards offering a broad range of services to its users (call centre, communication on forthcoming events, administrative support, and access to specific services), especially for frail people (seniors and disabled people). Social housing has been trying to provide a comfortable and friendly context to enable the integration of elders into the self-serve society. Several examples show that social operators are using more and more ICT to improve the elders’ quality of life and independence.

The technologies being nearly ready to use, the access to market (estimated to 2 years) depends mainly on adapted experimentation and a large dissemination.

The project idea is:

- to promote awareness of free choice and independent control among older consumers in selecting their own appropriate responses to needs and requirements for a self-serve solution system;
- to provide an effective answer to the needs of today Social Housing, in order to enrich the life of the elderly living in the current social house panorama, by developing the digital infrastructure of the social housing, and a gateway to their services;
- to bring affordable services to the elderly with a large panel of services between their service providers and the “circle of support” formed by family, friends and social operators.