E. Fugger, B. Prazak, A. Hochgatterer. Electronic environments: Support or burden for the elderly? Gerontechnology 2008; 7(2):109. For the majority of elderly persons, better housing conditions mean ageing in place, with appropriate changes of living environments supporting independence and enhancement of quality of life. Changes in the living environment are frequently connected with the integration of technical aids. Consequently, intelligent technologies for assisted living are discussed as promising (electronic) environments for the elderly. To what extent and in which context referring technical systems will be in the position to care for human beings and to provide expected results, is still a matter of investigation[1]. Preparatory works have been started in various laboratories but only a few of them deal with this matter in 'real environments', i.e. in living arrangements occupied by elderly persons. The Austrian Research Centers GmbH have started a pilot project in assisted living environments, applying a sensor network for activity monitoring as well as intelligent care environments. Results from these projects are providing a basis for planning and design of user-specific assistive technologies, considering given environments and requirements of the regarding elderly persons. Dealing with this situation, ARC have been actively involved in a series of projects in the field of Ambient Assisted Living (AAL), in a national as well as in a European context[2]. Two recent projects deal with the acquisition and analysis of user needs and derived system requirements as applied in selected homecare environments. One of these projects puts the focus on designing and testing of a stationary user interface (*Figure 1*) for elderly persons, which is to be applicable for various purposes, like alarming, communication, structuring of the day, information etc.[3] **Methods** In the framework of a qualitative study, prospective users were confronted with a prototype of the terminal and other electronic devices, displaying the different functionalities as well as cognitive training software. During and after their active contact with these tools, users were invited to a dialog on their experiences, based on a semi-structured concept of questions. The same experiment, including extended conversation, was carried out together with caregivers and relatives of potential users. **Results and discussion** In short, one of the rather surprising results of the trials was that a number of elderly users tended towards a more positive attitude to electronic environments as their caregivers, differentiating between family and professional carers. For the latter group, questions of supervision, fear of failure and suspected financial losses came out as influencing factors for their valuation. This result indicates that specialised (technological) training for elderly persons might be absolutely meaningful, but as the decisive factor caregivers should be involved in needs-adapted training programmes in order to reduce their objections. As a result, electronic environments might become supportive rather than burdensome for the elderly as well as for caregivers.

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Address: Austrian Research Centers GmbH, Austria; E: erwin.fugger@arcsmed.at

Figure 1 Prototype of the electronic user terminal