

F. Pianesi, M. Zancanaro, M. Malfatti, A. van Berlo. *Netcarity: Ambient technology to support older people at home. Gerontechnology 2009;8(2):118; doi: 10.4017/gt.2009.08.02.021.00*

Netcarity¹ is a European funded integrated project researching and testing technologies which will help older people to improve their wellbeing, independence, safety and health at home. It is developing and testing a new technology infrastructure for homes, with systems that enhance communication with friends, family and care givers; support everyday living and promote a sense of social inclusion². **Technical description** The project is investigating how new and existing technologies can be integrated cost effectively into people's homes, making them feel more comfortable about remaining in this familiar environment. It will encourage older people to live independently and inspire them to be more socially active. Netcarity's goal is to turn older peoples' homes into supportive environments which include them in society and postpone or avoid the expensive and traumatic move into care homes. **User studies** In Trento the researchers of the Bruno Kessler Foundation and the Regional Institute for Social Studies (IRSS) involved older people in the design process by means of focus groups and cultural probes to take into account functional requirements, and also the psychological and emotional aspects of interaction with computers for this kind of users. Via these very close interactions with the end users, prototypes of a new mobile computer system, called MobiTable, and a novel intelligent system for fall detection have been designed and developed. They are now in further development for testing at a larger scale in the houses of older people in Trento (Italy) and Eindhoven (The Netherlands). In Eindhoven, similar focus groups and design sessions with older people revealed similar needs and user interface requirements as compared to Trento. **Cost effectiveness** The project will deliver technical solutions in the range from high cost to low cost (e.g. open source communication software); the high cost solutions will be justified by the fact that exploitation schemes have revealed that longer independent living cost less than institutionalised care. The NETCARITY system costs based upon a monthly fee and considering a total cost of ownership (TCO), however, will be relatively independent on geographical origin.

References

1. www.netcarity.org; retrieved June 5, 2009
 2. www.euronews.net/2009/01/29/a-hi-tech-future-for-ageing-europe/; retrieved June 5, 2009;
- Keywords:** touch screens, fall detection, independent living, communication, user involvement
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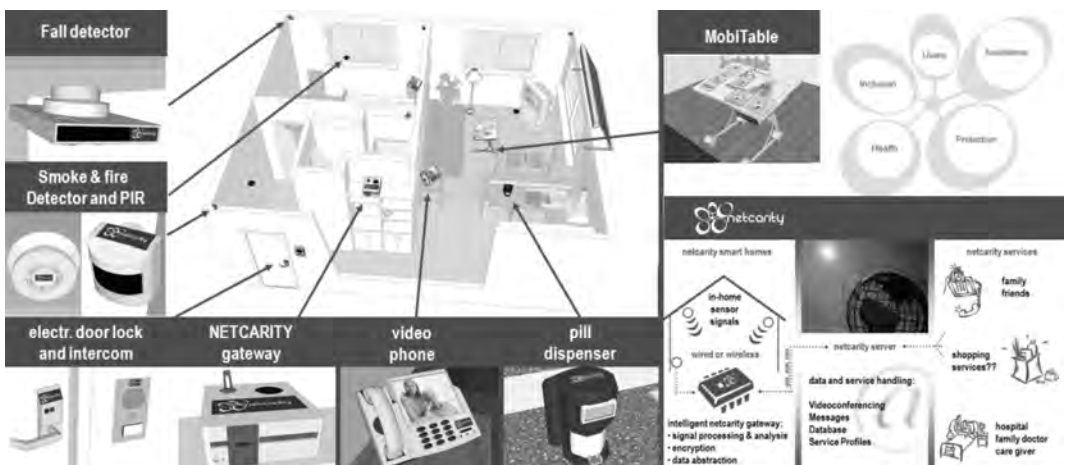


Figure 1. NETCARITY system architecture