



HoCare

Interreg Europe

HoCare - Delivery of Innovative solutions for Home Care by strengthening quadruple-helix cooperation in regional innovation chains

6th Local Regional Stakeholders Group Meeting: "Managing the digital divide during COVID-19 crisis for improving home care and related public health legal framework"

Bucharest, Romania - Tuesday, 23rd August 2022

AGENDA

14:00	Opening
14:05	1. The Interreg Europe HoCare project - presentation of the regional report developed in the first semester of 2022
14:15	2. Brief review of the challenges and improvements identified as impact of the pandemic crisis in the field of health and home care
14:25	3. The impact of the digital divide in home care during the Covid-19 crisis on the usability and accessibility of home care solutions
15:25	4. Roundtable and exchange of experience on managing the digital divide to improve home care solutions and the associated legal framework in the field of public health
16:55	5. Conclusions



PARTICIPANTS

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HoCare 6th Local Regional Stakeholders Group Meeting in Romania was organized in the last part of semester 2 of the extension of HoCare project in the framework of Interreg Europe's 5th Call for proposals.

The main objective of this meeting was to exchange experiences on how the Covid-19 crisis has impacted the digital divide in home care and how it can be managed by providing innovative home care solutions based on helicoid-based cooperation quadruple (consisting of citizens & users, the academic environment, the business environment and public & governmental authorities). Aspects related to possible measures that can lead to the improvement of the legal framework in the field of public health aimed at home care solutions were also addressed.

The event took place on 23rd August and it was organized in hybrid form, in order to allow an increased number of participants. The invited participants were selected in order to ensure the presence of the four categories from the quadruple-helix cooperation in R&I in the home care domain: Citizens / users, Business, Research and Public institutions/government.

The 6th Local Regional Stakeholders Group Meeting was structured into 5 main sections, presented as follows:

Section 1. The Interreg Europe HoCare project - presentation of the regional report developed in the first semester of 2022

This section aimed to provide a brief presentation of the Interreg Europe Programme, of the HoCare project development and of the main information included in the first version of the Romanian Regional Report regarding the status of home care research and innovation and the status of quadruple-helix cooperation in this field at the Romanian level. The presenter, *PHD Student Eng. Marilena Ianculescu, HoCare Contact Person from Romania -ICI Bucharest*, also emphasized the main objectives of the current meeting.

Section 2. Brief review of the challenges and improvements identified as impact of the pandemic crisis in the field of health and home care

The presenter of this section, *Prof. PhD Eng. Mat. Adriana Alexandru, Counselor at ICI Bucharest*, highlighted in her exposure the major challenges in defining the Romanian research and innovation ecosystem related to home care, the current political instruments, the main changes/improvements identified post Covid-19, the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and measures applied in Romania to face and recover from the crisis, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the health and social systems in Romania and the advantages of participation in the HoCare project.

Section 3. The impact of the digital divide in home care during the Covid-19 crisis on the usability and accessibility of home care solutions

The purpose of section 3 was to present digital health care innovative solutions that propose viable alternatives for home care that were directly impacted by Covid-19 crisis and how they tried to



tackle the digital divide, in order to provide a broader and easy access to their users. The presentations were:

- "Longitudinal studies for assessment of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the seniors" presented by *Psych. PhD. Rozeta Drăghici, Senior Researcher II at National Institute of Gerontology and Geriatrics "Ana Aslan"*. Starting from the above-mentioned impact perceived during the development of the vINCI project: Clinically-validated INtegrated Support for Assistive Care and Lifestyle Improvement: the Human Link", the major psychological effects felt both by the senior patients and their healthcare providers were emphasized in the context of the increased use of digital technologies for sustaining the management of their health status.
- "Providing ultra-personalised recommendations, founded on evidence-based science to encourage dietary behaviour change that results in measurable health benefit", presented by *Eng. Bogdan Ivanov, Chief Innovation Officer at NutriCare.Live*. The presented home care digital solution was NutriCare.Live, a nutrition assessment digital platform that uses genetics, microbiome profile and AI for providing a personalized therapeutic nutritional solution.
- "Managing the digital gap in home care through smart teleassistance solutions", presented by *Eng. PhD Sorin Soviany, Senior Researcher III at National Institute for Research & Development in Informatics - ICI Bucharest*. The presented home care digital solution was the developed inside the Romanian Core Program Project: „Artificial Intelligence-based teleassistance system for the detection and management of risks, falls and behavioral changes detection and management”.
- "The impact of digital gap in Home Care tackled through a solution developed inside ALAMEDA project", presented by *Eng. PhD Lidia Băjenaru, Senior Researcher II at University Politehnica of Bucharest*. The presented home care digital solution has been developed inside ALAMEDA, a European collaborative R&I Project: „Bridging the Early Diagnosis and Treatment Gap of Brain Diseases via Smart, Connected, Proactive and Evidence-based Technological Interventions”.

Section 4. Roundtable and exchange of experience on managing the digital divide to improve home care solutions and the associated legal framework in the field of public health

The stakeholders - *PhD Eng. Maria Cerasela Măciucă, President of "Association for Seniors – "Nicolae Cajal" and PhD Student Jurist Alexandra Dobre, General Manager of "Bucharest Senior Center"* from several associations that provide, among other related activities, home care services for seniors, pointed that Romania needs to be more focused on home care services, especially for the elderly. They also highlighted that Romania does not have a political strategy for the elderly and they are often marginalized. An important aspect highlighted was the fact that the elderly persons from the rural environment are deprived from a lot of healthcare and social services, due to several factors like the lack of social assistants. Thus, the development of digitalization should be more focused on them and should be personalized according to their health, age and IT literacy.

The discussion also pointed out the direct impact that the Covid-19 crisis had on the home care services for the elderly.



It has been emphasized that the lockdowns and restrictive measures discriminated especially the seniors during the pandemic. However, it was also shown that they tried to adapt to the situation, thus proving to be more opened to the digital communication (including the social interactions) and use of digital health-based services. The debate was also focused on the importance for organizing trainings and courses for the professionals in order to learn important aspects of how to take care of senior patients and to support them towards an active, independent and healthy aging.

Section 5. Conclusions

At the end of the meeting, the drawn conclusions were related to the need to develop a Strategy for the elderly, a Strategy for active aging and a national prevention law. An Agency of vast persons would also be necessary to be created in order to ensure the rapid resolution of seniors' problems.

It was underlined the necessity of a deeper and broader implication of the stakeholders in implementing improved home care solutions and the associated legal framework in the field of public health.

A more active exchange of experience in the home care at the European level could better support the development and implementation of models of good practices in Romania.

The stakeholders presented at the meeting appreciated the positive results of the event, both for the knowledge of the problem at the global level, and for putting in contact all those interested in the issue of elderly people and home care in Romania.

Photos from the 6th Local Regional Stakeholders Group Meeting in Romania





