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ARTICLE 2

THE ERASMUS+ C@RE PROJECT: HOW EUROPE'S AGEING POPULATION MAKES IT NECESSARY TO RETHINK SOCIAL AND CARE WORKER TRAINING'

In Europe, demographic ageing is an increasingly evident reality. According to Eurostat data reported by AICCRE (2022), **the average age of the European population on 1 January 2022, was 44.4 years, 2.5 years higher than in 2012.** The picture was thus of a continent with half the population being 44.4 years old and the remainder younger.

This demographic trend leads to an increasing demand for care for the elderly, making the role of carers and social workers crucial. However, the lack of specific data at European level makes it difficult to quantify exactly the number of these professionals. It is clear, however, that the need for home care has become an increasing need throughout Europe.

In this context, **equipping carers and caregivers with digital skills becomes essential. The European Commission recognises digital competences as one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning.** However, there is still a significant digital skills gap among professionals in the care sector. It is therefore necessary to promote initiatives that aim to improve digital literacy, communication skills and understanding of the ethical implications of using digital technologies.

The integration of digital technologies in home care offers numerous advantages. For example, the European project MARIO (<http://www.mario-project.eu/portal/>), funded by the Horizon 2020 programme, developed an assistive robot to address the challenges of loneliness and dementia in the elderly. This project demonstrated how technology can improve the quality of life of the elderly and facilitate the work of caregivers by fostering greater connection between users, caregivers and the community.

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However, the adoption of digital tools requires appropriate training. **Digital skills are not limited to the use of electronic devices, but also include the ability to critically evaluate information, ensure data privacy and communicate effectively through digital platforms.** Poor training in these areas can be a significant barrier to the effective implementation of technology in care.

In addition, digitisation of care services can help reduce the number of hospital admissions by enabling continuous monitoring of the health status of care recipients and timely response to their needs. This proactive approach not only improves the well-being of the elderly but also represents significant savings for European healthcare systems.

In conclusion, the integration of e-skills in personal and social care is now a necessity to meet the challenges of an ageing European population. The use of technology, when coupled with appropriate training, not only improves the quality of care provided to the elderly and frail, but also allows for greater efficiency in social and health services, reducing costs and improving the overall well-being of the cared-for.

The **Erasmus+ project C@RE** (Augmented Reality Approach for Personal Care) stems precisely from the analysis of the needs of a demographically changing Europe and stands as an innovative initiative to try to decrease the digital divide in the care sector. Through the **use of Augmented Reality (AR), the project aims to improve the training of caregivers and associates by offering advanced digital tools for hands-on and interactive learning.** The aim is to provide them with the skills they need to use technology effectively, thus improving the quality of care and facilitating their daily work. Investing in digitisation and continuous training of these professionals is crucial to ensure modern, inclusive and sustainable care. Projects like C@RE represent a concrete step in this direction, contributing to a future in which technology and innovation become valuable allies in caring for the most vulnerable people in our society.

For more information visit the project website: <https://ar4personalcare.eu/>