

AAL FORUM AWARD 2011	
Project acronym and number	ExCITE AAL-2009-2-125
Project title	Enabling Social Interaction through Embodiment
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Project Demo:	

End user prospective:

Please explain what needs/problems your project aims to answer? (max. 2000 characters)

Selection criteria: Level and quality of end user integration and potential to improve the quality of life for older adults, their families, carers and significant others

Two key needs for the aging population are to continue living in their home as long as possible and to maintain a satisfactory level of social interaction throughout their life. However, the onset of age related conditions and the decrease in both physical and mental health can impair mobility and contributes to a feeling of isolation, loneliness and depression. In some cases, elderly can even be forced into staffed facilities before they require full-time care, simply because their caregivers cannot look after them adequately. In fact, family members can have difficulties in visiting often enough and formal caregivers have limited resources.

Robotic telepresence can be a solution to the mentioned problem, by offering a way to help municipalities, family and friends to provide more frequent and consistent presence and care.

However, for a generation with basic or moderate exposure to computing and to telecommunication technologies such as internet and mobile phones, it is critical that a robotic telepresence solution meets the requirements for successful interaction between individuals and fulfils both the needs of elderly for achieving suitable social interaction as well as the needs of the kin and organisations to be able to maintain contact and monitor for dangerous situations and possible deterioration of health. As such, the evaluation of solutions plays a fundamental role and should not only occur in a short-term laboratory setting but rather in *real contexts* and over *extended periods of time*.

The pursued evaluation, outside the labs and over a long time span, has a twofold advantage. From the user side issues like continuous presence, ease of use, integration with daily home habits and personal idiosyncrasies can be analysed; from the technology side readiness and robustness of technology for a continuous, safe and efficient use can be assessed. This is important so that technology is used in everyday life even after the initial novelty has passed and that it is adopted not only by end users and families but also by the organisations which support them. One of the key challenges is to integrate technological solution with everyday practices of healthcare organization to insure that the technology is really used and not perceived as an extra burden.

Innovation prospective:

Please explain how your project solve above needs/problems ? (max. 1200 characters)

Selection criteria: The level of innovation– in terms of novelty of concept, approach to the development of the solution from both technological and social perspectives.

ExCITE addresses the challenge of promoting robotic telepresence to alleviate social isolation and allow regular monitoring. The device, called Giraff, allows caregivers with no prior computer

experience to virtually enter a home and conduct a natural, secure visit just as if they were physically there, and with no technical requirement whatsoever on the part of the resident. The Giraff includes a camera, display, speaker and microphone, and can move in any direction. The Giraff is placed in a home and allows a caregiver to virtually visit the residents there, to move about and freely interact with them (talk and listen, see and be seen).

ExCITE takes a rigorous approach to evaluation by deploying the unit to selected test sites in different countries and allowing users to use the platform in their everyday environment for a period of 12 months. In this long-term perspective we address the preferences of the elderly users and also examine specifically how organizations need to look over their processes and routines to accommodate such technologies. Organizations are involved in each country for establishing, maintaining and evaluating the test sites.

Currently test sites are on-going and the Giraff has already been improved technically and in user interface to address the challenges encountered. Feedback shows a very positive response from elderly and families and outlines the challenges in penetrating the organizations.

Market prospective:

Please present ideas of Business Models - explain how will you make you product a profitable service, what is the market and competition for this solution? (max. 1200 characters)

Selection criteria: Market potential for the project – based on the analysis and understanding of the current and future AAL market trends as well as competition.

The Giraff solution is based more on a service than a pure product model. The initial target customers are the municipalities in EU states where they are responsible for elderly care, families and elderly. The service includes not only the Giraff itself, but an online system that can be used to manage Giraffs and users so that the security and privacy of the elderly residents is assured. The service also includes leasing options, support, training, and a community portal where Giraff users can access and share best practices information. Giraff is simple to use, intuitive and appealing. There are an estimated 10 million homes in the EU-27 with elderly residents receiving some level of care. The typical cost of nursing home care, at over 3,000 €/month, can be over 3 times the cost of home care. The Giraff solution is targeted at about 300 €/month, making it an extremely attractive solution for municipalities and families, especially in situations where it can postpone the transition to a nursing home. There are numerous other mobile telepresence solutions available, but they are all U.S.-based and are targeted at business applications rather than home care. There is a window of opportunity before U.S. providers enter the EU market that the company central to this project, Giraff AB, intends to exploit to establish a leading position in the area.

AWARD rules:

I confirm that I read and agree with the rules of AAL Best project Award 2011