



BUILDING ICT COMPETENCIES IN THE LONG-TERM CARE  
SECTOR TO ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OLDER PEOPLE  
AND THOSE AT RISK OF EXCLUSION

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PILOTS AND IMPACT

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|------------------------------|---|
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The aim of this report is to assess the outcomes of the pilots in both CareNET piloting countries in terms of the impact the pilots have had (for care workers and care recipients).

### Acquisition and development of digital skills and literacies

The profiling tool used in the pilots assessed the skill levels and digital literacy of care workers and older people before and after the pilots. The comparative analysis of the results obtained in the pre-pilot and post-pilot phases showed the development and acquisition of the digital competences of the participants. The pilots benefited individuals with and without prior knowledge and digital skills. The fundamental enhancement was in acquiring knowledge of ICT related competencies in areas, such as the acquisition of skills related to e.g. using videoconferencing tools and searching for, installing, using and deleting tablet applications. Older people also benefited from the careNET training in terms of digital skills acquisition.

### Impact on quality of care

Enhancement of communication was a key perceived improvement according to project participants. Care workers and care recipients, were able after participating in the project activities, to communicate online with relatives and overcame the isolation related to the care worker working conditions (long hours over many days per week, looking after the older person).

## Use of the online learning environment

There was a pronounced difference between the care workers' and the care recipients' ability to use the components of the online learning environment. The care workers embraced eagerly the technologies, whereas the care recipients did not use the online learning environment extensively and were less appreciative of its usefulness. The three components of the online learning environment were: the learning platform, the social network and the competency wiki.

### The learning platform

The first version of the learning materials was developed by King's College London and the University of Piraeus, taking into account the local context (in UK and Greece) of the care workers' sector. For this reason, for the purposes of the pilot we had to adapt the activities to the French and Spanish context.

The care workers who answered the exit survey assessed accessing and using the learning platform as broadly intuitive. However, they faced some difficulties (1) navigating to content outside the learning platform during activities and (2) navigating between the activities, given the considerable amount of learning materials. Care recipients had difficulties using the learning platform.

### The social network

Care workers used the project online social network to report on and share new skills. Interestingly, they indicated that the most useful activity provided by the social network was related to communication with peers. In the exit survey they had mixed views about the usefulness of the project social network. Some care workers highlighted the limited care recipient engagement with this networking and communication tool.

### The competency wiki

Care workers were the main users of the wiki. They used the wiki to engage in:

- | Providing feedback and personal observations about the training (benefits, difficulties, impact);
- | Asking questions;
- | Commenting on digital competences
- | Reporting on their newly acquired skills.
- | Completing the learner's journals at the end of each training activity.

### e-Portfolios

A significant percentage of the care workers (approx. 50%) completed e-Portfolios. Care workers mostly used their e-portfolios to report on experience of the training. The variation in quality and approaches in the produced e-Portfolios reflects the heterogeneous initial skill

levels of participants. Some of those who completed e-Portfolios also referred to their use of the learner's journals and the competency wiki.

### **Mobile learning: use of tablets**

Face to face training was central in the development of basic skills with the tablet configuration and use, and Internet access. A large majority of the care workers involved in the pilots considered the tablet as a "very useful" tool, in particular for searching and gathering information and acquiring communication skills. They also highlighted the importance of the tablet for professional purposes, in activities like searching for relevant information and looking for jobs. In addition, they expressed their interest in further developing interests and hobbies via the use of tablets.

Older people in their majority also found the tablets very useful, especially for accessing information and for using applications (apps).

### **The participant experience**

The majority of care workers and care recipients assessed their participation in the careNET pilot as beneficial. Several participants wanted to promote and share their experiences of the pilot with other care workers and older people, an issue we thought was significant for sustainability of the project initiatives.

### **Relation between learning experiences and work/life and impact on work/daily life**

#### **Care workers**

In their day to day context, care workers thought that searching for information online and being able to evaluate the web content they accessed was the most useful digital skill they acquired. To a lesser extent they felt they were able to enhance the online communication through tools like Skype and appreciated the gaming applications (apps). The facilitators confirmed the acquisition of competences, like communication through e-mail and chat, downloading applications or taking pictures. They also referred to the importance of searching for jobs online, the professional development content the programme provided and the e-Portfolio. For example, a care worker expounded the benefit of the training to her/his "professional well-being". The facilitators also identified the communication between peers and the searching and sharing activities for the care recipients as the main set of digital skills acquired by care workers.

The skills that the care workers wanted to further develop after the pilot were mainly related to online participation via the use of social networks or forums to support activities like job searches and vocational training.

#### **Older people**

The majority of the participating older people found the digital skills they acquired very

useful for their daily context. The most useful skills were related to online communication and they assessed positively the online messaging and chat tools and applications (apps). Several care workers and facilitators mentioned the interest of older people for geo-location tools like Google Maps or Mappy. Finally, the training had a positive impact on improving the relationship between the care workers and the care recipients and their relationship to their relatives and friends.

## Good practice examples

### Blended Learning and face-to-face sessions

The careNET training has been challenging for most of the participants in both countries. The careNET training is ambitious, taking into account the learning environment, the diversity of common and particular competences that care workers and care recipients need to acquire and the use of mobile learning (using tablets as a learning tool). The facilitators addressed these challenges by extending the time they spent in face-to-face support and meetings. Their involvement had also a positive effect on reducing the anxiety levels of the care workers.

### Use of tablets

Choosing tablets instead of laptops was considered the best practice for the project context, as tablets are positively intuitive for people without previous knowledge of new technologies and ICT skills.

### Face to Face Sessions

The cooperation with external actors and the involvement of the participants was extremely important for completing the pilot successfully. As the learning support was continuous and personalized, face to face sessions were completely crucial for the success of the pilots.

### The involvement of the ICT specialists

The ICT specialist became key actors in the learning process during the pilots (particularly in the French pilot). They were selected on the basis of their knowledge of social care; the context of care workers and the organisation of local care workers relays. The ICT specialists supported the facilitators during the face-to-face sessions and also via online support. At each session the ICT specialist was contacted by phone when the facilitator faced technical challenges. The useful interventions of the ICT specialist were commented on by a large majority of participants and facilitators as a success factor in the French pilot.

### Enhancements and recommendations

## Training time

Training time seemed to be an issue in both piloting countries. The analysis of the data of the learner experience indicated a steep learning curve for both carer workers and care recipients. Induction and familiarisation with the online learning environment (learning platform, social network and competencies Wiki) and completing all the activities in the designated time is generally a challenge for professionals with high demands on their time in terms of workloads and overall limited prior knowledge of new technologies. It would be necessary to dedicate longer periods of time and include more face to face support to counteract effectively such issues.

## Conclusion

The report provided picture of the impact of the pilots in both countries.

The profiling of the participants (inc. care workers, trainers and older people) ensured that we adhered to the recruitment criteria identified in the project methodology. It also helped to identify participants at risk (and provide appropriate support) when necessary. In addition, it assessed predisposition and attitudes to learning which could be beneficial to the learning process.

Adaptation and modification of the materials was done in collaboration with the learning architecture design and curriculum development partners (King's College London and University of Piraeus) ensuring that:

- the cultural nuances at a local level were respected;
- the specifics of local policies, particular circumstances and conditions of training in the pilot countries were taken into account.

This process was monitored closely by strengthening the communication component of the key stakeholders of the project to ensure that the learning experience of the carers in the pilot countries was broadly similar and adhered to the project aims and objectives and to the learning outcomes of the learning materials

A blended learning environment using the three components: competency wiki, the learning platform and the social network were used to support participant learning. However, it is important to emphasise that the overall learning environment adhered to the principles of blended learning.

The comparative analysis of the results obtained in the pre-pilot and post-pilot phases showed the development and acquisition of the digital competences of the participants. The pilots benefited individuals with and without prior knowledge and digital skills. The fundamental enhancement was in acquiring knowledge of ICT related competencies. Enhancement of communication was also a key perceived improvement according to project participants.



Lifelong Learning

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