



Mobile Social Networking Platforms: their potential for addressing SOCIAL NEEDS of older people

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Going online: my social life



AAL project, 07/2010 - 12/2012

Development of a **mobile social networking platform**

- facilitating the **social inclusion** of older people
- as well as easy access to relevant geographically based information.

Objective:

Reduce to social isolation and loneliness of older people

<http://gomylife-project.eu/>

Objectives for Go-myLife and priority



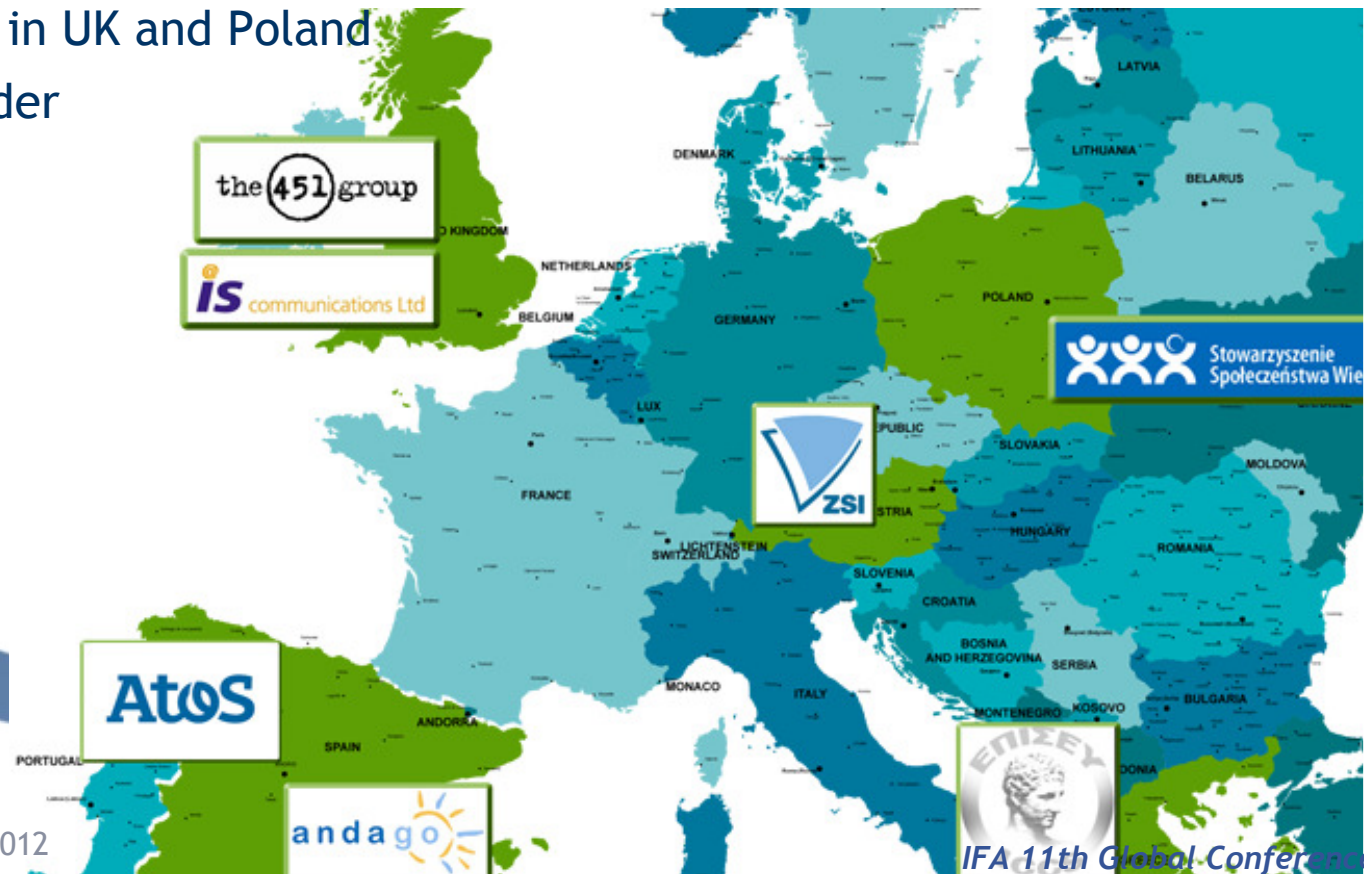
Goal description	Priority
My interactions with family and friends will be facilitated	1
My circle of relevant persons and groups will grow/deepen, I will be able to gain new perspectives and support	1 (local)
I will be more interested to get out of my house	1
I will feel more secure and safe to get out of my house	2
It will be easy for me to play an active role in my community and to be valued for the contribution I make	2
I will be more stimulated to keep my mind fit, to learn customised to my interests and to enhance my knowledge	3

2 Pilot sites for participatory end-user involvement



Methodology:

- Seven participatory workshops for user-requirements elicitation
- 2 pilot testing:
 - Pilot 1 during two month, pilot 2 during 1 month
 - 40 participants in UK and Poland
 - Aged 60 and older



Prior data-collection on experiences with Online Social Network Platforms



Methodology:

- Literature research
- Telephone interviews with operators from 50+ platforms
- Assessment of Facebook and other 50+ platforms with older people

Literature research:

- The time older people spent in online communities **correlates positively** with their **satisfaction** with the social support they receive as well with the number of people they are in contact with (Wright 2000).
- Virtual communities may actually **augment face-to-face** ones (Wright 2000; Hampton, Sessions et al. 2009).

Attitudes towards social network platforms for older people



50+ platform operators said:

- Main user group are women
- Use of forums to exchange (anonymised) information on health issues, activities, traveling etc.
- Find people with same interest in the same region (matching, activities)
- Has the potential to deepen relationships also in „real“ world

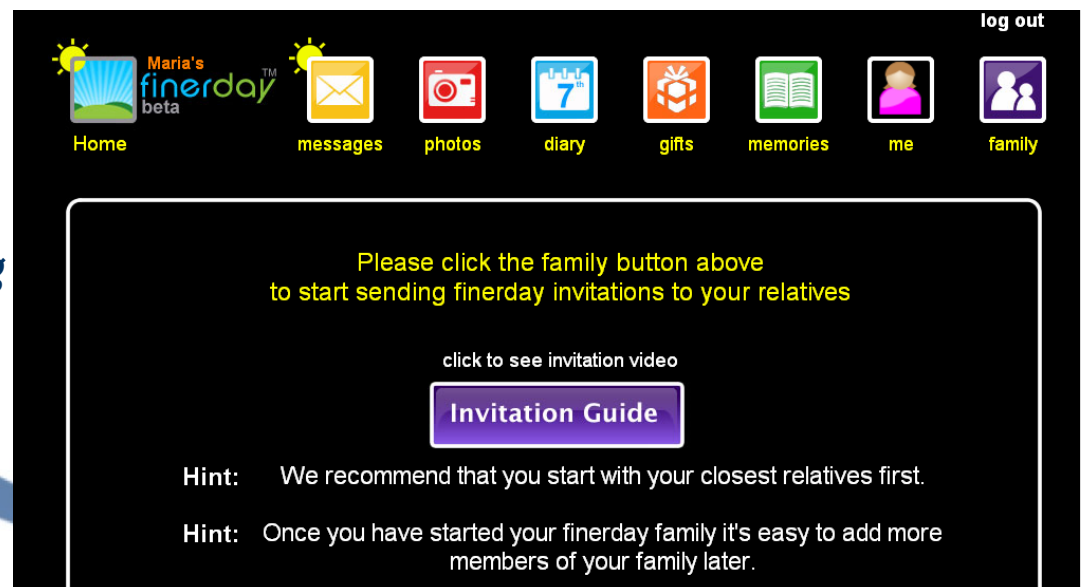
Peer communication:

After all, there are many platforms but when a 38-year old Norwegian rates a holiday and I as well being a 60-year old Austrian, that doesn't fit well.” (man, Austria/rural area).

Good practice example:

Finerday.com

Prague, 28 May to 1 June, 2012



Attitudes towards social network platforms - Facebook I



- Quick and broad scope: *“...instead of keep ringing to everybody, if one person sends a message all the friends can read it, it brings close to everybody and quick as well”* (man, UK)
- The ‘Wall’ is semi-public and impersonal:
 - *“I would never write on the Wall, this would be an intrusion into my intimate life, that’s my greatest objection against Facebook.”* (man, Austria/rural area)
 - *“... I never actually receive a message on Facebook that is significant for me”* (woman, Austria/urban area)

Attitudes towards social network platforms - Facebook II



- Self-exposing communication behaviour: *“In our day one had a diary that nobody was to see and today it is exposing oneself before as many people as possible.”* (woman, Austria/urban area)
- Not appreciated for interactions with their core family: *“My daughter would never accept me as a “Friend”. Her Facebook site is her own world; that’s none of my business.”* (woman, Austria/urban area).
- Poor menu navigation: *“There are so many icons and pictures; it is difficult to find the tree view.”* (woman, Austria/urban area).

Go-myLife: An online Social Network adapted to older people

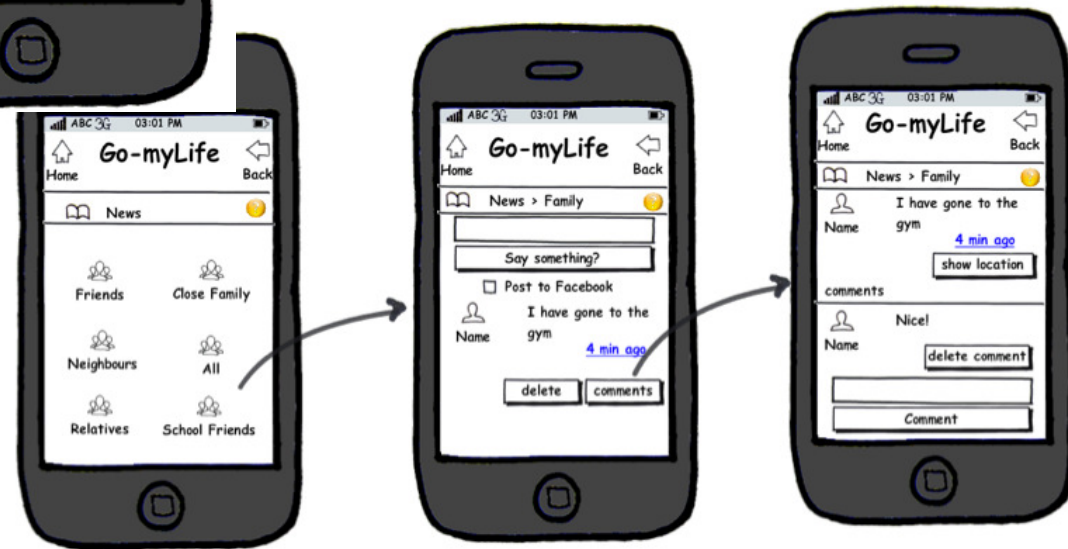


Login screen
Main menu



How are we different?

- Communication in user groups
- Focus on local community
- Adapted design for older people
- Geo-information as main feature
- Entry point to other SN (e.g. Facebook)



Identified organisational and technical barriers for mobile SNs



Internet connectivity:

- Low internet coverage to access Go-myLife mobile platform (especially in Poland)
- Hardly any Wifi-connections at home

Smartphones:

- Good entry point for those who never used PCs
- Requires training and time to get used
- **Manipulation** of the touchscreens is problematic (high interest in tablet PCs)



Application specific:

- Computer speech needs prior knowledge, e.g. profile, application
- Continuous feedback on successful interactions with the device, alert mechanisms
- User-id and passwords problematic -> creation of double user entries

Go-myLife influences relationships to local community members



Goal description	Priority
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Go-myLife focus on local community -> Go-myLocalLife

- Result from participator workshops and literature research
- Friends and local neighbourhood as source for emotional and reciprocal instrumental support

Communication patterns between test-participants prior to pilot 1:

- Contact once a week for a certain activity (activity groups 50+)
- No extended personal contact

Pilot 1: Go-myLife influences relationships to local community members



Communication patterns between test-participants during pilot 1:

- Communication about „non-relevant“-information (the weather is bad today, I love my flowers)
- Sharing of personal pictures (family, leisure activities, traveling)

-> Go-myLife supports getting to know each other on another level, thus it enhances relationships in the local community

Barrier:

- Learning to share „not-very important“ information
- Learning that what I have to say, even if “not important” - is interesting for others



Pilot 1: Go-myLife influences relationships to local community members



Goal description	Priority
I will be more interested to get out of my house	1
I will feel more secure and safe to get out of my house	2

Go-myLife supports the establishment of local networks:

- Deepen loose relationships with the contacts of my contacts
- Get to know others and who shares same interests and activities
- Organise people and events around these activities better

-> Go-myLife fosters more real-life meetings and activities

- No reciprocal instrumental support between members could be observed
- Geo-based information (“User-generated Around-Me”) was not very relevant yet

Pilot 1: Go-myLife and the family



What about the family?

- Go-myLife is currently not understood as a platform to deepen relationships with family members
- Go-myLife was understood a “closed” area for friends, where participants can chose among their age-group and feel comfortable
- Facebook can be the place to meet with distant family-members
- But it’s not a „comfortable“ place



Pilot 1: Active role in Community



Goal description	Priority
It will be easy for me to play an active role in my community and to be valued for the contribution I make	2

Go-myLife needs a „notice board“:

- To ask for and offer help or advice
- Examples: volunteer work, recommendations of a reliable and honest cleaning lady or an experienced plumber, find a nurse if needed, search for someone who would help with shopping

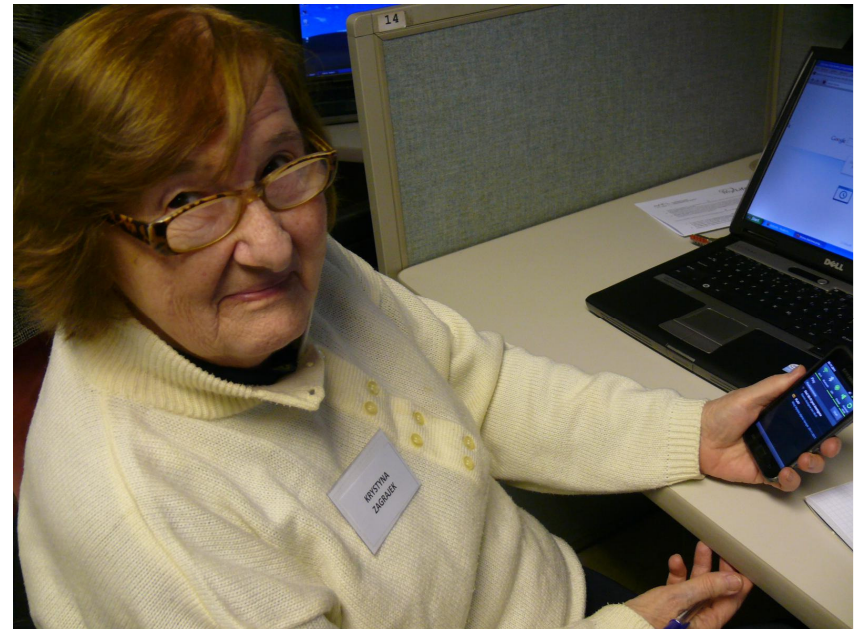
Pilot 1: Third-party content



Goal description	Priority
I will be more stimulated to keep my mind fit, to learn customised to my interests and to enhance my knowledge	3

Go-myLife needs third-party information

- Required by Polish participants
- Having all necessary information “in one place”
- Having the information adjusted locally
- Examples: links to cultural websites, more ‘practical’ information (the addresses of the local clinics, senior clubs, offices), local weather forecast, information related to health
- Go-myLife could stimulate discussions around this third-party content





Thank you for your attention!

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