

*Online social network
platforms and older
people - Go-myLife's
contribution to foster
local community life*

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ZSI is an independent and self-governed private institute. Core activities in **research, education, advisory services**, and co-ordination of **networks** are performed collaboratively in global partnerships.

Staff: ~ 60 experts

Located in Vienna

All innovations are socially relevant.
Working for social-profit, ZSI facilitates the social embedding and shaping of innovation with particular emphasis on processes of social innovation.



Going online: my social life

Go-myLife project: gomylife-project.eu



AAL project, 07/2010 - 12/2012

Go-myLife develops and offers a **mobile social networking platform** facilitating the **social inclusion** of older people as well as easy access to relevant geographically based information.

Partnership: 7 organisations coming from 5 countries

Research methodology: literature study, interviews with operators of 50plus platforms, seven participatory workshops with older people for user requirements elicitation, long-term evaluation in two pilot sites (UK, Poland)

Prevalence of social isolation and loneliness in old age



5-10 % of older people perceive themselves as lonely all or most of the time (*Chambers, Allan et al. 2009*)

Age	Social Isolation	
	Infrequent social contacts	Has no friends
16-29	3,4%	4,6%
30-39	6,0%	5,3%
40-49	8,8%	7,6%
50-59	10,9%	8,7%
60-69	13,9%	12,6%
70+	17,4%	16,1%

Source: ESS 2002/3, cited in Lelkes (2008)

Family is not always the source of overcoming loneliness



- **Visits** by children make little impact on loneliness (*Wenger and Burholt 2003*)
- Very old **widows** living with children are frequently amongst the **loneliest** (*Wenger and Burholt 2003*).
- Older people may turn to the family for instrumental help, they are least likely to do so in times of loneliness (*Wenger and Burholt 2003*).
- **Reciprocal relationships** and mutual help systems are preferred over family support (*Department for Communities and Local Government 2008*).

The importance of local neighbourhood



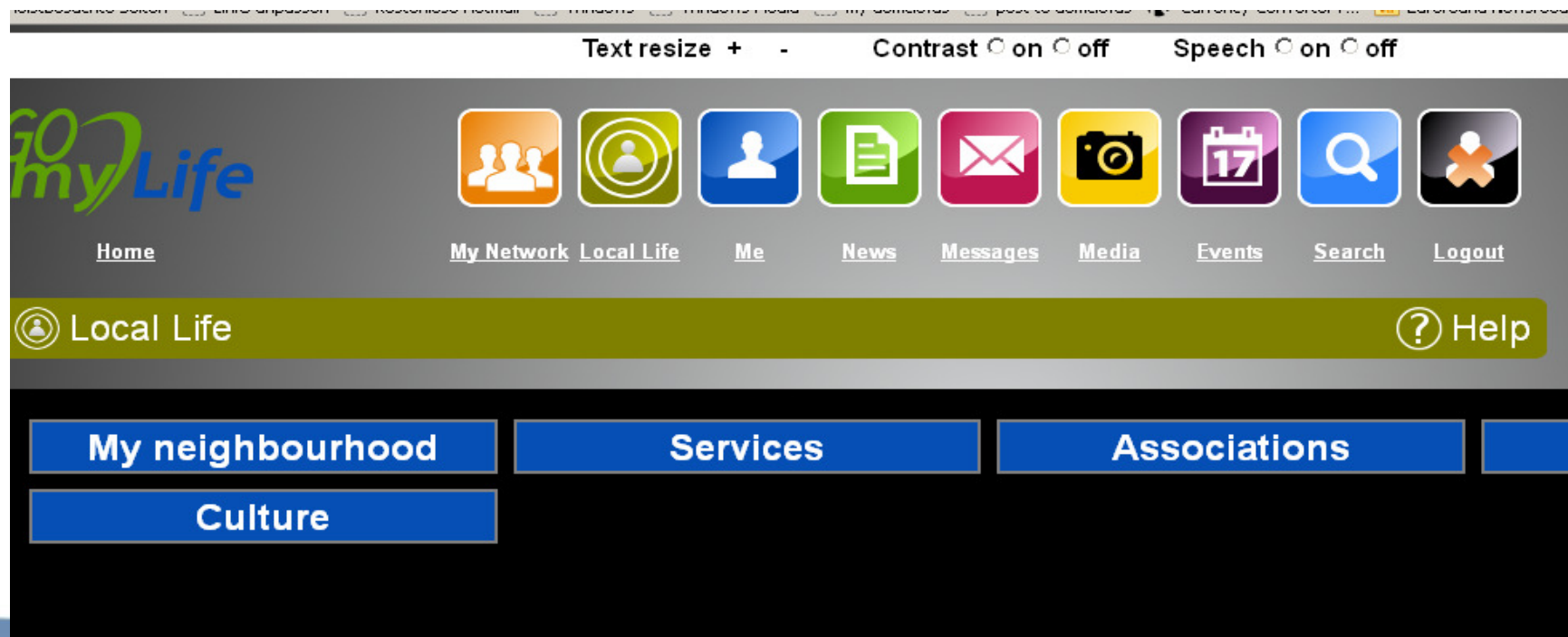
- With increasing frailty, older peoples' lives are affected by, and bounded within, their immediate physical and social environments.
- Older people spend more time in their local neighbourhood and they invest a great deal of themselves in the area (*Department for Communities and Local Government 2008*)
- The community is a major factor in older people's decisions about where to live (*Evans 2009*).
- Problem: closure of local services.

Online social networks and older peoples' social activities



- 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).
- A number of Wright's (2000) survey participants **developed very close relationships** with their Internet friends, even though they had met online and were complete strangers beforehand.

Local Life as core value on the Go-myLife platform



Challenges of the project



- Older people feel often reluctant to talk about their individual problems.
- When they fail to deal with new technology, they tend to blame this on their own lack of knowledge and ability instead of blaming poor design.
- Older people sometimes find it difficult to communicate clearly and designers, if not very well trained, therefore tend to miss the messages they are trying to convey.

Success factors of the project



Go-myLife Approach:

- Elicitation of older peoples needs via participatory user involvement methodology .
- Transfer of social science research findings into technical terms via internal participatory workshop.
- Communication training for both social science and technical researchers.
- Pilot testing and evaluation of the prototype in a close to real-life setting.

Benefits of the Go-myLife platform for end-users



- Goal 1: My relationships with family and friends will be enhanced.
- Goal 2: My circle of friends and other relevant persons/groups will grow and I will be able to gain new perspectives and support in tackling challenges I face.
- Goal 3: I will be more interested to get out of my house.
- Goal 4: I will feel more secure and safe to get out of my house.
- Goal 5: I will be more stimulated to keep my mind fit, to learn customised to my interests and to enhance my knowledge.
- Goal 6: It will be easy for me to play an active role in my community and to be valued for the contribution I make.



Thank you for your attention!

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