

DESIGN OF THE PILOT ACTION IN BOLOGNA

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Involved partners	LHA BO
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1. Objectives

The goal of the digital tool is to take care of the frail seniors and their caregivers, who are not particularly skilled in technology. The aim of the tool/platform is to create a virtual community to promote the creation of new relationships; to share contents, activities and events carried out by volunteer organizations on the territory; to take care of the frail seniors, often isolated, helping them by using digital tools to discover new relational models. The tool, named YouBOS, aims to connect people, social health workers and volunteers in the third sector and to encourage the creation of a community to support the more frail, facilitating the maintenance of their autonomy and improving their quality of life. YouBOS has been designed as a tool to facilitate the access mainly of the seniors and their caregivers to the needed information and to obtain support through the use of the content published on the platform. The tool at the same time invites the elderly to take an active part and thus co-create the contents of the platform through specific thematic areas. The possibility to interact directly through a forum with other users aims to maintain relationships between peers and allow the seniors to ask questions of interest to experts and to the editorial staff of the platform, thus receiving answers to their needs.

Through YouBOS the pilot of Bologna aims at promoting:

- virtual socialisation
- more active seniors
- healthy lifestyle.

Primary endpoint

To maintain the cognitive capabilities (interaction and dialogue) gained by the seniors with the use of YouBOS.

Secondary End point

Improvement of the acceptability and usability of the technologies by the seniors.

Reduction of the risk of isolation related to psychological factors (e.g., depression, anxiety); socio-cultural factors (e.g., social supports, disruptive life events); and social environmental factors (e.g., transportation, housing).

Reduction of the digital divide. Better access to the services available in the local contexts thanks to the improvement of the digital competences.



The main **actors** involved in the pilot are:

- Health Districts and Local Planning offices of the Local Health Authority of Bologna
- Social Services of the municipalities of the Metropolitan City of Bologna
- Lepida and its eCare staff
- Community: volunteers associations, retired workers unions, churches, caregiver associations
- Private sector: cooperatives, private management of public services (day centre or residences for elderly)

Two groups were recruited and involved in the pilot:

#1 frail seniors

#2 volunteers and caregivers.

Experts were also involved in the study, such as a psychologist from the LHA BO with the aim of leading the group and conducting assessment activities.

The identified list of indicators is:

- Senior QoL
- Formal and informal caregivers QoL
- Social isolation
- Services acceptance and user satisfaction
- Sustainability: number of participants to the service

Indicator	Measurement tool	Data collection timing
Senior QoL	EQ-5D-3L	Input, intermediate and exit questionnaire
Formal and informal caregivers	Zarit Burden Inventory	Input, intermediate and exit questionnaire
Social isolation	UCLA loneliness scale	Input, intermediate and exit questionnaire
Services acceptance and user satisfaction	UT-AUT	Intermediate and exit questionnaire



The study protocol was approved by the territorial Ethical Committee of the LHA BO. Participation in the pilot study by the subjects involved is entirely voluntary and subject to the signing of the consent. All the procedures adopted are compliant with the GDPR.

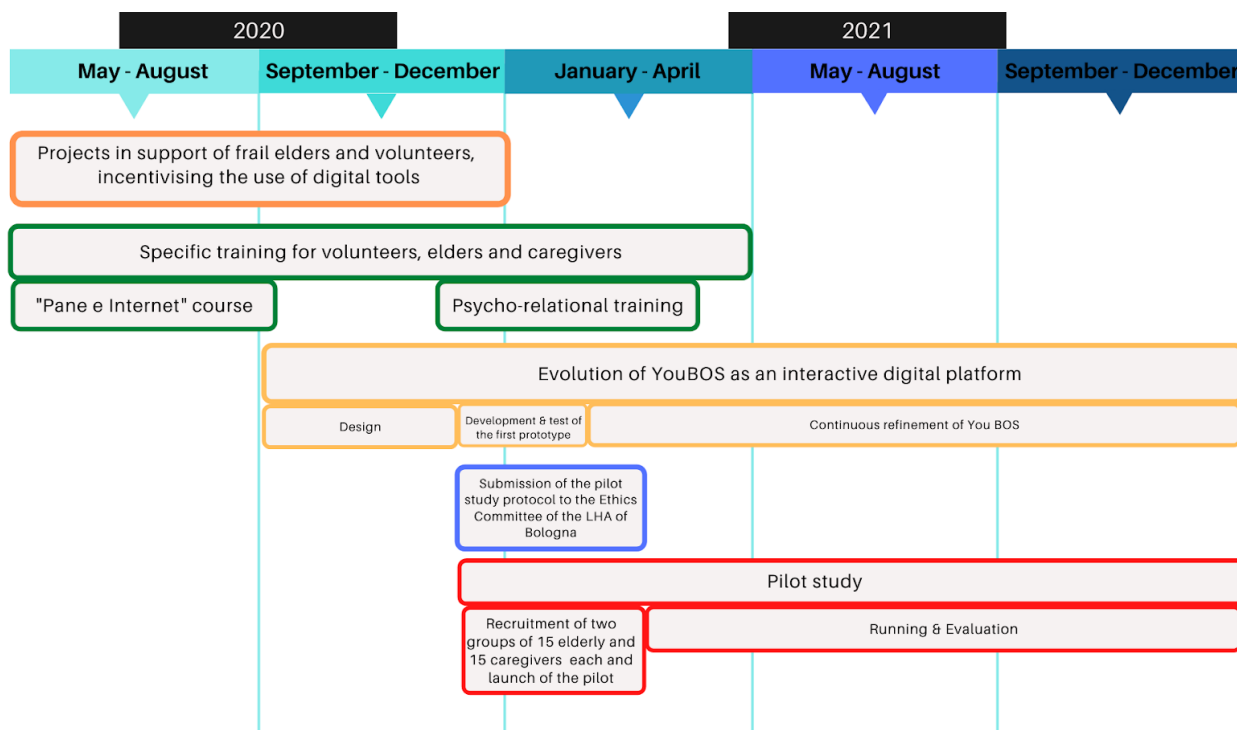


Fig. 1 Planning

2. Technologies and technical solutions

The Digital Tool YouBOS is a responsive web site, accessible online (<https://www.bolognasolidale.it/>) through computer, smartphone or tablet.

The Digital Tool solution uses a combination of web technologies which provide:

- a website accessible according to the legislation, usable natively also from mobile devices;
- a YouTube channel for asynchronous publication of video content;
- profiles of the users available on the main Social Networks, also used for the real-time diffusion of video interventions.

The Digital tool requires a connection to the Internet (also via smartphone); it does not collect data from the user, but allows a voluntary interaction (both in the form of sending questions in the transmission phases of live video content, and in the form of sending / inserting self-produced material to be proposed for publication, or sending reactions to contributions published on Social Networks).

YouBOS allows an integration among the different technologies used in order to guarantee access to the greatest audience giving them equal access opportunity. To make an example, the "on air" video transmission delivered through Facebook or Youtube will be made available directly on the YOU BOS platform for seniors who do not have any account on those social media.



On the YouBOS website there are also a connected Blog, moderated by an editor interacting with the users and an “expert’s corner” area, which will broadcast live on the channel or in asynchronous mode uploading the video on the web portal, giving the possibility to collect the questions by the users and forecast the subsequent replies.

Other sections of the website are the “laboratory of making”, where the users' contributions are published, “attivi per forza”, in which contents such as sweet gym videos and workouts are uploaded, “words between us”, in which are explained complex terms of daily use, usually in a foreign language like english.

Volunteers from the associations that won the 2021 "Concorso d'idee" competition were also involved as animators of the blog and of the "laboratory of making" area.

2.1 Operation procedure

The platform is accessible online and is mobile responsive, access from mobile devices is guaranteed by the adoption - in the creation of the platform - of the principles of responsive design.

There is no installation of any component on the user's PC or smartphone.

From the home page, a user can directly access the individual thematic areas available by clicking on the corresponding buttons.

Pursuant to Law Decree 76/20 (Urgent measures for digital simplification and innovation), access to the platform is allowed through SPID, the Public Digital Identity System which guarantees all citizens and businesses a single access, the digital services of the Public Administration are safe and secure. The user creates his own profile and can decide to highlight the contents of interest, to collect events organized in the territory of his choice, and to activate notifications for these activities.

The portal provides a reserved area in which the user can customize their user experience on the portal. Only a logged-in user can interact with the contents of the portal.

By selecting the "Login" button, the user is guided to use the SPID credentials and access the YouBOS platform. Once logged in, the user is redirected to the page relating to their User Profile.

The platform periodically sends users questions designed by health and social workers to monitor the use of the platform, identify social factors and individual behaviors related to fragility, encourage the acquisition of healthy habits and measure the level of self-perception of the state of health.

Any authenticated user can participate in surveys. If a new monitoring questionnaire is provided, users / seniors receive a reminder email.



3. User recruitment

The pilot recruited the following **two groups of people**:

- at least **33** elderly > 65 years old, frail, living alone, residing in the city of Bologna,
- at least **9** people who care for the elderly or disabled aged ≥ 60 or who are volunteers in associations belonging to the Third sector.

The recruitment started through the presentation of NiceLIFE to the lead volunteers of the virtual groups that formed spontaneously at the beginning of the first phase of the pandemic: WhatsApp groups, mailing lists, virtual reading groups via videoconferencing platforms (ZOOM, MEET etc.). Volunteers were informed about the activities planned during the pilot project. Volunteers acted as intermediaries to the people interested in participating in the pilot project and managed their participation. Volunteers play the role of facilitators in the use of YouBOS and are the ones who provide feedback on the use of YouBOS.

Inclusion criteria: seniors over 60 included in the eCare network who are frail or live with a person with high risk of frailty.

Exclusion criteria: Persons under 65 who are not caregivers. Persons who do not agree to use SPID or do not have a personal device such as tablet, PC or smartphone and an Internet connection.

The selected participants all have at least a minimum knowledge that allows them to use a personal device or are assisted and supported by a family member or facilitator to access the system.

4. User training and support

In the preliminary phase, a preparatory course was organized by two voluntary associations. In fact, in addition to the organization in 2020 of 5 digital courses as part of the "Bread and Internet" project promoted by the Emilia Romagna Region, which involved more than 50 volunteers in 2021, the collaboration with the regional project "Bread and Internet" was activated with the aim of implementing second-level computer literacy courses, in order to respond to the needs expressed by volunteers and support the volunteer associations that collaborate within the e-Care network. In addition, the LHA BO issued, in September 2020, two calls for collaboration aimed at associations.

One was focused on psycho-relational skills for frail elderly people

(<https://www.ausl.bologna.it/operatori-economici/avvisi-e-indagini-di-mercato/auslbandogara.2020-09-16.7344446928>)

and the other on digital literacy

(https://www.ausl.bologna.it/operatori-economici/avvisi-e-indagini-di-mercato/archive/anno-2020/auslbandogara.2020-09-16.7083966414/bando_proc_view).

The two formations were realized between November 2021 and March 2021.



5. Concrete steps during testing phase and procedural options for its successful accomplishment, including feedback loops

5.1 Meeting with the experimental group

The first meeting with the subjects participating in the experimentation took place at the beginning of February 2021. The experimentation was introduced to the selected elders and caregivers that joined the project, requiring an active participation.

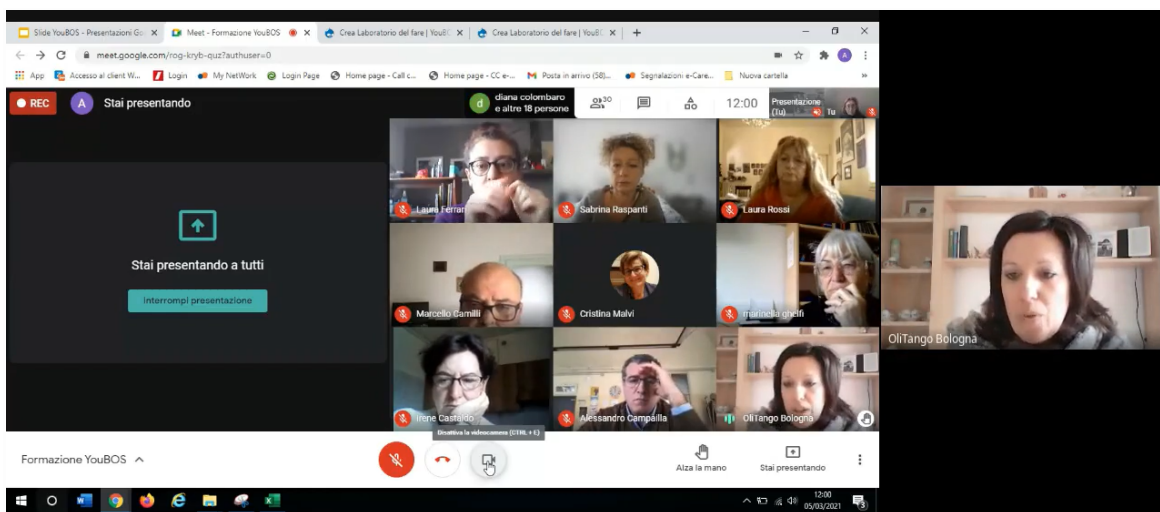


Fig. 2 Meeting of the experimental group

From February 5th 2021 the group met every two weeks via video calls managed by the editorial staff, in order to achieve the following goals:

- Sharing the tools to periodically check the level of competencies and the digital platform's usage by the subjects of the experimentation;
- Providing the participants with the informations and the training necessary in order to use the YouBOS tool;
- Collecting feedbacks and suggestions to make the platform more accessible and usable;
- Discovering the needs and interest of the group: topics of interest, ideas, insights, discussion moments to develop inside the platform;
- Starting from the participants' requests emerged from the first meetings, educational moments were organized both on digital themes (for example, podcasts and how to use them or how to access free online services to read books) and on transversal themes such as effective communication or creativity;
- Providing additional support to less skilled or struggling subjects, in order to focus the training on their specific needs, that in those cases differed from the ones of the larger group. Occasionally, the support consisted in following the subject step by step in the access procedure of the website using SPID, which are not always clear to people unfamiliar with some digital services.

5.2 Editorial staff meetings

Alongside the group meetings with the subjects of the experimentation, an editorial staff group (formed by personnel both from Lepida and the LHA) met weekly in order to:



- share goals and identify work methods for the organizations of the topics and the managing of the subjects;
- design actions and materials in order to respond to the demands emerged from the meetings;
- discuss the editorial work, share evaluating criteria for the publishing and arrange a division of tasks.

This constant work allowed a progressively increasing usage of the YouBOS platform by the subjects in these first months, both to establish relations with the other participants and to share and find useful information.

This result also seems determined by the step-by-step work method. For every step, the attention was focused on the feedback both from the participants and from the editorial staff. The contents to share, the tools' accessibility and the training and support methods used are revised and reevaluated every time based on the contributions of users and staff.

In fact, the collected feedback allows us to redefine and calibrate the actions previously designed. In this way the participants are more involved and motivated, because they can really have an active role in the creation of the virtual community, identifying rules of coexistence and sharing suggestions to improve the YouBOS platform from the user's point of view.