
Milan, 23 October 2017

“Did you know autistics change the world?”:
loveorfriends supports HomeMate,
an Assisted Autonomy Project for people with autism

Fabula Onlus launches crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter

PRESS RELEASE

Through the ages, autistic scientists, composers, artists and mathematicians have improved our way of life, expanding human knowledge, providing beautiful cultural works and helping bring peace. With our video *“Did you know autistics change the world?”*, LORF wants to share this message and help promote the crowdfunding campaign launched by Fabula Onlus for the new “HomeMate” initiative. We believe there is an opportunity to use technology to develop assisted autonomy models that can improve the quality of life of people with autism and reduce the costs to the community associated with autism. Although we acknowledge there is no magic solution for a problem that can be approached from many different angles, we do believe that HomeMate could represent a step in the right direction.

HomeMate: assisted autonomy for people with autism

HomeMate aims to create intelligent environments to foster the autonomy of autistic children. HomeMate helps with managing daily life but offers far more than a virtual home-help: it adapts to the personal habits and goals of autistic people in order to foster the development of autonomy and improve quality of life.

Each autistic person will receive follow-up from an expert, the “Life Mentor”, who is able to establish routines and goals. HomeMate activity will be set and managed by the “Life Mentor”.

HomeMate will support autistic people at many times in their everyday lives:

- virtual personal assistant: recalling appointments and daily routines (going shopping, taking medication, ...);
- supporting leisure time management: for people with autism, free time can easily become a “void” if left unstructured.

HomeMate will suggest leisure activities in line with personal preferences

- household management and security (switching lights on and off, adjusting the temperature in the house, ...)
- planning meals to ensure a balanced and nutritious diet;
- other related support.

HomeMate will alert support or emergency services should danger arise, such as in the event of:

- falls;
- absence of movement detected;
- gas leaks or fires.

HomeMate may also intervene in the event of behaviour that is potentially harmful or not in line with set life goals, such as:

- watching TV until late at night;
- playing music at too high a volume;
- going to bed too late.

HomeMate is not controlling or a strict authority figure. The HomeMate approach will be flexible, seeking to allow maximum personal freedom. The “Life Mentor” will program HomeMate in a way that respects the individual’s desire for self-determination. Our goal is to guarantee autistic people autonomy, assisted by technology. The person can interact with the HomeMate through voice commands using an app installed on a tablet or smartphone.

Home Technology

HomeMate will provide a complete picture of the house thanks to the installation of various types of sensors (e.g. presence, motion, temperature) for the automated control of:

- heating and air conditioning;
- lighting;
- surveillance, video intercom entry and anti-intrusion systems.

Some of these sensors can be an inexpensive addition to any home, while others can only be included as part of a fully integrated system.

Mixed Team

Nevertheless, the main challenge is to use available technology to develop a bespoke system around the specific requirements of persons on the autistic spectrum. The HomeMate project therefore requires input from a mixed team, which must include engineers, psychologists and educational experts.

Crowdfunding: Goals, Timing and Budget

Goals

The aim of the initial *crowdfunding* is to finance phase 1. In phase 1 we want to establish the scope of the pilot project to be implemented in phase 2. This means defining the requirements in terms of the reference educational framework, technological support and budget. At the end of phase 1, we will launch another call for *crowdfunding* in order to finance the implementation of the pilot project.

Timing

- by November 15, 2017: crowdfunding 1
- November – December 2017: phase 1
- January – June 2018: crowdfunding 2
- For a period of 1 year, starting in September 2018: phase 2

Budget

The funding requirement for phase 1 is calculated at Euro 11,208. A breakdown of the resources involved and relative costs is shown below:

<i>Human Resources</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Costs (Euro)</i>
Engineers	56	4,536
Psychologists	40	3,360
Educators	56	2,352
Coordinator	20	960
Total	172	11,208

[Go to Kickstarter and support HomeMate](#)

About Autism

Autism is a brain condition associated with poor social skills. The Autism Spectrum is very wide. The autism of a computer scientist may be barely noticeable, but as many as one quarter of autistic children do not speak.

Incidence of Autism

In the USA, one child in 68 is currently considered to be autistic, a proportion that rises to one in 42 among boys – numbers that seem incredible but represent the reality of the situation. Autism is a global problem: even higher ratios can be found in other countries.

Living with Autism

In France, almost 90% of autistic children attend primary school, but only 1% make it to high school. In USA less than half graduate from high school. Autistic babies become autistic adults. The United Nations reckons that 80% of autistic adults are not in the workforce.

Costs to the Community

Autism imposes hefty economic costs. The lifetime cost of supporting an American with Autism is \$ 1.4 – 2.4 million. In the USA alone, the costs to the community related to autism could exceed \$ 1 Trillion (\approx half of the current German Government Debt).

Risks and challenges

The main risk is related to technological changes, i.e. the development of a system to work with technologies that today look promising but which in the longer term do not live up to their initial potential. We intend to reduce this risk by making the system as flexible as possible. In any case, the project has a human component which no technology can replace, and the benefits from this factor can only grow with the passage of time.

HomeMate: Key Players

LORF S.B. S.R.L. – www.loveorfriends.com

loveorfriends is an app that promotes social interaction by pushing people to get out of the virtual world and meet up in the real world. This is an app that could also be used by autistic subjects, as the lack of social skills lies at the very heart of the autistic

syndrome. **loveorfriends** is LORF S.B. S.R.L., a b-corp start-up that supports autism, with particular reference to the Italian “*dopo di noi*” (“*after us*”) theme of supporting the disabled when they lose their direct carers.

Cooperativa Sociale Fabula Onlus – www.fabulaonlus.it

A not-for-profit social association that deals with education, intellectual disabilities and autism. In the autism field, it has a solid presence in the Milan area and surrounding province, providing a full range of support to 261 autistic children, teenagers and adults in 2016, of all ages and across the spectrum.

FifthIngenium S.R.L.s – www.fifthingenium.com

A company specializing in software development and consultancy in the field of innovation and emerging technologies. FifthIngenium is an official partner of Microsoft and Intel, with over 50 certifications and awards. In particular, FifthIngenium develops and distributes FifthElement, the first platform to provide support for motor and cognitive disability therapy, based on models taken from the fields of pedagogy, kinesiology and rehabilitation.