

VareseNews

An app for home schooling: European Union has given Insubria University €350,000 to develop it

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The goals of the international project, Essence, are: to turn the psychological, medical, social and economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic into great opportunities, by means of an in-depth technological evolution of services, which may be useful even after the pandemic; and to prevent the isolation of elderly people and children, who are forced to accept home assistance and home schooling, because of the virus, by identifying innovative solutions of remote communication.

The project is funded by the **European Union**, which has allocated €3.5 million, as part of **Horizon 2020**, with an emergency call created especially, to understand effects of the pandemic on public and clinical health.

The protagonists of Essence, which is led by the **Polytechnic of Milan**, with **Simona Ferrante**, include **Insubria University**. The university has received €350,000, for the research sector coordinated by Professor **Cristiano Termine**, a child neuropsychiatrist who, among other things, has just been appointed by the Education Minister, **Lucia Azzolina**, to the Scientific and Technical Committee, to implement Italian Law No. 170, on dyslexia and learning disabilities at school.

The acronym Essence comes from “Empathic platform to personally monitor, Stimulate, enrich, and aSsist Elders aNd Children in their Environment”, and resorts to the concepts of stimulation, assistance and monitoring to connect users. The stimulation is achieved using artificial intelligence, encouraging users to carry out physical and cognitive exercises, alone or in company, with apps. Virtual rooms simplify the tele-assistance of caregivers and the meetings with other users, to battle social isolation and promote exchange among generations. Monitoring makes it possible to identify any unusual physiological behaviour on a cognitive, physical and social level, leading to effective risk prevention.

In the Insubria University team with Professor Termine, there are the lecturers **Maurizio Versino** and **Stefano Bonometti**, who are collaborating with **Luigi Macchi** and **Simonetta Bralia** of the Education Department in Varese. **The goal is to develop and test apps that remotely record the rate of acquiring the academic abilities and any child neuropsychiatric problems on which to intervene.** The apps are for teachers and specialists, such as child neuropsychiatrists, psychologists and speech therapists, for them to make remote assessments and suggestions for rehabilitation, using tablets, for children who need it, not just during the lockdowns, but in any situation which hinders access to community resources or which causes social isolation.

In addition to the Polytechnic of Milan and Insubria University, the partners of this project include: the University of Milano, the Fundacion para la formacion e investigacion de los profesionales de la salud

de extremadura (Spain), the University of Haifa (Israel), the company Sxt-Sistemi, for telemedicine, Smart com doo informacijski in komunikacijski sistemi (Slovenia), Signalgenerix Limited (Cyprus), and the association E-seniors: initiation des seniors aux ntic association (France).

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