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Age.Vol.A. – Ageing, Volunteers, Assistants. Linguistic Resources to Improve Communication between the Ageing, Caregivers and Institutions. A Multidisciplinary Project

Age.Vol.A. is a recently (2017) funded research project on ageing issues in northern Italy. It concentrates on the demographic and social situation of Varese, an 80,000-inhabitant city in North-West Italy, with 13% of its population over 55 and foreigners representing over 8% of the province's population, a significant proportion of whom are employed as caregivers to assist elderly people at home (Euromonitor International 2015, Provincia di Varese 2017, Urbistat 2017).

Age.Vol.A. starts from the assumption that, between home-assisted Italian seniors and their non-Italian caregivers, there exist a linguistic and cultural barrier as well as a digital divide, which tend to increase the physical and social isolation of the elderly population. Such barriers can be reduced by creating and introducing multilingual tools (a web portal and a smart device application) aimed at providing the carers with terminology and practical information related to their assisted and the institutions (healthcare systems, health associations, etc.) they usually deal with in the caregivers' own language(s).

The methodology will be primarily based on Applied Linguistics, particularly Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2003; Flowerdew/Richardson 2018), domain-specific discourse (Coupland *et al.* 1991; Clark-Cotton *et al.* 2007; Bait 2009) and Translation Studies (Baker 2010); secondarily, the study will derive methods from social sciences (anthropology and sociology), especially as regards the quantitative tools to be used in describing the populations considered and for data collection and analysis (Agresti/Finlay 2015), and the qualitative framework for interpreting their spatial conditions and communicative needs.

After conducting preliminary interviews with foreign communities, volunteers, doctors and social workers in Varese to study their experiences and needs in relation to domestic care, a thorough survey of both the seniors and the caregivers' populations of the territory considered (Varese province) has been launched to hear the voices of both seniors and caregivers discussing the communicative gaps from their own experience and point of view. The survey is designed to analyse the same aspects from the viewpoint of the social actors involved and will be administered using an online survey tool as well as in a paper-based format.

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