

*Increase in aids for the elderly demands new expertise*

**1.9 million Euro wellbeing technology learning environment for Sastamala**

**Municipal residential care homes are on their way out and support is coming for the elderly to live longer in their own homes. In the future elderly people and others in need of assistance in the home will also be acquiring more aids and services independently. The design, manufacture, maintenance, calibration and repair of such aids will increase enormously, which implies a corresponding increase in the need for expertise among workers in the social and technology fields.**

The Sastamala education consortium is leading a 1.9 million Euro development project entitled Innovative Special Needs Home – Learning project on which a unique learning environment will be developed for wellbeing technology, practical experimentation and study. The learning environment is being set up in the Voimarinne innovation centre at Karku in Sastamala: Here its strengths will be the nearby educational institutions for social care and technology and the assisted living unit to be opened in 2012. The exceptional strength of the project also lies in the health care organizations in the area and wellbeing technology enterprises.

The learning environment will be open to all – elderly people, others in need of assisted living, care workers, relatives, relatives caring for a disabled person and students in the fields of social care, technology and, for example, interior decoration. There will be a homelike demonstration facility where modern aids and new technology can be tried out. There will also be a facility for practising installing aids, including up-to-the-minute equipment for the maintenance, calibration and repair of wellbeing technology. The learning environment will contribute to the security of students, residents and workers, and will impart not only means for unhampered living but also mastery of technology.

The learning environment will be unique in that, for example, practical nurses will have the opportunity during their studies to go hands-on with aids procured for the home – in both the demonstration facility and in the homes of elderly local residents. It is an additional advantage that students may specialize in aid technology and at the same time practice tactful interaction when encountering elderly people. The enterprises will moreover receive new ideas for the further development of aids and wellbeing services through the feedback from residents and students.

The learning environment is also to include a “health kiosk” facility for taking measurements from which a client may elect to have the most recent results sent electronically to the treating physician. In conjunction with the municipal authorities of Sastamala plans are also being made for a service point in the environment where people can be taught to use the new technology. Outside the Voimarinne centre a track will be constructed when people can practice moving about with various aids and platforms.

The project will equip the environment with aids for security, lifting, moving and also aids to ensure people’s free passage. Teachers of wellbeing technology and experts in social and health care and those in the enterprises will design the educational content of

the new learning environment. The aim is to create a centre in Voimarinne where practical experience will enable people to evolve new products and services to support living at home; their further refinement may well spark off new entrepreneurial activity. The practical orientation in learning will also make it easier to find trainee placements in caring and technology facilities.

The main source of funding is the European Regional Development Fund via the Council of Tampere Region, while the municipal administration of Sastamala is providing its own share. Collaborating organs include the Pihlajalinna medical centre, Tampere University of Applied Sciences, Pirkanmaa Hospital District, Vammala regional hospital, the Sastamala organisation for basic security, the companies Handico Finland, Lojer and Vexve.

*More information: [www.koti-hanke.fi](http://www.koti-hanke.fi)*

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