Participation in a research and development programme: enhancing the quality of life of older people through the use of new ICT

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The Council held an exchange of views on a draft decision on the participation by the Community in a research and development programme aimed at enhancing the quality of life of older people through the use of new information and communication technologies (ICT), undertaken by several EU member states ("Ambient Assisted Living" programme).

During a public session, delegations gave their positive assessment on the proposal, providing political guidance for further work on a number of issues such as: the selection criteria and funding of projects under the programme, and rules of admission for new members.

The overall objective of the AAL joint programme is to enhance the quality of life of older people and strengthen the industrial base in Europe through the use of ICT. The AAL joint programme has the following specific aims:

- foster the emergence of innovative ICT-based products, services and systems for ageing well at home, in the community, and at work, thus increasing the quality of life, autonomy, participation in social life, skills and employability of elderly people, and reducing the costs of services for ageing well in the information society, including the establishment of a favourable environment for participation by SMEs;
- improve conditions for industrial exploitation by providing a coherent European framework for developing common approaches and facilitating the localisation and adaptation of common solutions that are compatible with varying social preferences and regulatory aspects at national or regional level across Europe.

The AAL joint programme provides the legal and organisational framework for a large-scale European programme between Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain and Israel, Norway and Switzerland on applied research and innovation in the area of ICT for ageing well in the information society. They have agreed to coordinate and implement jointly activities aimed at contributing to the AAL joint programme.