# 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 Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the report by Neena **GILL** (PES, UK) amending, under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure, the proposal for a 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 Member States.

The main amendments were as follows:

-the committee emphasised the implications of the gender dimension throughout the text, and stipulated the establishment of an appropriate, efficient and gender sensitive governance model for the AAL Joint Programme. It stated that improving digital literacy, especially for women, is a precondition for inclusion and participation in the information society. Furthermore, the role of women in science and research should be actively promoted;

-on the question of **funding**, Members felt that participation should be subject to a minimum financial contribution commensurate with the potential demand from the various national research communities. Since the AAL Joint Programme is to make a substantial contribution to the development of the European Research Area, the overall value of contributions from the participating Member States, Israel, Norway and Switzerland should be above EUR 150 million for the duration of the Seventh Framework Programme. National contributions should be in a sum greater than 20% of total national research funding for AAL related activities;

- if the AAL Joint Programme is not implemented or is implemented inadequately, partially or late, the Community shall reduce or terminate its financial contribution in line with the actual implementation of the AAL Joint Programme. If the participating Member States, Israel, Norway and Switzerland do not contribute or contribute only partially or late to the financing of the AAL Joint Programme, the Community may reduce its financial contribution in line with the actual amount of public funding allocated by the participating Member States, Israel, Norway and Switzerland on the terms laid down in the agreement to be concluded between the Commission and the dedicated implementation structure;

-the results of the AAL Joint programme could also be used by other groups of people, namely people with disabilities ;

- the Commission should conduct an interim evaluation by 2010, assessing the quality and efficiency of the implementation of the AAL Joint Programme and progress towards the objectives set. In that evaluation it should also assess the need for further interim evaluations before the final evaluation at the end of 2013.

The cCommittee also made several amendments to the Annex :

-through its activities, the AAL Joint Programme must contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy objectives and to creating the knowledge based society, while trying to ensure that the use of new technology does not lead to social exclusion. In this context, the development of cost effective solutions that can help to ensure fair and simplified access across all regions of the Union, including rural and peripheral areas, to relevant ICT-based products and services is to be promoted ;

-wherever possible, activities carried out under the AAL Programme should ensure synergies with relevant regional developments, for example developments concerning smart housing or other infrastructures required for testing ICT solutions resulting from projects ;

- the AAL Joint Programme shall take into account demographic trends in the Member States in order to provide solutions that reflect the social and economic situation across the Union ;

-when selecting research topics for inclusion in the annual work programme certain prescribed criteria should be taken into account. These include: complementarity with relevant national and Community

programmes and non-duplication; innovation and co-financing by the private sector, in particular SMEs, with the aim of supporting market-ready or near market-ready products or services; the development of technology adapted to the needs of the elderly, for example in their home environment ("smart homes") and or in their work environment; whether services to be developed respect the privacy and dignity of the elderly; whether technology or services that provide support for independent living also contribute to increased social participation on the part of the elderly ;

-Parliament added common eligibility criteria with which applicants must comply ;

-a single, common and central evaluation shall be carried out by independent experts appointed by the Commission. The independent experts shall report to the Commission on the evaluation and selection processes;

-lastly, a maximum 6% of the Community financial contribution shall be used to contribute to the overall operating costs of the AAL Joint Programme.