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

2007/0116(COD) - 18/12/2013 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents a report on the final evaluation of the Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme (AAL JP).

The Commission reinforced the Union's commitment to make use of ICT for active and healthy ageing in its Communication 'A Digital Agenda for Europe' (2010). The Union's participation in the AAL JP is a cornerstone of that commitment.

The AAL JP was set up in 2008 by 20 EU Member States and three associated countries and focuses on applied research and innovation of ICT-based products and services for an ageing population, with a two-to-three year time-to-market.

An independent high-level expert panel chaired by former European Commissioner for Research Philippe Busquin, assessed the results achieved and progress made towards the AAL JP objectives, and issued strategic and operational follow-up recommendations addressed to the Commission and the Member States.

This report analyses the key recommendations of the panel and proposes action to be taken by the Commission with other EU institutions and stakeholders, and through its role in the AAL JP.

Evaluation results: the final evaluation report confirms the **high added value and major achievements of the AAL JP**. In particular, the panel concludes that:

- the growing importance of demographic ageing clearly justifies the existence of the AAL JP;
- the AAL JP operates as a coherent framework delivering clear added value for Europe;
- associated research, development and innovation activity is reaching critical mass;
- activities aimed at improving conditions for industrial exploitation have expanded significantly since the interim evaluation;
- the programme is well managed and has well-functioning governance arrangements; and
- progress under the programme is encouraging, although large-scale social and economic impacts have yet to emerge.

Important achievements and early results considered to be promising indicators of high overall impact, include:

- good participation by SMEs (over 40 %);

- estimated own investment of over EUR 325 million from industry participants (predominantly SMEs), leveraged by joint investment of EUR 150 million from the EU and EUR 220 million from participating countries;

- the launch of some 130 projects so far, with good end-user involvement;

- the fact that nearly 50 % of the projects under the first two calls have already secured intellectual property rights in respect of their results; 25 % have secured financing to market new ICT products and services, e.g. alarm systems, remote monitoring, robotic systems, communication tools and game-based training for the elderly;

- the creation of a new innovation 'ecosystem', highlighted by the five AAL forums which have been organised on annual basis since 2009, with attendance growing from 500 to 1 200, in parallel with growing numbers of exhibitors, commercial sponsors and active media partners.

The Commission's response to the recommendations: the Commission welcomes the final evaluation report, which documents the positive impact of joining EU and participating states' forces. All Member States should consider participating in AAL2 which would enhance European integration in this field even further.

The Commission approves of the recommendations to Member States aiming to:

- **further improve the AAL JP's operational performance** and review procedures and governance roles to identify possible bottlenecks and areas for streamlining and improvement. In this connection, the Commission has already requested in its proposal for the AAL JP that participating states should establish common binding time-to-contract and time-to-payment targets;

- **gear future calls for proposals to socio-economic challenges**, deploy more agile instruments and collaborative projects reflecting future market dynamics and developments in the area covered by the programme. The Commission has already considered the option of using additional instruments such as prizes and innovation grants to enable rapid intervention where appropriate;

- **ensure that the programme is further oriented to exploitation** and that stronger metrics and systematic follow-up be applied to give a clearer view of project impact to guide future implementation;

- **improve the quality of participation** (by users and demand-side actors such as service providers and insurance companies) in the follow-up programme to ensure that it is spread over a broader geographical area and maintained throughout the project lifecycle.

- **enhance communication and community-building activities** that are such a key asset of the programme.

The Commission welcomes the recommendation addressed to it, this being to help strengthen further the coherence and synergies between research, innovation and uptake activities relating to ICT for active and healthy ageing. It has taken certain measures in this respect:

- under Horizon 2020, the AAL JP will address market-oriented research and innovation and aim to translate upstream research results into ICT-based products and services emerging on the market in response to users' needs ;

- the Programme will be complemented by the More Years, Better Lives joint programming initiative, which will focus on new multi-disciplinary research on demographic change in response to policy needs ;

- the Commission will ensure complementarity with the European Institute of Technology's planned knowledge and innovation communityon healthy ageing ;

- lastly, the EIP-AHA has established key priorities for innovation and will address a number of the obstacles to bringing innovative solutions for active and healthy ageing to the market faster and on the right scale. Strong synergies will be created with the widening of the scope of AAL JP in line with that of the EIP-AHA.

The European Parliament and Council are invited to give their opinion on the report's analysis and recommendations, and to support the implementation of the proposed action.