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

2007/0116(COD) - 14/06/2007 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to adopt a decision, based on Article 169 of the EC Treaty, concerning the participation of 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.

PROPOSED ACT: Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: ICT can play an important role in the lives of older people by helping them to improve their quality of life, stay healthier and live independently for longer. Innovative solutions are emerging to help counteract impairments which are more prevalent with age. ICT enables older persons to remain active at work or in their community. However, the majority of these older individuals are not yet able to benefit from ICT.

"i2010 - A European Information Society for growth and employment", launched a flagship initiative on caring for people in an ageing society. A corresponding action plan for ageing well in the Information Society was also adopted. The 2006 Riga e-Inclusion Ministerial Declaration set the scene for a comprehensive policy on e-Inclusion, and recommended launching a joint research initiative in the area of ICT and ageing.

CONTENT: the Ambient Assisted Living research and development programme (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. The overall value of their participation is estimated at a minimum of **€150 million** during the period 2008-2013.

In order to increase the impact and critical mass of the AAL joint programme, the Community should participate therein by making a financial contribution of up to €150 million, subject to efficient implementation and financial commitments by Member States in line with the criteria set out in the co-decision.

A mid-term and final review will be carried out by independent experts to assess the effectiveness and overall impact of the Community contribution to the initiative. The Commission and the Court of Auditors may carry out all the checks and inspections needed to ensure proper management of the Community funds and protect the financial interests of the Community against any fraud or irregularity.

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 Information and Communication Technologies

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 older people and reducing the costs of health and social care. This may be based e.g. on innovative utilisation of ICT technology, new ways of customer interaction or new types of value chains for independent living services;

- create critical mass of research, development and innovation at EU level in the areas of technologies and services for ageing well in the information society, including the establishment of a favourable environment for participation by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs);

- improve conditions for industrial exploitation of research results by providing a coherent European framework for developing common approaches and facilitating the localisation and adaptation of common solutions which are compatible with varying social preferences and regulatory aspects at national or regional level across Europe.

By focusing on applied research, the AAL Joint Programme will complement related longer term research activities envisaged under the Seventh Framework Programme, as well as the demonstration activities forming part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (2007 to 2013) established by Decision No 1639/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006, which focuses on large-scale uptake of existing solutions. Due account shall be taken of possible ethical and privacy issues in line with international guidelines.

There are two types of activities in the AAL Joint Programme:

1) Research, development and innovation activities implemented via shared-cost transnational projects involving partners from at least three different participating Member States or other participating countries addressing research, technological development, demonstration and dissemination activities. These should be targeted at market-oriented research, should be of short to medium-term duration and should demonstrate the capability to exploit the project results within a realistic time frame.

2) Brokerage, programme promotion and networking activities, which may be implemented through dedicated events or in combination with existing events. These shall include the organisation of workshops and the establishment of contacts with other stakeholders in the value chain.

The AAL Joint Programme shall entail consultation with relevant European stakeholders (such as decision-makers from ministries and public sector authorities, private-sector service and insurance providers as well as industry, SMEs and user representatives) concerning the research priorities to be addressed and the implementation of the programme.