OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
No. Prev. doc: 10010/11 RECH 103 COMPET 181 TELECOM 61 SOC 393 MI 249
Subject: First interim evaluation of the Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme (AAL) - Council conclusions

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on the First interim evaluation of the Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme (AAL), as adopted by the Council ("Competitiveness") at its meeting on 31 May 2011.
Council conclusions on the first interim evaluation of the Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme (AAL)

The Council:

1. RECALLS the Decision¹ of the European Parliament and the Council on the participation of the European Union in the Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme (AAL), based on Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), previously Article 169 of the EC Treaty, which required that the Commission would carry out an interim evaluation of the AAL two years after the start of the Programme, but no later than 2010.

2. RECALLS the Europe 2020 Strategy which identified demographic ageing as both a challenge and an opportunity for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, and the flagship initiatives "A Digital Agenda for Europe"² and "Innovation Union"³ where this topic has been addressed as a priority.

3. WELCOMES the interim evaluation of the AAL by the Expert Panel and the Commission's Communication⁴ that included measures in response to the findings and recommendations of the evaluation as timely input to the development of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Pilot Initiative on "Active and Healthy Ageing" (AHA)⁵ and the preparation of the future of the AAL.

¹ OJ L 201, 30.7.2008, p.49.
² Doc. 9981/1/10 REV 1.
³ Doc. 14035/10.
⁴ Doc. 5047/11.
⁵ Doc. 7586/11.
4. WELCOMES the view of the Panel that during the two first years of operation the AAL has made substantial progress to the development of innovative ICT-based products and services and has good potential to achieve its objectives, thus providing a successful example of the use of Article 185 TFEU to build the European Research Area (ERA), while noting the need for some changes, in particular strengthening linkages across the innovation system and operational performance, to enable the AAL to realise its full potential in a longer term.

5. WELCOMES the strong engagement of the participating countries to the AAL, proved by their significantly increased financial contributions well beyond the legal requirement; ENCOURAGES participating countries to consult all relevant stakeholders and to take into account the potential and interest of their respective research communities when making their financial commitments.

6. WELCOMES the high level of participation by small and medium-size enterprises (SME) in project consortia, reaching a level of above 40% as well as the involvement of end-users, thus contributing to creating a critical mass in research, development and innovation at European level, for which also the AAL Investment Forum as a research-to-market bridging mechanism is a key element. However, AGREES on the need to enhance the exploitation of AAL results by developing a real open European market for ICT-enabled innovative products and services, and appropriate economic and business models for the emergence of a market of applications instead of a “market of pilots”; AGREES on the need to further improve the interaction between end-users and other stakeholders as appropriate across all project phases in AAL projects.

7. NOTES the Panel's finding that the Virtual Common Pot works well on the whole but that the Panel expressed concerns regarding the diversity of national financial and funding eligibility rules and payment schedules, and INVITES the participating countries, involving the Commission, where necessary, to analyse the funding approaches, with a view to exchange of practices and to simplify and to apply more coherent funding eligibility and financial rules, where possible.
8. NOTES the Panel's recommendation that the AAL operational capacity urgently needs reinforcement and therefore INVITES the participating countries, in co-operation with the Commission, to pay particular attention to this need; NOTES, however, that management costs of AAL are a concern for participating countries and that they should be kept as light as possible; WELCOMES the Commission's intention to facilitate the exchange of experience and synergies with other Article 185 programmes (EDCTP, Eurostars, EMRP, Bonus) to address questions on management and operations, and ASKS in particular to consider all possible options for reducing the administrative and financial reporting requirements.

9. UNDERLINES the need to further strengthen synergies between AAL and other relevant activities of the Framework Programme (FP) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), other relevant EU level programmes and initiatives, as well as those at national and regional level.

10. NOTES the interest of the participating countries for the continuation of AAL-type activities and WELCOMES the Commission's intention, in consultation with participating countries, to perform an impact assessment of options for such a continuation, also taking account of the evolution of the AHA.

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6 Such initiatives include, amongst others, the EIP pilot initiative on "Active and Healthy Ageing"; the pilot Joint Programming initiative on combating neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's; the envisaged Joint Programming initiative on the theme "More Years, Better Lives - The Potential and Challenges of Demographic Change"; and eHealth Governance Initiative.