

# AAL FORUM<sup>2011</sup>

## Executive Summary



### Active and Healthy Ageing and partnerships for Social Innovation



National Research  
Council of Italy



# Plenary sessions – a brief SYNOPSIS

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### Session One

The first Plenary Session of the AAL Forum 2011 was opened by the AALA's **President Lena Gustafsson**, who started the session by showcasing the association's new video and extending a warm welcome to the room, packed full of delegates. She quickly turned to the main theme of the day – that now was a turning point for the AAL JP and a time to turn project results into impact. In the face of society's great challenges, she said, it was important to be innovative as innovation would help us meet those challenges, as well as create wealth and employment. She called for the Joint Programme to pioneer the tools and services for innovative social solutions, new ways to support those services and new ways to support our ageing population.

The welcome letter from **Nichi Vendola**, President of the Apulia Region of Italy and the host region for the conference, called for a sustainable future for the millions of EU citizens through the link between innovation and social relations. Kroes stated the need for public policy makers to make the most of innovations like those being created through AAL and develop inclusive policies that benefit an ageing Europe. Welfare is the engine of development, she said and to forget this would be a mistake.

Following this **Giuseppe Pizza**, the Under Secretary at the Ministry of Research, Education and Universities in Italy. He told the delegates that AAL JP's success can only be measured by the programmes it helps develop that support ageing and vulnerable people in society. Every member state must address the challenges society faces and it is science and technology that will help us in meeting these challenges. But we must work together, he said, and reach coordinated solutions and avoid duplication. Italy, he said, supports the AAL JP agenda and emphasized that the challenges it addresses must become part of a collective growth in Europe.

In a welcome video address, **Neelie Kroes**, VP of the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda,

stated that Europe was in crisis and the only way to emerge from this was through innovation. New technology will drive this innovation, she said, but echoing the message of Lena Gustafsson, she said that we must now get ideas out of the lab and into the real world. With this aim in mind, she called on the public sector to remove barriers to innovation and speed the uptake of that innovation by integrating it into the services it provides. Everyone must work together throughout the regions of Europe and above all, we must change.

Speaking for **Antonio Tajani**, VP of the European Commission responsible for Industry and Entrepreneurship, **Mario Ali** stated that if European business was to remain competitive it must innovate and change the way things are done – and he called not just for technical innovation, but for social innovation, too. One in four businesses is a social business, he said, and it is these that will provide the services in line with the Lisbon Treaty and protect the weakest in our society. He also highlighted the work that needed to be done to break down the barriers that still exist for social innovation to flourish, while calling for tangible benefits to emerge from programmes like AAL.

**Francesco Pacella**, speaking for **Antonio Maria Gabellone**, President of the Lecce Province and host to the conference, pledged support for the Joint Programme by Lecce as it looks to implement the sort of innovation on show at the Forum to address the demographic changes so evident in cities like Lecce all over Europe.

**Pietro Siciliano**, Chair of the Forum Programme Committee also extended a warm welcome from the region and called on young researchers within AAL to carry on the good work as the social innovation society needs is only possible with their brilliant ideas.

**Anne-Sophie Parent**, Secretary General of Age Platform Europe and a speaker representing the "end user" of much of this innovation, told the audience how a walk through Lecce had helped her understand how the ageing population was impacting on all society. The demand for change is there, she





Peter Saraga and Mario Ali speaking at the Plenary sessions

said, but we must speed up the supply and these solutions must be financially viable with an emphasis on enabling people to stay in the home for longer. To do this we must look at social innovation to fight isolation and find better support for carers. She concluded by calling on European mayors to join forces in looking at active and healthy ageing and help bridge the gaps between authorities and the citizen.

**Lambert van Nisterroij**, MEP, concluded the keynote addresses of the first plenary session by looking forward to active and healthy ageing programmes from a European Parliament perspective. He began by heralding the AAL JP as a wonderful, bottom-up formula that brings research to the market. This is exactly what is needed, he said, but we have to speed up the process. He also highlighted the opportunities that the “silver economy” presents business, while we must also consider how technology can help us save money in healthcare. We must work together, he concluded. We have the knowledge and skill in Europe, so if we put it all together, then we will be successful and the European Parliament will support AAL.

## The SME and AAL

**Peter Saraga**, a member of the Forum Programme Committee introduced the session in which the delegates were given a glimpse of how SMEs work within the AAL programme by emphasising the need for projects to bring real products to market.

**Matteo Santoro** of the GP Group in Italy opened by outlining the importance of companies developing a clear

business model for their innovation, from the start. But, he warned, IT solutions in this market require investment from the user and so it is always a question of who pays – the authorities, the service provider, the end user. A business model will define this.

**Saskia Vermeulen** of ShareCare, based in the Netherlands, explained the different ways she has worked to get her innovation to the market, from creating informal care groups to keeping people up to date with the latest news and developments. But she, too, highlighted the need for investment and explained how ShareCare had changed course and found a clearer route to market through partnership with a large company called Simac. Never be afraid to be innovative, she said, but always be prepared to change your plans.

**Dr Axel Steinhage** of SensFloor, based in Germany, explained how he had found government support to be a lifeline for his innovation, sensors on the floor that monitor movement in the home and can detect falls. His innovation came with the idea of producing the mats in rolls and he has now taken the product to market.

**Javier Ramirez** spoke for CPMTI of Spain and the Siesta project, introducing the concept of “prosumers”, a combination of producers and consumers. Key to his success was that his design of ambient solutions through mobile devices was successful because it focused on real people.

## Session Two

The Plenary Session of day two of the AAL Forum focused on the European Innovation Partnership on Active and

Healthy Ageing (AHA), concluding with a debate on how the EIP can support industry market take-up and older people. The session opened with a short address by incoming AALA President **Mike Biddle**, who welcomed the joining up of the innovation pathway the EIP brings and noted the opportunity its focus on AHA brings AAL.

Former EC Director **Frans de Brune** echoed that calling for AAL JP to be more than just another research programme and that the link with EIP does that for it.

**Mario Ali**, Director General of the Ministry for Education, Universities and Research called for politicians to realise the importance of ICT for AHA and highlighted the opportunity this brings to business and AAL. He reiterated the will of the Italian Government to support this initiative by increasing coordination between the regions and encouraging cooperation between member states and the public and private sectors. Growth, he said, would follow if we work together on common objectives and AHA is our fundamental priority.

It fell upon **Constantijn van Oranje-Nassau**, Member of Cabinet of Neelie Kroes and head of Policy, Strategy and Objectives of the EIP-AHA to explain in detail the overall aims and objectives of EIP as an attempt to break through the innovation paradox – develop markets, identify barriers and how to break them down, and look at ways of bottom-up commercialisation – in other words, how to turn good ideas into business. He reiterated the core message of the Forum that it was critical to approach the challenges of our ageing population with a programme like this and by doing so we would create the triple win of opportunity, sustainability and benefit to the citizen. He also explained how the EIP had been set up through a series of steering committees, workshops and consultation with stakeholders. This has led to five themes and actions for the EIP and the next stages will now take the programme to full implementation. He concluded by emphasising the importance of groups like the Joint Programme of AAL in ensuring the EIP works. We need commitment, he said, and this promising new approach to creating innovation will work.

**Maria Uccellatore**, Italian AAL JP representative followed this presentation of EIP by emphasising that our ageing population is a challenge for all society, young and old, but that we should look at ageing in a more positive way and work for a better future by not just looking for profit, but the right profit for the social good. She pledged active support for EIP-AHA by Italy and

supported a regional approach and local agenda as a basis for development.

**Adrian Agrimi**, Director of Industrial Research and Innovation, Technology Department, Apulia Region, picked up on the need for regional policies for social well being to be far more sophisticated with better experimentation of what works and what doesn't being carried out at a regional level. He called for regional innovation partnerships, the need for a clear policy path and to raise awareness of all the issues being discussed throughout European communities.

**Fozzy Moritz Eckhart**, delivered a clear message of the need to look into the future at the start of each project and establish a clear motivation for creating the innovation in the first place – and in doing this, we should stop thinking about the issues in terms of just the elderly but in terms of us all and the things we can do at any age to keep active and healthy.

**Misha Pavel**, Director of the American National Science Foundation added a US perspective to the session when he told the audience that the problem on both sides of the Atlantic is the ratio between the elderly who don't work and the working population and this makes healthcare a huge cost problem as the former outweighs the latter. He also highlighted the fact that at the moment sophisticated healthcare prolongs life but does not increase the quality of life and we need a paradigm shift in order to do this – we need proactive prevention instead of reaction to disease; patient care in the home instead of a hospital-centric system and evidence-based learning about health instead of experience-based training. But, he warned, as in the US, change will be difficult.

### Session three

The final session of the Forum focused on how AAL solutions can support Social Innovation and began with an attempt to define Social Innovation by **Pekka Kahri** of TEKES in Finland. He described it quite simply as being about people, society and creating new value and new ways to organise and deliver services to a changing society. An important point to remember, he said, was that the outcome of this change is often for the public good rather than the individual alone. He used the examples of social and health services of the development of open source software to illustrate this point. He finished by asking people to look at innovation not simply as another term we all use to explain new ways of thinking or doing

things but also as a concept that will create societal value.

**Olga Rivera**, Deputy Minister for Quality Research and Health Innovation in the Basque Region of Spain, asked a simple but fundamental question for the Forum to answer – do AAL solutions already support elderly people or do they just have the potential to do so? Indeed, are they delivering at all? The bottom line, she said, is that health systems need redesigning. At the moment the care of chronic disease consumes most of the budget and the systems just weren't designed for that and it will only get more critical as society grows older. AAL solutions can help, she said answering her own question, but they are not working yet.

We need to be quicker. Rivera went on to demonstrate how new systems are tested in real situations in the Basque region and this should be a template for others to follow. We are a living lab for new solutions, she said, from public procurement systems to intellectual property rights for the SMEs developing the innovative products, from new products and services designed for chronic conditions to creating closer relationships with public constituencies. Finally, like many others at the Forum, she called for a GLocal approach to making the changes we need – regional solutions applied on a global scale.

**Alex Kalache**, Senior Policy Advisor with the UN, spoke about the needs of social innovation and AAL solutions with an international perspective and followed the previous speaker by calling for the need for more emphasis being put on the prevention of chronic disease, rather than their treatment. He also injected some stark facts about the world's ageing population that makes the need to act now even more compelling. By 2050, the population of 60+ citizens will be six times what it is today, while by 2100, the populations of Asia and Africa alone will be more than the global population today. The world is ageing fast and the challenges are huge, he said. We need age-friendly environments and we need to share ideas around the world. Yes, we can have social innovation, he concluded, but it needs to be in the context of where people actually live and in that sense we must listen to older people.

After the keynote speakers, the Forum heard from three representatives from AAL regions – Spain, Hungary and Finland. **Carlos Bezos** of the Value Creation City Lab asked four quick questions – is technology making people more active or not? Is technology changing the attitudes and habits of older people? Do we respect older people or are they seen as costly

problems and what role to we give older people in creating the technology we are trying to implement? Without answering, he concluded that we should listen to older people and let them help shape the technology.

**Zoltan Lantos** from Hungary spoke about Central and Eastern Europe being a hugely diverse region, where income is generally lower and less is spent on healthcare. But health is not healthcare, wherever you are, he said. They are different and AAL solutions need to address life and personal relationships rather than treat disease.

Finally **Jarkko Häggman** presented a view of AAL from a municipality perspective and highlighted the need for more at-home care developed between the local authority and the private service provider on the local level as a joint venture. The resulting services should be integrated and the end user, the elderly person or the carer, should have a one-stop shop where these services can be accessed. AAL solutions can be in a market place, where users and service providers can meet and a service integrator can help make life easier for both. Remember, he said, all end users are people, and that means us, too.

### Closing remarks

As the Forum closed, **Massimo Inguscio**, Director CNR, declared that great progress had been made over the three days and that there is a definite sense of coordination and convergence across Europe. AAL JP is putting together some strong, cooperative ideas and successful products and services as well as successful SMEs will emerge.

**Elena Gentile**, Ministry of Welfare and Social Planning, Apulia Region, was also positive about the progress being made. The Forum had highlighted the great challenge that there is huge value in the quality of life as well as the dignity of people. The Forum had clearly demonstrated this and been a platform for exchanging opinion and demonstrating solutions. She will take from the Forum the need to build relationships with other regions to tackle the great challenges we face, promoting best practice and more research.

**Peter Winlev Jensen**, Deputy Head of Unit at DG INFSO, outlined how the EC had taken on board the great challenges and made 2012 the European Year of Active Ageing, an initiative that offered the AAL JP projects a great opportunity. He called for all at AAL JP to be ambassadors for ICT and ageing, to help communicate their results and work in this field and to continue to work together to make a real difference for all our futures.





# Executive summary

## focused on the plenary sessions

As the first words of Neelie Kroes' welcome video message to the 2011 AAL Forum, rang around the conference centre in Lecce, Italy, there was an audible sound of murmuring from the large audience. "Society is in crisis," said the Vice President of the European Commission with responsibility for the Digital Agenda.

It was a stark assessment of Europe's position but one that gave everyone a useful reminder of the political and societal context in which the AAL Joint Programme is working – there is a global financial crisis that threatens the economic stability of even the most robust economies, while at the same time there is a demographic movement towards a more elderly population in Europe, which requires a paradigm shift in the way we view ageing and also how we organise sustainable systems that make the process healthier and happier. Then, of course, we have to look at how we pay for that shift.

In his welcome letter to the Forum, Antonio Tajani, Vice President of the European Commission with responsibility for the Industry and Entrepreneurship, underlined that there is no growth without innovation! "And when I speak of Innovation," he said, "I'm not only referring to Technological Innovation but also to a new concept of innovation, which includes the process, the design, the services and, particularly relevant for the AAL Forum, Social Innovation. Social Innovation could be a new service or a different organisational process, or it could be a radically new approach in providing services."

With these great challenges come great opportunities and with that fundamental premise serving as a backdrop to the three-day Forum, it quickly became clear that among the gathering of industry stakeholders, researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, end users, authority representatives and policy makers, there is an optimism that AAL is working and that it gives us the chance to foster both wealth and well being as we innovate towards a sustainable future for millions of citizens.

AAL Association President Lena Gustafsson set the tone for this when opening the Forum directly linking the need to innovate to meeting the financial challenges we face – innovation creates new jobs, supports business and, of course, supports older people. This she labelled as social innovation, the creation of tools and services for innovative social solutions.

This has been a consistent message since the formation of the AAL JP in 2008, but at this, its third annual Forum, things had changed. The message was clear - we have reached a turning point, a turning point that takes us beyond simply realising that we need to do something about our ageing population to a point where we have solutions, products, services and systems of care in place. It is a turning point that takes us beyond the research and technology push for these solutions and into a market pull for them. In short, the Forum marked a turning point in that it is clear that the AAL JP now needs to move from projects and results to delivering real impact. The big question, of course, is how we do this effectively; how can industry meet this demand and bring real products to market and what barriers must be brought down to make it happen?

Perhaps one of the clearest calls to action in terms of addressing these fundamental questions was the role of the public sector and its collective will to take up the innovation as it becomes available. This particularly relates to the provision of care and healthcare, which in most instances is delivered or coordinated by some form of public authority, and it was here that the "Triple Win" scenario was outlined by several keynote speakers. This refers to the notion that through social innovation we can achieve more sustainable care and healthcare systems that benefit the citizen, inject cost savings and efficiencies into the process that benefit the public purse and unlock commercial opportunity to develop the market that benefits business and industry, creates jobs and brings benefits to patients, carers and the social care and medical professions.

There certainly is public sector buy-in to active and healthy aging and the AAL's approach to innovation, both at a policy-making level and at a regional governmental level. MEP Lambert Van Nistelrooij said that the European Parliament gave AAL a positive vote of confidence in that it brings together the best and then delivers. But, he said, it does need to deliver more and when it does, and the benefits are there for the end user to see, and the savings are there for the authority to make, then they will buy.

To ensure this happens most effectively, it is vital that the

AAL JP keeps policy makers well equipped and educated with all the latest developments in this arena so they can best deploy the right innovation that meets particular identified needs.

The Forum this year took place in the town of Lecce, in the Puglia Region of Italy. Here, regional and local politicians as well as other key Italian stakeholders contributed to the plenary sessions and several debates. As an example, Elena Gentile, Regional Minister of Welfare and Social Policies, Puglia Region, highlighted amongst others, her strong support for the AAL JP programme and AAL work on the Regional level, where its vision and strategy are so important for the new concepts of welfare and social policy and for social innovations. These, she concluded, should not be seen only as problems but as an opportunity, which, if well managed, will support industry and create new jobs for young people.

In further debates and discussions about regional AAL affairs it appeared that on the regional level there is more convergent agreement on how AAL should be impacting on the public sector. We need more sophisticated policies towards ageing at a regional level. We are all facing the same problems, the same issues, but there are different systems in place to meet them, so regional policy paths of research and innovation, social welfare and healthcare need a coordinated approach with a common vision and shared objectives across the regions that promote both public and private actions. We are dealing with many stakeholders – carers, health authorities, industry, policy makers and, not least, the citizen – so the approach needs to be coordinated to involve them all on many levels. There is a clear opportunity here for the AAL JP to create regional clusters and provide platforms for the exchange of experiences and ideas. We need to understand the technological state of the art developed at a regional level and we should analyse the weakest and strongest links to help make policies more efficient. By forming regional innovation partnerships, we can test ideas in living labs and gain a better understanding of pre-commercial procurement.

And it is with this idea that it would be wise to focus a little more clearly on what many at the Forum referred to as the “end user”. Just who is this person? Is it the old person who needs care, the person who is ill who needs treatment and monitoring? Or is it all of us in society? And when, as users, should we start using the technology being devised for active and healthy aging?

It quickly became clear amongst many speakers and delegates at the Forum that when we talk about the quality of life we need to think in terms of the whole of life. What our current sophisticated health systems do is prolong life at the time when the quality of life is very low, so what we need to be doing is improving the quality of life before disease to prevent the onset of disease in the first place. We should move from an episodic and reactive focus on disease to a focus on proactive prevention.

And this means putting in place the social innovations that impact across all age groups and to do this we must look into the future and all try to understand how we would like that future to be for us. There was clear support for AAL's encouragement of young researchers in this regard. So the message is clear; challenge the way we do things now, let new ideas in and embrace the change at every level.

Of course there are many barriers standing between ideas for change, products and services that usher that change in and actually bringing solutions to market and making that change happen. These were clearly identified by many

speakers at the Forum, but more encouragingly, solutions were offered, too.

Perhaps the most often mentioned obstacle was that of access to money, both to fund the development of innovative products and, not least, to take them to market. While the Forum was not the place for firm financial commitment there was a call to arms for all current 23 AAL member countries to maintain their financial commitment to the programme and for continued support from the EC for future funding commitment. Supporting this was the clear message that through innovation comes growth – jobs are created, businesses can emerge and flourish, and all while addressing the real need we have in society.

But there was also a note of caution that we should not expect too much, too soon. The programme is only four years old and the products and services being developed are only just starting to emerge. It is time to start looking at how they can create the impact they have been devised to create, but it will take some time for the actual volume of jobs to be created, markets to be developed, and businesses to emerge. However, with the funding the AAL JP has ploughed into development, jobs have already been created; it is now time to make sure these are sustainable.

Another key obstacle identified at the Forum was the need for AAL to attract the right players and encourage participation from new stakeholders in the development of solutions for active and healthy ageing. Many thought this was difficult and new and innovative communications tools

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**Social innovation is about people, and society and about creating new value that benefits the whole of society and not just the elderly. It is about connectedness and using our need for social relationships to keep us well and happy**

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aimed specifically at new players should be developed. One call came for 20 per cent of funding to be set aside for new players in the market. With such a diverse set of issues being addressed by the AAL JP, a multi-disciplinary approach to innovation is seen as vital.

AAL JP addresses the gap between supply and demand on the innovation path that currently exists. Throughout the EC's distributed funding programmes, attention has been focused more on research and supply rather than on the demand side. This gap between supply and demand and the barriers that exist along the gap, will be addressed, as the Forum heard, with the help of a formidable new ally in the form of the “European Innovation Partnership” (EIP) on the pilot “Active and Healthy Ageing” (AHA).

The EIP is a new structure, initiated by the European Commission, formed to bring all needed stakeholders together to identify barriers to innovation and bring them down by looking at bottom-up commercialisation using existing European programmes – like AAL. It is neither a funding instrument nor a research programme but instead a new structure designed to build a framework for innovation, bringing stakeholders together, and turn good, innovative ideas into good business, as highlighted by Constantijn van Orange-Nassau, Cabinet of Vice President Neelie Kroes, European Commission.





One of the many breakout sessions at the Forum 2011

The first EIP, planned to come into force at the beginning of 2012 has a focus on Active and Healthy Ageing, principally because the EC has recognised the compelling need for action to be taken to promote better ageing and the commercial opportunities this brings, particularly in the use of ICT. These are aims set out by the Commission with its vision for 2020 and it sees in AAL the success of pooling knowledge and resources in a collaborative approach. It represents a great opportunity for the AAL JP projects and participating SMEs. Areas being focused on in this partnership for Active and Healthy Ageing will be prevention, care and cure and active ageing and independent living.

This promising new approach to the challenge presented by our ageing society will need a commitment from a variety of actors to succeed and, the Forum was told, support by AAL was crucial. There is a need to work across silos, with the wide range of stakeholders and not just those in the health sector, in order for the elderly to remain active. It is vital, therefore, that more of what the AAL JP is doing is communicated across the whole innovation chain and that it gains support by all stakeholders.

While the need for further commercialisation of results to create impact, the need to remove barriers that exist for innovation and the need for an understanding of how innovative ICT solutions can be applied to the needs of our ageing population were all prominent themes, there was one phrase that strode over the Forum like a giant – social innovation. It is a phrase that encompasses much of what AAL is seeking to achieve and a concept that both started and ended the main debates. But what is social innovation and why is it important?

In essence, when applied to the AAL context, social innovation is simply a new way to organise and deliver new services to a changing society. It is not just about providing new technology to make people's lives easier, although it may involve that, and it is not just about putting in place monitoring devices and warning systems to keep watch over the most vulnerable, though it certainly involves that, too. Social innovation goes deeper than that and is about people, society and creating new value that benefits the whole of society and not just the elderly. It is about connectedness and using our need for social relationships to keep us well and happy.

Misha Pavel, Programme Director at the National Science Foundation in the US, provided a good illustration of how products and processes should be linked to offer innovative solutions. When a sick person goes to the doctor, he said, the doctor sees the sick person and not the whole person. Technology enables the doctor to see the whole person through a collection of relevant data, while the data can also be used by patients to make decisions about how they live their lives. Social innovation is about creating an ecosystem that applies this technology to new services and processes throughout life so that the elderly generation (and not just today's elderly, but all elderly generations to come) are able to live active and healthy lives. Social innovation is about changing our environment to make it more appropriate for

older people, it is about changing the attitudes and habits of old people, while at the same time changing attitudes to old people; it is about valuing the older person's experience and providing him or her with a voice that can be heard. The message is clear from the Forum – social innovation creates social integration across the generations where the elderly are not just seen as a negative cost but also a positive asset. The Joining Programme is working on the solutions that make social innovation possible through technology, while at the same time exploiting the need we have for this innovation to create jobs and prosperity for the whole of European society.

The Forum hosted five tracks and several side events besides the main plenary sessions. The tracks examined in critical detail aspects of wellbeing and care of older adults with chronic conditions, the need for social interaction and promoting connectedness, how older people can benefit from the “self-serve” society and ageing in the global context. There was also a group of discussions that brought together the AAL community to discuss how they can influence future AAL JP calls, for example in the area of primary prevention and the development of better user interfaces, while another looked more closely at the European policy for ageing well.

The side events also included information on and discussion about topics like intellectual property rights (IPR), AAL in the built environment, social robotics, and platforms on social innovation and quality of life. One side event, organised by the AALOA association, included a technical oriented competition and award, this year on the topic “Indoor localisation and tracking for AAL”.

The Forum also saw the Young Researchers Forum take place, a side event that gave young researchers the chance to outline the work in which they are involved, present posters and discuss issues relating to their work with AAL.

The Forum also saw its first annual project award, a prestigious prize presented to the AAL JP project based on its level and quality of end user integration, the overall level of innovation and its market potential. The overall aim of the award was not only to reward what the judges considered to be the most valuable AALJP project based on those criteria, but to raise the overall awareness of AAL innovation as a whole. Shortlisted for the award were:

**CAPMOUSE** - a project developing truly handsfree interaction with the computer through a tongue-controlled mouse.

**ExCITE** - a project looking to enable social interaction through a low-cost audio visual device called the Giraff, a robotic telepresence operated by the carer.

**HOPE** – a project that looks to help elderly people in the home carry out everyday tasks, monitor their health and lead more independent lives.

**IS-ACTIVE** – a project developing inertial sensing systems for monitoring advanced chronic conditions and providing risk assessment.

The winner of the first AAL Forum prize was ExCITE and its Giraff - see page 16 for more details.

Finally, with its exhibition of successful AAL projects and innovative SMEs working within the AAL JP framework, the Forum provided an insight into how technology is enabling support to older adults, while at the same time providing concrete evidence of the commercial viability of the solutions being demonstrated. From monitoring services to communication devices and from social media applications to combat loneliness to management services for chronic diseases, it is clear AAL is getting results and making an impact.

# The importance of a vision

**A**fter Professor Fozzy Moritz Eckehard had ambled slowly across the main stage at the second Plenary session, his mop of extravagant blonde hair catching the spotlights and a knowing smile playing across his slightly craggy face, somehow another Powerpoint presentation just wouldn't have seemed right – and sure enough as the director of SportKreativWerkstatt presented a vision of the future through the eyes of several well-observed characters and a few snappy jokes, it became clear that in terms of AAL presentations, we were watching innovation in progress.

The idea was that Fozzy, as he likes to be known, was offering the audience a glimpse of possible outcomes of AAL activity and what could be – the point being that we don't simply need to focus our efforts on the issues we face today, but we need to look into the future and develop a vision of where we would like to be in 20, 30 or 40 years' time. And not only do we need to look at the solutions we may be offering, but also at the motivation for creating them in the first place as well, as what may stop us achieving our goals.

SportKreativWerkstatt is an innovation incubator, a company, as Fozzy puts it, “dedicated to making innovation happen”. It comes at this task from all angles, sometimes process design, other times moderating the structure of projects. Often they develop their own initiatives, finding partners and putting together consortia. “Essentially,” says Fozzy, “we make sure the right things happen at the right time with the right partners.”

One aspect of this work is looking at the role of motivation to any innovation's success, a concept many projects fail to grasp. “It is essential to examine what would motivate people to use the things you will be developing,” explains Fozzy. “If you know this before you start development, then you can address it properly. Most times, you cannot find this out just by interviews or questionnaires,” he continues. “People won't know if they will be motivated to use a particular mobile phone, for



example, if they don't know what it is or how it works. We are trying to find out what motivates people to use something that is not yet there.”

Of course this is a bit of a chicken and egg situation – which comes first, the motivation to use something that doesn't exist or the motivation to build something?

“The motivation to build something comes first and this is often based on need, and then comes the process to make it right,” stresses Fozzy. “We need to understand what motivation exists (if any) to use something that doesn't exist.”

Of course, this approach to innovation is one that companies like Apple have been using successfully for years, but it is rarely applied with this commercial savvy outside that arena. Fozzy explains how he has applied this thinking to an AAL JP project and the success it brought.

“We wanted to develop a movement chair,” he explains. “To have a positive impact on the health of the elderly, we have to make those who don't like to move at the moment, move more often, especially couch potatoes. If they move more, then they get fitter and that helps prevent a number of diseases and conditions.

“We received funding for the project and managed to engage with a big furniture company to produce these

TV chairs, adding more technology from other partners. But the question remained what would motivate these people to move in the chair? Obviously, we are dealing with people who didn't move, so we couldn't get them down to a movement centre to test it, so the only way we could find out how to get people to use it was to take it to them.

“So we set up lots of different functional prototypes of the new chair – some in which you do gaming, some in which you can feel some movement, some in which you are moved, some in which you can feel a certain element of training and some in which you are put into totally new positions! We had lots of approaches, which we tried out on the couch potatoes and from their comments and later in a reflection group, we got a much better understanding of what it is that would motivate them to start moving. And finding that, we find the key to the whole product's success.”

There are many more aspects of successful innovation than simply finding out what your end user wants, particularly if they don't know they want it when you start – but it is a good starting point according to Fozzy. Another is future visioning and he believes this is particularly relevant to the work being done by AAL partners.

“We are now designing the future of preventative health, how this will look in 10 years time, what kind of players there will be working in it, what institutions will be necessary and what kind of products and services will be needed,” he explains. “If projects are able to place their work into this context, then it gives them much better direction. You can innovate in any direction, anything is possible, but knowing how it will flow together, what the long-term direction will be gives you that long-term vision.”

Fozzy believes this aspect of development is vital for the success of AAL. Projects may have a target vision for their work, but contextualisation is vital. “We need to find out about motivations, stakeholders and their interests, we need to understand the barriers that exist to our innovation and what we can do about them, we need



to understand what the state of the art is in our field, both in terms of products services available now, but also what technologies will be available in one, two or three years time. We need to understand the trends that exist in our field.

“So we contextualise and make sure that what we are developing fits into the environment that is there and the environment that will be there.”

Fozzy set up SportKreativWerkstatt because he “wanted to be part of shaping the future” and, instead of saying how bad things are, to try to change things for the better. As such, he is generally optimistic, but insists that if we are to make things better for the elderly population – and he includes all of us, across all generations in this – we need to understand what future we want for ourselves.

“For young and middle-aged people, there are huge problems ahead and this is like a time bomb,” he says. “We cannot wait until they all 55, fall into the AAL remit but are fat and unhealthy; we should do something about their health now before it is too late. Active and healthy ageing is a life-long project and not something that starts when you are old.”

While Fozzy believes the AAL JP is addressing this in the right way, he also concedes that we are dealing with very complex and challenging issues. “It is an apparatus that moves slowly at times with lots of self-interest,” he laments. “But I think even though it’s slow, it does move.

“People are getting more and more aware of what is necessary to make an impact with respect to social innovation and its effect on people. Now everyone should all work together, create the effect and everything else will follow.”

Asked to look further into the future himself, at a time when his children will be his age, Fozzy remains optimistic, despite this slow movement – and he believes that technology is at the heart of our future, but not as it is now.

“Technology will be a part of life but hardly visible,” he says. “But it will be in much better control, supporting individuals and social life.”

Having answered the question, Fozzy was reflective, saying that his reply was not very concrete and he needed more time to reflect and to employ the correct methodology to get the answer right. But that is what he does and as he thought about it more he began to get excited again. “I would be excited to produce such a system vision for how our lives in old age will be in 40 years time,” he said. “I would definitely like to be a part of that.”

Somehow, I suspect he will be.

# Partnering innovation in Europe

**The new European Innovation Partnership begins next year with a pilot focus on Active and Healthy Ageing. In an interview with Constantijn Van Oranje-Nassau, senior adviser to Neelie Kroes, we find out how this initiative dovetails in to the work already being undertaken by AAL projects and SMEs**

One of the major themes at the AAL Forum 2011 was the impact the European Innovation Partnership and its pilot focus on Active and Healthy Ageing would have on industry, the market take-up of innovation and on the elderly in our society. Of course, this new initiative, which after a preparatory phase in 2011 becomes active at the beginning of 2012, is highly relevant to AAL and its community of stakeholders. All at the second plenary session at the Forum were keen to understand more from a European Commission perspective just what it all means for AAL.

Hoping to make this clear from the stage was Constantijn Van Oranje-Nassau, a cabinet member and senior adviser to Vice President

Neelie Kroes, European Commission, responsible for the Digital Agenda.

Almost immediately he linked the fundamental aims and objectives of the EIP with those of AAL. “The EIP is bridging the gap between the supply and demand sides of innovation and looking at ways of



bottom-up commercialisation using existing programmes like The Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme,” he said.

The link with AAL becomes even more explicit when considering the EIP’s first major focus, Active and Healthy Ageing and Van Oranje Nassau was quick to establish why this theme had been chosen. “There is a compelling need,” he said. “There is a huge societal challenge as we are facing a huge demographic change.

“Hand in hand with this challenge, there is significant economic opportunity,” he continued. “We need to provide more and more services to a large and growing customer base. There is also pressure on our healthcare systems to provide solutions in this area.

“As there is already a good understanding of the needs and challenges we face as well as the existence of mature technologies and testing services in place and as government plays such a vital role in the area of healthcare, we felt we are ready to create the triple win with the EIP – developing more sustainable healthcare systems by saving on costs and making efficiencies, creating commercial opportunities and benefiting the citizen.”

Van Oranje Nassau called on all in the AAL JP to support these aims and work with EIP to engage with all stakeholders and bring Active and Healthy Ageing to the top of the agenda.

There were many questions after the speech as delegates pondered just how the AAL JP would fit into the new EIP and the real difference it would have on addressing the needs we have in society. But Van Oranje Nassau was pleased with the reception and happy that there was now a greater understanding of the support EIP can offer this area of innovation.

“There were a lot of good questions which means people are engaging and they have thought about where EIP could add value to their activities,” he said soon after the session. “But there is also a certain voice of concern from people about not being involved or not fully understanding if it’s going to be beneficial to them,” he added. “I think the message there is that this is in full development and there’s a lot we want to do, but only so much we can do. We will try to start small, a few activities, see if that works and then scale it up if it’s successful – we don’t know.

“Some of our experts, especially in business, are saying this is all going too fast, while our governments are saying it’s going too slow, but if you’ve seen the pace of this it’s been extremely high, especially considering it’s a new instrument and we’re working across sectors, across DGs. We are trying to look at where we have common interests, where our interests are complementary and all of that is going on as we are developing this EIP initiative, so it’s a steep learning curve.”

One of the key messages that did emerge from the session was the question about encouraging new players into the research arena that is Europe.

Van Oranje-Nassau told delegates that the EIP will be addressing this but afterwards said he felt that he believed innovation in the sector would emerge from all manner of unsuspecting places!

“This EIP initiative will look at ageing across the board and focus on the innovation side, but I truly believe that the innovation will come from players and areas that are not expected,” he explained. “You didn’t expect Apple to become a music software provider or at least a market for music,” he argued. “And I think things like that will start to happen in



Constantijn Van Oranje-Nassau believes AAL and EIP will be a perfect fit in the way they approach innovation

We felt we are ready to create the triple win – developing more sustainable healthcare systems, creating commercial opportunities and benefiting the citizen

this market, too, where people will start to manage their own health. Money will come from other sources, the providers will be different players, so I think all that really necessitates that we have an open view to those actors who can actually join this initiative.”

In terms of AAL, Van Oranje-Nassau was delighted with what he had seen at the Forum but injected a note of caution about

the need to open itself up as the programme grows.

“The Forum really has grown – the audience has grown and there are more people here talking about marketable solutions so there’s a feeling of a growing maturity for this industry,” he said.

“On the other hand, you see too many familiar faces, so I do think that

AAL has to open up and be careful it doesn’t box itself in as a specific sector. We see the same thing with our healthcare friends, they are very concerned with health, but certainly technology in the home is not something they will be used to or particularly interested in.

“But it is all now connected so to bring those constituencies together is obviously important, and it’s important that AAL remains a strong brand within its own constituency, but opens itself up to new players – just as it will be for the EIP.”



# Delivering the double win

Lambert Van Nistelrooij delighted the packed conference hall on day one of the AAL Forum when the member of the European Parliament stood up and in a rousing address at the opening session began with the words “AAL is wonderful!” They were words AAL JP wanted to hear, as support at the political level in Europe is crucial to its future success.

What Van Nistelrooij was referring to was the frustration felt by many in the fact that though Europe has invested heavily in fundamental research over the years, much of this has been “taken up too slowly” and there is a feeling that we now need to start seeing results. “We need to speed up,” he said, “and the AAL Joint Programme is a wonderful bottom-up formula that brings research and innovation to the market. It brings together the best and then delivers.”

But there was also a note of caution in the MEP’s speech. “The European Parliament sees the need for you to do even more,” he said. “Innovation brings many benefits to society, while the silver economy is there to be exploited.

“So we must find more user-friendly instruments for care and healthcare and Europe must work together on this. We have the knowledge and the will to deliver the solutions we need to meet the challenges of our ageing society, but we must see the products and then the European Parliament will offer even more support.”

In an interview after the speech, Van Nistelrooij was in reflective mood about how we should actually speed up this process and the most efficient way to get products to market – and one word was key to him, cooperation.

“As a means for getting start-ups off the ground, cooperation is the key,” he said. “Don’t think that you can do it alone, because developments are going so quickly, so look for partners and get in line – this is the way of speeding up in Europe.”

While he is clear on the need to speed the innovation process, van Nistelrooij still believes the pace of this change



Lambert Van Nistelrooij is a supporter of the AAL JP

AAL is a wonderful bottom-up formula that brings research and innovation to the market. It brings together the best and then delivers

needs to be faster. “I sometimes have a little doubt that we are speeding up fast enough,” he said, using the example of lack of take-up by the end user in the Netherlands as a good example of this. “What we saw there,” he explained, “was that even though we had fibre broadband to every home, we did not deliver services as people didn’t want them. You have to rely on take-up by the user and that is not so easy.

“And it is not a question of creating some big design here,” he continued. “No, it’s a question of looking at how a system works, in housing or hospitals, for example, and then looking at the impact your product can have and then making them payable.

“But this is different in every country as every country delivers and pays for services in different ways, so your solutions have to be tailor-made to create the maximum impact. AAL is a good example of how these tailor-made ideas can also be coordinated through cooperation. Here we have products from many different countries and it is this cooperation that brings wider impact in the longer run.

“The key for me, however, is that we must make the innovation pay, both in terms of cost savings by offering services online, but also in terms of offering services that people want to buy.”

And that for Van Nistelrooij is a key measure of success for the AAL JP – the most important thing to deliver is the services, he believes.

“We need to create the services that people can and want to use, to make them feel safe in their own home and to make a difference to their lives, this is the first thing,” he said. “The second thing that comes from this, the double win, is that in creating these services, we deliver jobs – this is true.

“But it is always hard to find a balance between cost and benefits, so it’s not only about the economic benefits and the jobs, it’s also about delivering better services.”



**Peter Wintlev-Jensen, Deputy Head of Unit, DG INFSO, speaks about the EU's Year of Active Ageing, 2012**

**Can you explain a little about the European Year of Active Ageing 2012 and how you see it fitting into the wider AAL JP Programme?**

The European Year of Active Ageing has been set up to engage with the wider community on the sorts of issues being addressed by the AAL JP. It is an initiative that is driven by the EC and the DGs with the wider policy responsibility for social policies and employment policies. In my view this is an important dimension, to link the technological side with the uptake in society, especially in the workplace and on the social side.

The idea with the European Year of Active Ageing is to launch a wide information campaign to allow actors across Europe to make themselves visible, but also work from the top down level to really put the issue on the agenda. I think it's good to connect the technological innovation efforts at the Commission level so we can bring together a lot of different policy areas, instead of working, as we were before, in a more fragmented way.

**What impact do you hope the year will have on this specific area of helping people to live a more active and happy elderly life?**

A lot of it is about changing mind-sets because there are a lot of issues around ageing that are negative, like, for example the fact that 80 per cent of employers have the impression that older workers are a liability rather than an asset. This is a real problem because despite the fact that we have high unemployment now, the workforce from this year will be shrinking and in a few years we will have a critical shortage of a lot of different resources. Take Denmark as an example, where in the next five years, 25 per cent of the staff in the care sector will retire. We can't afford to throw people out of society who still want to continue working and that means we need to change the mind-set, we need to change the employer's mind-set, we need to change retirement policies and pension policies. I think that's what the year can help us to achieve.

**Does this joint approach to research into things like ageing signal a change at the Commission in terms of how the DGs are working together in terms of innovation?**

I think that's what's expressed in the Europe 2020 strategy. If Europe wants



to make its future from innovation, we have to apply that across the board – it's a systemic thing and should not just be made up by individual components. We need to create an environment that is useful for innovation. The big step now is that we deal with innovation not just in the research and innovation DGs but also in the other policy areas and DGs – so that's the big change.

**How does that work in practice?**

The example here is the European Innovation Partnership and its focus on Active and Healthy Ageing, which is a joint effort between the health DG, the Health and Consumers Commissioner, John Dalli, and the Commissioner of the Digital Agenda, Neelie Kroes, supported by the research and innovation



Peter Winlev-Jensen (pictured, left) believes the Year of Active Ageing will highlight the need for change

# The year to put active ageing in the limelight

research that we hope will be translated into local innovation. In Europe the innovation structures are very dispersed, and we have a big problem in that even the big countries cannot sustain their innovation capacity and they need to go outside. So it's a win win situation where, from the countries' perspective, they can connect their national innovation communities at European level and not only get access to knowledge generated elsewhere but also get access to markets, networks and connections, and from a European perspective it makes it possible for us to reach out to those local actors, 40 per cent of which are SMEs. So it was really designed to connect those people up and that's been the big success. But obviously now, we still need to get the proof that it can deliver and make impact, and I think that's where we are now focusing the discussion.

The European Innovation Partnership is one of the major instruments we now have to help create that market, but we still have to work on removing the barriers that will allow us to grow. The problem we have in Europe and also in the global context, is that unless we create favourable conditions where projects and companies can grow and can generate return on the investment, we will not get the investment and that will probably mean companies will go elsewhere. People and capital are now moving globally, so we need to create an environment in Europe that will be favourable for people to invest energy, for investors to come here, and in my view the EIP programme is one big effort across Europe to do that.

## If there's one lesson you've taken from this Forum this year, what is it?

It shows that things are moving; we are moving from technology-driven approaches to systems that really are useful and are appropriated by the users. They are AAL-solutions that solve problems and have realistic ways of doing useful things so people are going to invest in them. I think that's a positive evolution, and we will support it.

This programme for us is a really important component of the Year of Active Ageing because it is a big joint effort by member states to address big societal challenges. We see it as a cornerstone that we need to evolve and improve, but it's a good beginning.

Commissioner, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn. In effect, this is a joint effort from the demand and supply side of innovation to enable us to accelerate the uptake of innovation much faster and remove barriers.

But it also illustrates the link between societal changes and competitiveness. Already now, and more so in the future, Europe needs to create new areas of growth and new jobs, but we cannot save ourselves simply out of this competitiveness as we need to create a basis for the income that will allow us to have a good sustainable social system as well as good and sustainable care system.

Another reason we will be working together is to get the maximum effect from the investment of public money, including public procurement and

research and innovation investments. This is also the expression of a new strategy and we hope that this will be reflected in how the Member States work. We want to work in public private partnerships and engage industry and all the stakeholders and that's the way forward as we see it.

## Do you think the AAL JP is a good example of that in action and are you optimistic in terms of the future when it comes to programmes like this?

The AAL JP was created as a huge innovation and it was the first time we created a programme from scratch involving Member States, who invest together with the Commission, targeting an area with such a huge value to our society, where small companies address big problems and get access to good



# A better future for our elderly

**M**ike Biddle takes over as President of AALA from Professor Lena Gustafsson at the end of 2011, leading the programme into its most exciting phase yet, a time when results start to emerge and we see the real impact the work is starting to have on the elderly in our society. But, happy though Biddle is with progress so far, speaking after the Forum had closed he concedes that there is still much to be done.

## How did you find this year's forum?

Really interesting – I think some of the themes that are coming out seem to be quite cross-cutting and there seems to be general agreement that we need to be moving on from technology and products and start thinking about systems and services. The main theme has been social innovation, the business of innovation and the chain management that we need to put in place.

We need to consider what we should aspire to have in the future to allow people to live independently the way they want to. And we need to start to pull that through in terms of what that will mean, because everyone's going to have to change a little bit and if we can work out how we are going to change we can then work out what systems and services we need to support that. When we understand that better, we can work out what will come in in terms technology and products to enable that. That's the common message.

## Up till now, there has been a focus on products with AAL, so how has this sea change come about?

People have been looking at some of the demographic trends and thinking about what we need to do through the AAL JP and other programmes like the European Framework FP7 as well. And we've started to think about how some of these can come together. So, instead of saying 'if you had this technology, what would you do differently', you say 'these are things that are coming so what will you do differently and how can we have that conversation'.

We are almost at a tipping point where people see that we do need to do something different and it's starting to get past the research technology push and



Mike Biddle, the incoming president of AALA, is optimistic about the future

we're thinking about the market pull. That will happen more as the word spreads. There's quite a community around it but they're the people who knew it was coming and now they need to be looking to reach out.

## You talk about research and product push, surely that's what AAL JP's been about, how does AAL fit into market pull?

The AAL Joint Programme has always been about trying to connect the innovation space beyond the research base, so instead of more research it was always trying to apply the research and move things onwards into the market. If something finishes it shouldn't just be ready to be put in a box and go, but it should be at a point where you know it can scale up and roll out at volume.

There's common talk across this sector about the need to move past pilots and demonstrators, and that's just what we've been doing. There's have been lots of good examples of this across Europe, but nothing that's gone to scale yet. So now we're at the point where we can start thinking about how do you go to scale? AAL has always been at that point where its starting to pull things through a bit more, so instead of looking at things that are ten years into the future, it is looking at things that are two to three years out there.

In a nutshell, AAL has always been more focused on how to drive the innovation forward as opposed to research for its own sake.

## Another critical theme that seemed to emerge from the Forum was the need to engage across the generations as we look to address the challenges we face with our ageing society. Would you agree and if so, how can we involve everyone?

That is right, we do need to do more and should all start by involving ourselves in this process and ask ourselves not 'what do they want' but 'what do I want?'. I look at my retirement date about 30 years from now and I hope we will be doing things a lot differently then.

We ran a challenge in the UK, which involved school children and older people. One young boy stood up one day



and said: 'you can be young at eighty or old at 60' and that I think says it all. We need to move past thinking about age in terms of chronological age – we can be young at 80.

**But isn't that idea different to actually being realistic that people do have real problems when they get to a certain age, mobility, chronic disease, etc. Some don't, and we can increase those numbers, but isn't that a separate issue? We are still going to have to deal with certain aspects of ageing as a problem to manage?**

I think this is where the social innovation comes from, which is how do link the two? How do you make living more joyful? As you get to later years, yes you are going to need to support in various ways – you have probably a one in three chance of getting a long-term condition, but then your condition doesn't define you, age won't define you. If, for example, you have diabetes type 1 or type 2 at any age, there are ways of managing that and clearly you need to think about how you can manage it and what technology can do to support that. But you are not a diabetes patient, you are just someone who happens to have diabetes. That's the mindset change, which is starting to come.

**So it's a big year next year with the European Year of Active Ageing and with the EIP coming into force. How do you see AAL fitting into the whole innovation picture in Europe?**

It's a great opportunity for the AAL JP. What we're trying to do with the EIP is achieve the triple win, and try to move things closer to market in the innovation space, which I think is part of the space that AAL is occupying. We've just had our fourth call for proposals, so we're a toddler, we're finding our way a bit and we're starting to think what can we do there and I think the language of the EIP is helpful - Active and Healthy Ageing, it's a more positive outlook. I think that's where AAL can start to come in and help with that.

So as a partnership of 23 countries, we need to think about how we can move this field on, how can we move past the pilots and the demonstrators. A lot of the things that EIP is trying to do, and the Year of Active Ageing 2012 also supports, is to raise awareness. The programmes may be known about within the community but we need to go beyond that now so it's not just about information communications technology but about how we reach out to people in the health sector, the social sector, in housing sectors and every other relevant sector.

**Do you have a vision for that?**

That's why I think EIP and AAL JP have an opportunity to bring all those people together. It's only through a conversation and by involving people that we will have it, and we need to construct programmes so that people come together and identify the needs and then we can set the challenge for organisations to change, business to change and innovate, and we can then grow the SMEs. What's interesting about AAL is that 40-50 per cent of organisations that interact with the calls tend to be SMEs and as SMEs grow then so will we.

The other thing that's interesting about this agenda is that it won't just be one organisation that delivers it. When you're talking about support for people it will tend to be provided on a local and regional level – but as one speaker said, the principal thing we have for delivering care is our hands, and no matter what technology you have around, you are going to need people to deliver this, we are social beings. So we can build supply chains and build businesses but some of that will be realised locally with people on the ground.

**You sound very optimistic about AAL and about us growing older as a society, is that true?**

I tend to be optimistic anyway, but I think that ageing should be a joyful process and we can help make that happen, I think AAL can help to build the technology, the services and the systems and the companies which can take that forward. We do have work to do; the one thing we do know is that we have to change, but with change comes opportunity.

Overall I'm positive, some people might say we're in a crisis so now is not the time to invest in this, but the thing is, I come back to the word tipping point or pivot, it's not how do we do what we currently do, we'll make that cheaper or better, it's actually about what we need when we look at 2020, 2040 and so on – and all the statistics say we need to change.

There's always going to be a reason for not changing now, but that will never get you to the point where you end up with what you need to end up with.

**The AAL JP ends in 2013 and needs backing from the European Parliament, the Council, commitment from the Commission and support of its 23 member countries to carry on. Are you confident this will happen?**

We are a programme until 2013 and actually some of the projects that have been funded will run out in 2017, so these things go on. We have an opportunity to

take that forward and we need to think about how things are changing. We've learnt much in the last four years in terms of what is it that we need to do, what it is we need to modify, what we need to do more of or less of and what to focus on. Now we have the opportunity to look at what should come next, and in my mind that's not more of the same, it's about how we drive forward in a way that will have impact, so we move past pilots and demonstrators and start to look at delivery and deployment.

One of the measures politicians will look for is economic impact. Everything may be fantastic, but they want to see that tax payer's money is delivering jobs and income, taxes and everything else.

**It hasn't yet, when do you think we'll see that delivery?**

You're starting to see things here - various people were talking about concepts last year, now we're seeing things that can be realised. That makes sense – we were trying to find projects that would run for two to three years and now they were supposed to be two years from market, so in the next couple of years they will start to come through.

It is a longer game. You're right, evaluation and impact assessment will be an important thing to show but most people agree if you're investing in research and innovation you will drive things forward for the future. We need to show what that is and how we've achieved it.

**I've spoken to several people who've got products here and I've asked have new jobs been created by this work and some of them have said yes, we are employing people to do this. They are making money.**

Yes I think some of the connections are building, and it's events like this that show it's not so much about competing with everybody, it's working with what you can collaborate on. With the amount of investment we've had, that is going to create jobs and so on. What we need to do now is make sure that it's something sustainable. We all keep talking about sustainability in the context of the green agenda, I think in this space it's all about social sustainability and I think that fits with some of the social innovation that taking place.

Fundamentally though, and this is part of the triple-bottom line that people refer to in terms of sustainability, it's about economic sustainability, You're right that politicians and funders in the 23 countries and European Commissioners all need to see that we're delivering that, and we need to continue to take that idea forward and continue to deliver.

# A winning product to market

The Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme's very first Forum Project Award was a popular competition attracting a large audience to the *Dragon's Den* style inquisition of the four finalists and eager anticipation amongst delegates about who had picked up this precious prize.

The competition was, of course, tough, with so many projects meeting the judges' criteria, which was based on the level and quality of end user integration, the overall level of innovation and its market potential. The overall aim of the award was not only to reward what the judges considered to be the most valuable project based on those criteria, but to raise the overall awareness of AAL innovation as a whole.

The winner of the first Forum prize was the ExCITE project and its Giraff telepresence robot, designed to improve social interaction for the elderly.

Stephen Von Rump, founder and CEO of Giraff Technologies, spoke after receiving the honour of being AAL JP's very first project award winner. Just what did he think the award will mean for his innovative Giraff robot?

"The challenge that all of us have in this young industry is trying to get the technology over the hurdle into commercialisation," he said. "That's what a lot of these grants and goals are all about - getting this out of the laboratory and into the real world, into the commercial environment.

"The challenge for small start up companies like ourselves," he continued, "is always about how to get access to the market, access to customers, access to users and so on, and the ExCITE project for Giraff the company is all about getting early access to users, being able to make mistakes in a more friendly, controlled environment, and being able to come out with a product which is really tailored to user requirements.

"So that access and visibility have been really important for us, and certainly this award increases our visibility at the EU level, and hopefully gives us access to more customers and enables us to tailor the product and services even more."

The ExCITE project developed Giraff, a mobile telepresence device - 'Skype on wheels' as it has been dubbed. It allows



Stephen Von Rump is confident AAL products will make a difference

anyone, a family member, a friend, a professional care giver or even a doctor or a nurse to be able to virtually enter the home over the internet and conduct a natural visit there just as if they were actually coming to the door. It's certainly a novel approach to communication with the elderly and the bright blue device catches the eye. Von Rump is convinced older people will benefit a great deal from its presence in the home, while care givers and family members will also feel the benefits.

"We know for sure that social connectivity and avoiding isolation and loneliness is a major part of elderly care and in fact even contributes to physical wellbeing as well as emotional and mental wellbeing," he explained. "So the goal of the Giraff is to improve quality of life in the home and to extend the time that elderly people can remain in their own home safely and independently by allowing more people to participate in the care process. So that's what it means for the user, for the people in the home and those that care for them, it's all about quality of life."

A major contributing factor in winning the award and, something the judges honed in on during the Q&A session with the finalists, was the commercial viability of the projects and Von Rump's ambitious goals certainly impressed.

"One goal for any start-up company is always about raising money," he said. "But in terms of commercialisation now, our goal is to build and deliver into the market 100 Giraffs in the next 12 months. That's ambitious, but given that we now have a product that is getting rapidly tailored to user requirements, something that we think will be accepted in the market quickly, it's possible."

So how do people actually react to this big blue machine trundling around their homes? "Well, there's no question it's certainly something that needs a proper introduction and a bit of getting used to," conceded Von Rump. "The two most common points of feedback that we get from the elderly after using the Giraff in the home for a while, is number one - the simplicity. There's no user interface, there's nothing for them to do except press the button saying I want the visit, or I don't want the visit. Everything else is done by the person making the visit, coming from the charging station, going around the house, making the visit, entering the living room and then going back to the charging station when it's done.

"The second thing that elderly people say they like about the Giraff is that there is a feeling of control that they have, because they get to decide who has permission to visit them and under what circumstances. And it's a lot easier to say no when someone comes to visit on the Giraff than if someone is knocking at your door."

Needless to say, Von Rump thoroughly enjoyed the AAL Forum and left with renewed vigour and a determination that he will see Giraff succeed in helping the elderly stay connected, while at the same time make the company behind it commercially successful - the two cornerstones of the AAL programme. "It's certainly been a great event for us, and it seems for everyone," he said. "The talks, the exhibitions and the social events as well - it's been a great time.

"I think one thing that I've learnt is that the most valuable conversations and dialogues have been with those who are actually in the care practice, members of municipalities or health organisations," he added. "I would like to see us continue as an organisation to do things to encourage even more participation by those groups."