



# AAL FORUM 2015

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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# ➤ LEARNING FROM THE FORUM

Rafael de Andres Medina, President of the AAL Association

**W**e wanted to use the AAL Forum in 2015 to get a better understanding of the active ageing ecosystem, the challenges it creates and the opportunities it brings. We also wanted to look at what added value AAL can bring to that ecosystem and how AAL solutions will best benefit society, industry and individuals.

Of course, the best way to understand all this from every viewpoint is to involve those on the ground - the product developers, carers, researchers, investors, policy makers and, naturally, the end users.

With 650 delegates present at the Forum representing all those categories and given the chance to interact, debate, argue, discuss, plan, collaborate and brainstorm ideas, it is little wonder that the event has helped reinforce AAL's resolve to continue pushing our projects to deliver solutions to the market as well as help us understand more of what it is we do well and more of what it is we need to change.

We must remember that this is a huge economic opportunity for everyone involved in the ageing market. Collectively, older people have

€3bn to spend in Europe alone and as more of us are now living longer, this market can only grow. Meanwhile, care providers, both formal and informal, are open to the possibilities that technology brings to provide the support, security and help they need to look after older people either remotely or in the home.

So it makes absolute sense to involve all these users every step of the way when developing products, thinking up new ideas and entering the commercial realities of selling in the ageing market place. This is why another vital part of this Forum was the active participation of users and sessions focused on finding out what they think, what they want and what they are prepared to pay for.

The Forum provided us with the focus on which to discuss all these issues, while with innovations like the hackathon and the matchmaking sessions, it also provided fresh approaches to the sharing of ideas and collaborative possibilities. The fact that the hackathon was won by a team so young and optimistic is encouraging indeed.

With all this interaction and involvement of stakeholders, as well as a keen focus on business modelling and the support for ideas and entrepreneurship, I am convinced that we have come away from the AAL Forum 2015 with a much more rounded sense of what solutions we need for a better quality of life for older adults and how innovation and social inclusion should be at the heart of all we now do.

**"The forum provided us with fresh approaches to the sharing of ideas and collaborative possibilities"**





# AAL FORUM 2015

## Background and Executive Summary

**T**he AAL Forum 2015 took place in Ghent on September 22-25. The event was supported by the AAL Programme and the Flemish Agency for Innovation for Science and Technology IWT in collaboration with iMinds. More than 650 delegates registered and attended the event, while 28 exhibitors from across Europe also took advantage of the opportunity to highlight a wide collection of products and services developed for the AAL market.

The overarching theme of the annual event for 2015 was “Aspirations in Active Ageing - Engaging People, Services and Technology”. The intention was to examine ways that the AAL Programme can encourage and promote an improved connection

between the individual and the innovation. In doing this, we can expect the development of better technology products and services and by closing the gap between product development and the end user, the products being developed will become more attractive and wanted. This not only makes good business sense, but in doing so people will actually want to use the products, meaning they will be able to remain healthy and active and at home for longer into their lives.

With this focus clearly defined, the three-day event was organised with a high level of interactivity. 42 sessions took place over the two main days covering the central themes of education and training, the roll-out of solutions and trialling, connecting supply and demand, meeting the needs and hopes of older people, interoperability and the future of AAL.

The interactive nature of the sessions covering these themes proved popular among delegates. Presentations were made, but the emphasis was on open, honest discussion that delivered clear outcomes and lessons learnt. “The sessions I attended were open





people, get advice from academics, trainers and entrepreneurs and then design a solution or product for the AAL market. This part of the Forum was very popular and attracted significant interest from delegates, while the winning team impressed everyone with their grasp of the challenge related to social isolation, the agility with which they blended that challenge with a commercial opportunity, and the speed and ambition with which they planned to get the solution to market. The hackathon also highlighted another key theme that was a focus of attention for many delegates - the need for intergenerational collaboration, involving young people in the development process.

As always, the AAL award was also a key feature of the Forum, with three projects impressing a packed plenary session with the quality of their pitching and the way they handled tough questioning by the judges, the audience and through social media, all live on stage. The session clearly demonstrated the need for projects to collaborate with the target market and to have a clear and sensible business plan in place from the start of development. While not the most exciting pitch, the winning project - VictoryaHome - picked up the €5,000 first prize by impressing the judges with their business plan, projected income and expenditure and the fact that they had taken their product so close to market so quickly.

and honest,” said one delegate. “A lot of things were mentioned and discussed that many projects and industries would not like to talk about. So there were many lessons to learn from the mistakes that were discussed, while the feedback from the audience provided solutions for avoiding mistakes in the future.”

The exhibition of AAL solutions and products was also a key part of the event, with projects and related industries able to demonstrate their products and services to a receptive and lively audience. September 22 was a day devoted to the demonstration of these products to a group of older people, who were able to test and rate first-hand the solutions designed specifically with them in mind.

The exhibition floor also hosted digital poster sessions, held over the two days throughout the coffee and lunch breaks to ensure maximum participation. Projects were given the opportunity to present their products, deliver a digital poster and answer questions from the floor. It was informal and relaxed and the posters remained available to view and interact with via iPads located in the poster area.

The Forum’s first hackathon also took place over the three days, with teams able to interact with a target audience of older

**“The emphasis was on open, honest discussion that delivered clear outcomes and lessons”**

An extremely well received innovation for the Forum 2015 were the matchmaking opportunities provided by the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN). Here delegates were able to advertise their requirements for cooperation and arrange quick meetings with appropriate people to set up further collaboration efforts.

This Executive Summary provides an overview of the event from all key perspectives - with reports from key sessions involving the end user, the investor and reaching the market. Opinion and analysis is also published from all tracks, from the awards, from the hackathon and from the exhibition floor.

The publication also contains interviews with key stakeholders at the event. This content provides valuable background insight into the variety of opinion, analysis, advice and strategies that exists for AAL as it is now and for the future, how the opportunities in the active and healthy ageing (AHA) market can be best exploited, what users expect, attracting investment, co-creation, and the increasing mindset that AAL should

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**“Older  
people were able to  
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in mind”**

focus on the development of products and business strategies that adhere to the concept of agile ageing – not products for “them” but products we all need (or will need) and want.

The interviews provide a valuable cross-section of opinion, while comments from many delegates also add substance to the overall opinion of the AAL, the Forum, approaches to the challenges we face and ideas for developing these approaches we need to take.

Overall, there was a clear impression at the Forum that the new, more interactive format was well received. People liked the opportunity to contribute more to the sessions and

appreciated the often open and frank nature of the presentations that not only highlighted successes and solutions ready for exploitation, but exposed weaknesses and failures as well as, more importantly, a willingness to learn from them. People also appreciated the opportunity to contribute ideas to sessions that not only helped consolidate tried and tested methodologies but added to them. People felt they were making a difference.

There was also a determination by those involved in AAL projects to ensure a greater degree of end user involvement and more effective business planning within the current proposal structure, although there was also a significant groundswell of opinion that AAL should take a far more entrepreneurial approach, with shorter lead times, less bureaucracy, a focus on the idea rather than the process and a greater degree of business mentoring.

The matchmaking opportunities were extremely well received, with many delegates delighted with how the meetings went, the opportunities for real business they delivered and the speed and efficiency at which they were organised and processed. The hackathon too, was seen as a valuable innovation for the event and one that should be continued as a way of generating great ideas for the market and speeding up the process for getting those ideas funded for development.





# AAL FORUM 2015 GRAND OPENING

The opening ceremony of the AAL Forum is always an inspiring affair and with optimistic speeches and a real sense amongst the delegates that this would be a lively conference, 2015 got off to an interesting start



"By 2016 there will be  
**16 million robots**  
deployed specifically for care  
around the world"



Innovate UK's **Ilan Spero**, the moderator of the 2015 AAL Forum, welcomed the delegates and explained how this year's forum would be taking a more interactive form. One of the main aims of this gathering of minds was to create a consensus among all stakeholders about the best ways to move the AAL Programme forward. Encouraging dialogue with the wider public about active and healthy ageing is a vital step towards bringing the inventions and solutions of the programme into the mainstream, and this was an overriding theme of the event.

**Rafael de Andrés Medina**, President of the AAL Association, welcomed delegates to the Forum and thanked the organisers, sponsors and speakers for their participation and continued support. He went on to explain how the Forum 2015 would become a more interactive experience for all in an effort to gain a better understanding

of the AAL ecosystem and the challenges it faces.

He called for politicians, policy and decision makers at European, national and regional level, project partners, health and social sectors, carers, older adults, researchers and industry to meet together, interact and act as a catalyst for engagement and development in the healthy ageing market.

He emphasised the huge opportunity that exists in this market, but that it could only properly be exploited if the AAL tackles both the societal and economic challenges of Europe's demographic changes and keeps the social inclusion and empowerment of the older adults at the heart of all it does. Support for social care and health systems across Europe is also a vital ingredient for success.

Representing the Flemish government at the event was **Peter Persyn** who is involved in issues surrounding healthcare and education.

He recollected Ghent's long tradition of spearheading technological innovation events, giving the example of the Flanders International Technology Fair, first held in 1983 and started by the first ever elected president of the Flemish government Gaston Geens. This event helped spark the third industrial revolution in Flanders based on the idea that new possibilities offered from fields such as IT and biotech could help make a better life for all. This idea has had a tremendous impact around the world and the AAL Programme abides by these same values.

The Flemish government was one of the original bodies involved in the creation of the AAL, and that privileged position has allowed them to observe the evolution of the programme and garner valuable lessons. As has been mentioned often, Persyn highlighted the fact that the value chain in Europe remains far too long, which has all too often stifled the pathway from a new



invention to an affordable product available to the public. Modern technology evolves far too rapidly to allow for this, with last year's winners very quickly becoming today's losers, and so the process of turning a bright idea into something tangible must be shortened. Persyn called for a single European patent agency or bureau, which could help this situation, as at present there is no method of rapidly recognising patents as there is in the USA today.

**Annelies Storms**, Alderman of Ghent for Culture, Tourism and Events gave a short speech to describe the vibrant history of Ghent, a city where past and present collide but also remain in balance with each other. An economic

powerhouse in the middle ages second only to Paris, it has remained great city. The historic heart of Flanders is also widely regarded as the cultural epicentre of the region, with a pulsating music scene that has produced a number of excellent bands and artists over the years. Named as one of Lonely Planet's "must-see cities", it is truly one of Europe's hidden treasures, and the Alderman encouraged all delegates to take the opportunity to see the city while they were there.

Next to the plenary stage was the EC's **Zoran Stančič**. He told of the residents of his hometown near Ljubljana being awed at the rapid development that took place there many years ago, with the introductions of gyms and solariums signalling to them that their country was showing real signs of development. But, Stančič asked, what are the true signs of development within a community? He believes that care – the way in

which dependent people are treated, whether they are refugees, children or older adults – is an excellent measure of development. As such, he cited his pride in the AAL Programme, what it stands for, and its many achievements since its beginnings in 2007.

To move forward, he continued, the AAL Programme must be quicker in identifying opportunities in the market and acting upon them. By 2016 there will be 16 million robots deployed specifically for care around the world. By 2017, there will be 17 million smart homes helping people to live longer at home and more independently. These represent huge opportunities for developing products and services, and the AAL needs to work out how to scale up joint activities to bring real solutions to Europe. The EC has allocated significant funds in this area, and so another mission for AAL has to be to focus on the evolving needs of the market and supporting early user involvement in the development process.

The opening session ended with an inspiring speech by entrepreneur and co-founder of Cubigo - Geert Houben - who spoke about his time in Silicon Valley and the need for healthcare to become more like self-care, in a way that banking has become more user focused. You can read more about this on page 56.



Geert Houben  
tells his story

# ➤ FOSTERING INNOVATION IN THE AGEING SPACE

**Stephen Johnston** from Aging 2.0, a global innovation platform for ageing, spoke about his experience in the US and what is being done to foster innovation in the ageing space



**W**orking in San Francisco, you learn the Silicon Valley attitude that technology is simply a way of facilitating better living. Technology

and ageing are shaping our world. The unprecedented demographics of the future are set to have a significant impact on our society, and technology has the potential to help us cope with this.

Just 20 years ago, the world was undergoing a rapid upheaval, with the first websites appearing and mobile phones beginning to hit the mainstream. Since then, a lot has changed, but not just in terms of technology. Life expectancy has increased by six years globally, bringing with it significant changes to society. The challenge is to make it easier for older people to remain engaged with society. If this is not done, fundamental problems with economic growth will occur.

With these demographic changes, it is obvious that new challenges in terms of care will have to be tackled. One third of people born in 2015 in UK will get dementia in their lifetime. It is now a \$600bn global problem, almost equal with cancer and cardiovascular disease. As a society, we will have to learn to innovate around this new



reality. This will involve bringing care into the community through strategies such as telecare. Keeping people gainfully employed, physically active and out and about will also be a challenge. These are all key to combatting loneliness, a huge problem in the US which has been linked with direct health consequences.

The writer William Gibson famously said, “The future has already arrived – its just unevenly distributed.” Indeed, there are already a number of technologies existing in the marketplace today at the cutting edge of innovation that can help to improve quality of life and quality of care. Avatar-based services are able to deliver services remotely, triaging people at home without them having to come into hospital. Some even have microexpression recognition technology, so they will know whether a patient is being truthful or not when they say they’ve taken their medicine!

Driverless cars come under the same umbrella. In a survey, one of the biggest fears of older adults in America was losing their ability to drive. It leaves them isolated from the wider community, especially if access to public transport is difficult. Driverless cars can help to keep them integrated with society and allow them to stay independent. As well as this, clever new algorithms are currently being developed which can coordinate carpooling using Uber cars, creating an affordable and easily accessible alternative to public transport.

Despite all this technology existing, we don’t yet live in a “tech utopia”. Many of these companies that already have an incredible opportunity to improve the lives of older adults don’t even realise that they’re in the ageing space. They need to think about how older adults can use their technology, test their products with them and include them in their overall corporate strategic focus.

Aging 2.0 has been working over the last four years with around 1000 companies, and the same barriers to market come up time and time again. 25 year olds can be passionate about changing the world for older adults, but many of them do not really understand what an 85 year old with dementia needs. Access to pilots needs to be improved – hospitals and care homes are currently reluctant to open their doors to for-profit companies. This lack of trust is limiting innovation and stopping people with good ideas from testing and scaling their concept.

Distribution is probably the biggest barrier. The ageing space is very fragmented – it doesn’t just involve taking an app, putting it on iTunes and making it available to millions of people in an instant. There are a lot of difficulties that must be overcome to scale a product to market. Business models also need to be improved to create more incentive for companies, and funding remains an issue for many ventures.

Aging 2.0 has been taking these challenges and creating programmes around them to support them. For example, there is a panel of around 800 consumers, and events such as challenges at universities and hackathons get older adults into a room talking to innovators, creating intergenerational conversations that help people understand the problems that need to be solved.

Then there is the concept of co-creation. Innovators, consumers and industry – these are three parts of the conversation that can work together to make a difference. People need to get products out there once they have a basic idea so that they can test it with all stakeholders, changing things iteratively until they eventually create a valuable product.

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**“Many companies have  
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# ➤ YOUR THOUGHTS FROM THE FLOOR

The exhibition space at the ICC in Ghent this year was alive with new projects, new ideas and new faces. The conscious effort to move towards a more interactive Forum had clearly been taken to heart, with a number of eye-catching demonstrations and poster presentations making up what was the most engaging AAL Forum exhibition to date.

This year we spoke to many of you on the floor about your thoughts about this year's exhibition, the Forum in general, and what you think that AAL can do to increase its engagement with the general public.

**"We can create new things  
for the future  
with our research,  
but older adults  
need things today"**

"Once your project has ended, stay in charge of your invention.

Don't think that people will appear, as if by magic, and just make it happen for you. Just having an SME in your consortium doesn't make the transfer to market an easy proposition.

There is no magic recipe, no defined route that if you follow you will be successful. There is a lot of legwork, but you must do it yourself - take the risk, keep in control and take your ideas into the world. As a scientist, that is your duty these days, so don't trust someone else to do it for you"







“There are five years of AAL projects now and people complain that this has not resulted in enough products reaching the market. We need to change the way we decide what to fund. If you keep having the same evaluation criteria, if you keep approving the same proposals in the same way, you will have the same results”

“We need a more agile approach. Look at the idea first and then start to find the missing pieces. So, start with a very short, two-page pitch for an idea; then apply an accelerator programme. Appoint expert AAL coaches to help them complete the process - fill in the documents, help find the missing parts, develop a business proposition and then look at funding”



**“What happens now is that you have to identify and find the missing parts yourself, you have to write the overall solution,**

**find partners and then make a full proposal.**

**It's hoop after hoop.**

**Too many great ideas are thrown out because the proposal is not good”**



**"If we want to engage with  
the wider world  
then we need to be getting  
our products out there and  
testing them with the public.  
We need to  
work together  
with people to make  
products that  
they will love"**



**"We are now  
connecting devices  
to create holistic systems  
that can react in real  
time with more sources of  
information. This year we are  
seeing more systems  
interoperating with open standards  
and commonly known protocols"**





“Its very difficult for people to see themselves getting old. When people talk about ageing they think about their parents or grandparents. We need to come up with ways of connecting our work with everyone”



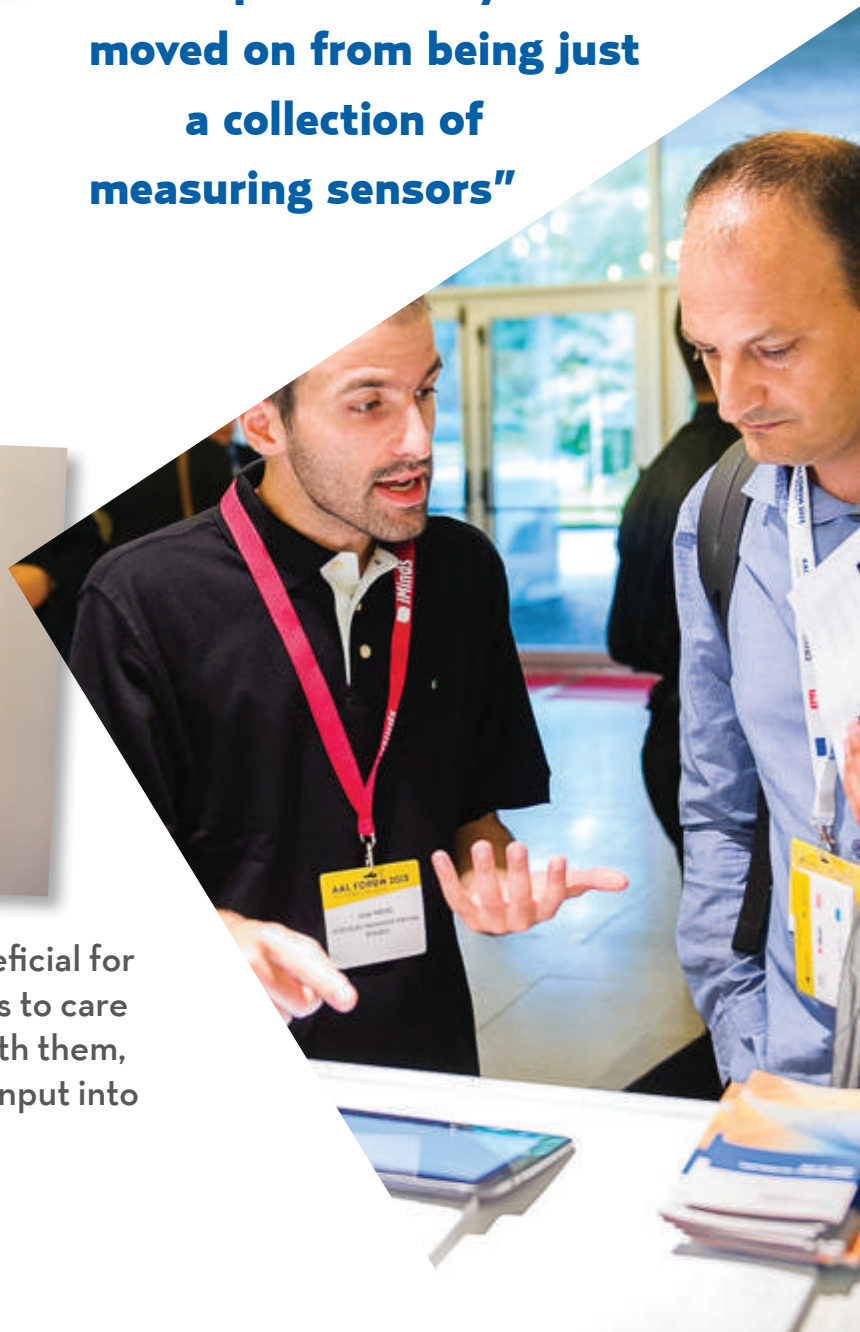


“Avatars are one way to deal with human interaction, but they are not the only way of doing things. In many cases people react better to simple emotional representations such as smileys and emoticons, and this should be integrated into products”



“Working with a care association is beneficial for both parties. The researchers get access to care workers and credibility from working with them, while the care association gets to have input into products that they need”

“This year we are seeing a lot **more focus** on how systems can react not just to physical aspects **of people’s lives** but also to the mental aspects – they have moved on from being just a collection of **measuring sensors**”





# ➤ IMINDS HEALTH: PAVING THE WAY FOR DIGITAL HEALTH

iMinds – the digital research and incubation centre of Flanders – was one of the co-hosts of the AAL Forum 2015. Involved in a number of research projects in the healthcare domain such as Care4Balance and LittleSister, it played a key-role in introducing the increased levels of interactivity at this year’s event



**W**ith more people living longer than ever before and chronic disease on the rise, traditional healthcare systems are being pushed to their limits. Scarce medical resources are struggling to meet rapidly increasing patient demands. It is generally acknowledged that the concept of digital health can help to address this issue, with digital technologies empowering people to better track and manage their health. As such, digital health can personalise and optimise treatments while reducing medical inefficiencies and costs.

But before the full potential of digital health in all its facets – personal, societal and economic – is realised, a number of barriers need to be overcome; an effort to which iMinds is largely contributing. “Digital health is one of iMinds’ focus domains. Through our focus on the development of advanced health and clinical decision-support systems – and the removal of their technological and societal adoption barriers – we make sure that consumers, healthcare professionals, patients and policy makers can exploit digital health’s full potential,” says Roger Lemmens, Director of iMinds Health.

Thanks to its broad skillset covering research and entrepreneurship activities, and its facilitating role in the healthcare landscape, iMinds is uniquely positioned to realise important breakthroughs in this space. As the digital research and incubation centre, it combines the strength of its 900+ researchers at five Flemish universities to conduct strategic and applied research. Together with its research partners (companies, governments and non-profit organisations), iMinds translates digital know-how into concrete products and services. In addition, iMinds supports researchers, young entrepreneurs and start-ups in the successful market introduction of their ideas.

*For more information, please visit [www.iminds.be/health](http://www.iminds.be/health) (Twitter: @iMinds).*

# ➤ THE INTERACTIVE SESSIONS

AAL is a diverse area of research and innovation, and this year's Forum's selection of speakers and activities reflected this. The interactive sessions were divided into six themed tracks that covered the wide area of work being done in this field, with activities ranging from brainstorming and open ended idea sessions to more traditional talks with Q&A sessions

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## Rolling out field trials

Field trials are essential for improving market uptake of later-stage innovative solutions of AAL businesses. Living labs across Europe can help to create a smart health ecosystem, and including older adults in the design process of new projects helps to create products that people want and will buy. The sessions in this track looked at all aspects of field trials within the AAL ecosystem, exploring people's experiences with them and how they can be improved in the long term.

## Education and training

The AAL Forum aims not only to bring people together and showcase some of its more successful projects, but also to provide valuable education and training to the delegates. The sessions in this track covered a wide range of topics including successful implementation, applied gaming,

entrepreneurship, cooperation between stakeholders, and creating successful business models.

## Connecting supply and demand

Commercialising AAL projects and successfully bringing the solutions to market has been a much-discussed topic at the forums of recent years. The "Connecting supply and demand" track this year continued exploring the many aspects of this important issue, assessing what makes a product or solution successful, the best ways to attract investment from the right source, and methods for bridging the gap between procurers and suppliers.

## The future of AAL

The direction in which the AAL Programme moves in the coming years is of interest to all. Topics under discussion included how to overcome AAL market barriers, the positive





effect that avatars can have on user engagement, the move towards highly customised solutions, and ideas about possible challenges for the next call of the AAL Programme. There was also a brainstorming session on the obstacles that have kept valuable data sets from being made available to researchers.

### **Matching older adults' aspirations**

Understanding what older adults want to maintain their independence and happiness and then translating that into solutions is the very core of what AAL is about. Putting this idea into practice is easier said than done, however, with a number of common pitfalls that stop from providing the user with what they need. This track included sessions on the importance of living labs, the latest developments and ethics of sensor monitoring, and the best ways to translate stakeholder requirements into products and services.

### **Interoperability resolved**

Interoperability between platforms and their components will allow for AAL solutions to be used in conjunction with each other to improve the overall experience for older adults. The concept promises to deliver excellent results if achieved, but there are many issues that prevent this from happening. This track explored how interoperability can be achieved in the future and what is currently holding it back.



# ➤ THE FLEMISH CARE LIVING LABS EXPERIENCE DAY

The Tuesday before the Forum kicked off saw IWT, the Flemish government's innovation agency, invite 300 participants from the elderly care sector to the ICC to join in a day of activities alongside older adults designed to showcase some of their success stories and encourage interaction between end users and the people working to make solutions for them

"I was **very happy**  
to try out the things I was  
shown and **even happier**  
that they could **help me** at home"





**T**he Flemish government has recognised ageing as one of the major societal challenges to be tackled. To support this policy, the government's innovation agency IWT has started initiatives such as Flanders' Care and the Care living labs as the flagships of their challenge-driven innovation policy.

To make their work more tangible and as an illustration of their success, the six Flemish Care living labs organised an Experience Day on the Tuesday before the Forum. About 300 participants from the broad elderly care sector came to the ICC to be submerged into a complete experience consisting of demonstrations, workshops and interactive sessions. The participants represented care facilities, older adults, care professionals, policy makers and researchers.

Properly engaging with older adults is one of the most important aspects of any work being done in the ageing space. Without dialogue between the people who create the solutions and the people who use them, the needs of the user will never truly be supported. The Experience Day offered opportunities for both sides, allowing the older adults to see some of the solutions that have been created to help them live independently, while also giving people making the solutions invaluable time to receive feedback and come up with new ideas.

AAL projects that took part in this additional day of activity were delighted with the opportunity to interact with the people they are designing products and solutions for. Meanwhile, one of the older people present remarked that she had no idea this work was going on but was "very happy to try out some of the things I was shown and even happier if they could help me at home".



**"Properly engaging with older adults is one of the most important aspects of any work being done in the ageing space"**



# HOW TO CATCH THE INVESTOR'S ATTENTION

The investment community is massively diverse. Investment can come from many sources, whether it is from venture capitalists, crowd funding or simply borrowing from family and friends. In a session in the Connecting Supply and Demand track, delegates – mainly entrepreneurs in this case – were given the chance to gain some valuable insight from a range of investors about how to successfully attract funding

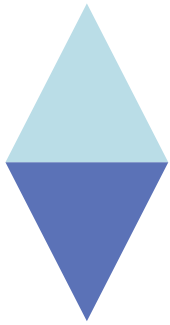
**T**he session began with a question to Cécile Real of Medevice about how a group can attract attention from investors. Real made it clear that clarity is essential. If you want to win the confidence of an investor, you must be able to explain the idea, the target market, the steps that need to be taken to get the product out, and the role that the investor will be expected to play in the relationship. “I want to know that the person I’m talking to has thought about the connection between the technology they’re using and the market,” she said. “The technology must be molded to fit the demands of the market, because the market will not adjust itself to fit the technology.”

Stephen Johnston of Aging 2.0 then gave some fascinating insights into the differences between the US and European markets. The

US has tended to put its money into health and wellness, making products that are legitimately desirable for a broad spectrum of ages. Although not specifically designed for older adults, Johnston believed that this strong consumerisation is a more effective strategy, as the products are ultimately more in line with what people want. As he put it, “old people don’t want products designed for old people.”

On the other hand, the US government takes a more backseat approach in terms of its involvement with the ageing space. Johnston recounted that he had never been invited to sit on a panel or appear at a forum in the US as he had in Europe. Top down activities in Europe are in general far superior, with better integrated healthcare, equality, public transport and more innovative business models. All of these assets are there to be taken advantage





## “Without traction, a company is still essentially an idea”

of, and they need to be combined with the American panache for creating products that people love.

Having the right team around you is always important in business. Paul Pelsmaeker of Digital Health Innovation Hub has been involved in a number of AAL projects, and he highlighted the fact that although it is often necessary to have many partners in a consortium to develop a good solution, it is also important that everyone’s roles beyond the development side of the project are clearly defined. “You need to ask yourself: do we have a team to take us to market? Do we have the right strategic partners and dissemination experts?”

Johnston expressed doubts at the practicality of investing in a consortium of organisations, saying that it would be almost impossible to turn such a group into a viable

business that was scalable. He suggested that this method works excellently at the research stage but that the model must be transitioned into something more streamlined once commercialisation of the product becomes the main focus. Real agreed with this view, saying that as an investor dealing with eight groups, it would be hard to have confidence without knowing specifically who was going to exploit the project outcomes.

Today’s market for ageing is approximately between €200-300m – relatively small. As an entrepreneur looking to get a product funded, is it better to target existing markets such as the pharmaceuticals or healthcare ICT industries, worth €1.4tn and €50bn respectively? The panel all certainly thought so, and also pointed out that there are a great number of successful products out there already which could be perfect for older adults but have yet to be oriented towards them. The one way to actually create a new market would be if all medical data in Europe was shared. Services could then be created off the back of this data.

As the session became more interactive with some lively discussion between the panel and the audience, a few key points emerged. When seeking investment, one should have a good knowledge of the group or person they are seeking investment from. It is important to know how much knowledge the investor has of the market. If they are not going to be able to give any more input further than financial backing, they may not necessarily be the right investors.

Finally, the issue of traction was discussed. Investors know that the companies that end up being most successful are the ones that have already developed some sort of relationship with their customers, whether that be through revenue or simply through pilots. Without this traction, the company is still essentially an idea with no implementation, and the entire panel was in agreement that traction with the target market was the one of the first things that any investor looks for.



# ➤ SUPPORTING THE ENTREPRENEUR

Investor **Shabs Rajasekharan** believes AAL should be supporting its entrepreneurs and helping them get their products to market

**S**habs Rajasekharan of Smarter Futures was at the Forum looking for products with promise and people with a passion for developing their ideas. He found many of those people and some of those products exciting, but what he feels now is that more work needs to go into getting products to market that older people actually want and, more importantly, will buy.

The entrepreneur and social investor was looking to raise capital for an impact investment fund his company Smarter Futures has set up to support other entrepreneurs with brilliant ideas and a dedication to getting those ideas to market. He was also looking for products that can generate traction and consumer demand and to get those products to market quickly.

Rajasekharan approached this task believing that AAL projects and the solutions they produced face one major problem in achieving this market penetration. "I saw issues in scaling up with a lot of these solutions in this market," he says. He believed it was not really seed





money that was problem, but it was scaling up funding that was needed. "Once you have a product or prototype that works, how can you scale it up?" he used to ask.

After speaking with delegates at the AAL Forum 2015, however, Rajasekharan soon realised that maybe scaling up funding was not the issue here at all. "What I think is really needed are good teams that have great ideas, that have sweated it out already and have a real understanding of what the consumer demand is for their solution," he now says. "These teams are not going to be necessarily looking for investment, but will be wanting to take their solution to the next stage."

He believes there are many barriers to prevent the scaling up of AAL products, and they are not necessarily to do with money. "Often no one actually wants the product," he says. "It's gone through numerous focus groups, lots of testing with these groups over a year and a half or so and there is a business plan in place. But after three years, when the project is finished and they want to launch it, no one actually wants to buy it."

"I believe the reason for that is because often it has not actually been tested with real consumers but has been tested in a fabricated testing labs," he continues. "And maybe these labs prove that the product works and people like it, but maybe these labs also simply provide projects with the answers they want? So when it goes out into the real world, nobody really wants it. This is a barrier to success for AAL products."

Rajasekharan identifies other barriers for AAL products as well: "There are many things that hold up commercialisation," he says. "Regulation and reimbursement, standardisation and the fragmented European market are just some."

He has a very clear mind about how AAL should be approaching this dilemma of

shortening the gap between innovation and market and one he believes will help projects overcome these barriers.

"I think the way that AAL should approach this market is by stepping back and taking advantage of the community it has already developed. There are a lot of very talented people here, with great ideas, so let's find the ideas and let's give those with the best ideas the support they need, providing them with mentoring and advice," he says, outlining his vision. "They will need help with meeting the consumers, testing their ideas

Shabs Rajasekharan speaks up at the second plenary session



out in the market and other strategic support and that is what AAL must be doing more of as they have the network in place - living labs, care organisations, researchers, industry, for example. It's not just about money. I think money is often a disincentive."

It's a compelling argument and one that would seem to make sense if we consider how industry develops successful products and gets people to buy them. But getting products to market is a risky business and some of the things that need to be done to develop a product, test it in the market and prepare it for the market do cost money. So who should shoulder that risk?

"The first person who should take the risk is the entrepreneur," explains Rajasekharan. "If that person is not willing to invest in what they believe in, then why should anybody else? This is how it should be and that is how it is in the US. The majority of products that have emerged from the US have been funded when there is a demonstrable capacity and a demand."

Rajasekharan was impressed by the people he met at the Forum, the ideas and passion they had and some of the products they have developed.

"I saw an iPad that has been developed specifically for elderly people so they can use it very easily - the interface is simple, with icons and large letters, while in the backend it has been designed not to shut down and not lock the screen. I think this has potential," he admits. "I have not looked at it all in great detail, but I have met the person behind it and he doesn't want investment and that for me is the first great thing about this. He has been self-financing for the past five months while the product has been developed and they now want to get it out into the market and see what happens.

"That is something that AAL should look at and see what they have to help and support people like this, put them in touch with partners in terms of living labs or care organisations where the device can be tested."

With the growing ageing market and the commercial opportunities that brings, Rajasekharan is convinced that it is this sort of entrepreneurial risk taking and dedication that will eventually deliver the products that older people will want to use and buy.

**"Let's give those with the  
best ideas  
the support they need "**





Whether Europe has those entrepreneurs who can do it their own way is a big question, but Rajasekharan believes they are here and if they are prepared to listen and learn, then he believes they offer the best solution for addressing the challenges of the ageing population and they will deliver what is needed into this market. “Then you will see things start to appear on the market that the ageing population really does want,” he adds.

While developing products the elderly population want to buy is important, when it comes to health and care services, there will be many products that they may not want, but they will need – some of the medical devices being developed, for example. No one really wants those things, but they may well need them. This is another big market opportunity and once again Rajasekharan believes Europe can learn from what is happening in America.

“Even though people may not want certain things, they will end up buying them or being prescribed them,” he said. “For these products it would be useful to engage with doctors during development because they know exactly what many elderly people will need and the market here is huge.

“That’s another difference between here and the US,” he continues. “Because the doctors there have to watch their costs so tightly, they are beginning to innovate themselves and invest in ideas from entrepreneurs. I have seen this recently, where the physician is the investor, the person who will put his time, money and effort into helping an entrepreneur validate his hypothesis.”

## **“AAL has the network in place – living labs, care organisations, researchers, industry. It’s not just about money”**

Rajasekharan is keen to see more business people at the Forum. “Someone told me that the AAL Forum was a great place to come to for this market as it brings a lot of people together,” he explains. “And it is true that a lot of different people do come here and so I would really like to see more investors who are interested in social impact come to the event next time as well as more care organisations, family officers and people like that.

“I think then we will see more people asking the right questions, like ‘how many paying customers do you have?’ because that is what an investor would ask.

“I will also come back with entrepreneurs next time, to see if the AAL community can support them and their ideas – because the support facility is here and entrepreneurs could really take advantage of that.”

## **JOIN THE NOW WITH THE FUTURE**

Sylvie De Smet,  
Manager, FamilyEye

It’s important for the future that AAL works together with all the companies who participate in their funded projects. They need to collaborate with them in one direction, fast forward and not look back or at what others are doing.

I see AAL as a good way to collaborate with the people you need to work with and to create the things we need. Everybody is talking about ageing, but just looking forward we need to consider what people need now and what they will need in the future and we need to join these things up.

## A HELPING HAND FOR INNOVATION

IWT, the innovation agency of the Flemish Government, was one of the main sponsors of the AAL Forum this year, and has been heavily involved in its activities since its inception. Offering financial support, advice and networking opportunities to research centres and entrepreneurs, it has helped to develop several initiatives to drive innovation in the ageing space. **Veerle Lories** was representing IWT at this year's forum to promote its work and meet likeminded people from across Europe to discuss the best ways to improve penetration and adoption of new solutions

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### Can you explain a bit more about your involvement within AAL and the ageing space?

IWT is the innovation agency of the Flemish Government. It is a member of AAL and has been closely involved in AAL activities since its inception.

As a funding agency, IWT helps companies and research centres to innovate and implement research and development projects. We offer them financial support, advice and a network of potential partners in Flanders and abroad. We also support the Flemish Government in its innovation policy. Ageing is seen as one of the major societal challenges to be tackled and as a consequence new initiatives such as Flanders' Care and the Care Living Labs have been developed. They are the flagships of the challenge-driven innovation policy of recent years.

### What do you look for when you invest in something - both in terms of the idea and the people involved?

In our funding schemes priority is given to projects with a higher risk and a greater expected impact in Flanders on an economic and societal level. Any enterprise – be it an SME, the Flemish branch of a multinational company, or a social profit sector organisation – may request funding. The only condition is that the enterprise should have the capacity to exploit the result to a sufficient extent and hence create enough impact in the form of employment and other economic and societal

Veerle Lories



returns. We generally prefer collaborative initiatives, bringing together research partners, enterprises and societal stakeholders.

### Stephen Johnston in a session earlier at the Forum said unless a product has traction it doesn't warrant investment. Would you agree with that?

We fully agree with this statement. This is the reason why IWT is continuously looking for substantial potential return and added value in the projects that are submitted to us for funding. With the funding we are trying to make up for the knowledge risks that the innovators are taking.



### How do you create dialogue with the general public about the issues surrounding active and healthy ageing?

IWT is an active partner in Flanders' Care. Flanders' Care is a coordinating platform that aims to improve the quality of care through innovation and to stimulate responsible entrepreneurship in the care economy. The Flanders' Care platform collects all relevant information on care and active and healthy ageing initiatives and communicates it to all stakeholders, including user groups and the general public. This is done through media, events, strategic workshops and more.

One great example of engaging in dialogue with older adults was the organisation of an 'experience day' by the Care Living Labs, which are funded by IWT. It took place the day before this year's AAL Forum, inviting potential users to get to know the activities and results of the care innovation projects of the living labs. See page 20 to read about this interactive user session.

### What do you think is lacking in terms of real market penetration and the adoption of these solutions? How do you think this can be improved?

The care markets are fragmented. This is related to the funding of the care actors and the regulation in the different regions and member states in Europe. A more consistent funding and regulatory framework would

contribute a great deal to the development of a single care market.

On a smaller scale, we can promote the penetration and adoption of new solutions by improving contacts and collaborations between care providers, care users, knowledge centres and the business community. The better that these actors know one another and collaborate, the faster innovative solutions for the care sector will get into day to day practice.

### Is there anything else you would like to add about the relationship you have with AAL, iMinds and active and healthy ageing in general?

Active and healthy ageing is a goal for all of us. It is not that difficult to convince people of the necessity to invest in the quality of life of older people. We all know some older people and one day, hopefully, we will be one of them ourselves. Moreover the societal costs that coincide with ageing are increasing rapidly. Investing in the development of new services, new tools and new products which enable us to fulfil these expectations and manage the costs is the way to move forward, and this is exactly what iMinds Health and AAL are aiming to do. IWT will, on behalf of the Flemish government, keep on being their active and supporting partner in doing so.

**"We can promote the adoption of new solutions by improving contact between all actors in the ageing space"**

## ➤ AND THE VOTES ARE IN

One of the more interactive sessions was one where users and customers were asked to assess AAL solutions designed for people with dementia or mild cognitive impairments (MCI). Though sometimes let down by the technology, the session proved a useful exercise in understanding the complexities of user responses and there were some valuable conclusions to take away

Two of the key themes of the AAL Forum 2015 were interactivity and engagement with the end user. Interactivity, of course, buzzed through the conference centre throughout the two days, with sessions abandoning the standard presentation followed by questions and answers format and adopting a far more brainstorming approach, with delegates sitting around tables in small groups eagerly discussing the topic in hand and liberally sticking post-it notes to whatever space was left.

Engaging the user was a theme at the heart of a session designed to

give AAL projects the opportunity to present their ideas and solutions to people with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and dementia. The session gave the audience the opportunity to rate the product that had been presented to them using a simple app that asked the following questions:

- Is the solution useful?
- Is the solution easy to use?
- Is the solution attractive?
- Does the solution sufficiently respect privacy?
- Would you buy/rent this solution when it's on the market?





Multiple choice answers were available for each question and the session provided some surprising answers for the projects to consider when planning further commercial exploitation of their products.

The afternoon opened with some remarks from Louise Richardson, a former vice-president of AGE Platform. "Information flowing through the EU and into all countries will lead to better lives for older people," she began. "Technology is now part of all our lives," she continued. "So we have to innovate in this space using this technology - some will fail and others will succeed and this will help push things forward. What is clear though, is that we must take risks.

"AAL is an interesting programme," she continued. "From a user perspective, we now have to make decisions based on the technology and its commercial potential. So the programme is bringing together people working on technologies, SMEs, policy makers and, of course, users, and together projects must produce products that are sellable to older people. Proposals must reflect this and must be commercial.

"To be commercial, we must know when developing the product whether or not potential buyers will actually spend their money on it. So we must work collaboratively, with older people and old people's organisations. Older people need to be real participants and not just used to test products further on down the line."

Many AAL projects focus on the needs of people with MCI and dementia and this session was designed to understand how different projects involve users, reflecting their wishes, desires and needs in the development of their solutions, how users have been involved in the testing of them and what business plans have been put in place to take the products to the relevant markets.

The session was also designed to see if this approach had been successful

## ➤ THE ELDERLY VOICE MATTERS

Louise Richardson



In all AAL projects we have users who are participants, which is usually adequate and the AAL has made this part of the criteria for participation in the programme.

The question now is how can we better get these people involved so that we can get valuable feedback on the products being developed and, more importantly, establish whether or not people are going to be willing to pay for them.

We need to link in with the organisations who support and work with these types of people and to keep on building on the very basic theory that the voices of all elderly people, no matter what their mental or physical state is, are important. These voices are vital for the development of the right products and services we all need. The elderly have to see themselves as participants and all members of all AAL project consortia must also see them as participants and not simply as buyers.

Projects must work with organisations involved with the elderly, both formal and informal, community and institutional and make them understand that their voice matters

**"We need to establish whether people are willing to pay for the products being developed"**

by asking potential users attending the proceedings whether or not they would actually buy and use the products presented by the projects.

Geja Langerfeld, national contact person of the AAL Programme in the Netherlands and organiser of the interactive session, started the next phase by asking for a few facts and figures about the audience present. Most were aged 20-49, used ICT often or sometimes but most very rarely, if ever, used eHealth services.

The demonstrations then started with each project given 10 minutes to present their product to the audience, who then had the opportunity to rate each product using the app.

One of the solutions examined was the 2PCS system, presented by Lennart Köster. This is a wearable device in the shape of a watch and designed for people losing mobility and social interaction. Older people

# “From a user perspective, we now have to make decisions based on the technology and its commercial potential”

often have a sense of subjective insecurity – fear of falling, fear of being a burden – and this, the project believes, is helped by knowing that help is, quite literally, on hand.

The device has a number of functions, including an SOS button, mobile fall detector and speech communication. It operates indoors and outside without the need to apply different settings to give the user greater mobility and freedom.

The product is still in development, but there will be two versions available – a business and home edition for people living in care and a private edition for people at home with informal carers.

Voting reflected a strong feeling in the room that the system still looked a little like a monitoring device that older people may not want to wear as it indicates very strongly that they are old, infirm and may need help.

## ➤ KEEP TALKING TO THE PEOPLE WHO WANT YOUR PRODUCT

Johan Bengtsson, CEO, Cogknow



enjoyed this interactive session, although I had hoped that there would be more users involved. We were asked to present our solutions to end users and there were only our peers present. I see these people all the time and can talk to them at events like this so it would have been nice if more elderly people were there so we could get their feedback on our work. That would be something to consider for the next time.

Of course, we have already learnt a lot from our potential future customers. We are aiming our product at people with mild cognitive impairments. So we have



Something more discreet may be a better solution, it was voiced. The vast majority, however, did find the device useful and simple to use and 66 per cent found it reasonably attractive. But, when it came to whether or not people would pay for the solution, 80 per cent said only perhaps or no.

The session ended on a positive note for 2PCS, when it was pointed out that in five years everyone will have an interactive watch like the Apple Watch and will be happy and familiar with interacting with a watch. "It will be normal behaviour."

The VIRTASK project offered the most extreme indication that being an attractive product that people like is not always a guarantee that people will want to pay for it. VIRTASK consists of a range of avatars on screens that respond to voice, facial expressions and gestures and offer a variety of services designed to help the

older person in the home – prompting when medication is due to be taken, suggesting meals and suggesting activities, for example. It also can carry out day-to-day chores, automatically drawing curtains and switching lights on and off.

A variety of avatars have been designed for different markets. Anne, for example, is blonde and has blue eyes and has been specifically designed for the Dutch market and is on sale for the basic package at €1,500 euro. The team is looking for a subscription option, too.

In the voting, the majority of users found the avatar both useful and attractive, but when it came to whether or not they would buy it, most were un-persuaded with 30 per cent saying no.

The session ended with a lively debate about the conclusions to be drawn. It was agreed that a good

variety of projects had been put forward, displaying a great deal of creativity and good ideas being put into practice. And from that, we should conclude that older people will want different things – a wide variety of products will be needed and not every one of them will tick every box for every older person.

In terms of user interaction, it was agreed that as we are all potential users, we all need to join the discussion about what we need, what we want and what we are prepared to pay for.

People, however, seem loath to pay for the products, which was one of the more interesting conclusions. People are interested in the ideas and the theories, but they are slow to see the need to pay. "We need to change this," said one delegate. "If we want a good quality of life, we have to pay. We are going to have to invest into our old age."

to make the solution much more simple to use than you would ever imagine yourself. What we find easy to use is a huge thing for people with dementia.

So the need to simplify the solution maybe four or five times during development has been our biggest learning curve. And even then, when we think we have simplified it enough, we go back and it is still too complicated.

It is always somewhat of a dilemma when you are developing new technologies or new applications for technology because you are with the front runners and when the solution actually goes to market, that's another couple of years. But we now have a new generation of elderly who are much more familiar with technology and all the devices we have around us so it will be interesting to see if they actually start using the solutions we are developing.

One clear point that is emerging is that people seem quite happy to consider certain technologies when they don't have to pay for them, but as soon as they realise it would cost money, they make it clear they don't want it. This has everything to do with needing the products. When people don't actually need the product right then, they look

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**"It would have been nice if more elderly people were there so we could get feedback"**

at it and say, 'no, I wouldn't pay for that'. I didn't want to pay for online storage space two years ago because I didn't need it. Now I get a message from Google that my storage is full, so what would you like to do; find another solution or pay me some money? Of course, I pay them because now I need it and it's more convenient.

I think it's the same with these solutions – when people need them, they will pay for them. It's the same with privacy issues. There is always a lot of talk about privacy when discussing this technology. We have done some research into this issue with our customers and they see privacy as something you trade. So if you need help, you trade in a little privacy and they don't see a problem with this.

So, as with all these things, you really need to talk to the actual client who wants to use your product. It is these people who will give you the valuable information you need in this market.

## BUILDING A HOME

Architecture is an important consideration in promoting ambient assisted living in the home. One of the “Education and Training” track sessions focused on how to deal with the provision of care services considering architecture constraints and how to adapt a home for older adults.

**A** running theme of the forum this year was the idea that older adults to not want to live any differently than anyone else. One of the biggest fears for those growing old is having to move into a nursing home, and so creating environments that people can live in and call a home for longer is a goal that can improve quality of life and allow a greater level of independence.

The PRoF consortium is an international think tank of interdisciplinary professionals that has been envisioning the evolution of care environments by building concept rooms that cater to the needs of those in care. Serge Lefevere of DETOO introduced the PRoF 2.0 concept, a

personalised residence of the future that aims to provide a good living environment.

One of the integral aspects of PRoF 2.0 is that it provides a healing environment, eliminating stressors such as noise, connecting people with nature and enhancing people’s feeling of being in control. “Positive distractions, such as interactive art and video, provide people with a sense of peace and hope,” explained Lefevere. “In a home it is important to provide opportunities for relaxation and humour.”

Much thought has gone into creating the environment, and each feature, such as a system to improve air quality, exists because credible research and evidence has proven that it will enhance the area for the user. Other features include daylight simulation and wheelchair access. Accessibility around the home has been considered from the very start of the design process so that it is integrated without the aesthetics suffering.

Not everything in it is necessarily new; rather it is an exercise in implementing existing solutions in innovative ways. This way of working should be at the heart of most AAL projects.



# ➤ CO-CREATING BETTER AAL PRODUCTS

Involving the user in the development of your AAL product is not only sensible, but vital if you are to receive funding. But there's a lot more to user-centric design than holding workshops and asking older people if they like what they see. Co-creation involves the user at every step of the way and not only leads to better products but saves time and money as well

**J**annelien Verjans and Nicolas Schepers both work for U-Sentric, a company specialising in involving people in the design process so that the resulting product or service exactly meets the user's needs and desires. Both were involved in an interactive session as part of the "Matching older adults' aspirations" track during which they ran a co-creation workshop, which saw delegates design a product with the help of a user.

Co-creation is one of the central themes of AAL. Projects must include user interaction in the proposal, while business modelling that involves the target group is also a crucial aspect of any development plan. U-Sentric has developed a co-creation roadmap that essentially answers crucial questions to do with the user. What does your user want? How can you respond to it and how can you integrate those user needs within your project but also within your roadmap to market?

"A lot of products are made based on user insights and user needs but then they go to the market and these aren't planned into the marketing strategy," says Verjans.

"When you develop your idea, it is simple to involve your end users within that process," she continues. "But you must be able to take those user needs and user insights to create some value within your market and how can you sell it to your market. In that sense, you need to stay in touch with your users throughout the process and afterwards."

Jannelien Verjans



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U-Sentric co-design roadmap is a little book that you can follow from step one until the end, although Verians points out that it's not quite as simple as following a recipe. "It's an iterative process," she says. "It's about learning and getting involved and that's how we want to work with AAL projects, to help them do this thing the right way, learning every step of the way."

"The point is that the roadmap is creating one common understanding between everyone from research stage to development stage," adds Schepers. "What can happen is the project says 'Okay, we research something, then the designers make a visual design or wire frame, then there's development'. The danger here," he continues, "is that they are working in silos and not understanding together at each stage."

"What we want to do is bring teams together to avoid this misunderstanding so, it's not only valuable for the users but it's also valuable for the people producing the product. There is a common goal."

This co-design process will often require a change of mindset within a company and the entire company must be involved. So what exactly is involved? Nicolas explains:

"The roadmap is basically a framework of methodologies to follow step by step," he says. At the core of each methodology is the 'persona'. Basically you do research involving interviews or surveys, to understand what the basic needs are for certain target groups. You then take the extremes of what you find out and develop 'personas'. You can then give it a name, create a picture and you end up with someone who you are developing for. You can then tick off which aspects of the product's design work for each persona, almost as though you are visualising that end user.

"So, instead of making a report about your user research, you make personas out of it. That's actually the core of each methodology use in the roadmap.

"In our project 'AAL Inspiration' we first made a wire frame out of the user needs, tested them, checked them off, reviewed them and saw what works and what doesn't. It's a lot more cost efficient because instead of developing everything in the project, we've actually cut about 25 per cent of



Jannelien Verjans and  
Nicolas Schepers

the features before development because we know they won't work and that the user doesn't want them."

Another key aspect of co-creation is communication. Not only is this important during the development phase, but also once the product has been developed and it is ready to go to market. Here, communication will be key to ensuring the right message is conveyed that ensures the product appeals to the people you know it should appeal to.



## GOOD SOLUTIONS NOT JUST THE

believe in network management. As an insurer, we are only able to do the financial part of any solution, so we need partners in the field who want to deliver the services.

I believe we need to have good solutions for everyone and not just designed for the elderly. It should be one market for all consumers. So we have to make good connections that bring together all stakeholders – the finance, the home care, the support services, we all need to work together. When we do business like this, we can see good growth, locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

As a member of the AAL Advisory Board, I always advise people to look to the consumer, listen to the end user and then build your business. So when you have an idea, go to the end user to see if they like it and if you then decide to develop it, make sure that there is a willingness to pay for it. When the price is too high, or people are not prepared to



## "You need to stay in touch with your users throughout the design process and afterwards"

Here, co-creation involves picking up on the ideas the target groups have about what the message should say, how it should be delivered and who should deliver it. This process applies well to the AAL market, where often the end user will also be carers, parents, children and others involved in an older person's life, so different messages need to be tailored to the different audience even though the product may be the same thing.

# DESIGNED FOR EVERYONE – ELDERLY

**Koen Claus**, Director, DKV,  
member of the AAL Advisory Board

pay, even the best idea will not work and the business is already dead. You must always first look to the consumer and then ensure there is a market for your business. If you do that, then I can assure you that you will have a business for all Europe.

So the idea is really important, of course, but understanding your market and developing your business models are as important.

When you do business in Europe, we know that quite often this business will be regional often due to regional legislation, but I believe that for it to be a good business model it must be possible to translate the same business to work in other countries too. To do this, when you



develop your business, you have to write the last page of the plan first – so for a business to be successful across Europe, you have to think about this from the start and then work back from that ambition.



## ➤ REACHING THE MARKET

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There are many obstacles that AAL projects can face when trying to reach the market, but as more is learnt about these obstacles, more methods for overcoming them are emerging. This session, part of The Future of AAL track, encouraged participants to discuss new “contracts” with risk-sharing and innovative co-investment models, as well as propositions to adapt business support functions and to build innovative distribution models



**B**leddyn Rees is a lawyer working in the healthcare sector, acting as an advisor to both purchasers and providers within the ecosystem. Drawing up a contract is what lawyers call 'risk allocation'. Rees explained that in healthcare, the concept of risk is not easily understood, and so healthcare is in its infancy in terms of contracting compared to many other sectors. There are many examples of contracts that have failed because the risk transfer between the two parties is fundamentally flawed.

Integrated care needs to move on from just meaning primary and secondary care i.e. GP services and hospital services. In reality, social care, education and housing services need to be integrated together. From a government perspective the purchase and provision of these services needs to be thought of as a whole.

So, how do you contract for integrated services? The first typical payment model that exists in the market place is block grant type funding. In this case the government will give a certain amount of money to a hospital and the hospital runs itself on this grant. The problem with this is there is no incentive to be efficient. The UK tried to solve this using payment by results, but this has led to manipulation of the system to make more money.

Traditional health contracts consist of a commissioner overseeing a whole series of healthcare providers in areas such as acute care, primary care and social care. These can be private sector, public sector or both. The problem with this setup is it involves a large number of separate contracts, each of which must be coordinated by the commissioner to deliver effective integrated care. Managing these types of complex contracts is not an easy skill, and the public sector currently lacks the experience to do so effectively.

This led to the forming of an alliance. The overarching relationship in an alliance is a

series of organisations collaborating to deliver integrated care. Beneath this overarching relationship are bilateral contracts between parties that deliver the services, these contracts can be different - block funding, payment by results etc. The model is thus infinitely flexible. With one contract at the top, you have a shared risk-reward framework, you can align objectives and financial incentives, and you have collective accountability.

This contractual framework can bring about massive change in innovation. At the heart of these alliances, mature relationships between organisations have to be nurtured, and it is

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**"With an alliance, you have a shared risk-reward framework, you can align objectives and financial incentives, and you have collective accountability"**

### **"When finance is limited, you have to focus on presenting cost effective solutions to the market"**

by sharing responsibility that improvements are created. Principles must be agreed upon that govern the organisation's decisions, and the decisions are based on what is best for the user rather than the organisation. No group in the consortium will get paid unless everyone is pulling their weight, so collective work and improvement is essential.

Joe Killen spoke on behalf of Tunstall, a telecare equipment company with a turnover of about €300m. The typical user of their products is an elderly person who lives alone in their home. They have a radio button, which they wear around their neck, and when they have a problem they press the button, which puts them through to a 24-hour control centre that can deal with the situation.

Tunstall launched a project with the Andalusian government, which runs a telecare service with about two hundred thousand connections today. "We discussed the possibility of using European funding to improve the quality of service for elderly people in Andalusia, with a key objective of exchanging information and creating synergies between the social services department and the regional health service in order to provide higher quality service to the end user at a lower cost," Killen explains.

Tunstall agreed to create an interface which exchanges voice and data between the social care system, the telecare system and the health service. The traditional response after getting a call from a patient with a history of cardiovascular problems would end with the social care system contacting the ambulance and getting them to call the patient and take over. The problem with this is that the patient might not be able to pick up the call due to incapacitation. Tunstall's new service got round

this by allowing calls to be forward directly to the ambulance along with relevant data for the specific patient such as address and medical records. The regional government is extremely pleased both with the increase in the quality of service as well as in the economies realised by emergency services being able to intervene more quickly.

Killen highlighted a number of important lessons to draw from this case study. Most areas of Europe are subject to significant financial restrictions today. This means that technology solutions cannot just provide a solution, they must also increase efficiency, because that only works when the market demand in terms of finance is growing. When finance is limited, you have to focus on presenting cost effective solutions to the market.

When looking at implementing effective solutions, you must coordinate well between private centre technologists and public sector services deliveries. The world of technology and the world of social care speak very different languages. The technology development market offers fantastic new ideas all the time but often there is no route to market because the public sector budget has not been analysed in order to tie cost efficiencies into the solutions being proposed.





## ➤ THE AAL VIBES ARE GOOD

With the publication of the new AAL Strategy Document, projects starting to deliver their products to market and a successful Forum packed with ideas, **Peter Saraga** of the AAL Advisory Board believes things are heading in the right direction

I think there are two things to consider now. First of all, we don't just think about the elderly as people with needs because they have frailties; we are now talking much more about what older people want and what they desire. So, they are not a problem to be dealt with, they are people, many of whom have money, with both needs and desires that have to be met. This means that there is a genuine market and it is developing fast.

Secondly, there is a great need now for AAL projects to bring their products into this market. So are we going to see the products in this market begin to take off? That's hard to predict, but in my opinion, the vibes are that we are beginning to see the kind of things you'd expect to see happening when markets start to take off.

Of course, we have been talking about this market potential for a long time now and these things are very difficult to predict. Let's take computer games as an example. In the early days, when we had electronic games like Pong and other things, they went through a long period when little things happened but nothing that important. But then at some point, games started to become very big business and this, as with many things, was a something to do with the combination of the nature of technology - technology becoming capable of doing the things you actually want it to do - social change and price. It's hard to pinpoint an exact moment when it all happened, but it did and games became big business.

I think that if you now look at the AAL market and the kinds of products there are in it, the timing of this change that I am speaking about is affected by the demographic change that is taking place. And we know about this change because we know how many people are getting older, so we know that we are on a curve of increasing demand - demand driven by a real need. So I believe we are about to see a big change and a huge market developing fast for AAL products.

It's very important that all stakeholders, SMEs, entrepreneurs, end users and older people, are engaged in this process now, so the interactive nature of the Forum this year is a very positive step forward.

Peter Saraga

**"We are on a curve of increasing demand  
- demand driven by real need"**

## ➤ INVOLVING END USERS IN DESIGN: FRESH APPROACHES

Interactivity was one of the buzzwords of this year's event, with a number of sessions taking the form of discussions and brainstorms between small groups. This had the effect of encouraging new ideas and approaches to be voiced, with delegates from all backgrounds being given the chance to say what they thought was being done right but also what needed to change. One of the Wednesday sessions of the "Matching older adults' aspirations" track produced a wide range of ideas about how to improve user involvement in the development of ICT solutions.

**T**he general consensus from last year's AAL Forum, held in Romania, was the need for the event to become more interactive and to actively involve all stakeholder groups who are vital in moving forward the adoption of new technology by older adults.

With the involvement of local Flemish research programme iMinds and the local government innovation agency IWT, the AAL Forum 2015 became the most interactive yet, with delegates old and young involved in active sessions, discussing, debating and thrashing out ideas about how to tackle the challenges facing the ageing population.

One of the more memorable interactive sessions that summed up this new mood for collaboration through dialogue was one entitled Smart Engagement for Smart Solutions, which involved end users in meaningful discussion with industry and researchers. The session was organised by CORAL and was designed to seek innovative solutions for involving users in developing ICT for AAL as a way of matching older people's aspirations with products on the market.

This exciting afternoon saw entrepreneurs, policy makers, end users and researchers sitting down to share ideas and look at the processes needed to build effective solutions. Two of the key points addressed were how to keep users involved once a project has worked with them and then how do projects involving the users in the innovation and marketing processes.

It was extremely engaging, with seven separate presentations taking place that posed different problems, with the audience being asked to seek the solutions to those problems. After each of the sessions, delegates around separate tables were asked to discuss amongst themselves how to address the issues raised, while also looking at the barriers that needed to be overcome in relation to keeping the end user involved in the whole process of development through to market



## "People of all generations should be involved in the innovation process for AAL products"

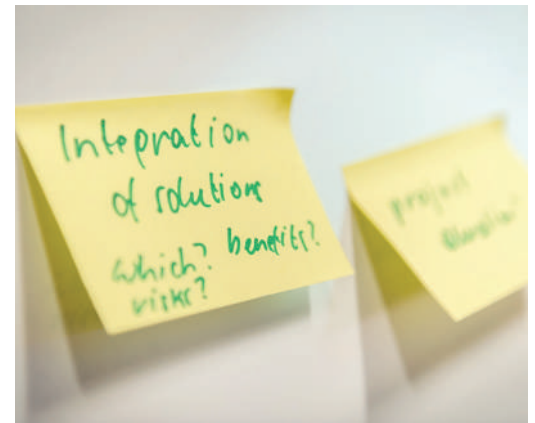
implementation. From start to finish, ideas were flowing.

Questions addressed included how to motivate older users to attend the intensive research and usability tests, how to remove the stereotypes and prejudices about older adults and technology and how to surmount the notion that health isn't as important or as popular as we like to think it is! The tables quickly got to work and there was a palpable sense that real issues were being tackled and relationships being formed.

Of course, it was important that once the different groups had formulated their views, the outcomes were addressed and the ideas shared.

Common themes arose from all tables. Agreement was reached about the need to get away from the common process of developing products for older people and the need to involve all stakeholder groups at every stage of the innovation and commercial process. Consensus was also reached on the need to focus on lifestyle instead of health, while the need to break down barriers using an intergenerational approach to innovation was also a common theme. People of all generations should be involved in the innovation process for AAL products, as well as in the process of product use and adoption.

It became evident that the user wants products that they can trust if they are to use them in their day-to-day lives. Suggestions of how ICT can be built into every-day activities older people like to do, like bridge, poker or bingo, was also thrown



into the mix as a way of maintaining on-going engagement with the end user throughout the marketing process.

The interactive nature of this session seemed to typify the mood of the Forum 2015 and highlighted the optimism there was for positive change, not only in the way AAL addresses the development of solutions for older people, but in the way those people for whom these products are designed become an essential part of the process at every step of the way.



## Q&A

Phillipe Muyters, Flemish Minister for Work, Economy, Innovation and Sport, provides an insight into how the approach to active and healthy ageing in Flanders corresponds perfectly with the work of the AAL

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**With the AAL Forum taking place in Ghent, how closely aligned are the aims and objectives of research in Flanders with that of the programme, particularly in relation to Flanders' Care?**

The ambitions of the AAL Programme correspond to our approach in Flanders. Elderly care is one of the most important challenges Flanders faces today. Enabling the older adults to live longer and happier lives at home is an integral part of that. Researching technologies, methodologies and processes all helps to achieve this. Flanders' Care aims to assure that all stakeholders are involved and that research takes into account all direct and indirect end users.

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**"Care for older adults is one of the most important challenges Flanders faces today"**



**The AAL is focusing more and more on ensuring its funded projects are delivering products and solutions to market. How can this be achieved faster and how are you approaching this in Flanders?**

For products and solutions to be accepted by the end user, cooperation and co-creation between entrepreneurs and care actors is crucial. It's important that entrepreneurs develop innovative solutions based on real needs to ensure the added value to the market.

In Flanders, Flanders' Care is the platform that combines knowledge, innovation and business to facilitate different stakeholders in their development and market introduction. On the one hand, we have developed several online support instruments; such as the user-centered roadmap, the evidence based toolbox and the export readiness scan. On the other hand we have established the Flanders' Care network, through which the policy domains of science and innovation, economy and welfare collaborate to match needs with relevant support and coaching. Activating the entire relevant value chain and working together accelerates the total process.

**The Forum seems to be full of brilliant ideas. How can we ensure these ideas in Europe are scalable and can provide products and solutions that meet a social and commercial need in what is often a fragmented market?**

The key word in this is cooperation. In Flanders we are striving to build new cooperation and business models. By bringing together the care and the entrepreneurial sector, we can come to a sustainable balance between societal and commercial valorisation. We are organising test projects in which care organisations and companies work together to build new value chains to develop integrated solutions for generic care needs. Those new cooperation/business models influence both organisations

## **"It's important that entrepreneurs develop innovative solutions based on real needs"**

and stimulate system innovation and, of course, globalisation.

**How are you working to ensure that entrepreneurs working in Flanders remain in Flanders?**

We stimulate our entrepreneurs to internationalise, to collaborate with European companies and to participate in European and international projects. Flanders should be the spot where the core of the business is anchored. It is a centre where entrepreneurs can rely on good, educated employees and a stimulating, innovative and creative open policy approach.

**Are you optimistic that older people in Europe will be able to stay healthy and active for longer - and what role should technology play in that?**

Of course, we have a lot of expertise. We have EU programmes, EU/regional cooperation platforms and good working organisations in Europe to ensure this. Technology can be a catalyst and offers a backbone for faster introduction and implementation.

The challenge lies in a good and efficient use of the opportunities technology offers. Technology alone cannot assure longevity. Of equal importance is the quality of life assured by a holistic approach of care and cure. New technologies such as mobile health applications are important ways to improve wellbeing and health.

## ➤ MAKING THAT CONNECTION!

Collaboration is key to success at AAL, so the innovative matchmaking sessions at the Forum proved a popular part of the event

One of the most exciting and well-received innovations at the AAL Forum 2015 was the matchmaking event, hosted by IWT and co-organised by Enterprise Europe Network Flanders and iMinds in an effort to bring industry, researchers, investors and other key AAL stakeholders together for intimate, private meetings to discuss ideas for collaboration in the active and healthy ageing space.

Delegates hoping to make these valuable connections were able to complete an online profile before or during the event, outlining what they were looking for or what they could offer potential partners.

The event proved highly popular, with the team of matchmakers kept busy over two days bringing people together. Those seeking potential investors, deployers in the health and care sectors, and suppliers of AAL solutions all took advantage of the quiet space made available.

António Damasceno, CEO of Intellicare, Portugal, was delighted with his time at the matchmaking event, requesting meetings himself as well as being asked to several by potential partners.

“I have been looking for partners to do business with,” he said. “So I came to the Forum looking for companies with an offer that complements ours with a view to going to market together. I have found some potential partners and we have follow-up meetings scheduled for the next few weeks.”



“We have a product developed as a result of some research projects and it is already in the market,” he continued. “We now need to address new markets in new countries and the partners we found at the Forum are already there with a complementary offer so it’s a win, win situation – we hope!

“These meetings were very well organised. The profiles were detailed and outlined well what we were looking for and what others could offer so people were able to match expectations. I am optimistic that things will develop well from here,” he concluded.

Meanwhile, Ariel Shatz, Co-founder Cure My Way and representing Buddy and Soul was also full of praise for the sessions he attended while on the look out for potential collaborators and people who will be able to help his company find the end users who can benefit from their solution.

“We are looking for researchers to be involved in projects, since we are a science-oriented company, as well as associations with organisations like medical centres that are dealing with the end users,” he explained.

**“I came here looking for companies that complement ours and have arranged some follow-up meetings with potential partners”**

Mr Shatz came to the matchmaking late, but is thankful that he found it. “I spent one day of the Forum at the exhibition and that was a very fruitful time for me,” he said. “I was about to leave, but decided to try this partnering session instead,” he continued. “And it’s been an amazing experience. I have been attending conferences like this for more than 20 years now and this has been the best system of getting people together that I have ever seen. It is much easier to use than other systems. The help desk has been amazing and they were able to set up meetings for me in minutes so I am very happy to be here.

“Better still, I have had good meetings with potential partners and other very relevant people and I feel sure that we will have projects coming from this session.”

In total, 122 meetings took place, with 94 potential partners making valuable connections. Most participants in the sessions were from the host country Belgium, with the Switzerland next in line followed by the UK, Spain, the Netherlands and Germany.

While the matchmaking sessions are no longer available, you can still view the profiles of delegates who registered for the event online. Visit [www.b2match.eu/aalforum2015/participants](http://www.b2match.eu/aalforum2015/participants)





➤ YO!

## THE FUTURE OF AAL IN SAFE HANDS

Students demonstrated a firm understanding of how to tackle a very real issue facing older adults and the need to get to market fast - and win AAL's hackathon competition in the face of some stiff opposition

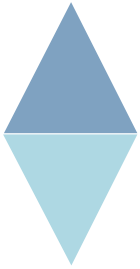
**M**aurits Descamps, Nathalie Saikali and Benjamin Vermunicht are all studying physics in the sixth form of RHIZO Lyceum OLV Vlaanderen Kortrijk, a secondary school in Ghent.

The three youngsters, together with their physics teacher Joos Van Cauwenbeghe, took part in the AAL Forum's three-day hackathon

event against three teams of experienced researchers in a grueling competition to research, plan and develop an idea to meet a need faced by older adults.

The event was hosted by the Microsoft Innovation Centre in Flanders and started with a brainstorming session that involved older adults, academics, representatives from industry, IT specialists 12 coaches and other





relevant organisations like care givers. The purpose here was for the teams to identify a need or an opportunity relevant to enabling older people to live active and healthy lives for longer at home. As Microsoft Innovation Centre, Flanders' Tom Braekeleirs put it: "The idea was to change the world or go home."

Some teams had come prepared with pre-planned solutions and used this time to test these out on potential end users. Our intrepid students had no such plans in place and used the sessions to understand the people they were talking to and try to relate what they heard to how they would face their situation themselves or what they would want on the market to help them.

"We didn't know what to expect," says Maurits. "We just came because we wanted to do something new."

The team decided to address the very real

**"We just came  
because we  
wanted to do  
something new"**

issue faced by older people of social isolation, looking at the problem in a very refreshing way that also involved young people - and YO-Tickets was born.

YO-Tickets is a simple, scalable web platform that provides membership incentives for events like cinema, theatre and music concerts. Members, young and old, select an event they wish to attend and other members are able to join the group attending that event to receive the same benefits, like discounts, venue tours, meet the stars or free drinks afterwards.

Young members join YO-Tickets with the aim of meeting older people to help and support them if they are lonely - and receive attractive benefits as well as the chance to meet interesting people in return. Older people join to meet others, young and old, as well as to enjoy social events.

Those electing to attend any particular event meet up before hand, planned through the site, attend the event together and enjoy the benefits together. This provides company for the older person through interaction with the group. Groups can also interact on the YO-Ticket site, exchanging comments about the event they have attended, reviewing films or planning new activities.

Venues are incentivised to participate as a way of filling empty seats and bringing in customers who may not otherwise attend their events.

The group presented a very well thought-through plan for YO-Tickets, demonstrating a real understanding of the market, of the challenges facing older people and of the need not simply to provide something for the older person but to involve the wider society in something that is both socially and commercially attractive.

"I really like the idea of linking IT with care and health," explains Nathalie. "I am thinking about becoming a doctor, but I also like to



Tom Braekeleirs





programme and code, so the match between these two interests really appealed.

“I think we had a strong concept,” she adds. “It is a do-able and a concrete idea that can be operating very quickly and will directly address the issue of social isolation for older people, while younger people will like it, too.”

The judges voted unanimously that YO-Tickets was not only the winning idea of the four, but also one that could definitely reach the market. They were impressed with the winning

team’s grasp of the challenge related to social isolation, the agility with which they blended that challenge with a commercial opportunity and the speed and ambition with which they planned to get the solution to market. The hackathon also highlighted another key theme that was a focus of attention for many AAL stakeholders, and that was the need for intergenerational collaboration, involving young people in the development process.

The hackathon was well received by delegates at the Forum, too. Those questioned saw it as a valuable innovation for the event and one that should be repeated more as a way of generating great ideas for the market and speeding up the process for getting those ideas funded for development.

Tom Braekeleirs summed it up afterwards, referring to his “change the world” remark. “Over the last couple of days,” he said in his summing up speech, highlighting the mood of optimism the hackathon had generated, “we did that here in Ghent. We all have the ability to change things, however small.”

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**“I am thinking about becoming a doctor, but I also like to programme and code, so the match between these two interests really appealed”**





## ➤ THE AAL AWARD 2015

The AAL Programme has invested significantly in more than 150 projects since 2008 and several of them are now beginning to show results and demonstrating real market potential. With the aim of raising levels of awareness of outstanding projects, the AAL Award selects one project each year that demonstrates promise in innovation, human-centric approaches to development, and market potential

**T**he AAL Award final, which takes place at the Forum, is judged based on a “Dragon’s Den” style presentation from three finalists. The finalists are selected after a rigorous selection procedure that any AAL project can enter. On the day itself and after the three pitches, a panel of judges and the audience are allowed to grill the presenters. First up was RelaxedCare, a system that consists of a well-designed, interactive cube and a smartphone app. The cube is connected

to a smart home system with different sensors. Innovative behaviour pattern recognition methods can detect the wellbeing status of the user, including activity level, social interaction and daily life routines. This information is displayed to the caregiver in a simple way via an application. An easy to understand colour indicator informs the caregiver about the wellbeing of the assisted person, with more detailed information accessible on the app.

The cube enables both sides to send simple messages on the basis of an innovative

interaction design, which involves placing NFC (near-field communication) tiles on top of the cube. These can send different messages such as a request for help, requesting a call or simply saying that the person is thinking about the other. The judges praised the flexibility of the system, but did express some concern about legal protection of the ideas involved. At present the product does remain fairly expensive and lacks a clear route to market, but the judges were unanimous in their praise for its aesthetically pleasing design.

Judges did point out that the idea was relatively simple to copy, making it commercially risky, although the assured answer to that was that the concept may be simple, but the complexity in measuring wellbeing was enormous and to copy that would be extremely expensive.

Next up was ChefMyself, a project that has developed a customisable application that provides a library of recipes. This is connected to a food processor with an accessible interface, specially tailored for the elderly, which encourages users to cook meals for themselves according to their particular

## **"A panel of judges and the audience are allowed to grill the presenters"**

nutritional requirements. By observing the meal history along with the users' needs and preferences, ChefMyself can automatically recommend a meal plan that ensures quality and variety in the diet. At the same time a social network, focused on the topic of nutrition and ageing healthily, is installed to encourage users to be active, maintain existing social relationships and create new ones.

The judges worried that the product would be unable to breach cultural barriers that might exist in terms of food preferences in different countries, but the presenter assured them that the library of recipes could be customised for each country. They also thought that the food might not be of the quality that people have eaten through the course of their life, although they conceded that it could prove to be an invaluable tool for people with limited cooking skills.

The live Twitter feed was a buzz with questions about ChefMyself, with people wondering if the €1,300 base price was a little expensive and whether there was enough trust in recipes on the internet. One tweeter asked whether the device could roast a chicken, to which the reply was that you would have to cut it up. An assured pitch.

The last presentation came from VictoryaHome, a system that includes



VictoryaHome present their product



smart devices including an activity monitor, fall detector, automatic pill dispenser, a smartphone app for family and friends, an online dashboard for response centres and a mobile telepresence device called Giraff. The system monitors the health and safety of the user, facilitates social contact, and creates peace of mind for both the user and carers. The app gives family, friends and other caregivers an overview of the older adult's wellbeing by showing for information such as missed medication, falls and visit me requests sent by the senior via the Giraff. In response these caregivers can use the Giraff to make a virtual visit. In case of emergency, professional care can be included using the dashboard and the Giraff for instant presence.

A number of audience members thought that the service lacked aesthetic appeal, saying that they did not believe that people would want it in their home. The judges commented that they thought the system might be trying to do too many things at once and that the solution lacked simplicity, but praised the presentation and the fact that the group had laid out a clear business model, route to market and detailed sales forecasts.

There were two awards up for grabs - the people's award, voted for by the audience immediately after the pitches and the judges' award, which carried the €5,000 prize.

The final plenary session of the AAL Forum 2015 brought the announcement of the winner. The award voted for by the delegates went to RelaxedCare, but the judges' choice went to VictoryaHome.

Peter Saraga, one of the four judges responsible for this choice said afterwards: "While possibly not the most exciting pitch of the day and despite some reservations of the aesthetic nature of the avatar, VictoryaHome is a very good product, which delivers a range of valuable services for the older person, while at the same time offering peace of mind for any carer involved.

"Perhaps the deciding factor, however, was the excellent business model the product had in place," he continued. "It was extremely detailed, with solid financial projections and a real-world pipeline for delivery into the market. We all agreed that it has the best chance of commercial success in the market now."

ChefMyself gave an assured pitch

The judges, from left to right: Roland Pouillie, Louise Richardson, Peter Saraga and Astrid Stuckelberger



## Q&A

# WE NEED QUICK WINS

**Kevin Wake** from Suffolk County Council, UK was a first-time delegate at the AAL Forum and he had come to find solutions that would enable his authority to continue to deliver top class social and health services but at a lower cost. After attending a session on taking an AAL product to market, he answered a few questions about his overall impression of the Forum and AAL in general



“When we started, we had no real idea about what to develop. We knew we wanted to develop something – a stick, an app, a wheelchair . . . we just wanted to help people move outdoors.”

Marion Schoone of Happy Walker

### As this is your first visit to the AAL Forum, what are your impressions so far?

I am very impressed. It is very well organised and I found the first speaker very inspiring. For me, this is a huge learning curve. We have not been involved with the AAL before so I am here to learn and soak up as much as I can, ask lots of questions and I will then go back and examine the way in which we may be able to use this knowledge to take our services forward.

I am involved in the external funding team at Suffolk County Council and my primary role is to identify ideas and potential projects and look to attract funding and partners for these projects.

### You attended the session on taking a potential product developed by an AAL project to market and the problems that project encountered (see panel, left). How did you find their approach to this aspect of their work?

They were very honest and open about the fact that they were learning as they were going along and that they had made mistakes on the way. So it was refreshing to learn about what they had tried and what they had learnt, what had worked and what hadn't. But I was

Kevin Wake attended the Business as Usual session, part of the Education and Training track, during which there was an honest and open appraisal of some of the pitfalls many projects face when proper business planning does not take place and the user is not fully engaged with the design process.



Kevin Wake of Suffolk  
Country Council in the UK

hoping to discover more about the key issue of getting to market, because that is the key for any product. It's great having a good idea but if no one is going to buy it or use it, then is it really that useful?

Clearly this project is still moving towards getting their idea to market (they have a six-month extension), so the question of the best way to do that remains unanswered in this case. But I have spoken to them since the session and they are keen to work with us now and see if there is anything we can do together in the future so it has been useful learning.

**So you are looking to get involved in projects in the area; will you be looking for funding through the AAL and if so what sort of area of research and development will you be looking to do?**

We are certainly very keen to become involved with AAL and to get funding if possible. We have two key drivers in Suffolk. One is about the economic development of the region in general, while we are also committed to providing good quality social care at a price we can afford. Ultimately, that means we are trying to get more for less by driving down some of our costs. We see technology as being a way to do that and so we are very keen to embrace the technology and find innovative solutions and, crucially, get them embedded into our systems as quickly as possible.

**Speed seems to be a big issue here, so are you looking to get involved with something where the idea is well developed and ready to use?**

I think the key is the business plan. It's all very well to have a long-term plan, providing that plan ultimately delivers - and by that I mean having a technology on the market that is able to deliver those quality services we want and need at a reduced cost. So if your long-term plan can achieve that, then that is all well and good, but most UK authorities are looking for some quick wins now. We have to drive down our social care costs so we are looking for things to move very quickly.

I think you could argue now that there is more than enough technology and many ideas out there to do this and that we don't necessarily need new technology and new ideas right now. If new ideas do come along that can be delivered quickly, then that is great, but the key right now is how can we get the good ideas that we have already got, on to market - and that's where we need the answers.

**"We have to drive down social care costs so we are looking to move quickly now"**

# ➤ TURNING HEALTHCARE INTO SELF-CARE

The AAL Forum was opened with an inspiring speech by entrepreneur and founder of Cubigo **Geert Houben**. He told delegates his story of life in Silicon Valley and how he believes technology will disrupt the healthcare market in such a way that will improve the lives of everyone

**G**eert Houben delivered an inspiring speech of the opening ceremony at the Forum, sending delegates off to the subsequent reception buzzing about his predictions that technology will increasingly impact on health, disruptively turning “healthcare into self-care”.

The entrepreneur is well placed to offer that view of the changing healthcare market. His first start-up, which designed and developed software for opticians, was bought by a large retail chain, enabling him to co-found Cubigo, a mobile platform that provides simple access to a range of interconnected healthy ageing services. Cubigo has been a success, now running in four countries and the recipient of a technology and innovation award from the Belgian government.

Houben himself was voted young entrepreneur of the year in 2014, while he also attended Google’s exclusive Silicon Valley bootcamp for foreign inventors and entrepreneurs after Cubigo was selected by Google’s Backbox.

His speech reflected on his time in Silicon Valley, where he was able to mix with other entrepreneurs from around the world in an atmosphere that enabled people to think big. “Thinking big is essential if you are going to make a difference,” he said. “You need to have big ideas and you need to know how you are going to deliver those ideas.

“So when you write your plans, always start at the last page. Know your ending, where you want to end up, and then work back from there.”

In terms of the healthcare market in which Cubigo sits, Houben likens it to banking. “Banking was inaccessible and just something you had in the background,” he said. “But then banks gave its customers the tools to operate their own accounts themselves, to make decisions and see everything they needed to see in one place.





## **"We need to ensure that we have solutions in place that fight loneliness and tackle social isolation"**

"To turn healthcare into a more self-care system like this, we need to give people the right tools," he continued. "We need to give them the tools to enable them to interact with our health services, so people have the information and the support in one place to be able to live independently and happily for longer, just by using this technology."

Houben believes that there should be three pillars to this strategy, which use technology and our connected world to enable us to remain independent, happy and active for longer.

"The products and services we develop through programmes like AAL should look at care and health in one or more of three ways," he said. "These are the challenges we need to tackle using technology.

"We need to ensure that we have solutions in place that fight loneliness and tackle social isolation," he continued. "It is a big issue facing older people, but one that our connected world can address.

"We also need to provide better comfort services through technology. Cleaning, cooking, shopping can all be made easier or improved for older people using technology.

"Finally, we need to address the care and security needs older people have, ensuring they have access to care remotely, can be monitored if necessary and most of all feel more secure in their homes."

Houben believes that by developing technologies that approach old age on these terms we will be able to develop a valuable market place for all health and care services globally, where fragmented markets are a thing of the past.



## ➤ AAL IS STARTING TO DELIVER BUT NEEDS TO SCALE UP FAST

DG Connect's **Paul Timmers** provides an EC perspective of AAL

**P**aul Timmers, Director of the Sustainable and Secure Society Directorate and part of DG Connect, spoke at the final plenary session at the Forum 2015, providing insight into the EC's position on healthy and active ageing as well as striking an optimistic note about the AAL and its success or otherwise in delivering what the market needs and the EC expects. "It's starting to make a difference," he said. "Products are getting to the market, investments are growing and the situation for the programme is very encouraging."

As the crowds cleared the main auditorium and the Forum closed for another year, Timmers explained in a little more detail just what he meant by his optimistic tone.

"The AAL Programme has been running for a number of years now," he said. "It started as a member state initiative and was supported by the European Commission. The idea was to fill the innovation gap between research and the market and this is seen as a space that can be filled with smaller companies. This was not an area covered by the existing research funding programme so the direct involvement of each member state was seen as crucial."

"So I am optimistic now because in this context, AAL is an established programme, with a continued involvement of the member states and it has successfully reached its second phase."

"But more importantly we are now seeing the programme is focusing well on filling that gap between innovation and the market and it



is also involving many small companies, which is so important in this space.

“The thing that really counts, of course, is that these AAL solutions do actually make it to the market, so it was very pleasing to see, new innovations that are very close to the market and some products already available on the market. What is also encouraging is that around 40 per cent of the companies involved in AAL appear to be able to attract capital for product marketing and scaling up after the project has ended.

“In a nutshell, then, AAL delivers, but there are still great challenges. AAL solutions, for example, still run into problems due to the differences between the health systems and the social care systems as well as the fragmentation of the European and global market place.”

Of course the fragmentation of markets from country to country and on the European and global scale is a familiar problem, and there were many discussions over the course of the Forum about how best to tackle this problem in the health and ageing space. One of the biggest concerns, however, seemed to be whether AAL itself could provide a solution, or at least add to the solution, or whether this is something that should be left to the market, which would, through economic necessity, force change.

Paul Timmers believes that it is a simple case of ensuring products developed in one country for the local market can be seen to be working, and the message is made clear that they can work in any market. That is the challenge. “If people see that there are interesting solutions, ready made and on the market in one country

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and that they can be easily applied in other countries, then they will buy,” he said although he conceded that this will not apply to all AAL solutions, where local and regional regulations and standards may determine whether they can cross borders and markets.

“Self-contained solutions that can be seen to work and are easy to adopt in a variety of settings can work in a fragmented market,” he says. “But there are other products and solutions, often dependent on standards and interoperability, that are more complicated. Economies of scale are needed to make them commercially viable.

“We have seen over the past 10 years that many industry and public sector stakeholders have been working on issues of standards and interoperability in this field while those working in the AAL sector have been trying to find their own standards, which has been slowing things down,” he continues.

“But what could be the game changer here is that we have large scale technologies like the Internet of Things coming into the market that already have their own standards and so AAL products being developed using this technology will benefit from this by being able to operate in any market or country by adopting these generic standards.

“Meanwhile, the EC has done explicit bridging between the Internet of Things field and active ageing at home field for Horizon 2020, which will also help AAL.”

This isn't the only work the EC is doing across all programmes that will benefit AAL over the coming years. The Silver Economy Strategy, focused on age-friendly homes and independent living, and the Digital Single Market which seeks to bring down the barriers to a single market in Europe, are two initiatives

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Paul Timmers believes will significantly help those working with AAL and open up new opportunities.

“The Silver Economy Strategy was designed to bring together all those with a stake in Europe’s changing demographic from an economic perspective,” he explains. “It acts as an umbrella to bring individual activities together to enhance their impact – for example, elderly people and tourism, the construction industry and the need to upgrade housing to enable older people to stay at home and, of course, health and care at home. Together, we create far more visibility and with that the market grows.

“It’s an interesting area, because it is not only about developing the new technologies and solutions, but also about creating a critical mass that will attract investment.

“That is one side of our strategy,” he continues. “It is very much focused on the market and investment. The Digital Single Market is more focused on enabling the digital economy ensuring things like trust, easy access,

proper networking, security, interoperability and standards are all in place.

“This is not focused on one particular area, but it will certainly have a positive impact on the AAL space particularly in terms of standards and interoperability, trust, security and privacy. These are important issues for any consumer in the digital market, but are particularly relevant for the elderly.

“In fact, we have just launched a public consultation on this specific area, so I hope that the AAL community responds actively.”

So far then, it all seems rosy for AAL. The market is expanding, products are making it commercially, the EC is opening digital doors that will provide further opportunities and end users are becoming increasingly familiar with technology. Why then do we need the AAL? Why do we need to fund research into solutions using public money when the market will deliver anyway?

While Paul Timmers can see the logic in that argument, he is also convinced of the value of public money being used to fund development



for the ageing market by the AAL. “Sometimes you need to kick start the market,” he argues. “Products need to be visible and seen to work. This will help create the market that others can then exploit.

“Secondly, we need programmes like AAL to overcome the fragmented nature of the ageing and health markets in Europe, when individual efforts would simply be too small. We are good at building consortia out of partners across Europe and they bring the knowledge of and access to individual markets together, so that helps create the critical mass needed.

“Thirdly, this type of innovation should lead to standards or benefit from standards and standardisation is a typical European activity and it benefits from this collective action.

“Of course, there is a degree of market failure with this way of doing things, and if the market was able to deliver, then there would be no need to put public money into these efforts,” he continues. “There are many other priorities. But we believe that it will be necessary to support this as we do for a while yet.”

Many delegates posed the question over the course of the Forum about whether or not funding AAL research and the development of products in the standard European research programme way – forming a consortium of about 10 entities, writing an elaborate proposal, working on research and development for three years and then trying to hit the market – is the right way to proceed in a market where, it could be argued, a more entrepreneurial approach would deliver solutions faster and more effectively.

Paul Timmers wants to see both approaches used in Europe, acknowledging the real need in Europe for things to be made a lot easier for entrepreneurs to develop products, get them into the market and tested with real users quickly – and for support to be offered to these people to do that. He points out that there are many large companies who take both approaches, being involved in programmes like AAL on the one hand, while supporting entrepreneurial activity and investing in promising people and products on the other.

“The EC wants to combine these two approaches, as well,” he says, highlighting the fact that the innovation space is an important component of Horizon 2020 and AAL, which offer dedicated support schemes for entrepreneurs, like venture capital support and the support for fast development, hackathon-type activity.

“I believe we need to offer this mix of support so the questions then become what is the right mix and do we need a common plan or vision that spans both approaches?

“In Europe, we often work on trying to establish a common vision or goal and a common plan for achieving that and I believe that in some areas we are very good at that – look at our automotive industries and health services – while in other areas we are not so focused together – look at shopping on the internet.

“I think the European way is that, yes, we need a common vision and we need a number of instruments to implement that vision, but at the same time, we need to look at what others do that works, copy that and apply it here, like entrepreneurship.

“With AAL, we started by defining our agenda and our priorities and they really clicked, they are really important; so we now need to scale up the solutions we have developed. How much longer should people have to wait to get fall prevention, for example, when they need it now?

“So, as I said at the start, yes, there is great optimism that AAL is beginning to deliver, but now from our side, there is also impatience.”

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The AAL Forum 2016 will take place in Saint Gallen, Switzerland.  
Keep an eye on the AAL website for further details.





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