

"Ageing well": European Commission unleashes €600m for development of new digital solutions for Europe's elderly people

By 2020, 25% of the EU's population will be over 65. To respond to this growing demographic challenge, the Council of Ministers approved today a Commission plan to make Europe a hub for developing digital technologies designed to help older people to continue living independently at home. The proposal, presented by the Commission on 14 June 2007, will provide some additional €150 million funding to a new European Joint Research Programme, resulting in a total investment of over €600 million. Through this new programme companies will be able to develop highly innovative digital products and services to improve the lives of older people at home, in the workplace and in society in general. Smart devices for improving security at home, mobile solutions for vital sign monitoring and user friendly interfaces for those with impaired vision or hearing – all of which will improve the quality of life of elderly people, their careers and families. The plan had already been approved by the European Parliament on 13 March in a first reading (Rapporteur: Neena Gill). 20 EU Member States, as well as Israel, Norway and Switzerland will participate in this Joint Research Programme.

"There is no reason for older people in Europe to miss out on the benefits of new technologies. The solutions and services resulting from this programme will help them to remain active in society as well as staying socially connected and independent for a longer time," said Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for the Information Society and Media. "Being part of the €1 billion to be spent by the EU, Member States and the private sector in research and innovation in this area, this programme will help European companies respond better to the needs of our elders, open major new business opportunities and offer solutions to help public authorities make our health and social care systems sustainable in the future".

Spending on pensions, health and long-term care is expected to increase by 4 to 8% of GDP in the coming decades. With total expenditure tripling by 2050, many countries are now looking for sustainable solutions. This is *the* economic opportunity for European companies to develop technologies targeting older Europeans, who are also important consumers with a combined wealth of over €3000 billion.

Between now and 2013, the Commission, the EU Member States and the private sector will together invest more than €1 billion in research and innovation for ageing well, including €600 million from the new Joint Research Programme and €400 million from the EU's seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. The main aims are to generate significant cost-savings in health and social care and create a strong industrial hub for ICT and ageing in Europe and make a better quality of life for elderly people (through e.g. smart home technologies for controlling heating, lighting, and even food stocks remotely, electronic alarm systems or tele-health facilities). Europe is well placed to become a lead market for "ageing well" technologies, creating worldwide opportunities for European ICT companies.

EU research and innovation in this area has already a successful track record in creating innovative ICT solutions for elderly people. Two good examples are [MobilAlarm](#), a tracking service allowing older persons to initiate an alarm call and get support whenever and wherever they need or want to do so and [I2HOME](#), the world's first standardised remote control for domestic appliances, making televisions, heating systems, microwaves and washing machines more accessible for people with physical or cognitive impairments.

Background information:

The participation in the Joint Research Programme (called "Ambient Assisted Living" Programme) adopted today is the result of the European Union's commitment to work towards an all inclusive information society ([IP/07/1804](#)). Greater online accessibility is at the same time one of the objectives of the Commission action plan "Ageing Well in the Information Society" ([IP/07/831](#)).

More than €1 billion is invested today by the EU in research and innovation for ageing well: some €600 million in the Joint Research Programme, an expected €400 million in the [EU's latest research framework programme](#) and more than €50 million so far in the [EU's ICT Policy Support Programme](#). This programme is a so-called Article 169 (EU Treaty) initiative the aim of which is to strengthen research cooperation between Member States by using matching EU funds.

The countries participating in this new EU Joint Research Programme are: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom as well as Israel, Norway and Switzerland. Lithuania has also expressed its interest to join.

For more information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/einclusion>

<http://www.aal-europe.eu>

<http://www.mobilalarm-eu.org/>

<http://www.i2home.org/>

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/news.cfm?item_type=library&item_subtype=audiovisual

Martin SELMAYR: 02.298.12.30

Mina ANDREEVA: 02.299.13.82