

Joining forces in Ambient Assisted Living

Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) is a new term referring to one of the most important societal challenges facing us in the coming years. Focusing on the increasing aging of the human population and aligned societal challenges, AAL is about intelligent systems that use technology to provide assistance for a better, healthier and safer life in the preferred living environment. In 2006, various research projects funded by the EU FP6 and FP7 research programmes have started to develop ideas in this AAL field. Seven of these projects have now joined forces and decided to start a convergence process in order to build a common platform for the standardization of AAL systems. This joint goal and first activities in the field have resulted in the joint support of the incorporation of an AAL Open Association – known as AALOA.

The mission of AALOA is to provide a shared open framework for developers, technology and service providers, research institutions, and end user associations to discuss, design, develop, evaluate and standardize a common service platform for Ambient Assisted Living.

The call for action is expressed in the AALOA Manifesto (<http://www.aaloa.org/manifesto>), and was publically distributed at the AAL Forum in Odense, Denmark (<http://www.aalforum.eu/>) in September 2010. Since then, the manifesto has attracted support and subscriptions from more than fifty individuals coming from the academic world and out of industry. The first project initiated by the AALOA community is EvAAL (<http://eval.aaloa.org>), an international competition aimed at evaluating AAL systems and creating recognized benchmarks for the assessment of the research results in this field.

Francesco Furfari from CNR, Italy, the first subscriber of the AALOA Manifesto, says:

"It's the first time that independent research projects have decided to join their efforts and share their findings before the projects have even finished. This is possible thanks to a common Open Source policy that may produce a strong impact on the market. Several industrial alliances have recently demonstrated how OSS can quickly open new markets, especially when the costs of developing a platform are spread over a multiplicity of stakeholders".

AALOA is an open community and invites everyone interested in AAL to join the community and to participate in its activities: to bring fresh ideas, to propose workshops and new projects and to

contribute actively to the growth of the association.

For further details, please visit: <http://www.aaloo.org> or write to info@aaloo.org .

Additional quotes from other important supporters:

Joe Gorman, coordinator of the EU project universAAL, says:

“As the latest and largest AAL project in the series funded by the EU, one of the main objectives of the universAAL project is to work towards the establishment of a standard platform for AAL. And not just the platform itself: also a community of people and organisations contributing to its development and uptake. We see AALOA as playing a central role in this, by putting us in touch with key stakeholders in the field, and providing a forum for real discussion and synergy with them”.

Gunnar Fagerberg, coordinator of the EU project MonAMI, says:

“The MonAMI project objective is to investigate, specify, validate, and promote an approach based on mainstream technologies so that AAL applications can be deployed in a cost effective manner. We believe that this can only happen if a widely used AAL platform based on standards is available. This is the reason why we have participated to the creation of AALOA. We intend to play an active role in ensuring that building blocks made available in AALOA platform can be integrated into future industry solutions.”

Thomas Karopka, vice chair of the Open Source Working Group of the International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA), says:

“Interoperability is still one of the main challenges in health care IT. The emerging field of AAL could prevent parallel development and market fragmentation by early adoption of a collaborative development strategy. Open standards and a common framework will be a strong foundation that allows the development of a sustainable common infrastructure. FLOSS principles are well suited for the coordinated development of this infrastructure. A governing body like AALOA is a major success factor for achieving this goal. IMIA OS WG is committed to actively support AALOA in providing links to the FLOSS in health care community.”

Reiner Wichert, spokesman of the Fraunhofer Allianz AAL, says:

“AALOA as a consensus-building community can play an important role in addressing technological industry and attracting them to the AAL market. Only when industry is ready to develop products and services based on a common unified platform, AAL will really get its chance for success.”