



THE TIME IS RIGHT  
FOR THE MARKET



# AAL PROJECT SUCCESS STORIES

10 AAL INNOVATIONS CREATING REAL IMPACT

**04 CapMouse**

Helping the disabled  
interact with technology

**06 Connected Vitality**

A new deeper level of  
communication

**08 DOME0**

Advanced helper robots  
at home

**10 Express 2 Connect**

Combatting loneliness by  
empowering individuals

**12 Fearless**

Achieving safety through  
simplicity

**14 Inclusion Society**

Supporting the wellbeing of  
elderly persons at home

**16 MyLife**

Software that supports  
independence

**18 RGS**

Virtual reality for  
post-stroke care

**20 Rosetta**

Addressing the needs  
of users and carers

**22 We Care**

Connecting people through  
smart services



**Karina Marcus**, Director of the Central Management Unit of the AAL Association

## ➤ FOREWORD

**When the** AAL Programme was established in 2008, it was focused on addressing the needs of our ageing population by using ICT and other technological solutions to enhance the quality of life for older adults. Throughout the intervening seven years, however, the AAL has never lost sight of the fact that by developing the products and services older people not only need, but also want, there are huge economic opportunities to grasp.

This is why we are now seeing projects funded by the Programme reaping the rewards of this approach and taking their finely developed innovations to a receptive and growing market. This is both good for them and good for those using the products and services.

The AAL Programme has been the fundamental trigger for this success, not only in providing access to hundreds of millions of Euros in funding, but also in providing the framework that promotes delivery to market.

This special publication celebrates the success of 10 AAL Programme projects that have, in a variety of ways, taken their research to market. As you will read, this road is often long and tough, but these AAL projects prove that if the need is there and an innovative technology is developed to meet that need, then success will surely follow.

Of course, this is just the start of AAL solutions emerging into this growing market place and the programme is continuing to fund exciting work that promotes and supports active and healthy ageing. That's why we are delighted to bring you these success stories as a small taste of the brilliant work our researchers, SMEs, end users and other partners have done over the years. And watch this space – there are plenty more to come.

*Karina Marcus*

CESS



# ➤ CAPMOUSE: HELPING THE DISABLED INTERACT WITH TECHNOLOGY

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The CapMouse project has led to the development of Liplt, a hands-free technology that allows the elderly disabled to use computers via lip movements. Having secured US and EU patents, the team are now making moves to push this technology into the newly emerging augmented reality market

**The CapMouse** project was instigated in order to develop a prototype of a hands-free computing device, using a head mounted capacitive sensor controlled by the lips that can be used as an input for a human-machine interface. The technology is aimed at disabled older adults and those with spinal injuries, although Tomas Brusell, a dentist by trade and CapMouse project coordinator, first invented the technology as a way to use his computer while unable to use his hands. “When you are with a patient and you have had your hands inside their mouth, it is not hygienic to use a keyboard or mouse,” he explains.



**“Reaching the stage of  
having a second-generation  
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“The technology we developed and tested during the CapMouse project has provided a method for basic input into the computer.”

The technology, now known as Liplt, connects wirelessly to Bluetooth enabled devices, allowing a person to control the device with their lip. Simple and intuitive lip movements do everything that would otherwise be done with a computer mouse. Worn on the head, it has the capability to help someone control a wheelchair, interact with smart environments, such as turning on and off lights, open doors, and access computers. It is thus an effective hands-free interaction aid for the disabled, offering a tool to improve the situation of those who are prevented from every day execution of social and professional interaction due to their physical impairments.



## PROJECT INFO

### Capmouse

Development of a non-invasive CAPacitive sensor oral MOUSE interface for the disabled older adults. The product is a functional end-user tested prototype of a device, which enables the use of electronic equipment by using ones lip.

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**“We can now declare that  
our technology  
is ready for  
industrialisation”**

### Securing the patent

Having been issued an EU patent in 2014 (a US patent was granted in 2013), the CapMouse team has now been encouraged to actively seek a partner in Europe. They are currently in talks with Sony and are approaching Google and Apple. “These are companies that are big in the world of augmented reality,” explains Brusell. “This is an emerging market for elderly people, because Google Glasses for instance can provide you with all the information you need projected on the screen of your glasses. Liplt can work in perfect harmony with this technology, allowing one to call people and more just with the movement of the lips.”

### From idea to prototype

With the technology on the brink of big things, Brusell believes that it was AAL's faith in him developing an unproven technology that has helped Liplt to arrive at where it's at today. “The CapMouse project presented something which was very different to the vast majority of projects. It's a revolutionary concept that utilises muscles that most people barely even use. Reaching the stage of having a second-generation prototype that has been thoroughly tested would have been nigh on impossible without AAL funding.”

### Ready for production

“The technology is stable, no Bluetooth or software bugs. Android and Windows PC applications are available and the prototype is ready for production as a standalone device and in combination with augmented reality technologies. It took us almost 10 years to take the project from my idea to a working prototype, and we can now declare that our technology is ready for industrialisation.”

# ➤ CONNECTEDVITALITY: A NEW LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION

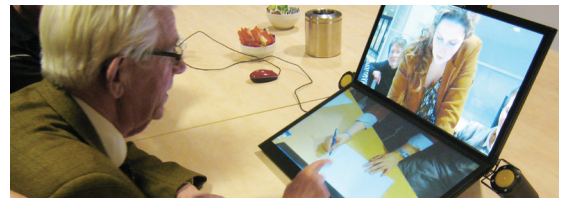
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Decreased mobility, loss of loved ones and diminishing mental capacity can all contribute to the onset of loneliness in older adults. ConnectedVitality sought to address this through the development of a video communication network that is intuitive and facilitates communication on a much deeper level than traditional technology.

**Older adults** with mobility problems can have difficulties organising their social connections and lifestyle in the way they want, which puts them in a situation in which they are reliant on others. The ConnectedVitality project's mission has been to develop a video communication network that enables immobile senior citizens to organise their social network, choose an activity and select levels of social interaction according to their individual needs, abilities and lifestyle.

**“Eliminating  
issues of  
usability  
and accessibility  
are key to  
the success  
of any AAL innovation”**

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## **Collective thinking**

For ConnectedVitality, the issues they faced were too complex and delicate to solve with a trial and error method – there are around one hundred components of age care strategies that need to be revised when formulating a new stratagem – so instead they opted for a focus group approach; a think-tank comprised of “a consortium of healthcare professionals with a selection of different and brilliant brains”.

This consortium helped to generate new ideas and innovative ways of addressing issues of accessibility, usability and differences in dealing with specific problems. “Each country has its own set of biases, which are expressed by their think tank”, says Robbert Smit, CEO of ConnectedVitality. “It is important and useful for us to understand the ways in which different cultures institutionalise their methods for coping with ageing within their societies.”



## “AAL can help a team transform a bright idea into a viable business”

### YoooM

The end product of the ConnectedVitality project is YoooM, a specialist digital display that aims to retain the essential elements of communication at a distance. According to its website, “fundamental contact consists of 60% body language, 20% tone and intonation and 20% content.” It supports this by using a large panoramic display, two cameras for a natural multidimensional viewpoint, and an intuitive touch interface to facilitate shared activities.



### Working in partnership

Smit has applied an effective consultancy approach in his mission to bring the innovations of ConnectedVitality to the people who need them. Operating on a business-to-business premise, the project is seeking appropriate care organisations to partner in mutually beneficial arrangements. Part of their success has been the empowerment of other healthcare businesses by giving them the tools to assist the elderly that are still employed by providing coping strategies for mental health issues. In the future, Smit wants ConnectedVitality to tackle the issues surrounding memory loss. “The elderly need environments and communication tools that suit their capabilities. We intend to create ‘errorless technologies’ for end users that will diminish or even eliminate issues of usability and accessibility that are key to the success of any AAL innovation.”

Smit is enthusiastic about the role that AAL can play in helping a team transform a bright idea into a viable business: “For a company its great, because you learn in-depth and have time to really understand the needs and the problems that create a competitive advantage. This would have been difficult to do without the help and funding from AAL.”

### PROJECT INFO

#### ConnectedVitality

The project aims to develop ‘the second best connection’ a video communication network, coined ‘The ConnectedVitality Network’, enabling immobile senior citizens to organise their social network and choose an activity and select levels of social interaction according to their individual needs, abilities and lifestyle.

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# ➤ DOMEO: HELPER ROBOTS AT HOME

To improve the wellbeing and autonomy of older adults, the DOMEO project has developed mobility assistive and companion robots to provide personalised domestic services. They have successfully trialled advanced robotic devices in real homes, with real people, and are now looking to commercialise the technology in order to deliver the maximum impact to its user base



**Launched in** 2009, the DOMEO project was designed to introduce assistive robotics into the domestic sphere. Vincent Dupourqué, the project's coordinator and CEO of ROBOSOFT explains: "Having domestic robots that provide physical assistance or companionship provides a helpful solution for vulnerable people who want to maintain their independence."

**"AAL provides a pragmatic, market oriented programme. It helps to have a product which is strong, viable and backed by a robust financial plan"**



DOMEO successfully created two pilot devices, extensively trialling them in homes of older adults and generating positive feedback. robuWALKER physically interacts with users to improve their mobility, and can help them stand up, walk and sit, as well as monitoring their vital signs and transmitting this data to the emergency services, if required. robuMATE, dubbed a 'digital companion', links people with the outside world, providing them with entertainment and also cognitive assistance to remind them of appointments, scheduled communications, or the time they need to take their medication.

## PROJECT INFO

### Domeo

a robot companion for older adults dependent and/or disabled to help them to safely stay at home longer and in permanent link with the outside world thanks to its internet connection and dedicated applications which also help caregivers in their daily work.

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### Making the right connections

AAL have been crucial to the ongoing success of DOMEO since the development process, as Dupourqué explains: "They have provided valuable services to us following the conclusion of the project, including opportunities to communicate with the wider scientific community and disseminate our findings. Making these connections and sharing our work is very important for sustaining DOMEO's work, and aids us in locating new partnerships, financing opportunities and potential customers."

### Market strategy

Dupourqué believes that AAL provides "a very pragmatic, market oriented programme. It definitely helps to have a product which is strong, viable and backed by a robust financial plan to obtain their endorsement," he says. "AAL provides the right kind of support for commercially oriented research nearing the marketplace. The concept and delivery of the support we've received from AAL has been very strong and positive."

### Test for success

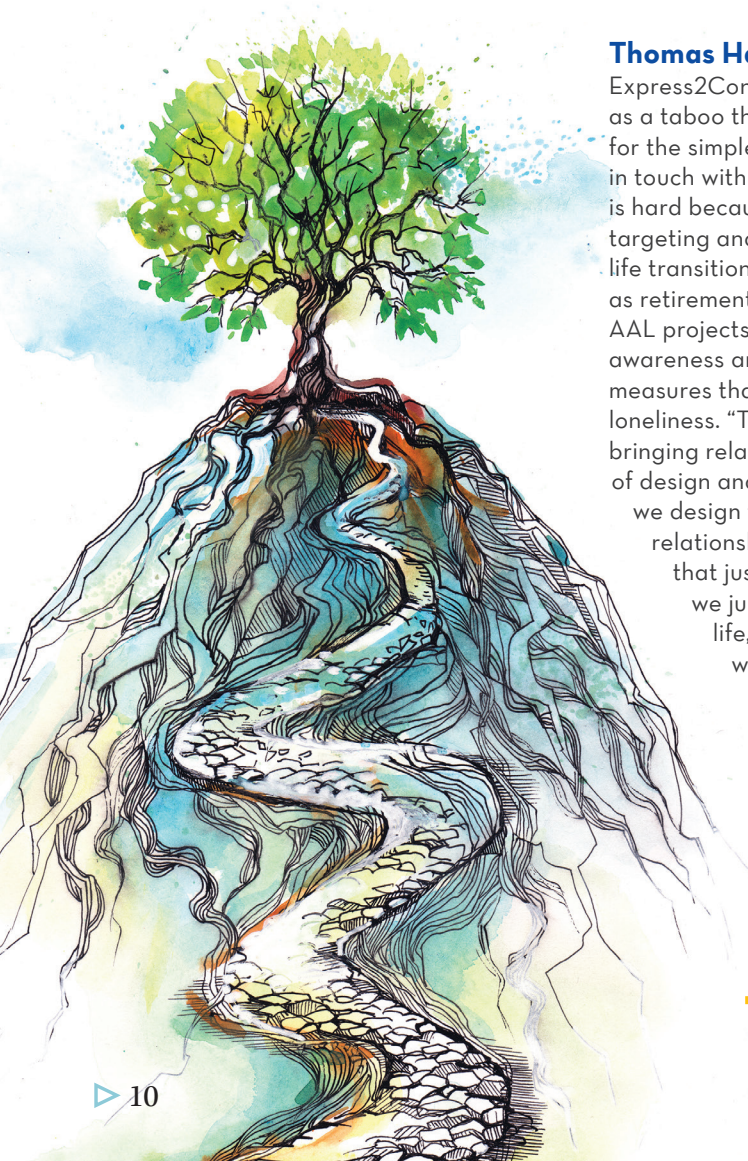
The DOMEO partners have secured the support of the French government to continue finessing the technical facets of their robots, and are now pushing towards commercialisation. "Engaging with call centres, insurers, physicians and the emergency services in further large-scale tests will help us to ascertain how our robots function in the real world and allow us to better assess the technological and business strategies for commercialisation."

**"Engaging with call centres, insurers, physicians and the emergency services will allow for better assessment of the technological and business strategies for commercialisation"**



# ➤ EXPRESS 2CONNECT: COMBATTING LONELINESS BY DESIGN

The Express2Connect project has created an app, Storyville, which stimulates and facilitates personal storytelling and enables interest-based connections and communication among older adults, empowering them and enriching their lives. The project's focus on helping people to build and maintain relationships with others is inherent to the design of their products, and the team has supplemented its work with a publication that explains this philosophy



**Thomas Hammer-Jakobsen** of Express2Connect describes loneliness as a taboo that is “difficult to address for the simple reason that getting in touch with people that are lonely is hard because they are lonely”. By targeting and understanding common life transitions of older adults, such as retirement and loss of a partner AAL projects can develop a better awareness and put into action measures that deal with this path to loneliness. “This is a question about bringing relationships into the field of design and into something that we design for. We need to think of relationships as not something that just happens to us, and that we just experience throughout life, but as something that we should maintain and build on.”



Express2Connect's approach to market is twofold. One is a number of games that run on an iPad using pictures, music and past experiences as a starting point for dialogue and relationship building available on App Store. The second is the publication of a book called 'Design for an Empathic Society' to be used as an approach to consultancy in relationship building.

**“Getting in touch with people  
that are lonely is hard  
because they are lonely”**





## PROJECT INFO

### E2C - Express2Connect

To develop a web service, which stimulates and facilitates personal storytelling, and enable interest-based connections and communication among older adults people. The focus been on preventing the internal experience of loneliness as this is strongly associated with dissatisfaction with life.

### Main contact



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Express to Connect

## The AAL Programme focuses on challenges and developing radical innovations to overcome them”

### Funding from all avenues

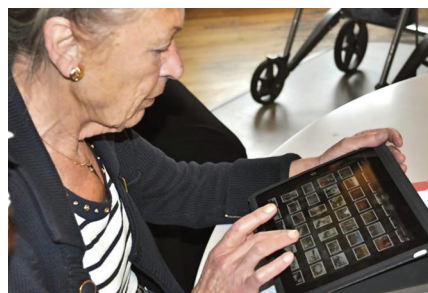
Putting its plans forward to the Copenhagen Living Lab Society in order to take their game to the next level, Express2Connect is seeking to secure funding from a programme called ‘EuroStars’ as the need for stronger commercial industry grows. The scheme already supports SMEs in almost thirty countries (with another five countries awaiting approval) with a combined funding intake of €1.14bn. Express2Connect’s consultancy element is marketed through their book, which will also be published in Taiwan this autumn.

### Know your target market

Jakobsen observes that taking an innovation into a new culture such as Taiwan, brings with it a new set of issues regarding how ageing is dealt with elsewhere in the world. By understanding other cultures, it assists AAL innovations to “frame collaborations with cultures outside our own”. From China’s one child policy to its social perceptions of older adults and ultimately its perceptions of issues synonymous with ageing, Jakobsen stresses that an acute awareness of cultural differences can be intrinsic to success.

### Define a challenge – then solve it

“The AAL Programme is special because it has a very specific and defined idea of what a challenge is - something that you seldom see in other European programmes.” Most programmes have a special kind of technology as their starting point, whereas the AAL Programme focuses on challenges. “It is extremely important that you start these small, radical innovations from the point of a challenge,” he explains.





## ➤ FEARLESS: SAFETY THROUGH SIMPLICITY

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The Fearless Comfort System is a sensory alarm that detects accidents in the homes of some of society's most vulnerable people who wish to live in their preferred environment. Its uncomplicated design and concept illustrates the importance of simplicity when creating a commercially viable product

**“AAL now provides support for business development of products via the AAL2Business support action”**

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**A major** issue with integrated panic buttons is that if the wearer loses consciousness as a result of a trip or a fall, they are not able to activate the alarm. The team behind the Fearless Comfort System, also found that much of their target market would either refuse or forget to wear an integrated sensor.

They developed a contactless sensory system which could be installed in the home and raise

the alarm when it detected any serious deviations of behaviour from the primary end users, as coordinator Michael Brandstötter explains: “It sends out an infrared pulse and measures the travelling time of the infrared signal, and based on this we can reconstruct the living area. It's easy to install and compared with other solutions it's straightforward and cheap.”

### Perfecting the business model

Brandstötter and his team came from a security and surveillance background, and they are just one of the many groups that have received AAL Programme funding in order to realise their product. “The AAL Programme’s support was essential, and without it we wouldn’t have been able to put so much effort into testing and development.” Besides funding research and development, AAL Programme is now providing support for the business development of their product via the AAL2Business support action. “We are very happy to get this support from AAL Programme and it is helping us a lot to finalise our business model for the Fearless system”



**“You need a technology which is not too complex or expensive from an installation point of view”**

### Powerful partnerships

Fearless tested their product in a community of flats for the older adults, and then teamed up with Toyota Motor Europe’s Production Engineering Advanced Technology Department with a view to taking their product to market. However, it hasn’t all been plain sailing for Fearless. “One draw back at the moment is that the market is quite volatile. There are a lot of companies entering this market and there is not yet a very broad supplier base for these 3D devices,” says Brandstötter.

### Creating a viable product

Brandstötter has some pragmatic advice for those seeking to work in the sector. “It’s best when these projects are driven by companies and they can see some business opportunities in it. You can do it from a research point of view, but is it really a viable product? You need a technology which is not too complex or expensive from an installation point of view.”

### PROJECT INFO

#### Fearless

The developed product is an event detector for autonomous fall detection, which does not require any wearable devices

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# ➤ INCLUSION SOCIETY: COORDINATING CARE

A new system for delivering high levels of quality assurance in the health and social care services, Inclusion Society aims to support the wellbeing of older adults living at home and ease their transition into managed care

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**Inclusion Society** is a connected service system that aims to improve communication and coordination between sectors, patients, friends and family for a better overall community care service. By enhancing the wellbeing of older adults living at home, the burden on health care systems can be eased leading to clear benefits at both a personal and societal level. “Communication between older adults living at home and the municipal central services was a major issue three or four years ago,” says project coordinator Thor Gudmundsson, “so this system provides two things: improved communication and preventative health.”

From a core device called the HomePad, the service user is able to monitor their own health data which is collected from wireless medical sensors and stored securely on the system, available to medical professionals, friends and family members that the service user has granted access to. On the other end are a variety of portals, such as the Third Party Services Portal and the Care Management Portal,

**“With AAL’s support and each partner’s unique competencies, Inclusion Society is going from strength to strength”**

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through which information is easily pushed through to those who need it.

Based on the same principle of permissions, Inclusion Society encourages connectivity in a more social way too, with easy-to-use videophone options for face-to-face conversation but only with those who the user has granted access. “We also wanted to simplify the utilisation of the internet”, Gudmundsson explains. “The name ‘Inclusion Society’ is a reminder that we want to give everybody the opportunity to be on it.”

## Strength through partnerships

Originally four separate partners before being established as the common company WellTogether, Hospital Organiser and Alloy took care of the system design and development while Vivit and Mediq, respectively, focused on the user interface and standards, perhaps the most crucial elements of Inclusion Society's success. "It was a kind of security to have partners just focusing on these issues," states Gudmundsson. "When you're developing a new system in a new market, it is especially important to know the standards before you begin testing."

## A safety net for small businesses

For small businesses like these operating in new markets, AAL provides a vital kickstart and safety net that allows projects to flourish by offering financial support, an opportunity to share out the risk and by helping them through processes like quality assurance. "These are complex issues which could easily kill a small company in project development," says Gudmundsson. "We would never have been able to do it alone."

**"AAL allows projects to flourish by offering financial support, an opportunity to share risk and by helping them through processes like quality assurance"**



## PROJECT INFO

### Applying the solution to existing markets

With AAL's support and each partner's unique competencies, Inclusion Society is going from strength to strength. The condition of Norway's health and social care sectors may have been the starting point, but the wellbeing of older adults at home and in care is not an issue that's confined to Europe. "The marketing situation of broadband suppliers is the same in countries like Australia, New Zealand and Canada as it is in Europe," remarks Gudmundsson, "so having entered a new product into a new market, we feel that we could easily take an existing product to new markets."

### Inclusion Society

Inclusion Society aims to support the wellbeing of older adults living at home and ease their transition in to managed care by using experience-led innovation methods to better understand their needs and tailor solutions to meet these.

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**InclusionSociety**



# ➤ MYLIFE: SOFTWARE THAT SUPPORTS INDEPENDENCE

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Intuitively designed software from Norway is helping older adults with reduced cognitive function to stay connected, stimulated and in charge of their daily lives through the use of everyday, touch-screen technologies

**Jorun Pedersen** is the manager at Mylifeproducts AS, a Norwegian company that aims to support independence in cognitively impaired older adults through simple and intuitive software solutions. Memas, the software developed through the Mylife-project, is designed for use with smartphone touch-screens to connect and serve primary end-users with formal and informal caregivers. “Clearing up time confusion is the main issue,” explains Pedersen. “Through remote control of a calendar, a caregiver can help the user to get control over their appointments and be sure that what they see on the screen will always be correct.”



**“It’s not just the end-users themselves but also the caregivers and their families who are initially wary of bringing unfamiliar technology into their home”**

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## PROJECT INFO

### MyLife

Multimedia technology to support independence and participation for people with dementia. The service offered by Mylife uses internet-based services to support time-orientation, sensory awareness, communication and recreational activities for people with cognitive disabilities.

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**Mylife**  
products AS

**memas**®  
Your memory assistant

Memas also recognises the importance of stimulating end-users' cognitive abilities by supporting communication and recreational activities. A number of services can be accessed such as the internet, messaging, the radio and newspapers so that the wider world never feels too far away. "We also have a photo feature," states Pedersen, "so family or friends can send photos of, say, a grandchild's recent football game straight to the screen."



### Combined expertise

Mylife was initiated with four Norwegian SMEs, each of which has brought their unique expertise in guiding the development of Memas to successfully bring the software to the market. This combined know-how has ensured that the product serves the end-users' specific needs and continues to inform new additions to the original concept. The most recent of these is a feature designed to help end-users locate items that could cause problems if misplaced, such as keys.

### Trialling the product

AAL provided the project with the means to run field and user trials in Norway, Germany and the UK. In many cases, it's not just the end-users themselves but also the caregivers and their families who are initially wary of bringing unfamiliar technology into their home and daily routine, believing that it won't be easy enough for them to use. The success of the trials, however, helped to allay these fears. "All the families in the trials had a good experience," Pedersen states, "and I would say that without AAL, without the opportunity they gave us to test it in real life in different countries, there would not have been a product."

**"Without the opportunity that AAL gave us to test our product in real life in different countries, there would not have been a product"**

### Testing the water

At present, the European market is sufficient for the scale of the project's ambition, which has seen Mylife marketed in Germany and planned for launch in the UK very soon. There isn't currently much incentive to rollout the product to North American markets, for instance, because Mylife, as Pedersen explains, would lose its competitive advantage: "It's natural for us to start in the countries where we had the trials. Norway is a small country, so we have to start and make sure that we sell a certain volume in our own market first."

# ➤ **RGS: VIRTUAL REALITY FOR POST-STROKE CARE**

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The cost of neural rehabilitation for stroke survivors is huge, while effective treatment to help people recover after a stroke is limited to drug therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. RGS, or the Rehabilitation Gaming System, have created a highly effective virtual reality tool that is now installed at several hospitals and post-stroke care centres in Europe

**RGS is** a virtual reality environment in which the stroke victim is placed in a first-person perspective. “The basic idea from here is that we can talk to the brain systems affected by stroke and this will help it regain its functionality,” explains project coordinator Paul Verschure. “It enables the patient to respond to things going on in the virtual world that are designed to stimulate communication between their perception, what they’re seeing and what they’re feeling and their motor mechanisms. The system adapts to each patient’s individual needs and requirements and adapts as the patient learns.



## **Achieving scientific validity**

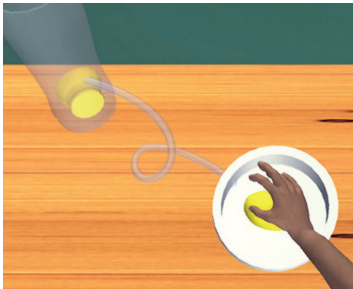
“I have always focused on building up the credibility of what we do, so we have put an enormous amount of effort into its clinical validation and into building a reliable technology,” he says. “Right now, we have people training at home and we are working with five different hospitals daily where the system is used. The purpose here is not only to prove the scientific validity of what we do but also to set RGS apart from everything else that’s out there. The company has now developed a solid commercial prototype, has many users and is being successfully used in five major hospitals. As Verschure proudly declares: “It’s not just an idea now; it has been tested, is mature and we are ready to take it to market.”

**“AAL has helped us to relate to the clinical community both locally and in Europe and that has been very useful”**

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## Untapped markets

The world's population of stroke patients and chronic stroke patients is sixty million – a huge potential market. Potential, however, is not enough in the harsh commercial world, which has prompted RGS to take a slower, more organic route to market success, as Verschure explains: “We talked with distributors, commercial partners and investors and it was always all about “but how do I make my money?” I found the differences in expectations here very frustrating. Business people are always working on their spreadsheets to figure out how to make money with minimal risk. I think that's the wrong attitude and I think reward has to be proportional to risk.”



# “RGS has been tested, is mature and is ready to take to market”

## Raising the product's profile

Verschure is now engaged in the process of networking and raising the profile of the RGS system and, if a hospital or stroke care centre hears of the system, they are able to provide the service. But he is thinking longer term, too and about the potential for a more personalised system patients can use in the home environment. “We're on a mission now,” says Verschure. “AAL fitted in with that mission but this project and its scope goes beyond what a single AAL project can realise. We are in this game for the long term. AAL has helped us to relate to the clinical community both locally and in Europe and that has been very useful in teaching us to be very careful when dealing with SMEs.”

## PROJECT INFO

### RGS

Rehabilitation Gaming System. RGS is a new integrated science-based approach towards the training of the brain. RGS comprises an expanding library of clinically validated protocols for the neuro-rehabilitation of motor deficits, affective disorders, cognitive and language deficits caused by brain damage. RGS objective is to provide high levels of care while lowering cost, serving all stake-holders in the rehabilitation process.

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## ➤ ROSETTA: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF USERS AND CARERS

Rosetta is an ICT system designed to help community dwelling people with progressive chronic disabilities such as Alzheimer's retain their autonomy and quality of life. Through a careful process of field trials, the team behind Rosetta were able to construct a viable roadmap for bringing their work to fruition

**“AAL funding was of huge importance in being able to execute the necessary developments and trials that provided us with valuable information”**

**Looking to** restore some of the autonomy through chronic disability, the Rosetta project is an ICT system designed to take some of the strain off care workers and prolong the time that sufferers can continue to live in their preferred environment. “The challenge with Rosetta was to develop a system suitable for people in different stages of dementia,” explains Rosetta’s project coordinator Dr. Irek Karkowski. “In all these stages they have different needs in terms of support and monitoring services in their daily life. The system offers support from going outside to fall prevention and detection.”

The Rosetta system is a non-obtrusive ICT based sensory system that would typically be set up around the home. The system works by creating a database that calibrates itself to the user and monitors sleeping patterns and daily activities so that caregivers and families of dementia sufferers can be informed on the development of the illness. As well as being able to monitor daily activities, the system also raises the alarm over any serious deviations from normal behaviour that may indicate an accident or a fall.

### The importance of funding

Rosetta is just one of many projects that has received AAL funding. Dr. Karkowski talks about the impact of AAL funding on his project. “AAL funding was of huge importance in being able to execute the necessary developments and trials that provided us with valuable information. With the funding we were able to monitor 26 different activities for people with dementia.” Using technology is often unfeasible or too expensive, but it was through this trialling that Rosetta were able to ascertain the more feasible aspects of their project with a view to taking it to the market place.

“Often you have  
a good idea,  
but you need to  
ask yourself:  
‘what is the  
business  
model?’”

### PROJECT INFO

#### ROSETTA

ROSETTA aims to help people with progressive chronic disabilities and their caregivers to retain their autonomy and quality of life by developing an ICT system that offers activity guidance and awareness services for independent living.

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### Creating a commercially viable product

There have been a number of projects that have started with a lot of promise but failed to do well commercially, Dr Karkowski believes this is avoidable: “There are many projects that do not create follow up. I think it’s important to make the distinction between ‘do I want to only

research, or do I want to finalise my project with the goal of bringing it to market?’ It’s very important to keep this focus. Often you have a good idea, but you need to ask yourself: ‘what is the business model?’ You need to design a solution that is commercially viable.”

Rosetta represents an ideal example of how a project can identify a problem and develop a marketable product, and following a successful year of trading and securing domestic contracts in the Netherlands, the people behind the Rosetta project have big plans for the future.





# ► **WECARE:** CONNECTING PEOPLE THROUGH SMART SERVICES

The WeCare project has seen the development and implementation of four different social networking services, each tailored to the needs of communities. Through iterative cycles of evaluating the services in terms of end-users and business viability, the WeCare project has achieved success in creating functional and viable products

**Four online** social networking services have been developed for the WeCare project, tailor-made for four different contexts in Finland, Spain, Ireland, and the Netherlands. They consist of a mixture of real-time video communication services, tools for sharing news and organising community events, tools to request and offer mutual support or informal care, and streams of relevant information.

Each of the countries' efforts has seen a fair degree of success. The Spanish group set up a service that linked older adults so that they could talk to each other. The Finnish group provided improved video communication services that allowed people to join in activities and chat to loved ones when away.

**“The AAL  
programme runs  
end-user involvement  
and business  
development  
workshops that  
can help  
projects thrive”**



The Irish partners were some of the first to try and innovate with tablet computers to connect people, while the Dutch group developed methods for coordinating care tasks between informal carers.



## PROJECT INFO

### WeCare

The project's goal is to enable older adults to participate in social activities. This will improve their quality of life, enable them to live at home longer and to contribute to society. An additional goal is to facilitate the coordination of informal care to older people, which will reduce the demand for professional care and social services.

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### Cycles of innovation

The WeCare project published a series of recommendations for other AAL projects at the end of its duration. As well as highlighting human-centred design and the importance of combining online with face-to-face aspects, the importance of trialling and improving the business model throughout the project is described as "critical" by the publication. Developing a business model that works can be done through iterative cycles of "organising meetings with potential customers and stakeholders in order to generate and evaluate ideas concerning value proposition, target groups and revenue streams."

### Working with existing groups

Another recommendation from the project outlines the importance of creating a flexible service that can be tailored to different target groups, as well as fostering local and existing networks. "Tapping into an existing group of people – for instance a neighbourhood centre that already brings together groups of older adults – and piggybacking on top of that is a far more efficient use of time and money than trying to build a user-base from scratch," explains senior research scientist Marc Steen.

**"Trialling and improving the business model throughout the project is critical"**

### Supporting business development

One of the ongoing concerns for projects in the assisted living sector as a whole is the ability to convince people to invest in solutions to problems that are societal in nature. What financial gains are to be made by helping people to be happier? The AAL programme has been addressing this in recent years by providing end-user involvement and business development workshops, as well as extra reports and manuals, and Steen believes that the extra attention in these areas can help projects thrive where previously they have failed.



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