



2021

ANNUAL REPORT

ACTIVITIES, FINANCE AND COMMUNICATION

2021

AAL ASSOCIATION

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INTRODUCTION

BY THE AAL DIRECTOR

As we look back on 2021 in our Annual Report to the AAL members, we are reminded about that second year of the Covid-19 pandemic – working from home most of the year, the vaccination campaigns to get a grip on the virus, the virulent discussions as well as protests on how to deal best with such a public health crisis in Europe and the world.

But above all what is really important in life – people, family, friends – social contact, most of it only possible online last year again. At one of our online seminars in 2021 a person expressed that ‘human touch will be the rare resource of the future’.

This is how probably most of us will remember 2021. And yet at the same time life continued and so did the activities of our AAL Programme, as we officially entered into the phasing-out period in summer 2021.

We managed to organise an additional Call in 2021 with most of our members participating while attracting yet again a record number of applications. We also launched a number of new final support actions around ageing well/health & care ecosystem building and looking into the feasibility of ethical certifications for the AAL domain.

We launched a communication campaign on the outcomes of the AAL Programme while continuing our annual Programme Impact Assessment. And we organised a number of webinars with experts and an online seminar on the strategic role of regional health & care ecosystems for system transformation.

And while we had to cancel our planned in-person European Week of Active & Healthy Ageing in Trieste, Italy, we did organise an online version in the last quarter of 2021. We managed to attract many people to this online event, which offered engaging panels, a number of stimulating online workshops and a very successful matchmaking platform.

“

At the same time life continued and so did the activities of our AAL Programme, as we officially entered into the phasing-out period in summer 2021.



So, we learned to adapt to this changing environment as best as we could. We did not only survive this crisis period by ensuring the continuation of the AAL Programme, but also made sure that the achievements of AAL will be lasting.

2021 was the start of Horizon Europe putting Horizon2020 behind us. The AAL Programme will still be around for some years to finalise all of its funded projects and support activities. At the same time, the moment has come to start wrapping things up, looking back on what we have achieved and learned and get prepared for new collaborations in this new decade.

May the following chapters provide you with information, thoughts and inspirations about that year 2021 together in the AAL Programme.

KLAUS NIEDERLÄNDER

GENERAL PROJECT SUPPORT

Mid- and final project reviews are part of the core activities undertaken by the AAL Programme Operations to guarantee proper monitoring of the actions funded by the Programme. A physical review, with the help of two external experts, is carried out at mid-term and a remote review at the end of the project. In both types of reviews, reviewers and representatives from the consortium, the involved NCPs and a CMU representative are invited to take part in the discussions. In 2021 a total of 19 mid-term and additional reviews took place, and 18 final reviews were carried out.

During 2021, the CMU together with a couple of AAL members worked on a revised approach to projects monitoring. The new process, focused on the overall AAL Programme Impact Assessment logic, aims at assessing the performance of the projects against the three overarching goals of AAL and supporting funded consortia in achieving them. The new monitoring process is being tested at the time of writing this report.

Call management

The last Call for Proposals of the AAL Programme was launched in December 2020 and was funded by 15 national funding authorities from 13 AAL Partner States and the European Commission. An online Info Day with a record number of participants (more than 300) was organised in January 2021. For the fourth time, the Call allowed for more flexibility regarding the scope, size, and duration of the submitted projects by including a type of instrument, namely, the Small Collaborative Project.

While keeping an open Call approach (open to all eight AAL application areas – see section 1.4), the Call 2021 stressed three elements, namely:

- **An inclusive health & care approach** (health prevention, preservation of physical & mental health, social participation)
- **The stimulation and upscaling of innovation in active & healthy ageing through health & care ecosystems**
- **The accessibility of digital solutions to end users, for example, through education for greater e-literacy.**



In total, 94 proposals were submitted: 80 Collaborative Projects and 14 Small Collaborative Projects. Below is some Call 2021-related data (more information is available here).

Call AAL 2021 - all submitted proposals	Call figures
Total budget	143 Mio €
Total requested funding	92 Mio €
Average quota requested funding vs. total project costs	64%
Total person-months efforts	18,200
Total number of partners	461
Average partners per proposal	5
Average total budget per proposal	1.52 Mio €
Average funding request per proposal	0.98 Mio €

Countries with the highest number of coordinators were Italy with 15 proposals, Denmark with 14 proposals and Switzerland with 13 proposals, while countries with highest participation (in terms of number of applicants) were Austria (88 participants) and Romania (80 participants).

As every year, the submitted project ideas spanned in several domains such as:

- Virtual reality in nursing homes
- Promoting car mobility for the elderly through enhanced driving safety
- Reminiscence to stimulate memory and activity
- Smart wearables to mitigate /prevent low-back pain
- Improvement of sleep quality through a coaching system
- Artificial intelligence-based platform to prevent heart failures
- Digital platform supporting informal caregivers (increasing competences, stress management, resilience strengthening, administrative support).

Topics specifically related the Covid crisis were:

- Nocturnal contactless remote monitoring of vital signs for prediction of respiratory disorders
- Advanced disinfection systems through smart sensors and robotics
- Automatic soap and gel dispenser with social interaction and stimulation for primary and secondary end users
- Counteracting patients' weak adherence and use of evidence-based solutions in context of lack of health care (HC) capacities.

After the evaluation and budget optimization process, 23 proposals were selected for funding, out of which four were Small Collaborative Projects and 19 Collaborative Projects (nine proposals needed to be reconfigured). However, due to the negative outcome of the re-evaluation of one of the selected projects, the total number of proposals invited for negotiation decreased by one and ended up reaching 22.

PROGRAMME

SUPPORT

In 2021, the AAL Programme continued to offer its community a set of initiatives, studies and services aimed at supporting the applicants, the project participants, and the overall community in key areas where the Programme operates. The existing Support Actions were continued, and new ones were put in place. In 2021, the AAL Programme continued to offer its community a set of initiatives, studies and services aimed at supporting the applicants, the project participants and the overall community in key areas where the Programme operates.

The existing Support Actions were continued, and new ones were put in place during 2021, through a new design, selection and implementation approach, which followed three main objectives: inclusivity, exploration and impact.

The accomplishment of these three objectives resulted in:

- The involvement of an enlarged spectrum of stakeholders, including an increasing number of investors
- The adoption of new initiatives, which in turn led to (among others)
 - The partnering with new innovators, increased visibility and increased collaboration (through the Challenge Prize)
 - A better understanding of the systemic dimension for innovation and the development of a European action agenda (through the Ecosystem Support Action)
- An impact assessment learning framework, supporting the AAL narrative and improving AAL project & Support Action priorities.

In 2021 the AAL Programme developed a more integrated approach in managing its Support Actions by fostering more interactions between our participants. For example, AAL2B contractors participated in the Coordinators' day and the Call Info day, presenting main obstacles and common mistakes or false assumptions made by entrepreneurs when preparing products to be commercialized. The Ethics guidelines have also been tested with some running pilot projects, to assess their suitability and relevance. The 2021 impact assessment findings have inspired the narrative of the Programme and much more.

AAL2Business

Two successful editions of the Lean Start-Up Academy took place in 2021. A remarkable novelty from the previous Lean Start-Up Academies editions is the creation of a case study used during the courses. In the previous online sessions, the contractors noticed that it was more difficult to stimulate debates and encourage interaction between the participants, when working virtually. Thanks to the support of the AAL CMU, the contractors were put in contact with an Austrian company called "Cogvis", a success story from the AAL network.

Moreover, the second and third editions of the GoToMarket Launchpad took place online between 1st July 2020 to 30th June 2021. The online workshop introduced the basic concepts of the go-to-market process, learning about investment models and follow-up opportunities. The online course was held by the coaches who later individually supported the AAL projects to catch the attention of different types of investors (through pitching or crowdfunding campaign). After the webinar, all participants were given the possibility to choose between the two above-mentioned services.

An AAL2Business toolkit, aimed at providing AAL community with guidelines on how to drive project results into the market, and maximize impact was developed by the end of 2021 and will be shared with the project beneficiaries and the rest of the AAL community by mid April 2022.











2021 edition of the Impact Assessment

Following the Impact Assessment surveys that were carried out in 2016, 2019 and 2020, the AAL Programme put in place a fourth edition, developing a new logic model for this exercise.

On the input-side of the logic model, the AAL Programme's inputs and activities to achieve its

Evidence from the third edition of the AAL Programme Impact Assessment*

AAL contributes to strengthening the industrial base in Europe

The AAL Programme has had a positive impact on...		The AAL Support Actions improve the capabilities of ...
 <p>61% of AAL projects, which resulted in at least one solution or component brought to the market</p>	 <p>...increasing chances of market success</p>	<p>60% of participants in AAL2Business to develop a commercialization strategy</p> 
 <p>68% of respondents for whom AAL funding accelerated development of solutions</p>		
 <p>82% of AAL participants who learned more about user-testing and identifying user needs.</p>	 <p>...helping to include end-users in the innovation process</p>	<p>more than 60% of participants in AAL2Business to increase user-involvement or to identify user needs</p> 
 <p>more than two thirds of participants who benefited from collaboration and networks established during the AAL project</p>	 <p>...intensifying collaboration and networks</p>	<p>89% of participants in AAL Forum to broaden access to the AAL network</p> 

objectives were identified. On the result-side, a distinction was made between outputs, outcomes and impacts:

- Outputs are defined as the project-level results that are expected to be generated during the project
- Short-term outcomes are results stemming directly from project completion
- Mid-term outcomes are results generated more indirectly from AAL project completion.

In the figures above and on page 12, the main findings from the 2021 Impact Assessment survey are presented.

AAL contributes to better quality of life for older adults and their networks



By enabling older adults to live **longer** in their **own homes** & remain in **better mental condition**

According to over **80 %** of respondents, the AAL Programme helps **to raise awareness** on needs and opportunities in the healthy aging and wellbeing market **among**:



Older adults and their networks

AAL contributes to increased efficiency and sustainability of support and care systems

By **increasing relevance and quality** of **care visits** & **unburdening carers**



Formal carers



AAL has an added value for international cooperation

Learning experiences from international cooperation within AAL projects



For **79%** of respondents **learning** in AAL project has been **relevant to bringing AAL solutions to market** in other regions, countries, and **across the EU**

Strengthening wider ecosystem and community in AAL field

For **more than 80%** the AAL Programme has contributed to **strengthening** the wider **AAL ecosystem and community**



**Source: Third edition of the AAL Programme impact assessment, Final Summary Report Online Available: <http://www.aal-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/IA-AAL-Final-summary-report-FINAL.pdf>*

Evidence presented in infographic based on online survey in 2021:

- among all 282 participants from 38 projects finished by the end of 2019
- with response rate of 34.7% and with all projects covered by at least 1 response



AAL Guidelines for Ethics, Data Privacy and Security

After the release of the AAL Guidelines for Ethics, Data Privacy and Security in July 2020, the Guidelines gained a lot of visibility in the enlarged community of health and care and were presented in several international online events and workshops. The Guidelines were also presented to 10 running projects, which are now testing the adoption and use of the guidelines for their mid-term reviews.

Based on AAL's Impact Assessment of finished AAL projects, one critical topic for future market success is the issue of trust in the developed solutions, in particular regarding the collected and used data. Following the development of Ethical Guidelines for ongoing AAL projects, the AAL Programme implemented a second support action, to look into the feasibility of linking AAL solutions with emerging certification systems.

For that purpose, a first feasibility study was carried out to test the interest and attractiveness of an ethical/data privacy certification system for digital solutions aiming at improving the quality of life of

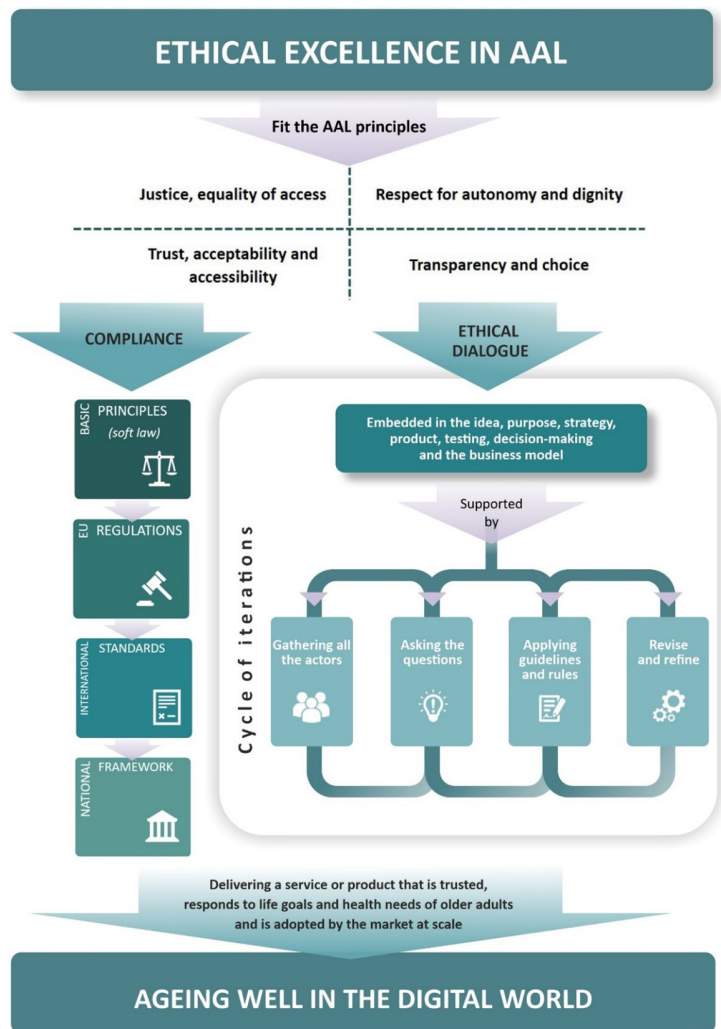
older adults. The support action concentrated on the following elements:

- Understanding (through online survey, desk research or interviews), the interest that active companies and users in the field of AAL may have in specific ethical/ data privacy certification systems
- Mapping, comparing, and benchmarking similar certification systems already in use or being conceptualized.

The final report of the study presents a number of expressed interests in such a certification system, in particular from the demand side, consisting of end users organisation and health providers, and especially some possible routes of integrating AAL solutions into emerging certification systems. A few countries have already embarked on exploring concrete certification schemes such as the German health app certification scheme DIGA, digital technology assessment frameworks in the Netherlands with the Italian authorities also expressing an interest to explore this field. At the same time, the International Organization for Standardization is looking in developing a specific scheme while an ethics framework is being developed for ICT professionals.

Further to identifying and mapping already existing or draft certification initiatives in the field of m-health, care, privacy and security, ICT professions and others, the focus in certification seems to be around specific technologies (such as for IoT or health apps, for example) as well as in specific application areas (home, health institutions, workplace).

The feasibility study was an excellent opportunity for the AAL Programme to follow up on an expressed issue of concern by the AAL community, while creating new contacts in an area of increasing importance in health & care.



AAL Ecosystem Support Action

Following continuous discussions about the need for more systemic innovation going beyond projects and product or service solutions at the AAL Forum in Bilbao and Aarhus in 2018 and 2019, the AAL Programme launched an ecosystem support action at the end of 2022. For that purpose, a Steering Committee made up of AAL members, the Advisory Board and the CMU was set up to be supported by an external expert from a regional ecosystem in the Netherlands.

During 2021 the focus was on understanding better the role of regional ecosystems in health & care and for ageing well and how they can be used for European innovation collaboration. For that purpose, ecosystem actors from over 10 AAL member countries were interviewed to learn about their practical experience, on what constitutes an eco-system, how it works and what it does.

Furthermore an international seminar was organised in May 2021 with institutional partners from Finland, Germany and an international business network to shed light on dealing with complex systems, ecosystem design matters and ecosystem matters in practice (collaboration within ecosystems, health & care data eco-systems and integrated health & care ecosystems).

The learnings of this discovery phase can also be found in a number of reports published on the AAL website (<http://www.aal-europe.eu/about/our-ecosystem/>), which served for the launch of the second phase in 2022. As a next step concrete ecosystem design tools will be explored and a roadmap for European ecosystem collaboration developed over 2022.



PROGRAMME COMMUNICATION

NETWORKING AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

In 2021 the AAL's communication and public affairs activities were shaped by the restrictions and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic with most communication and networking events taking place online. After postponement of AAL Forum 2021, the annual event was re-branded as the European Week of Active and Healthy Ageing and its second edition took place online in November 2021.



The website (www.aal-europe.eu), cornerstone of the external communication of the AAL Programme has remained the main point of reference for project beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The website has been maintained to give all the necessary information for AAL's last Call for funding and ongoing events. At the end of 2021, CMU Communication staff started to review and plan for the start of phasing out of the Programme. This initial plan envisions such changes as re-organisation of internal links and revising AAL homepage to include information of the Programme's decade long legacy.

A new EWAHA website

With the inception of European Week of Active and Health Ageing (EWAHA), the previous AAL Forum website was terminated and replaced with a new and more contemporary site (www.ageing-well-week.eu) that serves as the main source of practical information for the last edition of AAL-organised EWAHA in Gdansk, Poland. This move was necessary due to the need to create a new platform that is more adaptable to online or hybrid events, and to align with the new branding of the event. The website also serves as an archive of information for the previous Forums.

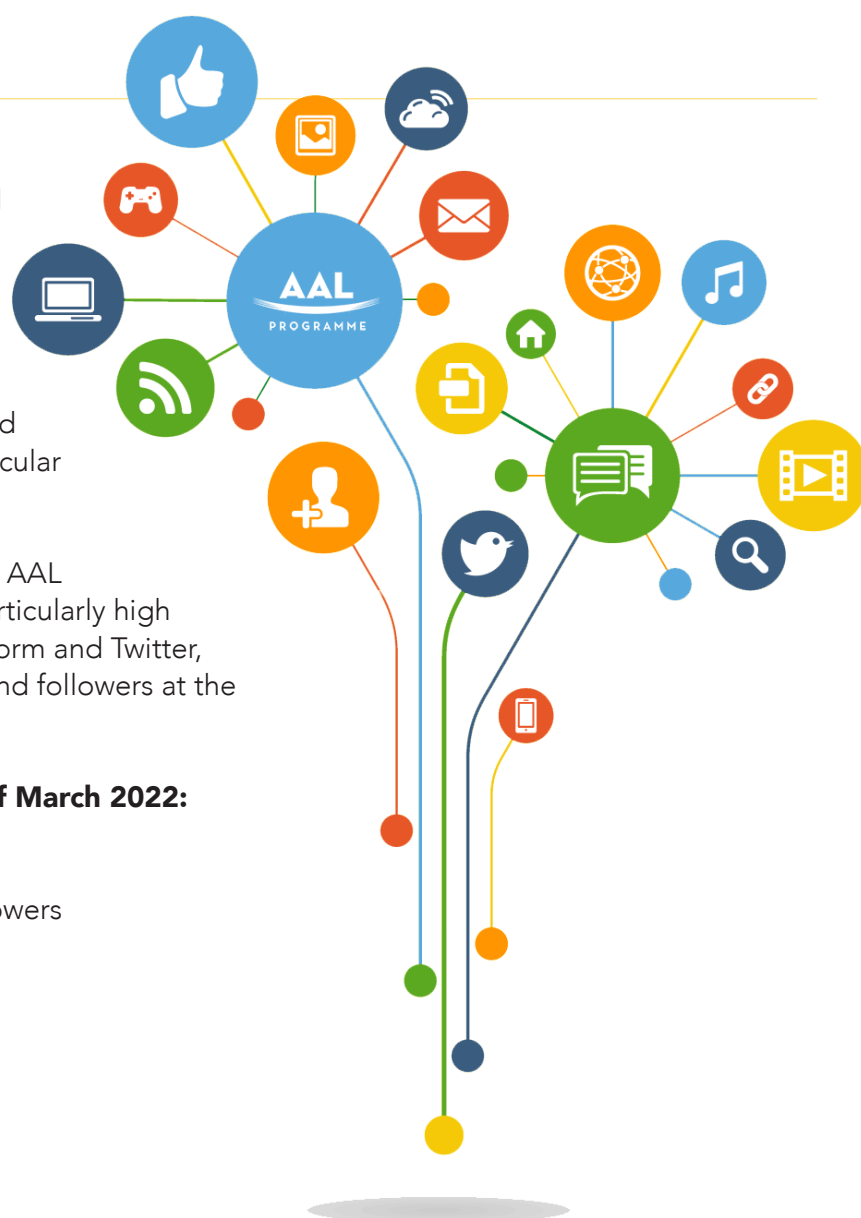
Social Media

Social media channels continued to be heavily involved in the outreach in 2021 to promote the ongoing AAL events, latest publications and support promotion of projects, the last Call for funding and AAL2Business offered courses. The channels have also been used to monitor the work and news from the AAL community, in particular our projects.

The follower counts steadily grew in all AAL Programme's social accounts with a particularly high increase on LinkedIn Professional platform and Twitter, which reached the mark of four thousand followers at the end of 2021.

AAL Social media audience size as of March 2022:

- LinkedIn: +2400 connections
- LinkedIn Professional: 872 followers
- Twitter: 4010 followers
- Facebook: 1904 followers
- Instagram: 265 followers



Newsletters

In 2021, the AAL Programme continued to connect with our community through three types of newsletters with a specialized content, namely, the general newsletter and issues for project participants and AAL event attendees. Moreover, a new design was created for the Event newsletter to align with the new visual identity of the European Week of Active and Healthy Ageing. To increase the subscription rate to all the newsletter, pop-up invitations to join the newsletter audience on the website have been ongoing for the last year. The onboarding campaign has also been renewed to target the audience with the most relevant information.

European Week of Active and Healthy Ageing and Public Affairs

Given the exceptional circumstances created by the COVID- 19 pandemic, the public affairs-related activities overlapped with the events, where we could bring together the political and policy interest of AAL. The AAL continued to cultivate these relationships through the span of the year by inviting policymakers and politicians to our events.

AAL Programme also gathered the views of our community to answer to the EU's public consultation on the Green Paper on Ageing that took place in the beginning of the year. Read the AAL's published considerations [here](#).

The 2nd edition of the European Week of Active and Healthy Ageing (EWAHA) took place, between 18 and 21 October, 2021 in an online format.



The Week was attended by approximately 700 people across Europe and beyond, and in addition to the plenaries and workshops, it also provided an online space for more than 40 exhibitors, 32 sessions and the opportunity to book one-to-one meetings for networking purposes. The participants showed great interest in the topics of age-friendly environments, e-health, care at home, artificial intelligence and robotics.

The event was full of stimulating debates and exchanges with politicians, local and national administrators, practitioners, geriatrics and psychologists providing a fruitful and exciting environment for an exchange between different perspectives across a wide array of topics related to ageing.

Participants included the **Vice President of the European Commission, Mrs. Dubravka Šuica**, who presented key findings of the Green Paper on Ageing with first actions, such as the new European care strategy, the **former Prime Minister of Finland, Mr. Esko Aho**, who engaged in debate with **Prof. Eve Middleton Kelly of Cambridge University**, a specialist in complex systems, on the need for a European Silver Deal and perspectives on an ageing society that must reinvent itself and the **Director for Digital Society, Trust & Cybersecurity at European Commission DG CONNECT, Mrs. Lorena Boix Alonso** who highlighted key aspects of the Digital Europe Programme

Similarly, to the first edition of EWAHA, this event also took inspiration from the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing to shed light on four main content tracks covering the following topics:

- **Track A:** Driving a platform for innovation and change
- **Track B:** Adapting health and care systems to the changing needs of an ageing population & drawing on the emerging learnings from the Coronavirus outbreak in 2020
- **Track C:** Promoting Intergenerational Solidarity
- **Track D:** Make the socio-economic case for impact investment into healthy ageing

To know more about the event, read the EWAHA Executive summary [here](#).



The Hackathon
at EWAHA 2021

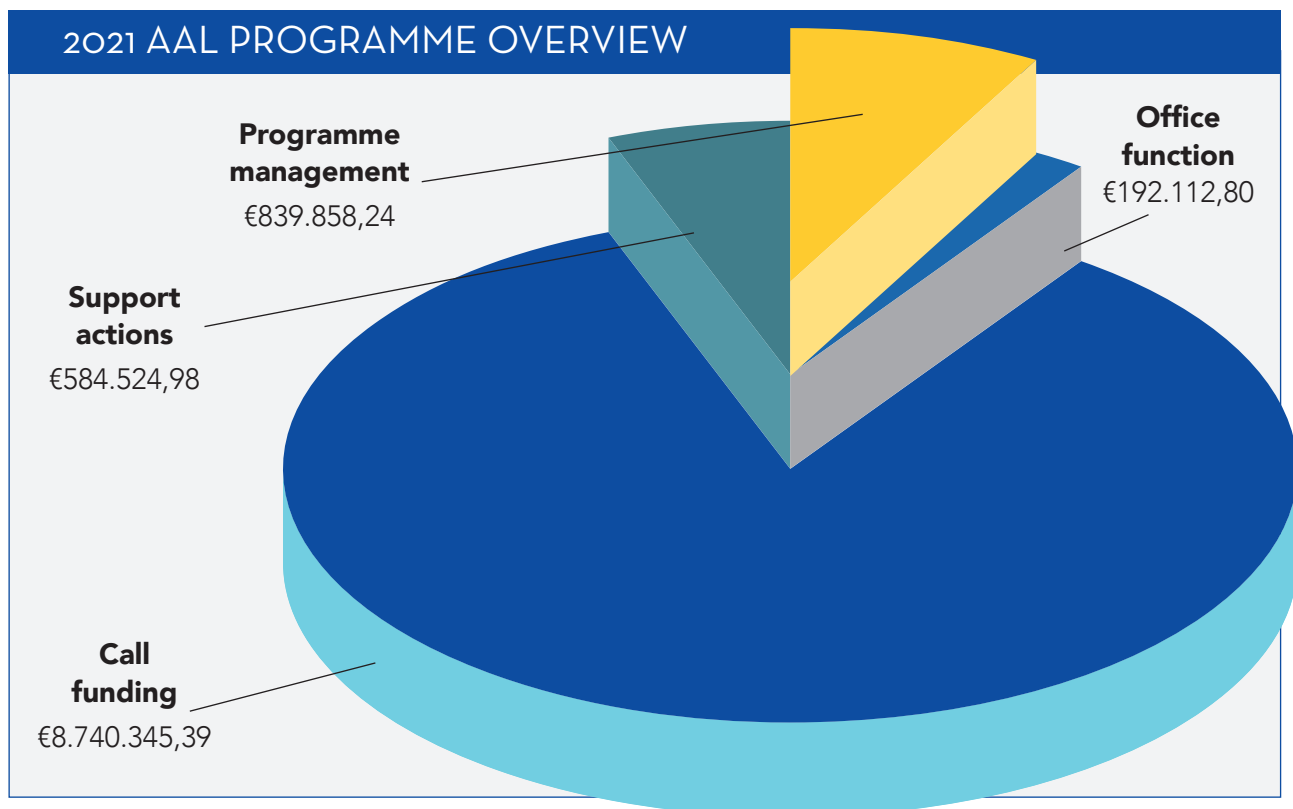
FINANCE

ACTIVITIES

The following section will provide a short overview of the AAL Programme finances in terms of 2021 spending and the evolution of the membership Call commitments in AAL2.

The breakdown of the 2021 programme expenses

The table below provides a breakdown of the different expense types incurred during the year 2021.



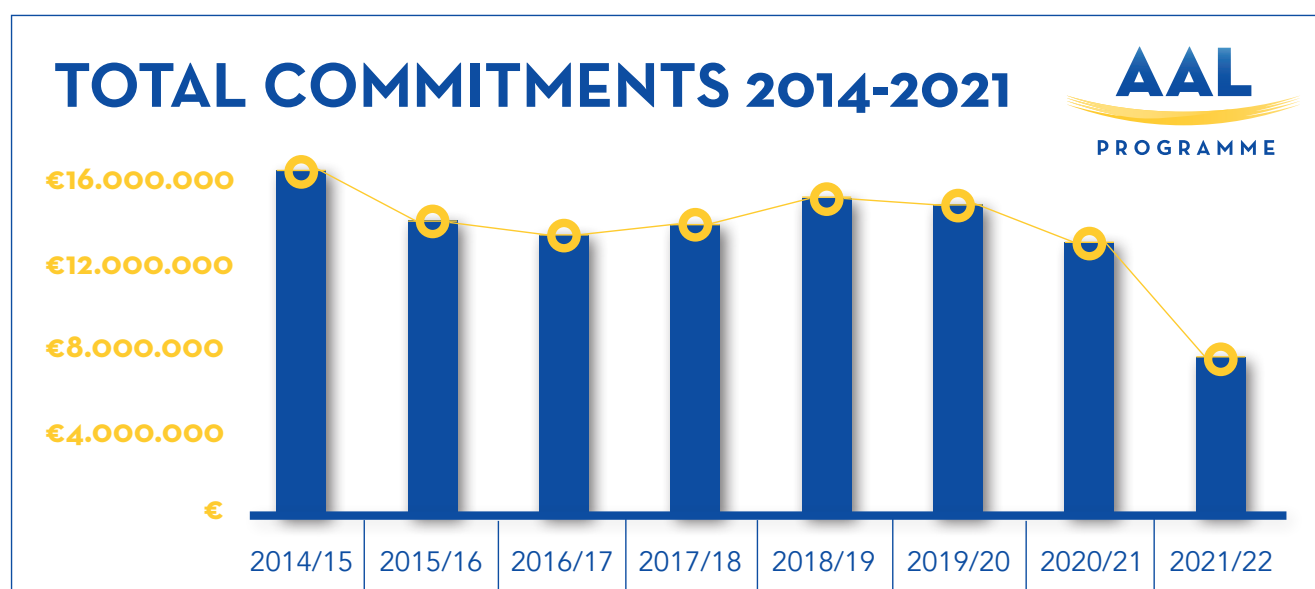
The largest part of the AAL financing is directed towards the annual Call funding of the EC contribution representing a little more than 8,7 million Euros in payments to the AAL members. This amount includes all transfers executed in 2021 for Call 2014 up until the Call 2020. The considerable reduction compared to last year's 18 million Euros can be explained by the final closing of the AAL.1 Programme in 2020.

The second largest part of the expenses were used for the provision of project support activities, such as the AAL Ecosystems Support Action, the Mid-term and final project reviews, the AAL2Business activities and the 2020 AAL Forum. Approximately 548k Euros were spent in 2021 on these activities.

The Programme management expenses amounted to approximately 839k Euros including personnel of the AAL Association, AAL governance, as well as the yearly organization & implementation of the Calls. Finally, the functioning of the central office expenses amounted to 192k Euros, which includes the rental costs, the IT infrastructure, depreciations as well as the daily office running costs.

The AAL Membership commitments 2014-2021

The table below shows the evolution of the AAL member commitments to the Calls in AAL2.

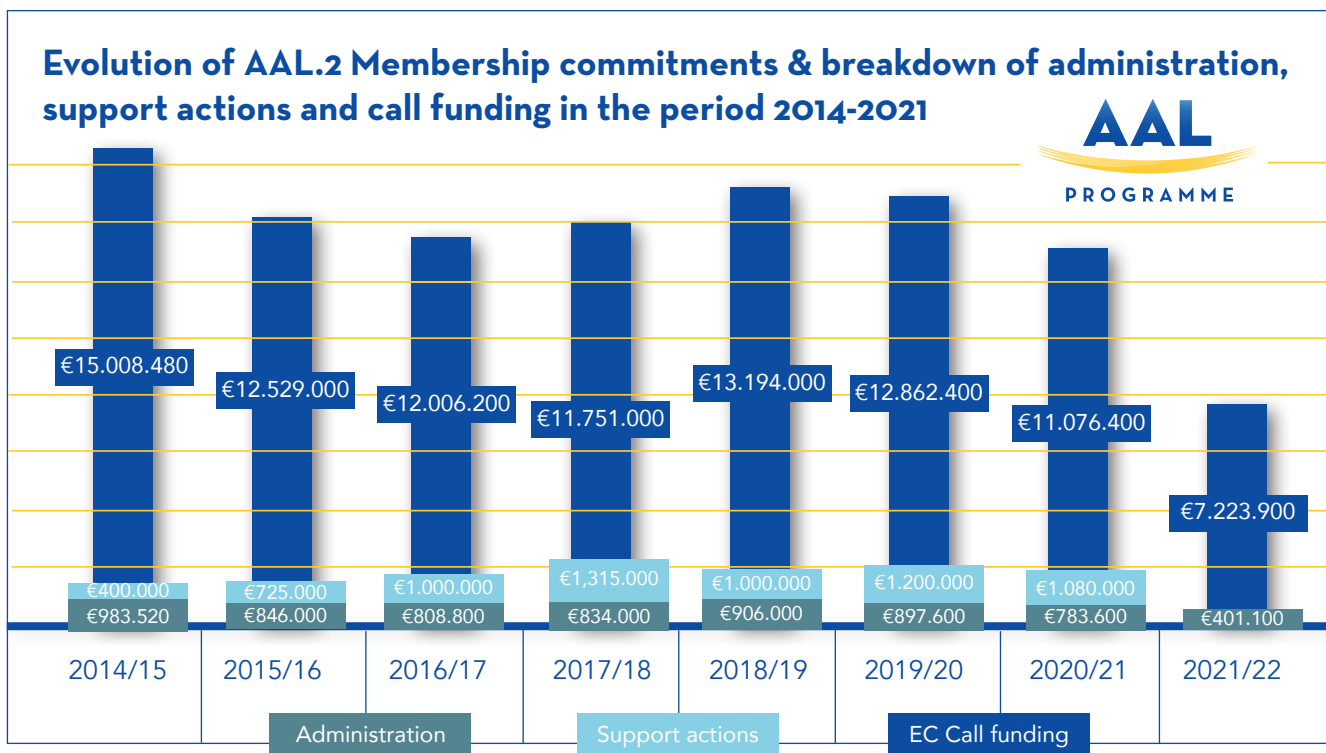


The above table provides the data on the evolution of the total actual commitments by our members. After a dip in 2016, the membership commitments started to increase and stabilise with commitment

in 2019 of approximately 15 million Euros. The official commitments for the year 2020 include both the Call 2020 for an amount of 13,060k Euros, as well as an additional Call 2021 for an amount of 7,685k Euros. Both Calls were included in the same and last 'Transfer of Funds' agreement with the EC under the AAL Joint Programme.

The EC Counterpart evolution 2014-2021

The table below provides a breakdown of the EC counterpart contribution.



The increase in commitments for the 2020/2021 Transfer of Funds agreement can be explained by the fact that in the agreement 2 Calls will be organized.

OUTLOOK FOR FOR 2022

As we close this Annual Report, what can you still expect in 2022 from the AAL Programme and when will we finally meet again?

By the time of writing this report, we have managed to organise already our first in-person encounter in 2022 as partner of the Health Valley event in the Netherlands in mid-March. The AAL Programme will use this year to promote 'Ageing well' with the support of digital technology while contributing with its experience for future European programmes. The 'European collaboration' track of this March event focused on the increasing importance of system innovation, in order to adapt to the complex challenges of demographic change.

Collaboration between organisations within local, regional, national and European ecosystems around ageing well or health & care will be key in the deployment and upscaling of digital-based solutions in the future. That's why the AAL Programme will continue its Ecosystem Support Action in 2022, in order to support the emerging ecosystem pillar of the Horizon Europe Partnership on Health & Care Systems Transformation, for example. We will also continue to stimulate collaboration between different regions with the support of our AAL Members, such as already launched in Portugal, the UK and Denmark.

As we prepare for the post-AAL future, we also want to celebrate the achievements of this 14-year European and international collaboration with our members and the AAL community. The culmination of this effort will be at our European Week of Active & Healthy Ageing in Gdansk, Poland from October 18-20. Our Programme Committee is currently building the programme for an engaging, inspiring and also festive moment together in person again!

2022 will also be about preparing reduced programme operations and management as of 2023. For some of us this will be the last year with the AAL Programme, so it will also be the first good-byes at the end of this year.

We look forward to collaborating with you in 2022, in meeting you again in person and in bringing forward together the achievements and learnings of the AAL Programme experience.

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