



Horizon 2020 Call: H2020-INSO-2014

Proposal number: SEP-210134170

Assessment of NOVEL Approaches to Alignment

Case Study No.5– Alignment of national AAL Programmes – Practical Implementation from the Austrian Perspective

Date: 15 November 2016

Dissemination level: Wider public

Lead contractor for this deliverable: AIT

Contributors: MIUR, UNIMAT, INRA



ABSTRACT

The focus of this case study is on the **practical implementation of alignment of national AAL programmes from an Austrian perspective**. AAL can be understood as a synonym for ICT-supported technologies for older adults to increase their quality of life. Since 2008, there exists a **transnational Article 185 Initiative dedicated to AAL**. In order to participate in Article 185 Initiatives a dedicated national programme is mandatory. Austria is founding member of the transnational AAL Programme. As a necessary pre-condition Austria has established a **national programme BENEFIT** dedicated to AAL in 2007.

Austria commits about 5.0 Mio EUR annually for research and development activities to both AAL programmes. About 50% of the budget are dedicated to the transnational AAL Programme and another 50% are dedicated to the national AAL programme BENEFIT. In practical terms, **Austria follows two aspects of alignment:**

- (1) **'Taking joint actions' aspect:** Within the transnational AAL Programme, Austria aligns its activities at strategic, operational and financial level with other countries in Europe, meaning all countries follow jointly agreed research priorities and funding procedures.
- (2) **'Building complementarities and synergies' aspect:** Within the national programme BENEFIT, Austria aligns its activities by building complementarities to the transnational AAL Programme and looks for synergies.

The case study will reveal how Austria in practical terms aligns its national programme on transnational level considering the two aspects. Thereby different alignment levels are focussed on: strategic coordination, operational call management, financial coordination, coordination in the development of new instruments, communication and dissemination activities.

The case shows the following **strengths of programme alignment from the Austrian perspective:**

- Create synergies between the national and transnational AAL Programme and projects
- Test new instruments where added value is highest (at national or transnational level)
- Community service of the transnational AAL Programme are open to the national and European Community
- Transnational alignment allows for easy coordination with other AAL related initiatives and networks

However, the case also reveals **limitations of programme alignment from the Austrian perspective:**

- Trade-Off between progressive coordinated development of transnational programmes and support by as many countries as possible
- National coordination between ministries with competences in research, innovation, economy, health and social affairs would benefit the demand side of AAL solutions
- Ex-Post evaluation and Impact Assessment needs prioritisation

This case addresses the following reader groups:

- **Coordinators of P2P** to assess the potential of aligning national programmes taking into account the two different aspects: taking joint actions and building complementarities
- **Managers and Coordinators of national RTDI programmes in RTDI ministries and funding organisations** to learn how to practically align national programmes on transnational level
- **Policy makers at European Commission** to learn about how to support the practical alignment of national RTDI programmes in the future

The case study builds on the ERA-LEARN 2020 "Definition and Typology of Alignment", and relies on a review of existing literature and targeted interviews. The case is part of a series investigating NOVEL approaches towards alignment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The case study has been written by Susanne Meyer from the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology. The author is grateful to Kerstin ZIMMERMANN and Gerda GEYER (Austrian coordinators of the transnational and national AAL Programme). She would also like to thank the ERA-LEARN Consortium partners for their useful suggestions on earlier drafts of this case study.

Table of contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Key features of the transnational and national AAL Programme.....	4
2.1 <i>Transnational AAL Programme - ACTIVE AND ASSISTED LIVING PROGRAMME (Art. 185 Initiative)</i>	4
2.2 <i>National AAL Programme - BENEFIT</i>	6
3. Principal joint actions and outputs of programme alignment	6
3.1 <i>Alignment in the establishment of the national and transnational AAL programme</i>	6
3.2 <i>Strategic coordination of the national and transnational AAL programme</i>	6
3.3 <i>Coordination of Call Management and Projects</i>	7
3.4 <i>Coordinated testing of new instruments</i>	8
3.5 <i>National budget coordination</i>	8
3.6 <i>Community building and community services</i>	8
3.7 <i>Strategic coordination with other networks and initiatives</i>	9
3.8 <i>Interministerial coordination for national and transnational alignment</i>	9
4. Overall strengths and key achievements of programme alignment	10
5. Overall limitations of programme alignment	11
6. Conclusions: Key success factors of programme alignment.....	12
7. Reflection and Outlook.....	13
REFERENCES.....	14

1. Introduction

AAL stands for 'ambient assisted living' and focuses on the development of ICT-supported technologies for older adults to increase their quality of life. Since 2008, there exists a transnational Article 185 Initiative dedicated to AAL. Many European countries support the transnational AAL Programme. In order to participate in Article 185 Initiatives a dedicated national programme is mandatory. Austria is founding member of the transnational AAL Programme. As a necessary pre-condition Austria has established a national programme BENEFIT dedicated to AAL in 2007. The focus of this case study is on the practical implementation of alignment of national AAL programmes from an Austrian perspective.

In the transnational as well as the national AAL programme Austria is represented by the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology at the strategic level and by the Austrian Promotion Agency at operational level. The Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology commits about 5.0 Mio EUR annually for research and development activities in both AAL programmes. About 2.5 Mio EUR are dedicated to the transnational AAL Programme and the other 2.5 Mio EUR are dedicated to the national AAL programme BENEFIT.

The case study will show that alignment of national programmes can include two aspects:

- (1) **'Taking joint actions' aspect:** Within the transnational AAL Programme, Austria aligns strategies, call management, new instruments and communication and dissemination activities with other European countries.
- (2) **'Building complementarities and synergies' aspect:** Within the national programme BENEFIT, Austria builds complementarities and synergies to the transnational AAL Programme. This can also be considered as one aspect of alignment.

In practical terms, Austria aligns its full national AAL budget when taking joint and complementary actions into account. However, taking the EC understanding of transnational alignment only the funding for joint actions is taken into account to measure alignment. This case study will reveal how useful 'complementary' alignment can be.

The case study will reveal how Austria in practical terms aligns its national programme on transnational level considering the two aspects. Thereby different alignment levels are focussed on based on the alignment typology (ERA-LEARN 2020 2015): strategic coordination, operational call management, financial coordination, coordination in the development of new instruments, communication and dissemination activities.

The case study is organised as follows: Section 2 will introduce the transnational and national AAL Programme in detail. Section 3 focuses on the practical implementation of alignment. Section 4, Section 5 and Section 6 reveal the strengths, limitations and success factors of programme alignment and Section 7 gives a short reflection and outlook.

2. Key features of the transnational and national AAL Programme

In the following, the development and the key features of the transnational and national AAL Programme will be introduced.

2.1 Transnational AAL Programme - ACTIVE AND ASSISTED LIVING PROGRAMME¹ (Art. 185 Initiative)

Development and aims of the AAL Programme

The AAL Programme, a transnational research and development programme, is an Article 185 Initiative supported by 17 Member States and the European Commission (duration: 2014-2020). The AAL Programme is a transnational funding initiative. The aim is to stimulate market-orientated research and development for technology products and ICT-supported services for ambient assisted living. The programme should lead to new business models, marketing concepts and value chains with improved usability and functionalities for end users. The AAL Programme carries out its mandate through the funding of transnational projects (at least three countries involved) that involve small and medium enterprises (SME), research bodies and user's organisations

¹ <http://www.aal-europe.eu/>

(representing the older adults). Participating Member States and the European Commission agree on annual working programmes, which are the basis for the annual calls.

The EC contribution for the AAL Programme is 175 Mio. EUR for the period 2014-2020. The majority of the EC contribution is used to fund transnational projects; a small part is dedicated to management costs. Additional funds for transnational projects come from national sources as well as from participating organisation within the project team.

The AAL Programme is a development based on the “Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme” (also Article 185 Initiative) running from 2008-2013 (EC Cofund 150 Mio. EUR). For readability, but also distinction between the programmes in this case study, we will refer to AAL Programme I (2008-2013) and AAL Programme II (2014-2020). Within AAL Programme I an annual thematic call for transnational projects have been conducted and about 145 projects could be funded. Based on successful results of the AAL Programme I, the AAL Programme II has been established as follower programme.

Austrian participation in AAL Programme I and II

Austria was already involved in the ‘specific support action’ dedicated to demographic change, which was a preparation action for the AAL Programme I. The result of the specific support action was that the AAL theme is important for a substantial number of countries in Europe and it has the potential to boost economic capacity. It also became clear that it needs a national programme in Austria dedicated to the AAL topic to be capable acting on national level in strategic and operational terms and build a national community. Additionally, a national programme is mandatory to join an Article 185 initiative. In 2007, the national programme BENEFIT was set-up. In 2008, Austria became founding member of the AAL Programme I. Within AAL Programme I and II Austria is represented by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology on strategic level and by the Austrian Promotion Agency on operational level. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology commits about 2.5 Mio. EUR annually for transnational projects. 55 out of the 145 funded projects in AAL Programme I are with Austrian participation.

The evaluation of the Austrian participation in AAL Programme I (Technopolis 2016) revealed that the programme was successful in strengthen the national and European networks of Austrian companies, research organisations and end user organisations. The involvement of end user organisations in the funded projects was instrumental to gain access to and to ensure the participation of older people, (informal) carers and other stakeholders. The participants consider successful end user involvement being the most important achievement of the AAL Programme I. However, only parts of the projects with Austrian participation were successfully developing products and services within the envisaged period of two to three years after project completion. Most AAL Programme I projects were research-focused or technology-driven, with rather little attention being paid to new business models, marketing concepts and value chains.

The general positive evaluation findings of the Austrian participation in AAL Programme I were one basis for the decision in Austria to participate in the AAL Programme II. One of the main changes between AAL Programme I and II is the shift from topic oriented calls to calls following a challenge driven approach. This gives a stronger role to stakeholders who demand solutions, meaning regional and local authorities, public utilities (hospitals, elderly care organisations, etc.) and social insurances.

Governance and Organisation

The AAL Programme II has established on governance structure for the administrative and financial organisation of calls. The AAL Association is an international not-for-profit legal association that is responsible for leading the AAL Programme II. The supreme body of the AAL Association is the General Assembly, which composes representatives of all partner countries. The AAL Association is co-managed by national coordinators and a central management unit that is headquartered in Brussels. The national coordinators are the first reference of the AAL Programme in their countries. The central management’ main responsible is the management of the overall programme in the interests of all countries, it coordinates the calls for proposals and it manages the budget. The coordination and management of the AAL Programme II is financed by 6% of the EC Cofund, national financial contribution and national in-kind contribution.

2.2 National AAL Programme - BENEFIT

The national programme BENEFIT is the AAL programme on national level to participate on the transnational AAL Programme I and II (Article 185 Initiative). The preparation of BENEFIT started in 2007 with the aim to also prepare and mobilise the Austrian community.

BENEFIT was set-up as a mission-oriented programme with the objective to fund technology development (ICT-related) for products and services aiming at maintaining and improving the quality of life for older adults. This also included that end-users, e.g. health care service, hospitals, etc. were important stakeholder and partners in the projects. For this programme the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology commits about 2.5 Mio. EUR annually. The BENEFIT programme was set-up in 2007 and launched 10 calls so far (2008-2016). BENEFIT started with thematically broad calls to be open to all national stakeholders. Later calls become more topic oriented. In 2011, Austria introduced a new focus on 'test-regions' to even boost the projects towards solution generation. Austria funds AAL test-regions, meaning at least 50 households needed to commit to test and evaluate new technology. Between 2008-2013 about 70 projects have been funded.

3. Principal joint actions and outputs of programme alignment

This section describes in detail how the two programmes are coordinated and aligned. Thereby it will become clear that alignment does not only mean 'joint actions', but also 'complementary actions'.

3.1 Alignment in the establishment of the national and transnational AAL programme

A necessary pre-condition for the AAL Programme I was the establishment of the national programme BENEFIT. At that time the Nordic countries already had RTDI programmes on AAL established. The Nordic countries shared their experience within in the 2-years preparation phase. A specificity in the Nordic programmes was the support of interdisciplinary project teams and integration of end-users as partners in the project. The AAL Programme I as well as Austria decided to follow these programme specificities in the establishment of the two programmes. Austria 'aligned' a part of their national programme BENEFIT with the Nordic countries programmes with respect to some programme specificities from the very beginning.

3.2 Strategic coordination of the national and transnational AAL programme

Coordination of national and transnational AAL strategies

Austria decided in 2007 to give emphasis to the AAL topic by establishing a national programme BENEFIT and participate in the corresponding transnational AAL programme. Although at that time, AAL (or related topics) were no priority in the Austrian RTDI-Strategy, several individuals in the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology supported this action, therefore the decision was taken. In 2011, a new Austrian RTDI-Strategy was developed (Republik Österreich 2011), which gave priority to grand challenges. "Ensuring quality of life in the midst demographic change" was one of the three identified grand challenges which was given priority in research in the future. This step ensured political commitment towards this topic for the future. As the same individuals have been involved in Austrian RTDI-Strategy and the strategy of the AAL Programme I, strategic coordination could be ensured. For the AAL Programme II (2014-2020) a new strategy was developed. In comparison to the strategy of AAL Programme I a strategic re-orientation took place from topic-oriented calls to challenge driven calls in AAL Programme II. This was challenging for some member countries, as they need to assess whether this re-orientation fits their national strategies and programmes. A common strategic development and re-orientation on transnational level supported by all countries with their national orientation is one of the main challenges experienced by the AAL Programme.

Experience of the AAL Programme showed that some countries dropped out in the AAL Programme II and new countries entered the network. However, there is a trade-off between progressive development of transnational programmes and the support of transnational programmes by as many countries as possible. Austria support the strategic re-orientation in the AAL Programme II. Moreover, in Austria an 'AAL Vision Austria' was developed, which can be considered as a national strategy dedicated to AAL (however, this is no strategy for the national programme BENEFIT) (AAL AUSTRIA 2015). Again, Austria ensured coordination of all strategy (AAL Programme II, Austrian RTDI-Strategy and AAL Vision Austria) by having the same individuals at ministry and funding agency level involved in the

strategy processes. In all strategies the overall framework and idea is the same, however the sub-topics differ from each other. This is also to ensure complementarity of national and transnational activities.

3.3 Coordination of Call Management and Projects

Call Management

The first call of the national programme BENEFIT was launched before the first call of the AAL Programme was out. The aim was to start building the community, approach end-users and prepare them for projects on transnational level. Since 2008, calls are launched annually within the national and transnational AAL Programme. The Austrian community can apply for projects twice per year. The national programme BENEFIT opens call in autumn, the transnational AAL Programme in spring. BENEFIT projects in autumn could be preparatory projects for AAL projects in spring.

Within the AAL Programme a call manual has been developed caring for all steps in call management and project administration. Whereas it was some effort in the beginning to agree on the expert evaluation process, the mid-term review and reporting requirements, the AAL Programme benefits now from the joint agreements and experiences. What turned out to be a true lessons learnt for all is the joint monitoring of project progress if this is seriously performed as it give insights from different perspectives on the progress and it opens eyes for new controlling mechanisms for the involved funding agencies.

However, there is limited alignment between national and transnational call management. Because call management in both programmes follows national rules and regulations, there are differences. BENEFIT for example has a different peer review, monitoring and reporting process than the AAL Programme.

On the one hand, this makes it more complex for people administering the programmes at funding agency level and for potential applicants, because they need to know both systems, on the other hand the differences also accommodate the different types of projects and the complementarity of the programmes.

Selection of Call Topics

On transnational level the discussion on call topics is joined by many countries delegates and additional stakeholders. Every year the discussion on call topics is established. Basis for discussion is a pre-defined framework of research priorities for AAL Programme I and II. The aim of Austria is to complement national and transnational call topics. In an ideal case, the call topics build on each other and complement each other, but they are not the same.

In the beginning the BENEFIT Programme was thematically open, in the last years, it focusses on smart homes and smart services. The aim is to fund large projects in test-regions to support implementation and to initiate demand. However, BENEFIT is still thematically open for small projects. Consultations of experts and other stakeholders are established before priorities of the call are set.

Austria reported that there are years with high synergies between the national and the transnational AAL call topic. However, there are also years when the majority of countries gives priority to other topics. However, Austria is open to all and new topics for smaller projects for each transnational call. However, Austria can adopt budget commitment according to their own interest.

Although, these discussions at transnational level on the annual call topic consumes a lot of time, Austrian participants could learn from discussion at European level and transfer good approaches and suitable call topics to Austria and implement them in BENEFIT on short term. Austrian experience can be shared on European level.

Eligibility of stakeholders

The AAL Programme should stimulate market-orientated research and development for technology products and ICT-supported services for ambient assisted living. From the very beginning, market orientation and end-user involvement played a vital role. Evidently, end-users like care services, health organisations or insurance companies were welcome to the projects, also as partners. However, not all countries were able to fund these type of organisations, but due to their participation in the AAL Programme, they made such organisation eligible for funding (e.g. Luxembourg). However, they are still difference in the national funding system, some perceive care organisations as companies, others have an own category for those with relatively high funding share. Austria could fund end-users from the very beginning. The participating countries in the AAL Programme worked towards similar eligibility criteria for their main stakeholders, which can also be considered as alignment.

Projects

The size of projects differs between BENEFIT and AAL Programme. It can be said that the national share of a project in the AAL Programme is similar to the project size in BENEFIT. The duration of BENEFIT projects is shorter (1-3 years) in comparison to AAL projects (2.5-3 years). BENEFIT projects are much more concrete, whereas AAL projects have a broader scope. BENEFIT projects often aim on testing products and service on the local market. It turned out that many AAL products need to be adopted to local or national needs, regulations and requirements, which is often realised in BENEFIT projects. Complementary AAL projects focus then on the development of common guidelines based on national testing of products. The projects as well as the programmes create synergies.

3.4 Coordinated testing of new instruments

During programme running time of BENEFIT and AAL Programme, new instruments have been tested in both programmes. In the BENEFIT programme the focus on 'test-regions' have been established as it turned out that products and services need to be adopted to local needs to find their market. Having 'test-regions' in Austria increased the impact of the BENEFIT programme. The focus on 'test-regions' can hardly be transnational, but needs a local environment and was therefore best to test within the national programme. The 'test-regions' work complementary to the instruments in the AAL Programme. Within the AAL Programme 'Hackathons' and 'AAL challenge prizes' have been established as new instruments. Hackathons are two-day events geared towards the creation of new ICT applications to improve the quality of life of older adults. The AAL challenge prize (50.000 EUR) is given to ideas to improve social life, health, home life, mobility and work life. Both instruments have higher added value on European than national level, but at the same time Austrian participants are welcome.

In Art. 185 Initiatives, the maximal EC contribution for the AAL Programme is based on national commitments for the call, but not on the results of the call. There is regularly remaining funding, because not all countries manage to spend their national budgets and therefore the full EC contribution is hardly released. The AAL Programme decided to use this remaining funding for experiments with the new instruments: Hackathons or AAL challenge prizes.

3.5 National budget coordination

According to participation and success of projects in the national and respectively transnational AAL Programme, the national indicative planned budget can shift between the transnational and national call. For national budgets spend in the AAL Programme, Austria received an EC Cofund of about 40% (Art. 185 framework condition). Although, the EC Cofund is appealing for Austria (to reduce oversubscription), Austria still may decide to shift budgets from the transnational to the national programme if this fits their demand better.

Experience in Austria in the last years shows that there is a tendency to shift budgets to the national level because call planning on transnational level is only done year by year. There exists a strategic framework for the calls, but the topics are discussed and decided on annual basis.

3.6 Community building and community services

National community building and AAL Platform

In the very beginning, the national community had to be mobilised. Different target-group oriented means had been used to address the community. Especially, some stakeholders like building constructors or insurance companies, did not feel attached to the community. The community also needed to be trained. In the very beginning BENEFIT projects were technology rather than demand-driven, but the community learned to follow an integrative approach and quality of projects increased.

In 2012, a national AAL Platform was established to be the entry point for any AAL related topic and stakeholder. The community grows and is successful in realising projects. However, the national AAL budget did not grow accordingly and many projects need to be declined.

Gateway to Europe and testing at home

National community in Austria can expand their networks on European level via the transnational AAL Programme to gain expertise, but also to share knowledge generated on national level with the European community. The Austrian community can profit from knowledge on new trends and developments. However, the

closer project findings, newly developed products or services, are to the market, the more important are national/regional markets to test and adopt products to user needs in the own region or country (Austrian seniors, Austrian care services, Austrian insurances). Whereas the testing is mainly organised within national projects, the testing results may later be communicated via guidelines for the German or European community in transnational projects.

Some end-users (e.g. Johanniter or Caritas) that have a European network, profit from the chance to apply solutions across Europe. For other end-users (e.g. local hospitals or insurances) only work on national level benefits their activities.

Programme Events

Both programmes have a kick-off event, but for result presentation, BENEFIT projects are often active at events of the AAL Programme and the other way around. The so called AAL Forum, which is the annual event of the AAL Programme, can be considered as a common event. The AAL Forum is aimed primarily at decision-makers, experts and interested people from politics, research and development, health, business and industry. Projects have the chance to present their findings to a broader European demand side. Additionally, Austria organised national AAL summits in 2014 and 2015 to showcase research results and AAL products. For these events international audience was invited as well.

Joint support services

Within the AAL Programme specific services for projects have been established, e.g. coaching to develop a business plan. This service is not only open for AAL project partners, but also partners of the national BENEFIT projects.

Another support service was the development of a classification model for the large variety of innovative ICT-based products and services that have been designed in recent years to increase the quality of life of the older adults. This project classification was developed in a project funded by BENEFIT, but the classification model is now used at national and transnational level.

3.7 Strategic coordination with other networks and initiatives

The national actors in Austria responsible for BENEFIT and the AAL Programme (Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology and Austrian Promotion Agency) decided that the strategic coordination with other European AAL related initiatives (EIP AHA, EIP AHA, AAL KIC, JPI MYBL, JPND) should take place via the AAL Programme. This task has been transferred to the AAL Programme, no additional national efforts are needed for coordination. There only exists an exception when it comes to the coordination with JPI MYBL as a transnational programme. It also needs coordination effort at national level between the national representatives of JPI MYBL and the representatives of BENEFIT/AAL Programme.

3.8 Interministerial coordination for national and transnational alignment

Already in the very beginning of the national and transnational AAL programme it turned out strategic interministerial coordination and cooperation at national level would benefit both programmes. A cooperation between ministries with competences in research, innovation, economy, health and social affairs would be a profound pre-condition for successful AAL Programmes as their stakeholders should be involved in AAL projects. In the transnational AAL Programme different types of ministries, funding agencies or networks are involved. The discussions within the AAL Programme benefits from the different perspectives of the variety of organisations involved. However, there the AAL Programme did not manage to mobilise all relevant stakeholder along the AAL value chain in each country. On national level, the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology started to communicate with the respective other ministries from the very beginning of the national and transnational AAL programme. An interministerial working group on quality of life and demographic change was established to ensure exchange between the ministries.

However, the evaluation of the Austrian participation in the AAL Programme (Technopolis 2016) provides evidence that the demand side should be strengthening as the target group of the programme (health insurances, social care organisations, hospitals, etc.) and there is need for more intensive interministerial coordination beyond "exchange". The evaluation revealed that demand side factors like financing and regulations are hindering

factors for AAL solutions to find their markets. Among the relevant actors who need to be mobilised to reduce market barriers are administrative units on local, regional and national level. These actors usually do not join an AAL project as a partner, but it needs other measures within the competence of other ministries (apart from RTDI ministries) to support the demand side processes.

The transnational and national AAL programme show that although the two programmes are very well aligned, coordination and alignment on national level is an important pre-condition for transnational alignment to encounter grand challenges.

However, although more intensive interministerial cooperation would be needed in Austria, it needs to be honoured that this group exists at all and communication is flowing. Setting up an effective interministerial cooperation takes long time. It was beneficial for this cooperation that the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology has stamina and supports this topic already for a long time.

4. Overall strengths and key achievements of programme alignment

This part summarises the strengths of aligning national and transnational RTDI programmes in the AAL area.

Importance of the AAL theme increased

The parallel development of the two AAL programmes and establishment of the AAL theme in strategically highly relevant documents increased the overall importance of the AAL theme.

Made main AAL stakeholder eligible for funding in all participating countries in the AAL Programme

One of the specificities of the AAL Programme is the involvement of end-users in the projects. However, end-users are not always companies, but also care services, health organisations, insurances, sometimes also local authorities. During running time of AAL Programme I, all participating countries finally managed to make such end-users eligible for funding in AAL projects, which has not been the case before. This can also be considered as alignment.

Create synergies between the national and transnational AAL Programme and projects

Austria looks for real synergies between the national and transnational AAL Programme and the projects. Whereas the national programme focuses on smart homes and services and the support of test regions to test AAL products and services and learn how to adopt them to local requirements, transnational programme often supports wider scope projects elaborating on new trends or developing general guidelines. Austria really tries to support those projects with the BENEFIT programme that have national added value and projects with AAL Programmes that have European added value.

Test new instruments where added value is highest (at national or transnational level)

In both programmes, BENEFIT and AAL Programme, new instruments have been tested. It became obvious from the beginning, that some new instruments potentially have higher added value on transnational level (e.g. Hackathons, AAL Challenge Prize) and others on national level (test-regions). The Austrian community has access to all instruments, but there is no competition or duplication between the instruments as the testing of new instruments is well coordinated.

National commitment to fund each transnational call to build a European AAL Community

Although Austria always look for synergies of the national and transnational call topic, there are years, where synergies are lower than in other years. However, Austria is open to all and new topics for smaller projects for each transnational call. It can adopt budget commitment according to their own interest. Austrian stakeholders always have the chance to work on transnational level and be involved in the European Community.

Community service of the AAL Programme are open to the national and European Community

The tight coordination of both programmes allows for community services that are open to the Austrian community, e.g. the business-coaching run by the AAL Programme, annual event by the AAL Programme. This allows Austrian stakeholders to connect immediately to the European community or promote their project findings on European level, even though they might not be active in AAL projects.

Transnational alignment allows for easy coordination with other AAL related initiatives and networks

On behalf of its members the transnational AAL Programme, it establishes links to all relevant other AAL related initiatives and networks. It needs no additional national effort for coordination.

5. Overall limitations of programme alignment

This part summarises the limitations and challenges of aligning national and transnational RTDI programmes in the AAL area.

Trade-Off between progressive coordinated development of transnational programmes and support by as many countries as possible

At transnational level, it became evident that moving from one strategy period to the next strategy period is challenging. A strategic re-orientation of the transnational programme causes dis-alignment with national strategies in some countries. The more progressive the new transnational strategy is, the more countries have difficulties to follow. Experience of the AAL Programme showed that some countries dropped out in the AAL Programme II and new countries entered the network. However, there is a trade-off between progressive coordinated development of Member States and a development, which is supported by as many countries as possible. This trade-off is also mirrored in the development of Key Performance Indicators. If the network is small and progressive they are able to agree on concrete performance indicators indicate also priorities, if the network is large performance indicators are often very vague.

Human and financial resources for coordination and management at transnational level are limited

More commitment of human and financial resources and capacities of member states are needed to even better align national programmes. Without resources for decent management of the network, only small steps towards alignment, but not radical change can be realised.

Strategic call planning is limited

Austria can follow a strategic call plan on national level. However, on transnational level the call topics are discussed and decided on annual basis. This make coordination and alignment of call topics in advance difficult and limits strategic call planning. Experience in Austria in the last years shows that there is a tendency to shift budgets to the national level because of the limited call planning on transnational level.

Limited alignment in call management

Although call management in BENEFIT and in the AAL Programme follow national rules and regulations, there are differences in the call management. BENEFIT for example has a different peer review, monitoring and reporting process than AAL Programme. On the one hand, this makes it more complex for people administering the programmes at funding agency level and for potential applicants, because they need to know both systems, on the other hand the differences also accommodate the different types of projects and the complementarity of the programmes.

Intensive national coordination between ministries with competences in research, innovation, economy, health and social affairs would benefit the demand side of AAL solutions

Interministerial cooperation benefits the demand side of the programme, because demand is generated by social care organisations, social insurances, hospital run by regional authorities etc. These stakeholders are not typical stakeholders or target group of RTDI programmes. To mobilise and integrate the demand side into the AAL Programme strategic national coordination among the ministries needed. Although Austria has established an interministerial coordination from the very beginning of the AAL Programmes, there is room for improvement to mobilise investment of the stakeholder groups of other ministries. This is one reason why it was difficult for project findings to be implemented and introduced to the market. There are only few success stories to tell for the moment and the impact of the programme could be higher.

Ex-Post evaluation and Impact Assessment needs prioritisation

Transnational coordination of programme is no means to an end, but the impact and added value of the transnational coordination must be evident. Ex-Post evaluation and impact assessment should therefore have priority on transnational, but also national level to control for the added value.

Within the AAL Programme projects are approached three years after completion to ask them on the impact of project results. However, the management team of the AAL Programme has limited human and financial resources and priority to fulfil this task.

On national level, Austria decided to have an external evaluation on the added value of its participation in the AAL Programme I, before starting AAL Programme II.

6. Conclusions: Key success factors of programme alignment

This part summarises the success factors of programme alignment in the AAL area. The success factors are described in a way they can serve as lessons learnt and transferred to other P2P.

Consensus making on national levels that topic is important

There needs to be consensus at national level of all countries involved in a transnational programme, that the topic of the transnational programme is important. Additionally, a well-structured concept from the beginning for the alignment of national programmes on transnational level supports process.

Existence of national programmes and willingness of align programmes

Transnational programme alignment benefits from the existence of national programmes (not only national budgets). The willingness to really align the national programmes and shape them accordingly and make the national part complementary to the transnational part was one important success factor in this case.

Considering programme specificities in other countries or in transitional programmes when establishing or revising national programmes

Before the national programme BENEFIT was established, Austria was in intensive exchange with other countries to prepare the AAL Programme I. At the time when the national programme BENEFIT was established Austria BENEFIT could already profit from knowledge on similar programmes in other European countries and on the agreed framework conditions for the AAL Programme I. Austria had the chance to align parts of the national programme BENEFIT (e.g. the funding of inter- and transdisciplinary project teams) to the AAL Programme or other countries' programmes.

Consensus on realistic and concrete aims at transnational level supported by national programmes

Open minds in discussions on transnational level, but at the same time realistic assessment of what can be managed and coordinated on transnational level supported by national processes, preconditions and resources is one key issue for the development of a high quality transnational programme. Strong and concrete aims defined and agreed upon in advance helps to make programme alignment successful.

Flexibility of national budgets

According to participation and success of projects in the national and respectively transnational AAL Programme, the national indicative planned budget can shift between the transnational and national call. This budget flexibility allows Austria to follow national priorities and competences and at the same time be part of the transnational AAL Programme.

Open minds towards experiments with new instruments

The AAL example showed how alignment of national programmes developed over time. The AAL Programme as well as the corresponding national programme showed openness towards experiments with new RTDI instruments. Thereby, it was assessed what instruments to better test on national and what instruments to test on transnational level.

Keeping openness and creativity towards new ideas with maturity of the transnational programme

With maturity of the transnational programme, organisational structures (hierarchy and power) are set and defined. It is one of the challenges of the Management of the transnational programme to keep openness and creativity towards new ideas within all bodies by establishing a specific spirit and invite individuals to engage themselves. If one body decides and the other body executes, the interests and engagement of individuals will decrease. This is about people management.

Engaged individuals with responsibility

Success of the alignment also depends on the individuals who are responsible for shaping and ensuring alignment. In this case study, both individuals responsible for the national and transnational part of the programme on strategic (ministry) and operational level (funding agency) are involved and engaged in both programmes since the very beginning. Their effort, engagement and strategic intelligence was one of the key success factors to define joint and complementary actions on national level to realise programme alignment.

Evaluation of Austrian Participation in the AAL Programme I

An external evaluation of the Austrian participation in the AAL Programme I provided evidence to the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology what to change in the Austrian participation and engagement in AAL Programme II. Additionally, the evaluation revealed issues, e.g. expansion of the target group (demand side), that are valid for the AAL Programme II as well as for the national programme BENEFIT.

AAL related interministerial cooperation benefits from the driving power and stamina of one ministry

Interministerial cooperation is an important pre-condition at national level to align challenge-driven national AAL Programmes at transnational level. This is because demand side for ICT supported products and services for older adults is mirrored by stakeholder beyond RTDI (e.g. hospitals, insurances, regional authorities). The Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology supports the AAL topic for more than 10 years and is there actively engaged in an interministerial group on quality of life and demographic change to initiate learning processes for all participating ministries how to support and enable AAL solutions. This long lasting engagement of this ministry was one of the success factors for the learning and engagement of other ministries. Even though there is room for more learning and engagement, ensuring national coordination in the AAL topic is already a success.

7. Reflection and Outlook

The AAL Programme I and II revealed that ICT supported products and services for elderly people cannot only be developed by RTDI programmes as such, but there is also need for structural and legal changes. Therefore, alignment of RTDI programmes in the AAL area is not sufficient to tackle the challenges, but it also needs coordination on national, but also transnational level of social, health, economic and regional policies and their respective funding structures. Additionally, aspects like social innovation and open innovation need adequately addressed and integrated in the programme. This is out of scope of Art. 185 Initiatives and its framework conditions, but it would benefit the actual problem. Problem diagnoses revealed that only part of the demographic challenges can be solved by RTDI, but others might need structural and legal changes. If this is known at the very beginning of such a transnational initiatives, the respective national stakeholder in each countries need coordination at national and transnational level. Additionally, it needs to be clear what are tasks on national and what are tasks on transnational level and what are the well-suited instruments to support the tasks (also by Framework Programme 9 and other instruments of the European Commission).

REFERENCES

Literature

- AAL AUSTRIA (2015): AAL Vision Österreich. Positionspapier. http://www.aal.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/AAL_Vision_%C3%96_Positionspapier_final_online_27042015.pdf
- AAL Programme (2014): STRATEGY 2014-2020 FOR THE ACTIVE AND ASSISTED LIVING PROGRAMME. http://www.aal-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/20151001-AAL-Strategy_Final.pdf
- Ambient Assisted Living Association (2014): Methodology to undertake innovation impact assessment of AAL Programme projects. <http://www.aal-europe.eu/documents-resources/reports-and-legal/>
- ERA-LEARN 2020 (2015): Deliverable 4.1- Report on the Definition and Typology of Alignment
- European Commission (2013): Final Evaluation of the Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme. <http://www.aal-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Final-report-of-the-AAL-Busquin-2013.pdf>
- Official Journal of the European Union (2014): **Decision No 554/2014/EU** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the participation of the Union in the Active and Assisted Living research and development programme jointly undertaken by several Member State. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2014:169:FULL&from=NL>
- Republik Österreich (2011): Strategy for research, technology and innovation of the Austrian Federal Government. https://era.gv.at/directory/158/attach/RTI_Strategy.pdf
- Technopolis (2016): Evaluierung der österreichischen Beteiligung am Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme (AAL JP 2008 – 2013). https://www.bmvit.gv.at/service/publikationen/innovation/evaluierungen/downloads/aal_evaluierung_end.pdf

Consulted websites

- <http://www.aal-europe.eu>
- <http://www.aal.at/>
- <https://www.ffg.at/programme/benefit>

Interviews

- Kerstin ZIMMERMANN, Austrian Ministry of Transport Innovation and Technology, Strategic Coordinator of the national programme BENEFIT and the AAL Programme, Delegate in the General Assembly of the AAL Programme, Vice-President of the Executive Board, Interview 2016-06-20
- Gerda GEYER, Austrian Promotion Agency, Operational Coordinator of the national programme BENEFIT and the AAL Programme, Alternate in the General Assembly of the AAL Programme, National Contact Person in the AAL Programme for Austria, Interview 2016-06-24