

Competence profiles within the AAL supply chain

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Background

Concepts of Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) include assistance systems, methods and processes to enable elderly or handicapped people to live as long as possible in their home environment. Appropriate systems and components can be implemented at various stages of the AAL supply chain (at home, outside/on the road, in the hospital, nursing home...).

According to [1] one key factor which limits the dissemination of innovations in the AAL field is the lack of adequately trained employees. New, innovative models and systems can be developed and established along the supply chain only if a sufficient number of suitably skilled people is available on the job market.

Already today companies involved in AAL are faced with a lack of well trained job applicants. Both the qualification programs for full-time professions as well as extra-occupational part-time education is insufficient [2] and very diverse within Europe. It is expected that the discrepancy between the need of highly skilled people and insufficient education programs in this rapidly growing market segment of AAL will increase within the next years. In an integrated Europe, where countries grow closer together and where all countries are affected by the demographic change in the same way, strategies to qualify players in AAL sector have to be developed jointly within Europe.

The CompAAL project

CompAAL is a project funded by the EU within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme in which competence profiles are developed for professionals along the AAL supply chain. 11 partners from 9 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, France, Hungary, Belgium) analyze the national status quo in the AAL field and determine the existent elements of an AAL supply chain in their country. Based on this research, the need for specific AAL professions is derived and each job description is assigned to a corresponding competence profile.

In this paper the results of the first project phase is presented, in which both the national status quo of existing professions along the AAL supply chain ("current state of the art") is determined, as well as the national requirements in the form of an ideal supply chain consisting of hypothetical AAL professions ("desired state"). The comparison of actual and desired state is the basis for the development of new AAL education courses.

Methodology

Nine professions were hypothetical defined for an ideal AAL supply chain:

1. AAL Consultant / Agent / Conductor
2. AAL solutions / service developer / provider
3. AAL usability specialist
4. AAL Social networker
5. AAL Caregiver
6. AAL Ethical issues specialist
7. AAL Architect
8. AAL Network provider
9. AAL Financial Manager

During the desk research existing reports and surveys in all nine partner countries were evaluated. It was determined which of these job roles exist and whether such jobs are needed. For each job role the country-specific circumstances and needs were considered, the necessary skills and abilities were determined ("National AAL competency profiles"), assigned and described.

Results / Outlook

Figure 1 summarizes the research on the most important AAL professions which are necessary to ensure the national AAL supply chains in all partner countries.

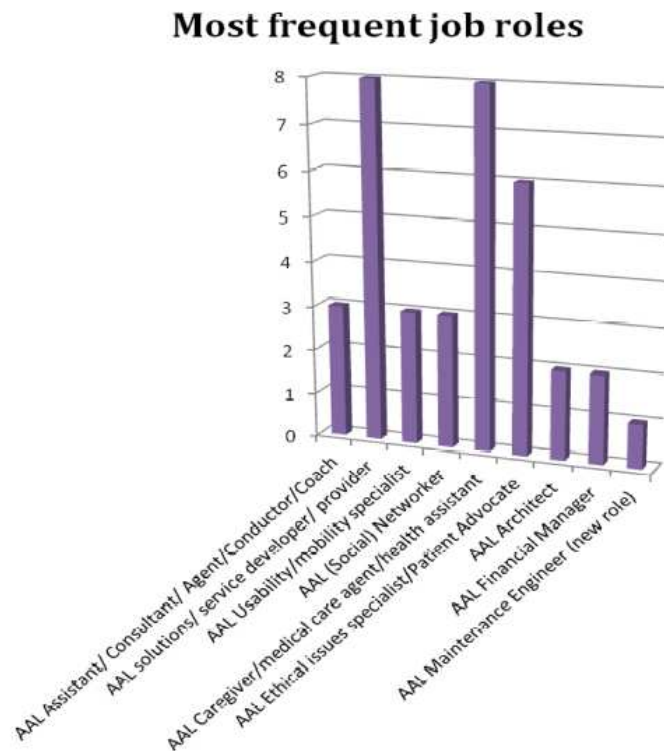


Figure 1 Distribution of the nine most important AAL professions in Europe

Accordingly, transnational AAL competencies in the areas of services and medical care are most important for an AAL supply chain. In addition, the desk research identified the following trends in the participating countries:

- In all participating countries AAL research is mainly induced by European or national funding.
- Germany is the leading nation in terms of research projects, products and services in the AAL field. There are a high number of nationally funded research projects, with a focus on both technical and social aspects. Along the entire supply chain, there are research projects and studies including the home environment, physical measures, mobility issues, social issues, market issues, education and training, health, intelligent systems for the elderly, etc.
- Austria is an emerging player in the AAL environment. In recent years extensive studies, as well as national research projects were initiated. Also first AAL products from Austrian companies (Butler and Home Cure) are available on the market.
- In France as well as in Switzerland studies evaluating topics in the AAL field were initiated which shows the interest of the national institutions and governments.
- In Bulgaria and Hungary AAL research is focused almost exclusively on technical issues. Projects are carried out mainly by universities. National studies or surveys have not been found.
- In Greece and Spain no national research programs dealing with AAL could be found. Research projects are conducted in the framework of EU programs (e.g. AAL-JP). While in Greece the focus is on technical solutions, in Spain social issues are of major interest.

References

- [1] Innovationsindikator 2008, Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie und der Deutschen Telekom Stiftung
- [2] Die Fachkräftesituation in AAL-Tätigkeitsfeldern: Perspektive Aus-und Weiterbildung, Regina Buhr