



Dear Partners,

At the **2015 Conference of Partners** of the **European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing** (9 December 2015), **Commissioner Oettinger in his Opening Speech** outlined how digital innovation, enabled by a functioning Digital Single Market, can transform demographic change into an opportunity for Europe's economy and society. He presented new set of actions for 2016-2018, designed to support the Partnership's triple win ambitions; ie.

Improving the health and quality of life of our ageing population, making our health and social care systems more sustainable, creating economic growth and jobs and unlocking investment in innovative products and services.

The set of actions announced by Commissioner Oettinger in December 2015 included:

- The opening of a **new Call for Commitments** to the Partnership, mobilising the growing number of stakeholders willing to commit specific actions meeting the needs of Europe's ageing population.
- The launch of a **new Call for Reference Sites** – a European award aimed at rewarding and recognising those alliances (that encompass government authorities, industry and start-ups, research organisations and civil society) able to demonstrate excellence in the implementation and scaling up of the most innovative products and services.
- And finally, Commissioner Oettinger invited all Partners to start working (with the European Commission), in the development of a "shared vision" – the creation of a Blueprint on Digital Innovation for Europe's Ageing Society-focused on how digital innovation can transform Europe's Ageing Society in the 21st Century.

Your response to the 2016 call for Commitments and Reference Sites could not have been more compelling. It confirmed the vitality that supports the work of the Partnership and the added value of working together.

As we closed the Calls on Friday 15th April (at midnight) we had recorded over 850 commitments from 28 Member States (and beyond). A total of 78 Reference Site applications (from 22 Member States) were submitted, representing regional and national alliances of stakeholders invested in the scaling up of innovation for active and healthy ageing.

What Next: Call for Commitments: We will now work with the Action Group coordination teams to develop the initial analysis of the commitments submitted. We want to understand how the commitments relate to the different activities of the existing EIP on AHA Action Groups, horizontal initiatives (such as the **MAFEIP** and the **Innovative Practices Repository**), if they point to new areas not yet covered and how they can contribute to the activities of the European Commission in the field of digital innovation for health and active ageing.

They will be an important component to inform the creation of the "shared vision" on digital innovation for an ageing society that Commissioner Oettinger launched in December 2015. And this in turn will help inform the support structures that the European Commission and its partners must implement to ensure that the Action Groups deliver on their goals for 2018.

We expect this analysis to be completed by end of June and each organisation responsible for a commitment will then be integrated into the activities of the relevant Action Groups. Concerning the Reference Sites Call we will immediately launch the "peer-review" process of the eligible applications received. The process will start with a briefing organised by the European Commission and the Reference Site Collaborative Network with all eligible applicants to provide them with the information needed to carry out the "peer-review".

By end of June we also expect the peer-review process to be completed and will inform each applicant of the outcome of their application (with the number of stars awarded).

From September 2016 and in close cooperation with the Reference Sites Collaborative Network (RSCN) we will launch:

- The Communication campaign to showcase and support the Reference Sites' innovative work via our newsletter and media channels.
- A twinning support scheme supporting Reference sites with high potential for fast transferability (and adoption) of innovative solutions.

The Reference Sites Award Ceremony is scheduled to take place in Brussels at the next European Summit on Innovation for Health and Active Ageing on the 6-8 December 2016.

On behalf of the European Commission I wish to thank you again for your extraordinary response to our open Calls.

As you know, the submission of commitments or the application to become a reference site is the beginning of a journey and not the end in itself. We will do our best to ensure that this journey will add value to your work and will help you achieve your objectives in line with the triple win for Europe. I want to reiterate our continued support to continue evolving the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing as a platform of excellence that can support the scaling up of innovation for active and healthy ageing across Europe.

We look forward to working with you.

Ilias Iakovidis