

Minutes of the AAATE General Assembly 2024

Time: Thursday, 11th of July 2024, at 17.00-18.30 CEST

Place: ICCHP Conference, Johannes Kepler University (Loft C), Linz

Online: It was possible to follow the Assembly remotely: <https://zoom.us/j/9056550031>

Agenda

1. **Welcome and opening**
2. **Minutes of the last General Assembly**
3. **Report from the treasurer and the auditors**
4. **AAATE activity report and highlights**
5. **Short Announcements of members**
6. **Any other business**
7. **Meeting closed**

Minutes

1. **Welcome and opening**

The President, Pedro Encarnação, opens the General Assembly and welcomes the 30 members, 15 of them connecting remotely.

2. **Minutes of the last General Assembly**

The minutes of the last General Assembly are approved.

3. **Report from the treasurer and the auditors**

The financial report for 2023 is presented by the Treasurer, Silvio Marcello Pagliara, and reviewed by the Assembly. The balance complies with regulations and has been audited by external independent auditors.

The report covers multiple years to better illustrate trends and provide an overview of the current state of affairs in 2024. Major fluctuations in income and expenditure are due to the irregular nature of project funding, which is recorded in the year it is received, while related expenditures may occur in subsequent years.

The membership fee structure is outlined, including the option for members to renew for two years at a discounted rate. A significant proportion of AAATE members make use of this opportunity, enhancing the predictability of the association's membership base.

The reports by auditors Jan Engelen and Susanne Dirks, confirming the soundness of the accounting and the overall financial situation, are made available to and appreciated by the General Assembly.

Following a discussion with the members, the Board was asked to:

- a) Consider revising the presentation of the financial report so that income is attributed to the year to which it pertains.
- b) Prioritize applications for new research projects to address the negative outlook reflected in the financial report, resulting from the conclusion of several projects in which AAATE has been involved in recent years.
- c) Carefully review travel and personnel expenses, particularly for staff whose contracts assume involvement in research projects, in order to help balance the accounts.

Both the financial report and the auditors' reports are approved by the General Assembly.

4. AAATE activity report 2023-2024

The presentation of the activity report was structured around the following points:

- Strategic development
- National Contact Persons
- Project participation
- GAATO collaborations
- Communication affairs
- Publication affairs

The President presented the activity plan for strategic development, framed within the objectives defined in the AAATE Strategic Development Plan approved in February 2022 and reaffirmed in January 2024. The plan is organized according to the following four strategic objectives:

- Objective 1: To intrinsically strengthen the association
 - Organizational improvements
 - Application for an operating grant
- Objective 2: To improve the organisation's external and internal communication
 - Quarterly newsletter
 - Aperitivos (informal online member engagement events)

- Reaffirm AAATE as the leading voice for assistive technology in Europe, e.g., through participation in international AT initiatives and new partnerships
- Objective 3: To increase the impact of the Association
 - Maintain a leading role in GAATO
 - Develop new partnerships, including with ATIA and AccessibleEU
 - Engage in research projects
 - Contribute to global initiatives
- Objective 4: To activate resources
 - Encourage greater participation from members
 - Apply for project-based and structural funding
 - Actively participate in international networks

AAATE currently has National Contact Persons (NCPs) in 33 countries. The European countries where AAATE has not yet established an NCP are: Andorra, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Kosovo, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Palestine, and Russia. Members were invited to propose suitable candidates for these positions.

The General Secretary, Evert-Jan Hoogerwerf, presented an overview of AAATE's involvement in project activities.

Projects concluded in 2023 and 2024

- TRIPS (Increasing accessibility of public transport - concluded in January 2023)
- DIGI READY (Erasmus+ Project)
- Right to Connect Now (Erasmus+ Project)

Projects still running in 2024

- VisuAAL (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action, supporting PhD Students in video-based AAL technologies)
- SEURO (transferability study of person-centred technologies for integrated care)

Project proposals submitted in 2024

- Erasmus+ project on Inclusive gaming (not approved)

- Interreg on technology and ageing led by the University of Bergamo (pending)
- Application for an operating grant from the eHealth programme (pending)

Evert-Jan also reported on AAATE's involvement in GAATO, the Global Alliance of Assistive Technology Organizations.

- Other associations have joined GAATO, strengthening the association
- Luc de Witte serves as president of GAATO, representing AAATE
- AAATE continues to play a leading role in the development and coordination of GAATO's activities

Sabine Long presented an overview of AAATE's communication channels:

- AAATE website: <http://aaate.net/category/news/>
- LinkedIn AAATE Group and Page: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2094327> and <https://www.linkedin.com/company/association-for-the-advancement-of-assistive-technology-in-europe-aaate/>
- X (Twitter) account: https://twitter.com/AAATE_net
- E-mails to members
- Presentations at events
- Press releases
- Reports of events
- Online Aperitivos

Pedro Encarnação and Evert-Jan Hoogerwerf announced that the 2025 edition of the AAATE Conference will take place in Nicosia, Cyprus, from September 10 to 12, 2025. The event will be organized by former AAATE President Katerina Mavrou. The conference aims to remain a welcoming forum for all stakeholders in the field of assistive technology, featuring a Research Strand and an Inclusion Forum comprising policy sessions, educational sessions, and an innovation area.

Gabriela Ricci, from IOS Press, presented the journal Technology and Disability

- Holds an Impact Factor since 2023
- Abstracted/Indexed in major academic databases
- AAATE members were encouraged to register as reviewers for the journal and to consider submitting their work for publication in T&D

Pedro Encarnação informed the members that a Special Issue of the journal is being organized to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Association. A call for scoping reviews has been issued, inviting contributions that summarize and evaluate the existing research landscape across various assistive technology (AT) domains — from AT for personal mobility and transportation to human-computer interaction in AT, and a wide range of topics in between and beyond. All members were encouraged to contribute.

5. Short Announcements of members

6. Any other business

7. Meeting closed

Given that there were no announcements from members or any other business to discuss, the meeting was closed at 19.00 CEST