A better future for ageing

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Project update 1
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ERA-AGE 2
ERA-AGE 2 is the continuation of ERA-AGE, the European Research Area in Ageing, which first began in 2004 under FP6 funding. With three years of FP7 funding (2009 to 2012), the project will secure for the long term, the future of the European Research Area in ageing research and launch Europe’s first joint research programme on ageing.

Launching initially with 13 partners in 12 countries the consortium has expanded through the addition of five associate partners in another four countries, as part of its remit to expand to a critical mass of EU27 members.

On 11 May 2010 the Seventh European Forum on Ageing Research was held in Brussels. Over 150 people attended this event, which focused on the future of ageing research and showcased the FUTURAGE project. The day examined the generation of research priorities for the FUTURAGE Road Map for ageing research and explored the strategic importance of ageing research for the whole of Europe. For the first time the European Forum took place in the European Parliament when the afternoon session was hosted by MEPs from the STOA Panel for Science and Technology Options Assessment.

Work has also begun to expand and update the ERA-AGE database by adding information about researchers to this important resource to complement existing information held about ageing research centres, funders, programmes and projects.

The consortium has also begun the planning process for a joint call for research, in which the member states will fund multidisciplinary research projects across at least three different countries. This is in advance of the original ERA-AGE 2 plans which were only to develop the infrastructure for such a call, and represents a significant step forward for the consortium. The call is planned for launch in May 2011, and will embrace the theme of the European Innovation Partnership in Active and Healthy Ageing, by addressing healthy life years.

FLARE 2
ERA-AGE 2 is substantially building on the success of FLARE, which was the first European programme on ageing research funded by the member states themselves.

The FLARE programme began in 2007, when the first call for applications was opened. Eighteen early-career researchers were awarded three years of funding to conduct a multidisciplinary research project in two or more European countries.

FLARE 2 was launched in July 2010, offering fifteen Fellowships funded by eight different countries, including for the first time, a funding agency from North America (FRSQ, Quebec). The deadline for applications was October 2010, with the peer-review process being completed in April 2011. The new FLARE Fellows are expected to begin their Fellowship in late summer 2011.

The second FLARE Summer School took place in Varna, Bulgaria in September 2010. This Summer School also included for the first time, early-career researchers from outside the FLARE programme, to enhance opportunities for networking. The programme focused on the future of ageing research in Europe, examining the differences between East and West Europe; opportunities for funding, and the role of multidisciplinary research. In total 33 attendees contributed to the discussions, and the event attracted sustained attention from the Bulgarian press.

In addition an online discussion group has been established to allow FLARE Fellows a virtual discussion space.