The University of Sheffield ERA-AGE Co-ordination Team

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Project Progress

ERA-AGE continues to make considerable progress resulting in some excellent outcomes to the benefit of the European ageing research field.

The highly significant development in the project and in European Ageing Research is the joint interdisciplinary funding initiative ‘Future Leaders in Ageing Research (FLARE) which was announced in February 2006. The interdisciplinary FLARE funding call promotes European scientific mobility and cross-disciplinary development. Nine ERA-AGE funding organisations have been involved in the FLARE post doctoral programme and in the development of various complex administrative processes leading up the FLARE Commissioning Review Panel meeting which was held in Berlin, September 2007. The high quality of submitted applications resulted in a decision to award 18 post doctoral grants – that is, two more than originally agreed!

ERA-AGE has continued to identify key European research priorities, good practices and to share associated information. Key funders, policy makers, scientists, nongovernmental organisations, and end users from 18 countries attended and contributed to the outcomes of the highly productive ERA-AGE Forum meeting in Italy in March 2007 which aimed to formulate the next phase in the development of a European ageing research programme. A subsequent Forum report is available via the ERA-AGE website. More recently, ERA-AGE held a Forum meeting in Paris, November 2007 which focused on the important issue of Ageing and Migration. The recommendations of this Forum will be covered in a subsequent newsletter.

Please read on for details on the FLARE programme and recommendations of the ERA-AGE Forum meeting in Italy.
BACKGROUND
FLARE is the first European programme on ageing research funded by the Member States themselves. It is a pilot project which shows the ERA-AGE consortium’s readiness and ability for collaboration. Launched in February 2007 the joint programme aimed to provide up to sixteen 3 year post-doctoral fellowships for recently qualified scientists. FLARE has two innovative features: part of the fellowship must be spent in another country and involve a cross-disciplinary collaboration. These novel features reflect the strong scientific consensus in ERA-AGE meetings on the need to develop a multi-disciplinary approach to ageing research and also a European networking in this area. Another key priority for both scientists and end users is the support of the next generation of researchers on ageing, hence the title, ‘Future Leaders of Ageing Research in Europe’ (FLARE).

SUBMISSIONS
The ERA-AGE consortium received a total of 49 European applications from 9 European countries.

EVALUATION PROCESS
FLARE applications were evaluated online by three reviewers which were subsequently classified into four rating subgroups to pre-structure review panel discussion which took place on 10th – 11th September 2007 in Berlin. A total of 45 expert European scientists were involved in the FLARE evaluation process. The European Commissioning Panel comprised 13 FLARE peer reviewers who each evaluated four or more FLARE applications, 10 FLARE funding organisation representatives and one end-user representative. See ‘Acknowledgements’ for more details.

OUTCOME OF THE FLARE COMMISSIONING PANEL
The Commissioning Panel agreed that quality of the submitted proposals was very high and within the scope of the call resulting in 18 FLARE post doctoral grants being awarded to successful applicants – that is, two more than originally anticipated! Successful applications reflect the whole range of ageing research from the biological to social sciences. The Commissioning Panel paid tribute to ERA-AGE for its innovative contribution to ageing research in Europe and praised in particular the emphases on research training, multi-disciplinarity and the involvement of end-users.

The table below provides details of the successful FLARE applicants and their projects.

FLARE SUMMER SCHOOL
The first FLARE Summer School for the FLARE fellows will be hosted by a partner organisation, the Swedish Council for Working Life (FAS) and the Vardal Foundation for Health Care Sciences and Allergy Research in Sweden. The one-week Summer School is scheduled for the 22nd to 27th June 2008 which will include lectures and presentations given by multidisciplinary experts in the field and sessions on strategic career themes for post doctoral scholars such as the development of leadership skills, developing research teams and funding strategies.
FLARE FUNDING CALL RESULTS

The FLARE review panel agreed that overall the quality of submitted applications was very high and within the scope of the call.

FLARE 3 year post-doctoral fellowships were awarded to the following successful applicants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Topic of application</th>
<th>Fields of research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Dietmar Herndler-Brandstetter</td>
<td>AUSTRIA</td>
<td>Effect of interleukin-6 on T cell subsets in old age: A search for new markers of immunological competence and trait</td>
<td>Molecular biology / immunology and clinical medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Egil Trükseszt</td>
<td>AUSTRIA</td>
<td>Quality of social care for older people - the effects of public funding on social care systems and social care provision</td>
<td>Economics, Sociology and social care provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Kristina Tjolinen</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td>Inflammatory markers, anaemia and generic factors in the development of muscle weakness among older people</td>
<td>Public health science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Marko Kervinen</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td>Degeneration and Ageing – the effect of pathogenic mitochondrial mutations</td>
<td>Clinical medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Davin Berangère</td>
<td>FRANCE</td>
<td>Economics of formal and informal care for ageing population</td>
<td>Social care and Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Rubel Katarzyna</td>
<td>FRANCE</td>
<td>The emergence and legal construction of a social risk in Europe</td>
<td>Dependancy Law and Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Meldari Anastasia</td>
<td>FRANCE</td>
<td>“Forms of ageing, dependency and responsibility: from public policies to the informal sector. Configurations of care and intramural solidarity in France, Great Britain and Greece”</td>
<td>Sociology, Epidemiology, Public health, Clinical gerontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Jochen Ziegelmann</td>
<td>GERMANY</td>
<td>Fostering Lifelong Autonomy and Resources in Europe: Behaviour and Successful Ageing (FLARE-BSA)</td>
<td>Psychology, Gerontology, Biomedicine, Epidemiology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Julia Klyan</td>
<td>GERMANY</td>
<td>The urikinase receptor in vascular ageing: regulatory mechanisms and clinical perspectives</td>
<td>Molecular biology, cell biology, vascular ageing diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Ravi Jagasia</td>
<td>GERMANY</td>
<td>Role of mitochondrial dysfunction in astrocytes in brain ageing</td>
<td>Neurobiology, Neuropathology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Hans-Joerg Ehni</td>
<td>GERMANY</td>
<td>The social and justice implications of age-related biomedical innovative interventions and “anti-ageing”-medicine</td>
<td>Medical Ethics, Moral Philosophy, Public Health, Theory of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Lynn Welter</td>
<td>LUXEMBOURG</td>
<td>The Impact of PPAR signaling on Alzheimer’s disease</td>
<td>Immunology Molecular biology, Computational biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Anna Marie Herghelegiu</td>
<td>ROMANIA</td>
<td>Impact of metabolic control on cognitive function and quality of life in elderly diabetic patients</td>
<td>Gerontology and geriatrics, social gerontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Yvonne Brehmer</td>
<td>SWEDEN</td>
<td>Mechanisms of strategic elaboration and associative binding in episodic memory: A lifespan developmental approach</td>
<td>Psychology and Cognitive science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Sandra Torres</td>
<td>SWEDEN</td>
<td>Elderly care in a globalized world: A study of cross-cultural interaction in the context of elderly care</td>
<td>Sociology, Nursing and social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Chengxuan Qiu</td>
<td>SWEDEN</td>
<td>The role of lifestyle factors in the prevention of dementia: A life course approach</td>
<td>Public health, preventive medicine, epidemiology, geriatrics, dementia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Blossom Stephan</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>An integrated investigation of vascular cognitive impairment in population based studies across Europe</td>
<td>Public Health (vascular risk, imaging) and Epidemiology (biostatistics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Antje Heinrich</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Age-related changes in the use of linguistic cues for speech intelligibility in adverse listening ability</td>
<td>Phonetics (Experimental Psychology) and Cognitive Neuroscience</td>
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</table>

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**FLARE COMMISSIONING PANEL**
- Professor Ann Bowling (UK)
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- Professor Hans-Werner Wahl (Germany)

**FLARE PEER REVIEWERS**
- Dr Aamir Ahmed (UK)
- Professor Roger Anderson (UK)
- Professor Joel Arki (France)
- Dr. P Bailey (UK)
- Prof Kenneth Boyd (UK)
- Professor Karen Blyan (UK)
- Professor Sara Carmel (Israel)
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- Professor Joel Ankri (France)
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- Professor John McMillan (UK)
- Professor Rod Nicolson (UK)
- Dr Michelle Peckham (UK)
- Professor Ludger Pintka (Germany)
- Professor Gabriela Ivan Prada (Romania)
- Dr Danit Shahar (Israel)
- Dr Robert Layfield (UK)
- Dr George Leeson (UK)
- Professor Hanns Lochmueller (Germany)
- Professor Sara Carmel (Israel)
- Dr Sam Taylor (Sheffield, UK)
- Dr. P Bailey (UK)

**FLARE FUNDING PARTNER REPRESENTATIVES**
- Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria
- Academy of Finland (AKA), Finland
- Caisse Nationale de Solidarité pour l’Autonomie (CNSA), France
- Caisse Nationale D Assurance Vieillesse (CNAV), France
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- Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS), Sweden
- Medical Research Council (MRC), UK

**ERA-AGE COORDINATION TEAM**
- Professor Alain Grand (France)
- Professor Mark Hawley (UK)
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- Professor Hanns Lochmueller (Germany)
- Professor Sara Carmel (Israel)
- Dr Sam Taylor (Sheffield, UK)

**End User Involvement Advisor**
- Dr. James Goodwin (Help the Aged, UK)
FOURTH EUROPEAN MEETING

The fourth successful ERA-AGE forum meeting was hosted by the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Italy in Rome, Italy on 13th to 14th March 2007. The meeting brought together the ERA-AGE partners, associate members and the other European ageing research funders and policy makers from 17 European countries with the aim of developing collaboration.

This European Forum meeting aimed to draw upon, and further develop recommendations of the European Forum on Population Ageing Research (FORUM) and those deriving from the four ERA-AGE scientific workshops to formulate the next phase in the development of a European ageing research programme.

The Forum commenced with a short welcome by Dr Stefania Salmaso (Director of the National Centre for Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Promotion) on behalf of Prof. Enrico Garaci, President of the Italian National Institute of Health, Istituto Superiore di Sanità which was followed by introductions and a series of presentations.

Key recommendations from the meeting included the following actions:

• To develop a European Institute on Ageing Research (real or virtual) to structure ageing research in Europe.
• To develop a “European database house” to provide a solid empirical foundation for comparative multidisciplinary ageing research.
• To encourage end user involvement in research.
• To ensure that research priorities focus on all aspects of ageing including socio-economic, psychological, medical and genetic factors associated with and affecting healthy and active ageing.
• To ensure knowledge transfer between all stakeholders.
• To establish a European research academy for ageing studies to:
  - provide scholarships and training for newly established and less experienced researchers in ageing
  - coordinate accumulative knowledge
  - facilitate multi and interdisciplinary research training
  - encourage further research in ageing and later life
  - promote collaboration with diverse stakeholders including industry.
• To expand the FLARE post doctoral joint funding programme.

Interested colleagues may download a detailed Forum report from the ERA-AGE website: www.shef.ac.uk/era-age

Forthcoming Events

The final ERA-AGE Forum will take place in 2008. Details of this important event will be made available via forthcoming newsletters and the ERA-AGE website in the near future.