



Report of the Second Meeting of the European Forum

9th September 2005

**Organised in partnership with
The Netherlands Organisation For Health Research & Development
(ZonMw), The Hague**

**Held at the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research & Development
ZonMw, The Hague**



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ERA AGE

**European
Research
Area in
Ageing**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FORUM RECOMMENDATIONS

This was the second Meeting of European Forum of Research Funders and Policy makers held under the ERA-AGE project that brought together 61 representatives of research funders, research institutes, policy makers and researchers from 24 European countries.

From National Collaboration to International Collaboration

- National priorities and strategies need to be identified as a basis for developing European collaboration. Collaboration in the ageing field should build upon existing structures so added value at the European level can be gained.
- Evidence needs to be provided for national governments in order to influence policy actions in this field.
- A research funders community at national level should be established in order to facilitate collaboration among funders.
- Research findings require translation into forms that can influence policy making. One way of achieving this is to establish a forum of scientists and policy makers.

Fundamental Priorities for Collaboration at the European Level

- There is an urgent need to create structures for European collaboration and learning from the US could be very valuable.
- A European virtual centre or institute on ageing with some basic funding should be created with the aim of coordinating ageing research in Europe.
- A European gerontological database consisting of different instruments and data should be developed as a primary resource for information sharing. The development of the database should start from individual countries focusing on the in existing national instruments and databases. ERA-AGE should be leading this process.
- Interdisciplinary longitudinal studies are lacking. There is an urgent need to obtain data on the ageing population at national levels across Europe by using well-designed and standardised longitudinal studies focusing on health and social care systems.
- Comparative studies of different European welfare systems from an interdisciplinary perspective are needed to provide a long term overview of their impact on older people.
- A system for central grants and programmes to train young scholars in ageing research is needed urgently. If young researchers are to become leaders in gerontology it is essential to provide opportunity for interdisciplinary training by organizing workshops, postdoctoral opportunities, summer schools, and so on.

Methodological Approaches and Tools

- A common language, standardized methodologies, definitions and tools should be established building upon existing resources. Methodologies and tools in ageing research should be standardized across Europe.
- Methodological innovations in interdisciplinary research are required.
- Conceptual tools for comparative studies need to be developed, for example tools for forecasting life expectancy and for measuring active ageing. This requires collaboration between demographers, economists and medical researchers across Europe.
- Quality of life measurement tools need to be created. Existing, well validated, WHO measures on health and welfare should be considered for application to the field of ageing research.

Strategies for European Collaboration

- Priorities and structures for collaboration need to be clearly articulated and defined. The focus should be on specific actions such as working towards a joint call.
- Missing aspects and gaps of ageing research should be identified to avoid duplication.
- Different funding sources for collaboration should be examined for example, fundraising schemes combining different funding sources should be developed. Private companies, businesses and national lotteries should be also considered.

Possible Avenues for ERA-AGE in International Collaboration

- ERA-AGE should develop strategies for engaging young researchers in ageing research and stimulate collaboration in this field.
- Information about ERA-AGE should be disseminated widely and a system of associate membership for the countries that do not have ageing research programmes should be developed in the near future.
- The ERA-AGE coordinating and reporting model can be adopted by other countries by developing a common agenda and structure for national coordinator's work and national Forums.
- ERA-AGE should facilitate the development of European and national databases and provide technical information and share this expertise when required.

PROGRAMME

Opening Plenary

Welcome and Introductions

Presentation on ZonMw

- **Dr Edvard Beem** (Managing Director of ZonMw)

Presentation on the EC Article 169

- **Giorgio Clarotti** (European Commission Officer)

Presentation on the ERA-AGE project

- **Professor Alan Walker** (Coordinator, University of Sheffield)

Working Groups

- Developing European Collaboration

Closing Plenary

Feedback from the working groups and discussion of the key issues for future collaboration.

AIMS OF THE EUROPEAN FORUM MEETING AND GOOD PRACTICE WORKSHOP

The Second ERA-AGE Forum meeting brought together the ERA-AGE partners, associate members and other European ageing research funders and policy makers from 24 European countries with the aim of developing collaboration.

The meeting focused on identifying the links and synergies between the funding of ageing research in the participants' countries and using this to build collaboration at the European level. The meeting provided an opportunity for participants to promote and discuss examples of good practices in ageing research in their countries and to also identify common challenges and strategies for overcoming them.

Short presentations by the ZonMw, by the ERA-AGE consortium and a representative from the EC were followed by working group discussions. The recommendations of these working groups were presented in the closing plenary.

Before the meeting the participants were asked to provide a one page summary on how ageing research is funded in their country. This was developed into a background document for the meeting entitled 'How Ageing Research is Funded in Europe'.

The next European Forum Meeting and Good Practice Workshop will be held in the Stockholm Sweden on March 30th 2006.

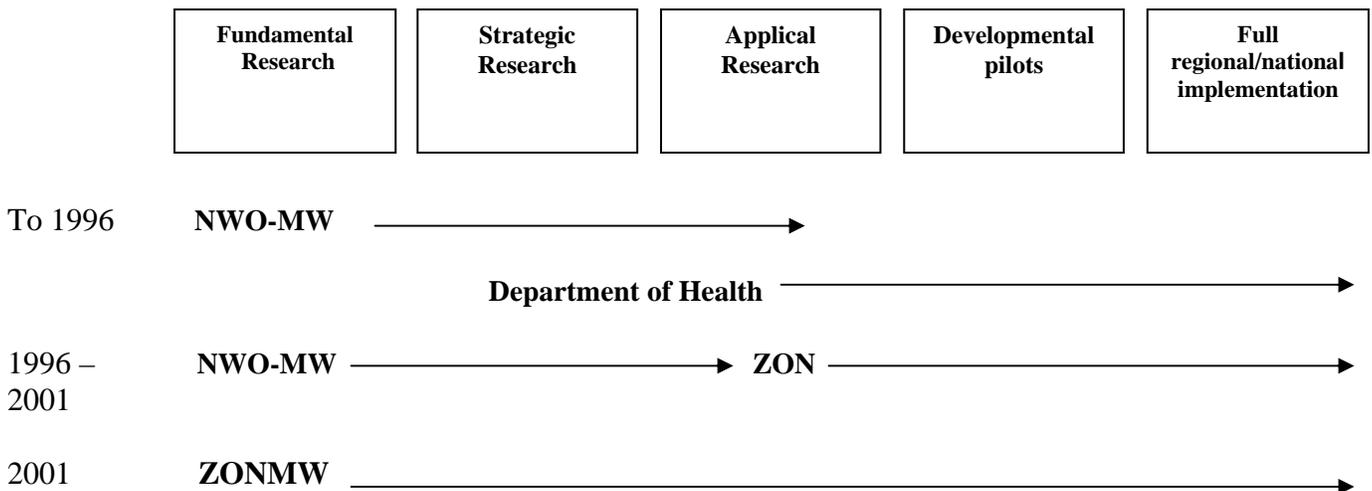
SUMMARY OF PAPERS

The European Forum on Population Ageing Research National and Regional Programme Coordination in FP7 Dr Edvard Beem

Welcome

- Brief note about ZonMw
- Aim of this meeting
- Today's programme

Knowledge base



ZonMw's mission

ZonMw promotes quality and innovation of health research and health care through the funding of research, development and implementation.

EC Lisbon Strategy:

Creation of ERA

- KP6 / KP7 (3.5 / 10.3)
- National research funding organisations (20)

ERA-AGE

One of five objectives

- To facilitate the co-ordination of existing ageing research programmes and knowledge exploitation

This meeting

- Identify the links and synergies in ageing research funding
- Discuss and promote good practices in ageing research and its funding
- Identify common challenges and strategies

Why ageing research

- Urgent societal concerns, new multidisciplinary strategies needed
- Challenge for policy makers and researchers to work together
- “National programmes” in place

National and Regional Programme Coordination in FP7 **Giorgio Clarotti, The European Commission**

European Research Area - Combining three concepts *:

- The creation of an "internal market" in research
(free movement of knowledge, researchers and technology)
- The restructuring of the European research fabric
(improved coordination of national research activities and policies)
- The development of a European research policy
(taking into account other EU and national policies)

* *COM(2002) 565 final, THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA : PROVIDING NEW MOMENTUM*

Coordination of Research

Policy level: Maximum leverage

- Open method of coordination
- Mapping, benchmarking, score boards
- Legislation (e.g. COM (2004) 178 Directive*)
3rd country researchers in Europe

Programme level: Medium leverage

- CREST Initiatives
- ERA-NET
- Article 169

Project level: Low leverage (1 to 2)

- New Instruments
- Traditional Instruments

ERA-NET Coordination of National and Regional Programmes

New very innovative scheme under FP6:

- Networking of programmes
- Ambitious goals: Joint calls and joint programmes
- Public programmes, parts thereof or similar initiatives
- Exclusively for public authorities and implementing Agencies
- Beyond FP6 priorities and implemented “bottom up”
- Open call 148 €Mio. - Only for Coordination NO research

A step by step approach...but ambitious

Many ERA-NETs implement successfully the following activities to foster coordination of research programmes:

- Systematic exchange of information & best practices
- Common strategic issues
- Development of joint activities
- Implementation of transnational research activities

❗ Impossible in 2002... then why are 750 programme owners & programme managers doing it in 2005 ???

Achieving critical mass, to ensure better use of scarce resources

Examples:

- Micro Nano Technologies (e.g. expectations in the field)
- Rare diseases (e.g. limited resources & cases)

Join Forces to provide common answers to common problems

Examples:

- Cancer (e.g. public health)
- Security (e.g. bio-terrorism)
- Food safety (e.g. consumer protection)

Addressing global issues

Examples:

- Environment (e.g. water)
- Energy (e.g. hydrogen)
- Resistant diseases (e.g. pathogenomics)

Developing common approaches

Examples:

- Ageing (e.g. societal impact)
- Food safety (e.g. standards)
- Plant genomics (e.g. ethics)

Addressing specific geographical issues

Example:

- Baltic Sea - Bonus (e.g. single research ship/programme)

Speaking with “one voice” to third countries

Examples:

- COREACH (e.g. cooperation with China)
- SEE-ERA-NET (e.g. cooperation with Balkan States)

Why Coordination? Why ERA-NET?

Objective: Reduce fragmentation of research efforts made at national & regional level in Europe

Reasons for coordination:

- Achieving critical mass, to ensure better use of scarce resources
- Join forces to provide common answers to common problems
- Addressing global issues
- Developing common approaches (e.g. ethics, standards)
- Addressing specific geographical issues
- Speaking with “one voice” to third countries

In many cases several reasons apply but for all:

- Avoiding overlap and build up of expertise
- Exchange of good practices
- Access to expertise

Programme coordination for efficiency

Nature shows us the way: Birds coordinating their efforts

71 % gain of efficiency

Coordination of national research programmes in FP6

60 running CAs covering all areas of FP 6 ... and more

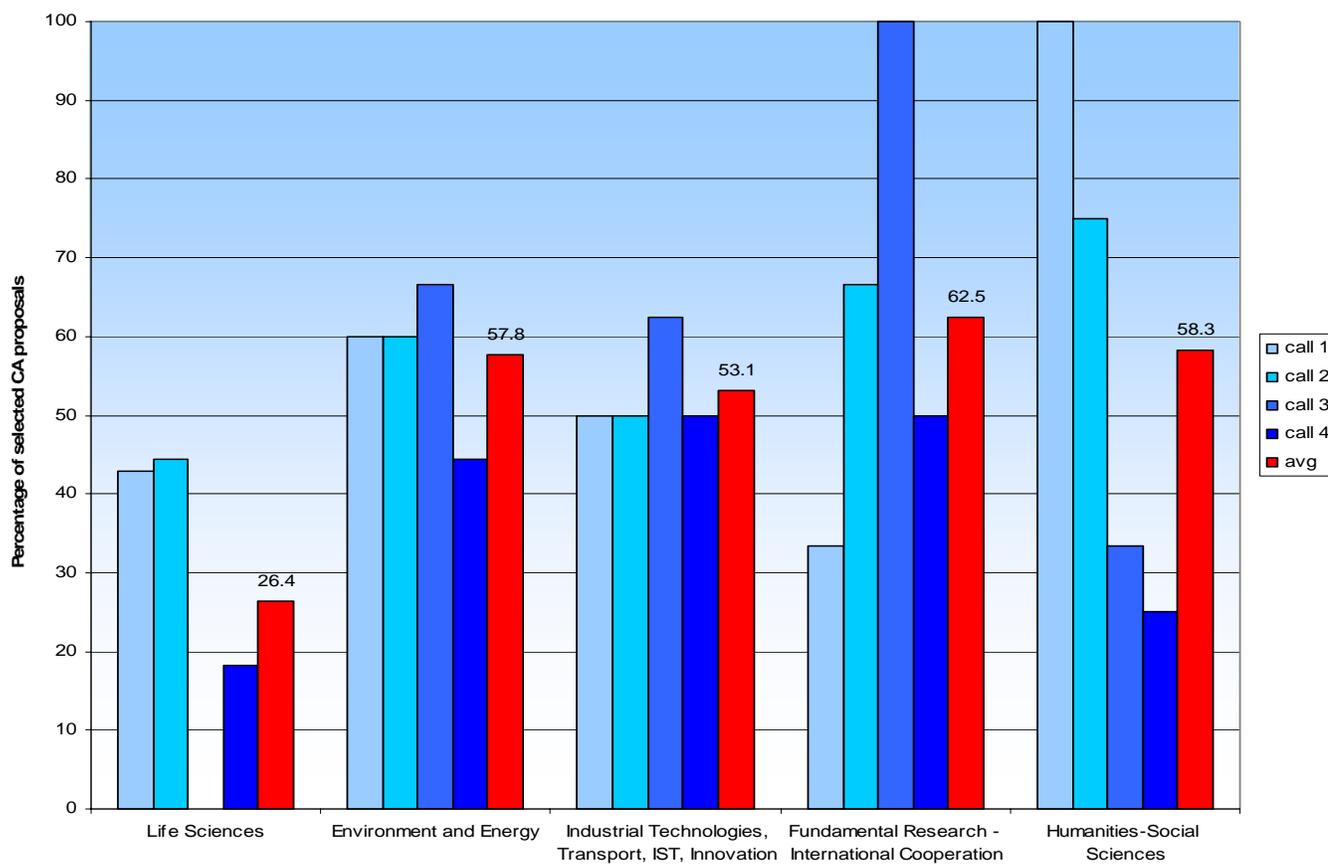
Area	SSA	CA	Area	SSA	CA	Area	SSA	CA
1. Life	6	8	5. Food	2	2	INCO	1	2
2. IST	0	18*	6. Sust. Dev.	1	17	INNO	1	2
3. Nano	1	11	7. Cit. & Gov.	1	6	Hum & Mob	1	1
4. Aero	0	1	SMEs	0	2	NONE	1	7

A wide participation by all countries involved in FP6 :

- 25 Member States
- 8 Associated Member States (Bg, Rom, Isl, Lie, No, Ch, Isr, Tk)
- 7 Other countries (Balkan 4 + Canada, Greenland and Russia)
- SSAs served their purpose : 26 funded → 11 CAs to date

ERA-NET: Selection rates (CAs only, calls 1-4)

Coordination of national research programmes in FP7



Much lower selection rates in Life Sciences: High will low skill?

Coordination of national programmes - will be implemented via:

- ERA-NET
- ERA-NET PLUS
- Article 169
- May cover subjects beyond the nine themes
- Addresses also complementarities with intergovernmental structures

ERA-NET in FP7

Reinforcement of the ERA-NET scheme:

- Continuity of ERA-NET as the scheme providing a framework for the coordination of public research programmes (new topics)
- Broadening and deepening the scope of existing ERA-NETs (to broaden the partnership and scope of the ERA-NETs and deepen the activities towards mutual opening of programmes)

ERA-NET PLUS in FP7

New is the additional EU financial support to “top up” joint calls (a premium for those tumbling the first hurdles to integration of EU national research programmes?)

- Providing EU financial support to joint calls undertaken by several national programmes
- Topping up to be fixed at the appropriate level (e.g. 25-30 %)

Article 169 in FP7

Participation of the Community in research programmes jointly undertaken by Member States

Article 169

‘In implementing the multi-annual framework programme, the Community may make provision, in agreement with the Member States concerned, for participation in research and development programmes undertaken by several Member States, including participation in the structures created for the execution of those programmes.’

- European large scale cooperation in “variable geometry” between Member States
- Cooperation between Member States sharing common needs or interests
- Identification Art. 169 initiatives on the basis of pre-defined criteria

Article 169 in FP 7: Criteria to select the initiatives

Identification of the initiatives on the basis of a series of criteria:

- Relevance of the initiative to EU objectives
- Clear objective and its relevance to FP7
- European added value
- Critical mass and similarity of programmes involved
- Art. 169 as the most appropriate means to reach the objectives

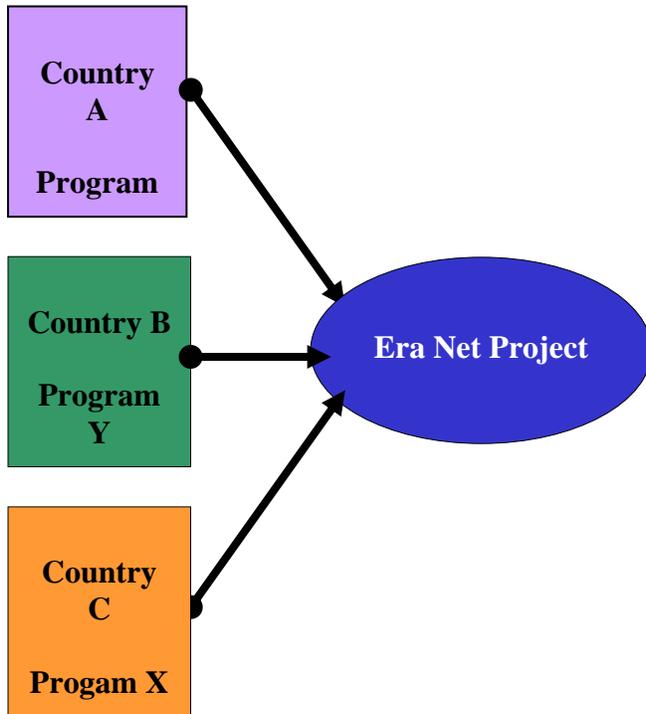
ERA-NET-PLUS vs Article 169 - 1

	ERA-NET-PLUS	Article 169
Legal basis	Art.164 &s. Consultation	Art. 169, Co-decision
Objective	Reinforced Co-ordination: Single joint call at an agreed moment in time	Scientific, administrative and financial integration: Joint programme over time (several years)
Implement.	Call for proposals (COM)	By dedicated structure
MS role	Coordination and Funding commitment	Joint Implementation incl. funding commitment
Variable geometry	For a single call	Partner MS over time
Commission role	Single top up (lump sum)	Contract based (Funding, Contract partner, Programme Shareholder..)

ERA-NET-PLUS vs Article 169 – 2

ERA-NET-PLUS

Reinforced Co-ordination



Article169

Programme Integration



ERA-AGE - European Research Area in Ageing
Professor Alan Walker, The University of Sheffield

April 2004-March 2008

Objectives of ERA-AGE:

- To facilitate coordination of existing ageing research programmes
- To promote interdisciplinary research activities between countries
- To share good practice in coordination and management of ageing programmes
- To support the production of European priorities for ageing research programmes
- To help break down the barriers between ageing research programmes and policy and practice

Methods:

- Systematic exchange of information and good practice
- Strategic activities
- Joint activities
- Transnational collaboration

The Strategic Role of the European Forum

- Potential synergies between national programmes
- Share information
- Identify knowledge gaps
- Disseminate information
- Strategic focus for ageing research

... Plus?

- Prioritise and coordinate ageing research?
- Represent ageing research?

Working Group Themes and Recommendations

Participants of the meeting were organised into four working groups, each group had a chair and a rapporteur.

- **Group 1** was chaired by Teresa di Fiandra (Ministry of Health, Italy) and the rapporteurs were Claudia Gandin (Istituto Superiore Di Sanita, Italy) and Kerstin Carsjo (Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Sciences, Sweden).
- **Group 2** was chaired by Jim Ogg (Caisse Nationale D'Asurance Vielliesse, France) and the rapporteurs were Ulrike Kohl (Fond National de la Researcher, Luxemburg) and Wolfgang Ballensiefen, (PT DLR, Germany)
- **Group 3** was chaired by Benny Leshem (The Israeli Ministry of Health, Israel) and the rapporteur was Inesz van Benten (ZonMw, the Netherlands).
- **Group 4** was chaired by Gerda Geyer, (The Academy of Sciences, Austria) and the rapporteur was Anu Nuutinen (The Academy of Finland, Finland)

Participants were asked to discuss the following questions and the outcomes of the discussions were presented to the closing plenary.

Working Group Questions:

1. Which aspects of ageing research would benefit from European research funders collaborating?
2. What are the gains from collaborating in these areas and what barriers do you think we will need to overcome?
3. What role would your organisation play in the European Collaboration?
4. What organisational form should collaboration take, i.e what structures do you think would work?
5. How should we begin to develop this collaboration, what can ERA-AGE do but also how can you pursue this within your organisation?

The working groups at the meeting represented a diversity of research funders, researchers, representatives from different research institutes, research councils, other funding agencies and policy makers from 24 European countries. All non-ERA-AGE participants expressed a willingness to participate and to be involved in the future ERA-AGE activities. The discussions proved to be very fruitful and the outcomes of the meeting will contribute to further development of the ERA-AGE project.

The summary of the questions is organized as follows:

1. Aspects of ageing research that would benefit from the collaboration of European research funders; the gains and barriers.
2. The role of national organizations in the European collaboration and the structures for collaboration.
3. Developing the collaboration within national organizations and the role of ERA-AGE.

1) Aspects of ageing research that would benefit from the collaboration of European research funders; gains and barriers

Fundamental structures for European collaboration

Participants expressed the need of creating structures for coordination of ageing research at the European landscape to facilitate European collaboration. The following coordinating structures were suggested.

- *A European Institute on Ageing.* A question has been raised whether it is a wise idea to mirror the NIA and whether this model is appropriate for Europe. A majority of the participants expressed the view that there is no need for Europe to copy structures like NIA but learning from the US might be more valuable. Europe has a sufficient number of institutes and there is no need to create a super institution but it is more urgent to establish a system for central grants and programmes to train young scholars in ageing research. On the other hand some participants still supported the idea of creating a European Institute on Ageing.
- *A European virtual centre or institute on ageing with a small centralized structure with decentralized bodies and a steering committee and board* could serve as a coordinating tool of ageing research and it could be established across different countries. It would require a small central basic funding and additional fundraising activities by the institute. Part of the virtual institute should be a virtual documentation centre on ageing reporting on major activities, events and publications in this field.
- *A European gerontological database* emerging from different sources (such as statistical offices, administration, research projects, including tools and training schemes) should be developed so that the data from these different sources can be accessed easily. The Israeli Gerontological Data Center (which is a national database of ageing research resources) could serve as a prototype of such an instrument. The objective of this instrument at the European level is to enable knowledge sharing and to establish collaboration in the ageing field. The development of the database should start from individual countries where each country should organize a database focusing on what is already done and on what must be activated, for example for the promotion of health and prevention of disabilities amongst older people. ERA-AGE should take a leading role and provide a source of technical information and expertise sharing when required.

- *Establishment of national databases.* In Bulgaria the information on ageing research and researchers is planned to be gathered and form the basis for the national database on ageing research, which will be a valuable source for information sharing.
- *The ERA-AGE database on European Research programmes* is a useful source of information and it needs to be widely disseminated across the countries.
- *Developing an internet database* where research programmes, priorities and special interests can be established.
- *Developing a European centre of accredited research results* that would enable transnational testing of research results that are not specific to a certain area. This could be an inexpensive source of information sharing. Evidence needs to be provided for governments in order to influence certain policy actions, therefore duplications are to be avoided and new research needs to build on existing research results. Stakeholders and end-users should be widely involved. The centre should not only collect the information but also evaluate the data. The European centre should be piloted first. It could lead to fruitful collaboration in the future. An example of such a dataset is the NORFACE ERA-NET and the SHARE project.
- *A common framework for mapping out the nature and extent of ageing research in European countries* could be developed by using the information already gathered by ERA-AGE on how ageing research is funded in participants' countries. This information could be further developed into a more structured form in order to provide a better overview of ageing research. A standardised format of a report could be developed by ERA-AGE consortium. One possibility is to adopt the format of the ERA-AGE National Coordinators' reports. By involving a large number of the European countries and adopting the ERA-AGE model, the information gathered can be instrumental in identifying strengths and weaknesses of ageing research as well as identifying the missing aspects of ageing research at the European level.
- *Workshops for programme managers* could be organised to discuss specific issues with the aim of bringing together potential partners and developing collaboration in the particular field. Themes of the workshops could be biomedical ageing research, multidisciplinary, exchanges of databases and so on. Learning from each other could be a useful and economical way of collaborating. For example, experts from other countries could be invited to these workshops to share the knowledge and information.

Interdisciplinary and comparative studies

- *Interdisciplinary longitudinal studies and the interaction between health and care systems.* Participants emphasised the an urgent need to obtain data on the ageing population at national levels across Europe by using well-designed and standardised longitudinal studies which should focus on health issues of the ageing population and its implications on health and social care systems.
- *Comparative studies* on different welfare systems from an interdisciplinary perspective at the European landscape are needed to provide a long term overview of their impact on older people. It is important to secure pensions in retirement and to ensure financial security in old age.

- *Research on health care and welfare services* should be planned in advance so the societal needs in health care and social care can be met. More research is required on care givers in relation to the recent shift from institutional care to home and family care. Aspects of equality and inequality in relation to the welfare system are to be examined more closely. The analytical studies should be carried out across Europe.
- *Intervention studies.* Collaboration could begin on intervention studies and monitoring the efficiency and quality of interventions and different models to meet the needs of the older people in social care.
- “*Healthy ageing*” should be achieved through health promotion and prevention of ill health. The main focus should be on prevention rather than on cure.
- *Stimulate interdisciplinary collaboration* in ageing research, for example cardiovascular and neurological research.

Methodological approaches and tools

- *Methodological innovations in interdisciplinary research.* The participants of the meeting expressed a need for methodological innovations in interdisciplinary research and suggested the inclusion of a broader range of disciplines in ageing research. Social sciences are overshadowed by medical and biomedical sciences which tend to dominate ageing research, and therefore it is important to strengthen other perspectives. Participants also suggested using standardized methodologies and tools in ageing research across countries.
- There are very few tools available that enable us to carry out international comparative studies, therefore there is an urgent need for development and innovation in this field. For example instruments for forecasting life expectancy and for measuring active ageing need to be developed. Collaboration among demographers, economists and medical researchers is needed in order to stimulate this development.
- Participants suggested creating quality of life measurement tools. Existing WHO measures on health and welfare should be considered for application to the ageing research field.
- A common language, standardized methodologies, definitions and tools are to be established and to be used in ageing research across Europe. This should build upon existing resources so duplications can be avoided. Clinical methods used in different European countries should also be standardised.

Professional training and leadership in gerontology

- Good multidisciplinary research requires training people for leadership role in gerontology. Leading researchers in the ageing field can attract young scientists. Workshops should be organized for scientists with a single discipline background to enhance the knowledge of another gerontological field, for example the European Masters in Gerontology course can be used as a model.
- To provide training in gerontology for clinicians and general practitioners to strengthen the fields of Gerontology and Geriatrics.

- Training new young scholars/researchers in ageing research. It is essential to provide opportunities for interdisciplinary training for young scholars so they can get established in the scientific community, especially new skilled researchers with a desire for interdisciplinarity. Some countries like France experienced a lack of career prospects in interdisciplinary ageing research therefore new opportunities are to be created. For example postdoc training, summer schools and workshops for young researchers should be organized.
- To support the professional mobility of young scientists.

Collaboration at the funding and policy levels

- It seems to be difficult to look at the funding opportunities before getting the priorities right and vice versa, it is difficult task to set up priorities without knowing what funds are available.
- Complexity of ageing research means that there is a richness of fields to be studied but this also means that various sources of funding will need to be looked at. We should learn from the US and develop fundraising schemes combining different funding sources. Private companies and businesses should be also considered as a potential source of funding. One of the sources in some countries could be the national lottery. For example in Portugal the ageing research programme on improvement of the quality of life for the elderly is financed from national lottery funds. It involves collaboration of different national ministries and has a multidisciplinary dimension.
- Ageing research does not receive a high priority in Framework Programme 7 in which ageing research is contained within its thematic fields. Also the funding opportunities for ageing research still exist in the form of ERA-NET Plus or Article 169. These sources should be explored.
- Some governments are reluctant to invest more money from the national resources into European research as they have already contributed towards the European Community funds from which the framework programmes are funded.
- Funding could start from a joint call. Bottom up funding approaches are preferable to top down approaches.
- Strategies and policies are urgently needed to guarantee the social future of the ageing population.
- Older work force professionals as well non-professionals need to be considered as a priority in all countries across Europe. Work opportunities for older people should be created.
- Science should be guiding policy in a consistent way.

Criteria and strategies for European collaboration

- Priorities for collaboration need to be clearly articulated and defined.
- To be able to collaborate effectively on an international level it is necessary to construct a clear definition of priorities to enable us to take a pragmatic approach to collaboration. Firstly the focus should be on setting up specific actions, for example, preparation for a joint call.

- To identify the best form of coordination structure at the European level and to develop methods for coordination.
- All activities must be interdisciplinary and be carried at the European level.
- Added value can be gained by working together in ageing research.
- Missing aspects and gaps in ageing research should be identified to avoid duplications.
- Select national practices which are useful to share with other countries.
- When selecting a research theme the following criteria should be considered:
 - To select research topics which do not entail political and social conflicts.
 - For expensive research areas combined efforts can be highly cost effective.

The following research topics could benefit from European collaboration and be of significant value.

- Life long learning and education for older people.
- New technologies for older people.
- Oral health care for older people.
- Loss of hearing and vision.
- Ageing of immigrants and multicultural aspects.
- Retirement and pension issues.
- Anti-ageing therapies including hormonal or non-hormonal therapy as well as drugs trials for prolonging life.
- Policy strategies for an ageing population and social future.
- Methods with regard to longevity predictions and for measuring quality of life.
- Long term care structures (professional and non professional).
- Developing indicators of health in old age.
- Ageing and employment.

Opportunities and challenges

- Increased collaboration would improve methodologies.
- More knowledge would be gained for less money and the quality of research in Europe will improve.

- Implementing innovations already developed in other countries, by collaborating we can learn from each other.
- There are different challenges in countries where ageing research is not institutionalised in comparison to countries with a long tradition in the ageing field. Again learning from other countries can be beneficial.

Barriers that could hamper European collaboration

- The language barrier seems to be one of the major issues. It needs more emphasis and researchers could be provided with language training.
- Legal aspects that differ across the countries.
- Cultural, educational and ethnic differences.
- Different organisational regulations and procedures.
- Diversity of priorities and research foci across the countries.
- Readiness of societies to relate to ageing as a focus of research.
- Definition of ageing. Ageing requires a holistic approach. Ageing is not limited to a single discipline, it requires a multidisciplinary approach. A life course perspective is also important.
- Difficulties in communication and working together to be overcome by promoting a culture of communication.
- Different practices of funding agencies in the different countries could be overcome by promoting flexibility at national levels.
- Avoid dominating perspectives, for example biomedical sciences tend to dominate.
- Existing theoretical differences in interdisciplinary research need to be overcome.
- Developing incentives for ageing research in countries where it is in its infancy. There are considerable differences in this respect between European countries.
- A lack of tools available for comparative research.
- Barriers for young researchers
 - lack of interest in the ageing field,
 - lack of funding,
 - lack of structures,
 - lack of future prospects.

2) The role of national organisations in European collaboration and the structures for collaboration

Forms of collaboration

- Collaboration should commence by information sharing about existing data basis, tools, methodologies and so on.
- Establishing national programmes on ageing research. Bulgaria is planning to establish a national programme on ageing research and this could also lay the basis for collaboration at the European level.
- Translating data from research into policy making. This can be enabled by establishing a forum of scientists and policy makers.
- Common goals and methodologies should be identified.
- To work together towards a joint call. A majority of the participants expressed their readiness to work together on a joint call on specific themes.
- Consulting end-users. The participants stressed the importance of consulting older people on their needs before defining the research activities. Representatives of older people will be invited to the next European Forum.

Topic level

- The role of the organization in collaboration depends on the nature of the topic. It is important to select a subject which would be relevant to the sponsors, for example the topic of nutrition and health would be an interest for UK research.
- Other common topics for research could be oral health care and mobility as a basic biological function, primary health care and healthy ageing. Caring for patients with Alzheimer disease and its early detection are also important.

Role of research funders

- In some countries like the Netherlands it has become more difficult to obtain co-funding. Therefore it has been suggested that it is necessary to establish a research funder's community that could facilitate collaboration among funders. A joint voice would be a stronger voice that would have a greater chance of obtaining European funds and of getting more involved in European research projects.
- The community of research funders should also play an active role in disseminating research results across the countries and maximizing the impact of research.

Role of national governments

- Some participants felt that national governments do not take an interest in ageing research and therefore ageing related issues are not prioritized. Governments have multiple priorities and ageing is competing with more powerful research areas such as medicine, economics. Investment in ageing research needs to be advocated at governmental level and the benefits and costs need to be well justified to the national governments.

Establishing collaboration at the national level

- National priorities and strategies are to be identified in order to form the base for common areas of research at the European level. This information could be useful when developing a joint call.
- Before we start to build international collaboration we need to make sure that collaboration within countries is well established. Cooperation at the national level could start, for example, by building a national documentation centre which can operate as a national centre on ageing, including universities, research centre from social and health sectors and this could be beneficial for European collaboration. Added value from each country would enhance European collaboration even further. Each country should collaborate in the following areas:

To take on an advisory role on

- communication and implementation,
- evaluation,
- involvement of end users (the ageing population).

To share knowledge on

- programme management and coordination,
- peer reviewers,
- scientific issues.

To share databases

- of samples,
- of research results,
- of researchers in specific fields.

3) Developing collaboration within national organizations and the role of ERA-AGE

Collaboration should commence by:

- Promoting workshops that focus on specific issues.
- Working towards joint calls on common priorities.
- Trying to develop a strategy at the national level which aims to achieve the goal of participating in collaborative research projects.

ERA-AGE as a facilitator of international collaboration

- ERA-AGE should take on the role of clustering scientific activities in ageing research.
- ERA-AGE could identify research topics which are inclusive at the European level.

- ERA-AGE could contribute to the European centre of accredited research results by gathering the data and the centre could serve as a visual sign for politicians and enhance the importance of ageing research in Europe.
- Information about ERA-AGE should be disseminated widely to countries that are not yet partners in the project. The ERA-AGE associate membership should be expanded.
- ERA-AGE should gather the existing good practice in different European countries and support small initiatives and this could be a starting point for collaboration.
- ERA-AGE should organise in the Member States one-day presentation meetings to disseminate information and to inform people about potential collaboration.
- Collaboration should involve a large spectrum of countries which would all adopt the ERA-AGE model of national coordination and reporting (national reports should identify strengths and weaknesses of research programmes in order to avoid duplication, enhance collaboration and share expertise). A common agenda and structure for the National Coordinator's work and National Forums should be developed.
- ERA-AGE should develop incentives for young researchers to engage in ageing research, for example to create possibilities for publishing, organize international workshops, and enhance the possibility for the implementation of research results.

Next Steps

The recommendations from this meeting will be used to develop specific collaboration activities at the next meeting of the European Forum in Stockholm on 30th March 2006.

The areas in which the collaboration should be developed are:

- Funding for young researchers.
- European ageing database.
- Virtual European centre or institute on ageing.
- Translating research into policy making.
- National ageing research forums.
- Developing comparative tools.

Appendix A

List of Participants

	NAME	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
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2	Abrahamsson, Kenneth Prof	Swedish Council for Working Life & Social Research	Sweden
3	Allon, Irit, Dr	Israeli Ministry of Health	Israel
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16	Coculescu, Mihail Prof	Ministry of Health	Romania
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21	Gandin, Claudia	Instituto Superiore Di Sanita	Italy
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23	Geyer, Gerda	Austrian Academy of Science	Austria
24	Globerson, Amiela Prof	Weizmann Institute of Science	Israel
25	Glod, Frank	Fonds National de la Recherche	Luxembourg

	NAME	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
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42	Newland, Claire Dr	Medical Research Council	UK
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47	Ozolanta, Iveta Prof	Riga Stradins University	Latvia
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Appendix B

LIST OF PARTNERS AND NATIONAL COORDINATORS

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Prof Alan Walker	University of Sheffield	UK
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All these are members of the Steering Committee; there are two additional members: Giorgio Clarotti and Anne-Sophie Parent.



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