Environments of Ageing

Workstream Leaders:
Hans-Werner Wahl, Heidelberg University, Germany
Susanne Iwarsson, Lund University, Sweden
Burning Issues for Ageing in Europe

- How and where to live in old age?
- How to keep up with daily activities and social participation?
  - During active phases of ageing
  - When functional capacity decreases and needs for support and security increase
  - When there is a need for 24-hour care and support in social activity
- Rapid population ageing – most of all among the very old
- Significant burden on public economy
Burning Issues for Ageing in Europe

- Mobility is a prerequisite for daily activity, social participation, well-being and health
- Technology solutions are important at all levels of person-environment relations as people age
Effective & Efficient Person-Environment Related Interventions are Needed

- Home modification services
- Housing provision
- Preventive home visits
- Fall prevention programs
- Geriatric rehabilitation programs
- Out-of-home environments
- Public transportation
- Technology & products
Scarce Scientific Evidence & Weak Implementation

- Much need for more research on ageing and environment
- Paucity of scientific evidence on outcomes and efficient solutions
  - Housing
  - Out-of-home environments
  - Technology and products
- Very weak implementation of existing evidence into practice contexts
  - In housing provision
  - In health care and social services
  - In city planning
  - In working life
Ageing and Environments: What Research Can Achieve

- Understanding of interactions between ageing persons and their physical-technical social surroundings
- Understanding how person-environment relationships shape outcomes of ageing (functioning, well-being, falls, health)
- Provide the evidence platform for community policy and interventions
Achievements of Environments of Ageing FUTURAGE Workstream (Workshop in Heidelberg in March 2010 and Its Outcomes)

- Identification and integration of burning issues of the research area of environments of ageing
- Linkage of these issues with current and future societal challenges of Europe
- Clarification of the role of user involvement and implementation issues
- Clarification of the important role of young scholars

In-depth treatment of theory, methodology and implementation research during Workshop 2, June 16-18, 2010 in Lund
Methodology of Heidelberg Workshop

- 35 scholars from Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, U.S.
- A wide range of disciplines
- User representatives
- Young scholars
- Concentration on existing evidence and research gaps as well as the translation of existing findings to intervention and practice implementation
There is some evidence that environmental aspects have an influence on functioning and health [e.g., Wahl et al., 2009, The Gerontologist; Iwarsson et al., 2007, The Gerontologist]

Inconsistent / lacking evidence and mixed conclusions [e.g., dementia and private home environment]

Paucity of systematic and cumulative generation of knowledge at large
(1) General Issues:

- How to make a “unique” Road-Map for Europe?
- More joint effort between countries
- User-driven generation of research questions
- Need for more efficient
  - synthesis of state-of-the-art on different issues
  - utilisation of existing data, for cross-national research
(2) General priorities:

- Focus on the bigger picture, in a European perspective
- Always keep a life course perspective
- Educate, communicate, translate, intervene and implement – challenges for researchers as well as for funding bodies
(3) Examples of important research areas:

- Clarifying the role of different types of home settings for the future (full range of older adults including cognitively impaired / those with disability)
- Clarifying the potential of safe and satisfying mobility for the future (full range of older adults including cognitively impaired / those with disability)
- How will technology change quality of life in later life?
- Research on the potential of work environments for older individuals must gain high priority
(4) Important cutting-across areas:

- Invest in interdisciplinary research – build new alliances
- Consider forthcoming cohorts – need for longitudinal studies
- Consider the heterogeneity of old age – from a person-environment perspective
- Invest into young scholars from a diversity of disciplines
Thanks a Lot for Your Attention!

Photo: M. Karrman