

# NEWS

ISSUE FOUR AUTUMN 2006

A better future for ageing

**ERA AGE**

European  
Research  
Area in  
Ageing

## Project Progress

The ERA AGE project has carried out strategic and joint activities during the second (months 18-36) and overlapping third (months 32-48) phases since the last edition of the newsletter. The second phase, designed to identify research gaps and long term priorities in ageing research, suitably leads into the third phase which begins the creation of joint activities as the basis of long-term collaboration.

Project partners, associate members and other European ageing research funders and policy makers have worked together to develop cross-national collaboration on funding ageing research. The development of a pilot collaborative funding call, 'Future Leaders of Ageing Research in Europe' (FLARE), for post doctoral researchers is now underway. Discussions on the continuation of ERA AGE in the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) are on-going.



## ERA-AGE Database

---

This information resource, which forms a large part of the ERA-AGE website, went live in June 2006. The database contains three different levels of information about European research on ageing, research funding agencies, research programmes and research centres and institutes. Users can browse these data sources by type, organisational name, country, discipline and research topic. The database also contains links to relevant external sites where available.

This resource is intended to be useful to a broad range of users: the general public, scientists, user groups, funders and policy makers. The content is not intended to be exhaustive, it provides a

useful starting point for browsers interested in finding out more about European research on ageing, and will be continually expanded during the course of the project.

The database contains the following resources:

### Research funders

Information on European research funding agencies that support national research on ageing. Organisational summaries, contacts and web links to these organisations are also located here.

### Ageing research programmes

Data on ageing research programmes that are either currently in operation or have been funded over the last 10 years in the ERA-AGE partner countries. This instrument forms part of a broader

strategy to gather data on ageing programmes across Europe, designed to develop knowledge sharing, identify and promote good practices and develop European collaboration in the ageing field.

### Research centres

Summary information on European research centres and institutes that carry out research on ageing. Currently this data includes a range of research centres and institutes present in ERA-AGE partner countries only. Organisational summaries, contacts and web links to these centres and institutions are also located here.

## Third European Forum meeting

---

The third meeting of the European Forum, held on 30th March 2006 in Stockholm, focused on two issues: disseminating good practices on ageing research databases and funding research institutes on ageing. Research funders, policy makers and researchers from 23 European countries focused on four topic areas: (i) collaboration and support for young researchers, (ii) developing European databases on ageing, (iii) developing a European virtual centre/institute on ageing research and (iv) developing comparative tools, such as tools for forecasting life expectancy and measuring active ageing, which would enable cross-national comparisons. Key recommendations from the meeting included the following actions:

- To establish a *national* basis for *collaboration* on existing datasets and comparative tools in advance of international collaboration
- To develop an *inventory* on existing databases and comparative tools to eliminate fragmentation and avoid duplication
- To approach research funders and policy makers to request measures so as to address the issue of a lack of infrastructure and financial resources in order to establish a *European database on ageing* and to develop *cross-national comparative tools*

- The ERA AGE Consortium to further develop *the recommendations on the virtual centre/institute on ageing research*

- The ERA AGE Consortium to develop *cross-national collaboration* to fund and train young scholars.

## Good Practice Workshop

---

The Good Practice Workshop on Building Collaboration between ERA-AGE Partners, held in Stockholm on 29th March 2006, was designed to build links and collaboration between partners. The focus of the workshop was the development of small scale collaborations and the infrastructure of a collaborative joint call. The aims of the meeting were:

- To identify *existing calls and programmes* where it may be possible to build collaboration between two or more partners
- To identify some possible *small scale collaborations* which the consortium can pursue
- To discuss the possibilities of developing a *joint call* and to begin to flesh out the infrastructure of such a call

Key recommendations included:

- To develop a small-scale pilot collaborative funding call for post doctoral researchers
- To use the small-scale pilot as a foundation to develop a large-scale collaboration in the future

## Overview of the Older People, Health and Social Care Workshop

---

The second scientific workshop focused on Older People, Health and Social Care and took place on Monday 19th June 2006 at the Academy of Economic Studies in Romania. The meeting was organised in partnership with the Romanian Ministry of Health and the Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding, Romania. It built on the scientific recommendations on health and care management that emerged from the FORUM project and these were used as a basis for developing further potential transnational collaboration in this field.

The working groups focused on:

- Effective Interventions in Health
- Access to Services (Including e-Health and e-Care)
- Epidemiology, Population Studies – Longitudinal and cohort studies
- Socio-Economic and Cultural Factors Shaping Care Needs and the Organisation of Services.

# Newsletter Spotlight:



## From programme co-ordination in FP6 to a European Research Area in FP7

The need to improve the co-ordination of national research programmes was a key message in the Commission's 2002 Communication on structuring the European Research Area (ERA)<sup>1</sup>. In this context a new scheme, called ERA-NET, was launched in 2003 under the 6th EU Research Framework Programme (FP6):

- The scheme funds Co-ordination Actions between national or regional research programmes and is therefore distinct from other FP6 actions which aim to bring together the research actors themselves (i.e. universities, research centres, industry, etc).
- ERA-NET is a bottom-up scheme in which programme owners and programme managers identify national and regional (sub-) programmes, which they subsequently co-ordinate or open up mutually. Projects could be submitted in any research area; they did not need to correspond to FP6 priorities.
- Under FP6, ERA-NETs covered four types of activities: (1) information exchange – (2) strategic activities – (3) joint activities – (4) trans-national research. The first two steps, as a minimum, were mandatory.

Through the ERA-NET scheme, concrete progress has been made over the past three years in structuring the European Research Area:

- Some 70 Co-ordination Actions, involving the active participation of all Member States have been set up for a total of €180 million. Funding from the Commission is limited to the co-ordination of programmes, i.e. the

research itself does not receive funding. As a result of these projects, hundreds of national and regional research programmes are being co-ordinated and the fragmentation of the ERA reduced<sup>2</sup>.

- ERA-NET projects total more than 1000 participations. Participants are either national/regional research programme 'owners' (typically research ministries or regional governments) or programme 'managers' (research councils, science academies or funding agencies such as Tekes in Finland, German Projektträger or the Istituto Superiore di Sanità in Italy).
- Some 50% of ERA-NET projects plan to launch a joint call for trans-national projects. To date, 15 such calls have been launched, amounting to more than €200 million of funding being committed by the involved programmes over a four year period.

Feedback from participants indicates that an important reason for the high interest in this scheme is its bottom-up approach. ERA-NETs allow Member States to focus on their priorities, collaborating in the areas they prefer and only when they are ready to do so:

- An analysis of the ERA-NET projects selected to date under FP6 shows that only some 65% of them correspond to core areas supported by FP6 thematic priorities;
- Some 20% of projects address areas considered as "non-core" in the relevant Thematic Area (e.g. wood production and manufacturing, medical emergencies);
- Some 15% relate to areas currently not covered by any FP6 priorities, such as astrophysics, metrology or fundamental chemistry.

Under the next Framework Programme, FP7, which covers the 2007-2013 period, the ERA-NET scheme will continue and will be reinforced. In addition to new or upgraded ERA-NET projects, a new ERA-NET Plus module will provide an incentive to organise joint calls between national or regional research programmes: a "top-up" of 50%

Community funding will be added to joint trans-national funding (i.e. if Member States commit €10 million, the Commission will provide €5 million, bringing the total funding to €15 million).

Thanks to the ERA-NET scheme, a vibrant community of research programme owners and managers is being created. ERA-NET projects are helping to structure the ERA by providing a mechanism to develop and exchange best practices and through launching joint calls. ERA-AGE partners are part of this new community.

Another novelty under FP7 will be that links between the ERA-NET scheme and other FP supported research will be strengthened. To make this possible, the new generation of ERA-NET projects and ERA-NET calls will essentially be managed under the Co-operation and the Capacities specific programmes. The bottom-up nature of the scheme will be ensured: dedicated "Out of Theme" calls are envisaged annually to select and support ERA-NET projects which are of a horizontal nature or which do not correspond to any of the FP7 research themes.

ERA-AGE is a unique project in European ageing research as it combines biologically oriented research programmes and sociologically oriented ones. Links with other FP supported activities will be ensured for ERA-AGE by a "peer review" group, which in 2006 has gathered Commission officials from five departments dealing with ageing research. This has, for example, resulted in support from both DG Research and DG Information Society to an increased collaboration and exploration of synergies of ERA-AGE with the proposed Article 169 initiative on Ambient Assisted Living as decided by the May 2006 ERA-AGE Steering Committee.

The inclusion of ageing research as a priority in at least three future FP7 themes (Health, Information and Communication Technologies and Socioeconomic Sciences) should provide plenty of opportunities in the future for ERA-AGE to strengthen its interactions with various Commission departments.

**Giorgio Clarotti** (Policy Officer, Project Officer, ERA-NET in the field of Life Sciences)

<sup>1</sup> COM(2002) 565 final, The European research area : providing new momentum. <sup>2</sup> Similar projects have been supported under FP6 by the Innovation and Information and Communication Technologies programmes. Being slightly different in their focus, they are not considered here.

# Newsletter Features

## European Ageing Research Programmes

For this issue, leading scientists provide their overviews of ageing research programmes that have involved their respective countries on a partnership level. The European Commission funded programmes focus on the themes of Quality of Life and Health and Social Care.



### The SHARE Project Family: Building a Panel Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe

Ageing is one of the largest social and economic challenges of the 21st century in Europe. SHARE is a group of EU-sponsored projects that will build up a **Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe** in order to create a fundamental resource for science and public policy to help to address this unprecedented challenge. The main aim of SHARE is to create a pan-European inter-disciplinary panel data set covering persons aged 50 and over. The SHARE project family brings together many disciplines, including demography, economics, epidemiology, psychology, sociology and statistics.

The original SHARE project was largely financed by the EU's 5th Framework Programme. In 2004 a first wave of data on the economic, health and family conditions of about 27,000 respondents aged 50 and over was collected in 11 European countries. The participating countries covered all EU15 regions: Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark), Western European countries (Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland), and the Mediterranean (Spain, Italy, Greece). The major strength of these data is the ex-ante harmonised cross-national dimension that allows comparing the effects of different welfare systems (e.g. pension and health care systems) on the lives of middle-aged and older European Citizens. The data were released to the scientific community in a preliminary version in April 2005. A complete release is planned for the end of 2006. The data is accessible free of charge, see [www.share-project.org](http://www.share-project.org). First analyses of wave 1 data produced fascinating results.

Short summaries are freely available on the website just mentioned. They include insights on health, economic status, social and family background: a comprehensive

picture of individuals starting to worry about retirement as they approach this stage of their life.

A second wave of data is currently being collected. It includes two new EU Member States, Poland and the Czech Republic, and Ireland. Data will be available in 2007.

Starting in early 2007, the **SHARELIFE project** will collect and analyse life histories of the SHARE participants to identify "intervention points" at which welfare state policies have affected women and men at different points in their lives.

Taken together, the SHARE project family will create a powerful data "laboratory" allowing researchers to better understand societal and individual ageing, and therefore help the policy community as well as citizens to better cope with the challenges and opportunities of ageing.

---

**Axel Börsch-Supan** (Director of the Mannheim Research Institute for the Economics of Ageing and Co-ordinator of SHARE)

---



### 'OASIS'-Old Age and Autonomy: The Role of Service Systems and Intergenerational Family Solidarity

The international research project 'OASIS' was funded within the 5th Framework Program of the European Community. OASIS was commissioned under the specific RTD programme "Quality of Life and Management of Living Resources" (contract number is [QLK-CT-1999-02182](http://www.share-project.org)).

The project was built upon a partnership between institutions and researchers from Norway, United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Israel with expertise in policy,



intergenerational relations, family care giving and quality of life research. The project was co-ordinated by the Centre for Research and Study of Ageing, the University of Haifa, Israel.

The aim was to deepen the understanding of:

- The interplay between family culture, values and norms
- Intergenerational relations, caregiving
- Service systems and their impact on elder's autonomy and quality of life.

The partnership endeavoured to learn how family cultures and service systems support autonomy and delay dependency in old age to promote quality of life and improve the basis for policy and planning, focussing on:

- The balance between family care and service systems and its relation to elders' quality of life
- Variations in family norms and transfers (intergenerational solidarity) across age cohorts in various countries
- How individuals and families cope when at risk of dependency (intergenerational ambivalence).

Specifically, the research focused on three prominent dimensions that influence healthy ageing and the coping of family caregivers: mixes of informal (family) and formal (service systems) care, family norms and intergenerational transfers and family coping with beginning dependency of an older member.

To our knowledge this was the first study of this kind which aimed to counterpose the 'veteran' *intergenerational solidarity model* with the recent *intergenerational ambivalence model*. A cross-cultural, cross-generational approach was used, comparing solidarity and ambivalence across societies. These countries have a diverse range of welfare regimes (institutional, conservative, residual) and familial cultures (family-oriented and individualistic) and also

contain elements of a north-south divide. These differences are likely to be reflected in intergenerational relationships.

The study included both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data was based on face-to-face structured interviews with an urban representative sample of 1,200 respondents in each country - 800 aged 25-74 and 400 aged 75+ totalling 6,000. The qualitative sample is an extended sub-sample of the survey. It includes in-depth interviews with 10 dyads in each country: elders with limitations in their physical functioning and one of their adult children.

The study was finished at the beginning of 2004, a final report was published along with numerous articles and chapters. Some of the main findings indicate that generally the majority in all countries acknowledged some degree of filial obligations, but more so in Spain, Germany, and Israel than in Norway and England. Country differences were more evident in the character than in the strength of filial norms. Basically family solidarity was central in all five countries, with variations in its strength that might reflect national and cultural idiosyncrasies in family cultures, behavioural patterns and social policy traditions. Personal resources (education, health, and financial situation) that relate to basic needs, were perceived as important.

---

**Professor Ariela Lowenstein** (Co-ordinator Centre for Research and Study of Ageing, the University of Haifa, Israel)

---

# Recommendations from the Quality of Life Workshop

ERA-AGE is in its second phase and has started to organise scientific workshops which are designed to identify research gaps and long term priorities in the ageing research field and to form a platform for future transnational collaboration.

The first scientific workshop was held on 1st December 2005 in London focusing on 'The Quality of Life in Old Age'. It aimed to develop the FORUM recommendations in this field in further detail and use them as a basis for potential transnational collaboration in the quality of life field.

The meeting brought together 47 scientists from 17 European countries, the majority of whom also participated in the FORUM project, [www.ageingresearch.group.shef.ac.uk](http://www.ageingresearch.group.shef.ac.uk)

## Fundamental Research Priorities

- All participants of the meeting rejected the single discipline approach in ageing research and strongly emphasised the need for creative interdisciplinary combinations in ageing research.
- More longitudinal studies are needed but methodological issues such as choosing the right cohort and sequence need to be addressed. The cohorts should start at the age of 40+ as these are the future cohorts of old and very old people and we should not restrict the samples only to the very old 75+. By choosing two measurement points during a seven year period scientists should be eligible to obtain funding from the EC framework programmes.
- New comparative studies are needed on the quality of life of older people within the old Member States and the new Member States. The studies should focus on evaluation of health policies and promote learning from each other that can be highly beneficial for everybody.
- There is a need for more inter-generational research and research on care systems, both formal and informal, as well as more studies on the risks of social inclusion and exclusion.

- Of particular importance is a focus upon *economic and social resources* and the inter-relationship with experiences gained earlier in the life course and their relevance to policy.
- Good practices at the national level across Europe should be sourced and effectively disseminated.
- Research findings require translation into policy and practice. Research results should inform new policies and serve as the basis for the further development of research.

## Fundamental Priorities for European Collaboration

- There is an urgent need to strategically co-ordinate research activities in the ageing field at the European level.
- Firm structures need to be developed to facilitate cross-national research, workshops, training and capacity building for future generations of researchers in the ageing field.
- Strategies for the interdisciplinary career development of young scholars need to be developed in order to retain new talent.
- An appropriate institution such as a virtual European centre or a data house is needed to co-ordinate ageing research at the European level and to facilitate European collaboration.
- National Forums of Ageing Research should be established within countries in order to facilitate collaboration.

## Ageing Research in Framework Programme Seven

- Strategies for successful applications under broader themes in Framework Programme Seven should be developed and new funding niches for ageing research should be sought.
- Ageing research has been given a low priority in the Framework Programme Seven; therefore it needs to be lobbied for at the European Commission. NGO's across Europe should approach the European Parliament stressing the importance of ageing research for society and national governments.



## Forthcoming Events



Two scientific workshops and a fourth Forum meeting and Good Practice workshop will take place in the near future:

### 1. The 'User Involvement in Ageing Research' workshop, 22nd November 2006, London, UK

The workshop will be organised in partnership with AGE Europe. The day will begin with presentations focussing on (i) international policy making, end users and older people's involvement in research and (ii) how researchers have engaged with end users in their research. Working groups will then enter discussions focusing on the following themes:

- Sustaining dialogue between funders, researchers and end-users on research development and knowledge transfer
- Barriers to involving end-users in research
- Good practice between end-users
- Good practice principles to guide user involvement in ERA AGE research.

### 2. Longevity, Demography and Genetics workshop, 1st December 2006, Innsbruck, Austria

The workshop will be organised in partnership with the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The day will begin with a range of presentations focusing on issues such as the European ageing population, biodemography of ageing, stem cells for healthy longevity, and choosing biogerontological research topics. Working groups will subsequently explore the following themes:

- Demography: How can demography profit from biogerontology and vice versa?
- Longevity: How can parameters which affect longevity be defined?
- Genetics: Genes or environment: which is the determining factor?

## National Co-ordinator Contact Details

### Anna-Liisa Kauppila

Academy of Finland  
anna-liisa.kauppila@aka.fi

### Aurelia Curaj

Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding (UEFISCSU)  
aurelia.curaj@uefiscsu.ro

### Claudia Gandin

Istituto Superiore di Sanita  
gandin@iss.it

### Gerda Geyer

Institute for Biomedical Ageing Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences  
gerda.geyer@oeaw.ac.at

### Irit Allon

Israeli Ministry of Health  
allonirit@yahoo.com

### Kerstin Carsjo

Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research  
Kerstin.carsjo@fas.forskning.se

### Liselotte Stevens

The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research & Development (ZonMw)  
stevens@zonmw.nl

### Lubica Strakova

The University of Sheffield  
l.strakova@sheffield.ac.uk

### Lucienne Willems

The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research & Development (ZonMw)  
willems@zonmw.nl

### Martin Barth

ProjectTraeger DLR  
M.Barth@DLR.de

### Michel Tuchman

Caisse Nationale D'Assurance Vieillesse  
michel.tuchman@cnav.fr

### Mihail Coculescu

Ministry of Health  
m.coculescu@uni-davila.ro

### Steinar Kristiansen

The Research Council of Norway  
sk@forskningsradet.no

### Ulrike Kohl

Fonds National de la Recherche  
ulrike.kohl@fnr.lu

### Wolfgang Ballensiefen

ProjectTraeger DLR  
Wolfgang.Ballensiefen@DLR.de



**ERA AGE**

**European  
Research  
Area in  
Ageing**

# The University of Sheffield ERA-AGE Co-ordination Team



**Professor  
Alan Walker**



**Dr Sam  
Taylor**



**Dr Lubica  
Strakova**



**Mr James  
Goldingay**



**Mrs Rita  
Saddler**



**Ms Lesley  
Marshall**

**ERA-AGE contact address:**

**Rita Saddler  
Project Secretary  
Department of Sociological Studies  
The University of Sheffield  
Elmfield Building  
Sheffield  
S10 2TU, UK**

**Tel: +44 (0) 114 222 6458/6418**

**Fax: +44 (0) 114 222 6492**

**Email: [r.n.saddler@shef.ac.uk](mailto:r.n.saddler@shef.ac.uk)**

**[www.shef.ac.uk/era-age](http://www.shef.ac.uk/era-age)**



**SIXTH FRAMEWORK  
PROGRAMME**

European Commission  
6th Framework Programme  
ERA-NET/1/CA-SSA  
No.510177