

Consultation

FUTURAGE FRANCE

Synthesis of the Responses

Within the framework of the European FUTURAGE project, we consulted a wide-ranging group of stakeholders to establish the priority orientations for such research in the medium-long term, including representatives of all the disciplines and professional specializations in France.

1. Research themes

The wide variety of research themes proposed reflects the scope of the field of research on ageing and the number of disciplines concerned. The main priorities highlighted correspond for the most part to the priority orientations already being worked on. They have been regrouped below into wide-ranging categories, along with a list of the most innovative and forwarding-looking propositions.

A Biogerontology: biology, biomedicine and genetics

The responses tended to focus on the different aspects of research on the brain and on cognitive functions, along with the mechanisms and forms of prevention for Alzheimer's disease.

B Social & Economic Resources

The research themes proposed can be classed under two main headings:

1. The institutional aspects, including changes in the retirement system and the conditions required to support such systems; employment and retirement; health care systems and networks; institutional responses to the needs of the elderly and their costs.
2. The evolution in needs within the context of population ageing, including inequalities, dependency, carers and inter-generational solidarity.

Other cross-disciplinary themes were also highlighted:

- Wealth creation by the elderly.
- Maintenance of social ties and the participation of the elderly in their social environment
- Ageing and migration

C Environments of Ageing

Again, the numerous propositions can be broken down into two main themes – which in turn can be broken down into many sub-themes – and a cross-disciplinary comparative axis.

1. Integration of the elderly and the prevention of exclusion, while taking their specific characteristics and environment into account

Role of the urban environment and housing; sociability modes and social networks; geographical mobility and public transport; the frameworks and socio-cultural conditions necessary for the elderly to continue physical activities and/or sports. .

2. Use made of new technologies

Technological innovations (NTIC and domotics) have given rise to new opportunities for gerontology but also raise questions in terms of acceptability, funding and ethics.

- Make a critical evaluation of the significant body of work and European programs that have focused on “technologies for disabled and elderly people” over the past 20 years.

- Analyze the role of technologies, design and objects to facilitate the insertion of the elderly in their environment and develop engineering and product design to help the elderly and caregivers.
- Set up organizations that systematically integrate the possibility of seniors using such tools and services. Analyze how the elderly use these new technologies.
- Study new technologies, especially on the development and integration of domotics into « intelligent » living areas (control of complex domestic tasks).
- Contribution of new technologies to health care and continued living at home.

D Healthy Ageing

The responses highlight five research areas:

1. Definition of ageing, its processes, meanings and social representations.
2. Prevention of ageing, social inequalities in terms of health care (influence of past and present living conditions).
3. Prevention of neurogenerative diseases.
4. Active ageing.
5. Institutions required (both in the abstract and concrete senses) to help people age well.

2. Some of the other priority themes put forward were:

- Ageing of immigrant populations in Europe.
- Geo-demographics of ageing and solidarity between countries.
- Ties between body image and identity.
- End of life.

3. European collaboration

6 main themes can be highlighted among the priorities requiring collaborative efforts at European level:

- Comparative research on social policies and welfare systems
- Comparative research on ageing in the workplace
- Improvement in and harmonization of health prevention, support and care frameworks,
- Constitution of longitudinal data bases
- Definition of best practices for « healthy ageing »
- Harmonization methodologies and vocabularies

4. What infrastructures are necessary to deliver these priorities at a European level?

Three types of organization, each with many variations, were proposed:

- **A European institute for research on ageing**, responsible for collecting and disseminating data and also for obtaining the financial backing necessary to fund research projects on priority themes, train young researchers and teaching projects.
- **A lighter coordination structure** responsible for organizing a network based on the « Biocluster » activity that would associate research centers, hospitals, universities and be open to industry.
- **The infrastructures required to coordinate field initiatives** would be those that do not already exist in the member states. Initially, the creation, maintenance and development of researcher networks would be encouraged using a decentralized « infrastructure » of « researchers-coordinators » working in laboratories (teams of researcher/universities) with project contracts.

Other forms of flexible coordination (and/or one-off) or pooling of resources proposed were:

- the creation of different types of European reference centres on ageing,
- collaborative platforms,
- constantly updated general and theme-based electronic platforms to be used as kick-off bases for congresses and seminars,
- research networks,
- public data banks that would be accessible to researchers,
- a European centre of excellence for the development of new technologies,
- multi-disciplinary European networks that would regroup single discipline networks.