

## European elderly: how are they? - Key Findings from an EU-funded Research database Unveiled

*The second detailed results of a European survey of health, ageing and retirement in Europe (SHARE) are being presented today in Brussels. The EU's Research Framework Programme awarded 5,8M€ over three years to the SHARE research project which collected data on life circumstances of around 35 000 European aged 50 and over in 15 countries, ranging from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean. Among the surprising results: Women live longer especially in South of Europe; but men are less sick, especially in the North; people in most Northern Europe eat less or the demise of the family is a myth. The main purpose of the survey was to provide accessible and reliable data to researchers and policy makers in the field of public health, economics and social sciences. Europe has the highest proportion of older citizens of any continent worldwide and the average age of Europeans will continue to increase.*

"Ageing is one of the most challenging trends of the 21st century", said the European Commissioner for Science and Research, Janez Potočnik "Enjoying healthy ageing and a comfortable retirement are, sooner or later, major issues for all of us. In that crucial area for the future of Europe, such large scale data base provides vital information to help define policies and shape actions for the benefit of all Europeans".

SHARE: A key European Research Infrastructure to assess challenges of aging in Europe

The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) is building a multidisciplinary, cross-national and longitudinal database on health, socio-economic status and social and family networks of more than 35,000 individuals aged 50 or over in 15 European countries: Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Israel, Poland, the Czech Republic and Ireland. Following a life-sciences approach, SHARE provides the infrastructure needed to improve our understanding of individual and societal ageing. It informs policy makers in Europe how the ageing process can be turned into an opportunity by appropriate pension, health care and labour market policies.

Funded under the 5th, 6th, and 7th Research Framework Programmes of the European Commission, SHARE benefits from additional support from participating countries' funding agencies as well as from the U.S. National Institute on Aging. A very successful database, SHARE has already attracted over 2000 scientific users who have produced a wealth of findings based on data from the project's baseline data collected since 2004. SHARE has been selected by the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure (ESFRI) as one of the 35 essential Research Infrastructures of the European Research Area.

## **New wave of findings**

The second wave of SHARE key findings, released today in Brussels, pointed to important new lessons, and pointed the way on how to turn Europe's demographic challenge into opportunities. Among the key new findings:

### **In the health area**

- Women live longer especially in South of Europe; but men are less sick, especially in the North.
- There is a strong relation between health behaviour and socioeconomic status.
- Geriatric care needs improvement in all countries surveyed

### **On Employment**

- Preventing ill health pays for itself
- Incentives to early retirement create early retirement
- Pleasant work place conditions support later retirement

### **On Family and Social Networks**

- The demise of the family is a myth:
- intergenerational money transfers are a major source of household wealth
- Big difference between countries on the importance of volunteering

### **On Economic Status, Income and Wealth**

- Consumption inequality is much lower than financial inequality

These key findings will be unveiled at a conference and experts workshop today in Brussels, in the presence of leading European scientists, policy makers, and industry representatives. Journalists can attend (from 11.30 – 16.00 – Q&A session from 12.20 to 12.45. Representation of the State of Baden-Württemberg to the European Union - Rue Belliard 60-62, 1040 Brussels)

For detailed survey results see [MEMO/08/752](#)

SHARE website: <http://www.share-project.org/>

See also [IP/05/503](#)