

LEAGUE OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES DECLARATION ON THE EUROPEAN INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP ON ACTIVE AND HEALTHY AGEING

(THE UCL/ IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON DECLARATION)

**A response to the Strategic Implementation Plan on Active and Healthy Ageing
- promoting European Active and Healthy Ageing through a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA)
across the disciplines.**

The European population is ageing rapidly, but living longer does not necessarily mean living a healthier, more active and independent life. The number of Europeans over 65 will double in the next 50 years, and the number of over 80s will almost triple. [Eurostat Population Projections 2010]

Life expectancy will continue to increase, yet unhealthy life years make up around 20% of a person's life. While a welcome development, ageing poses a formidable socio-economic challenge, mainly through the burden it places on our care systems. Yet it also presents great opportunities for citizens and businesses. Innovation for ageing well can improve people's health and quality of life and enhance the competitiveness of EU industry through the expansion of new markets.

Innovative thinking and the smarter use of innovation have the potential to bring new solutions to the market quickly and efficiently, while responding to the needs of end users.¹

The European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on Active and Healthy Ageing is an integral part of the Innovation Union, one of the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, which aims to create smart, sustainable and inclusive growth by the end of this decade. The overarching target of this pilot partnership will be to increase the average healthy lifespan by two years by 2020.

A workshop was organised on behalf of the League of European Research Universities (LERU) by University College London and Imperial College London in 2012. The workshop contributed to the development of the EIP by formulating a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) across the disciplines which sought to respond creatively to the Strategic Implementation Plan on Active and Healthy Ageing which had been adopted by the EIP's Steering Group in November 2011. The workshop created an important forum for academic researchers to identify the most important issues for active and healthy ageing research in the next 100 years, such as the innovations in research methods and technology in relation to the three priority themes - prevention, screening and early diagnosis, care and cure and active ageing and independent living, which had been identified by the EIP Strategic Implementation Plan.

¹ Active & Healthy Ageing, A European Innovation Partnership <http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/active-healthy-ageing/leaflet.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none>

The workshop concluded that

- I. Ageing research – in the full breadth of how people are able to engage in society throughout their life course – is a crucial requirement for the Europe of the future and has profound impacts on economic and regional development, education and innovation.
- II. A transdisciplinary approach to ageing research, incorporating not only the biological and clinical sciences, but also engineering, architecture, planning, social sciences and humanities research, is required in order to embrace the complexity of the ageing issue over time.
- III. The leading universities of Europe, who are able to cross the disciplinary boundaries, are well placed to provide the Member State representatives on the Joint Programming Initiative Governing and Executive Boards as well as the Steering Group for the European Implementation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing with input to develop a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) in this field.

The workshop formulated a Strategic Research Agenda as a modification to the Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP), please refer to page 7 of the [Plan](#).

Horizontal issues and framework conditions

- i. The Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) should be defined so that participatory approaches, which allow the voices of older people to be heard, are placed at their centre; research processes need to be not only about older people but be conducted with people of all ages.
- ii. The SIP needs to advocate appropriate research into smart assistive and inclusive technology that addresses user's needs and aspirations rather than meets a goal specified by technologists.
- iii. The SIP needs to ensure that ageing research incorporates integrated socio-economic, engineering and health research so that societally-feasible outcomes can be achieved
- iv. The SIP must include researcher mobility as a core component of its activities so that researchers are able to understand ageing issues across the EU.

Pillar 1: Prevention, Screening and early diagnosis

The SIP should promote the changing of health systems so that 'hard to reach' groups, such as the socially excluded (e.g. the homeless), recent migrants with little knowledge of their host country's language, and isolated rural communities, can be included in research.

Pillar 2: Care and Cure

The SIP should also consider the other factors which may contribute to disadvantage in older age in addition to socio-economic position such as disability or belonging to an ethnic, religious or sexual minority.

Pillar 3: Active Ageing and Independent Living

- i. The SIP needs to advocate appropriate research into smart assistive technology that addresses users' needs and aspirations rather than meets a goal specified by technologists.
- ii. The SIP should scrutinise ideas such as 'independent living' in different social and cultural contexts within Europe. The idea of older people living alone is not seen as being socially acceptable in all European countries.

Vision/Foundation

- i. The SIP should coordinate research priorities and activities across the Member States with the explicit aim of leading to evidence- and meaning-based policy, improved regulation and the inclusion of consideration for all age groups in EU Directives and Framework Programmes.
- ii. The SIP should define the excellence of research as embracing both fundamental and applied research, including innovation.
- iii. The SIP should continue to explore the relationship between socio-economic position and ageing as well as the complexities in this relationship – not all poor people die young.

London, 7 March 2013