



The Potential and Challenges of Demographic Change

Joint Call 2015 – Project THRIVE

Tackling health inequalities and extending working lives

SUMMARY AND OVERALL AIM

In Europe and Canada, policymakers are facing particular challenges related to rising life expectancy, a shift in the age profile of the population and the consequent increase in the prevalence of chronic illness and disability. But these increases in life expectancy are not experienced equally – there are inequalities that are frequently overlooked in policy-making. Less skilled workers, for example, have a shorter life expectancy, earlier onset of chronic illness and disability, are more likely to suffer from multiple health conditions as they get older.

Policymakers in Europe and Canada urgently need to develop strategies that fairly extend working life taking these health inequalities into account. Our aim is therefore to conduct international research that advances our understanding of the differential impacts of health inequalities on the opportunity to work later in life and of strategies and policies for extending working life that take these health inequalities into consideration.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

We expect our research to provide insights into the specific health conditions and combinations of health conditions that are likely to particularly limit the employment of more disadvantaged groups of older people and their carers in the future and the policy approaches that are most likely to prevent this. Our work plan engages policy-makers in appraising the evidence for different policy options to develop recommendations that can readily inform policy decisions. Our engagement with policy makers, employers and services, will enable adjustments in policy and practice in response to our findings to be integrated across multiple levels – including regulations, welfare systems, employment and health services.

PROJECT DURATION AND BUDGET

Project duration: 01/2016 – 12/2018 (36 months)
Project costs/requested funding: 1.162.499 €

CONSORTIUM

The consortium consists of 6 partners from 3 EU countries + Canada:

1. University of Liverpool, United Kingdom: Margaret Whitehead (coordinator of project)
2. Institute of Employment Studies, United Kingdom: Annette Cox
3. Karolinska Institute, Sweden: Bo Burström
4. Institute of Work and Health, Canada: Cameron Mustard
5. Statistics Canada, Canada: Wen-Hao Chen, Edward Ng, Sharanjit Uppal
6. University of Copenhagen, Denmark: Finn Diderichsen

WHAT WE WILL DO

We will analyse population datasets in each country to determine how patterns of morbidity with different physical and mental health conditions and caring responsibilities vary over working life by socioeconomic status and gender in different countries and how this is changing over time. We will estimate how the employment consequences of different longstanding illnesses at older ages vary between countries, the reasons for this and the implications for policies that extend working lives. By comparing and analysing policies in the study countries we will elucidate the different policy approaches taken and identify effective strategies. A series of systematic reviews of the quantitative and qualitative evidence will identify which policy approaches are likely to be most effective for extending the working lives of people with longstanding illness, particularly those from more disadvantaged groups. Synthesis of evidence from the reviews and analysis of national datasets will indicate how health inequalities are having an impact on the opportunity to work later in life in each country, how this is likely to develop in the future, and the strategies and policies that are most likely to extend healthy working lives fairly.

FIRST JPI MYBL CALL FOR PROPOSALS

THRIVE is one of the projects that is funded in the first JPI MYBL call for proposals of 2015, entitled 'Extended Working Life and its Interaction with Health, Wellbeing and beyond'. A total of five projects received funding.

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