



## More Years Better Lives thanks to elderly-friendly technologies. European researchers are planning new projects to study ageing populations and their use of technologies

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Elderly-friendly technologies help older people to live autonomously longer. European researchers are planning new projects to study ageing populations and their use of technologies.

The call for new research project was announced during the recent meeting held in Rome (December, 1st-2nd) by the Joint Programming Initiative More Years Better Lives (MYBL) at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - Policlinico Universitario Agostino Gemelli. Next meeting of the JPI will be in Canada to launch a new call concerning elderly-friendly technologies.

Humans live longer and technologies might be of great help in order to increase the length of full autonomy. In order to reach this goal, elderly-friendly technologies are urgently needed. This significant message arose from the 2016 conference held by the Joint Programming Initiative "More Years better Lives" (JPI MYBL <http://www.jp-demographic.eu/>) at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - Policlinico A. Gemelli di Roma. This meeting has been organized by the Italian JPI MYBL delegation that is in charge of communication and dissemination activities on behalf of the Ministries of Health and University-Education & Research, in collaboration with the JPI MYBL secretariat (ZonMw, The Netherlands) and with the JPI General Assembly.

"The focus of the next call will be on elderly-friendly technologies with a particular interest on third/fourth ages 'digitalization' and 'domotic' - Prof. Paolo Maria Rossini, director of the Neurology Institute of the Catholic University and Italian delegate at JPI MYBL explains -.

European elderly people are dramatically increasing and technologies to support and maintain full autonomy in daily living activities (including feeding, hygiene, housekeeping, dressing, in and out house mobility etc.) are urgently needed, Prof. Rossini says. Moreover, ICT will contribute to improve family, interpersonal and social relations and this will counteract the impact of chronic diseases (e.g. dementia).

This Call 2017, entitled "Ageing and place in a digitising world", is concerned with the ways in which the health and wellbeing of older people, at all stages of later life, is supported and promoted through the design of the social and physical environment, access to opportunities to learn, and the use of technologies of all kinds. The objective is seeking for innovative, transnational and interdisciplinary collaborative projects that investigate the potential of technology, place and learning in relation with the older.

The interaction between technology, place and learning is important to the health of older people, and research which explores them may produce important new findings to inform policy.

In particular scientists will be called to investigate how existing and emerging technologies can improve the quality of life, contribution and social engagement of older people; how individuals experience the places where they live, work and engage with others, and how learning and technology enhance or diminish their quality of life; how opportunities for learning can best be made available, by public, private and third sector means for the older.

The conference in Rome

"With MYBL we began a complex comparative work with a rigorous and scientifically analysis of the different welfare, health and organizational models in European countries related to the ageing populations and migration, in order to identify the winning models and the best of each local experience and aggregate it in a common model", prof. Rossini explain.

"The main target of our research activities (those funded by JPIP MYBL) - Edvard Beem, coordinator of the Netherlands Organisation of Health Research and Development (ZonMw) and chairman of MYBL since February 2016 says - is to maintain the elderly population as active and healthy as possible. For us the term 'health' means not only absence of diseases, but also the possibility of maintaining a full autonomy with a high life quality". Within this frame of research approach, not only medical doctors, but also social scientists and researchers from different scientific background (engineers, informatics, physicists, statisticians etc.) will collaborate to find out appropriate solutions to improve quality of life and increase the years of life spent autonomously of fragile elderly people. Needless to say, such results will be respectful of financial sustainability; for instance, ICT and other technologies will help to reduce the costs for medical and health assistance by transferring several hospital activities to the elderly house".

This meeting in Rome has also prompted the willingness of the Italian Government of facing the challenges represented by present and future migration flows. Italy would candidate as a chairing nation in Europe for research activities on this field. JPI has already started a 'fast track' analysis of the research projects on migration which - however - has involved only North European countries (Scandinavians, U.K., The Netherlands).

Concluding remarks of the meeting were given by Professor Walter Ricciardi, president of the Italian National Health Institute. The title of his lecture was "Can we avoid the perfect storm?". He has brilliantly illustrated the challenges that Europe and Italy will face in the immediate future due to financial resources scarcity combined to the progressive increase of the elderly population and the burden of chronic diseases and "frailty". That is the "perfect storm" where will resources be found to guarantee a solid welfare and health system for a progressively older population older and with lower and lower birth rates?

<http://www.jp-demographic.eu/calls/third-call/>

### Notes for editors:

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JPI "More Years Better Lives - The Potential and Challenges of Demographic Change" aims to better coordinate, harmonize and synchronize the research programs from the participating countries (15 from EU plus Israel and Canada) on the topic of demographic Change (DC).

DC is one of the most remarkable challenges for Europe. Birth/deaths ratio is progressively changing in a way that the shape of the demographic pyramid has been deeply changed in recent years to a rhomboid, with the ageing percentage of the population progressively impacting more and more. In the last century life expectancy has increased by 2 years every decade and in the next 50 years the over 60s u.o. proportion will change from 1 to 6 to 1 to 3. Such change will impact on health, social services, education, mobility, housing, labour & productivity organizations both in rural and urban societies. MYBL is therefore adopting a transnational and interdisciplinary approach to find out innovative solutions to make 'societal ageing' a resource and not a burden. For instance there are challenges like those linked to climate changes, energy consumption/production, food which require a common effort for an appropriate solutions. These are the typical topics for a JPI where several EU and non-EU Countries create a common frame of research also in order to optimize resources investments. At present EU has created 10 JPIs to which EU Countries adhere on voluntary basis, create a common Strategic Research Agenda and fund (with national resources) common calls. The European Commission is looking with interest to these experiences and is fully supporting their development. Within this scenario JPIs on neurodegenerative disease, on cultural heritage, on food, oceans and antimicrobial resistance have been created so far.