

the plain (in 1983). Therein, he found two masters, the old - past and the current heads, who fascinated him, and offered the opportunity of playing different roles within a multi-service skilled nursing home - including outpatients services, side by side with colleagues in a small but tight group. The involvement in gerontechnology began in 1992, serving as national delegate for the EU action 'COST A5' - Ageing and Technology, then continuing through the EU - Biomed II project 'TED' (Technology, Ethics and Dementia). He recently cooperated in a textbook about technical aids for domiciliary care of elderly patients (in Italian). At present, he is cooperating for a Health Ministry research on domestic accidents in elderly people. Therefore, time for listening music (from Gregorian choirs to Pink Floyd's "The dark side of the moon") or for reading good books is scanty. But he has a way out: his wonderful family, who pardon him for his late coming home, share with him the magic of everyday life, and are waiting for the next bike or mountain promenades, or for some picture of coloured fishes close to the rocks of west Liguria.
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Note: the patient on the photograph has given her consent to be included in the picture

World News

Finnish National Research Program on Ageing

The importance of ageing research and the need for multidisciplinary work in the field is today widely acknowledged. On the European level, European Forum on Population Ageing Research in 2002-2005, and the new ERA-AGE project, funded by the European Commission's 6th Framework Program, aim at promoting European co-operation in ageing research and research funding. This European-level activity both draws inspiration and encourages similar activities in individual

countries. Here my aim is to describe the measures taken by the Academy of Finland to support ageing research in Finland, particularly the Research Program on Ageing in 2000-2002.

Ageing research has long traditions in Finland, and the first scientific society on ageing, *Societas Gerontologica Fennica*, was founded as early as 1948. The Academy of Finland is the main governmental body for supporting and funding high-quality basic research in all fields of science. Besides its normal calls, open to all fields of research, the Academy has also taken special measures to promote basic and applied research on ageing, among them two multidisciplinary research programs and targeted funding for internationalization of ageing research. The second Research Program on Ageing in 2000-2002 had four general aims: (i) to help the society contain the challenges presented by the ageing of the population, (ii) to activate innovative basic and applied research, (iii) to promote cooperation and dialogue between different disciplines, and (iv) to strengthen the involvement of the academic community in the public debate on ageing. In the Program memorandum, both the ageing process itself (social, cultural, biological, and functional dimensions), and the challenges presented by population ageing (themes such as working life, life-long learning, living environment, technology, policy and services, and market) were mentioned as relevant topics of research.

Organization and funding. The program was launched jointly by the Academy of Finland, three ministries, the Social Insurance Institution, the Finnish Work Environment Fund, and The Association of Finnish Local Authorities. There was a two-phase call for the proposals. At first phase, one hundred plans of intent were received. These were evaluated by the program Steering Group, and altogether 51

proposals went through to the second phase. An international panel consisting of nine well-known experts from different fields of ageing research met in Helsinki for three days and evaluated together all the applications. The main criteria were scientific quality, relevance and organization of the project, and the competence of the applicant. Closely following the ratings of the expert panel, the subcommittee of the Academy together with other funding agencies finally decided to fund 21 projects. Altogether 12 universities and research institutes, and more than 100

researchers were involved. The total funding for the Program was 3.2 million euros. The themes of the projects ranged from neuroscience to design and architecture, and from labour market to social constructions of old age (Table 1). An important aim in the program was to create contacts between the individual projects and encourage multidisciplinary activities. To organize this, the program a Program Director (Marja Jylhä, in addition to her regular duties), and an Executive Coordinator (Marja Saarenheimo, 60% of her working time) were nominated.

Table 1. Sub-programs and their constituting projects as funded by the Research Program on Ageing and their project leaders

Sub-program / Project	Project leader with affiliation
Sub-program: Biological ageing and neuroscience	
Normal and pathological ageing of the brain	M. Haltia, University of Helsinki
Advantages and disadvantages of postmenopausal hormone therapy: A preventive trial	E. Hemminki, National Institute of Public Health
Andropause: The age-related decline of testicular function	I. Huhtaniemi, University of Turku
Mild cognitive impairment as a predictor of Alzheimer disease	H. Soininen, University of Kuopio
Sub-program: Functional capacity and well-being	
The process of frailty and disability in older women	T. Rantanen, University of Jyväskylä
Lifestyle and functional capacity of elderly Finns	A. Reunanen, National Institute of Public Health
Patina of Time 1973-2000: On well-being and longevity in an ageing cohort	P. Leino-Arjas, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Health, functioning and well-being among ageing employees - The Helsinki health study	E. Lahelma, University of Helsinki
Sub-program: Ageing, work and economy	
The labour market challenge of workforce ageing	R. Asplund, The Research Institute of the Finnish
Economy	
Age, work and gender: Management of ageing in the later working life	R. Julkunen, University of Jyväskylä
Life strategies of ageing women: Subsistence alternatives of women past forty, ca 1800-2000	M. Rahikainen, University of Helsinki
Towards a successful old age: From a full working career to an active retirement	R. Rinne, University of Turku
Economic effects of ageing in Finland	J. Lassila, The Research Institute of the Finnish Economy
Sub-program: Everyday life and environment	
Older women - Invisible road users	L. Hakamies-Blomqvist, University of Helsinki
The village community as a resource for the aged in the sparsely populated areas of Lapland	S. Koskinen, University of Lapland
Ageing and independent living - Smart medicines for the physical environment	T. Siitonen, Helsinki University of Technology
Ageing and independent living - Future home of elderly people	A-M Ylimaula, University of Art and Design Helsinki
Sub-program: Elderly care and services	
Encounters in the local welfare-mix for the older people	J. Lehto, University of Tampere
Towards an integrated evaluation system for the long-term care of the elderly	U. Häkkinen, M. Vaarama, National Institute of Public Health
Assessment of ethical guidelines for enabling technologies in old age	P. Topo, National Institute of Public Health
Constructing age, health and competence: Argumentation and rhetoric in institutional and personal discourse	A. Peräkylä, University of Tampere

Every year one or two seminars were organized where all the projects participated, discussing themes such as ethical questions in ageing research, or the implementation of results. A web site also helped interaction. Projects that were thematically close organized together research training seminars and workshops, where basic concepts such as independent living, autonomy, and quality of life were discussed from the perspectives of different disciplines. These activities demonstrated clearly the importance and fruitfulness of multidisciplinary, but we also learned that the difficulties in genuine encounters across disciplines are great, particularly between the different scientific 'cultures', natural science on one hand, and social and humanistic science on the other.

Examples of the projects. Several of the 21 projects (Table 1) were either directly or implicitly related to gerontechnological themes. Here are three examples:

- (i) In the project "Assessment of ethical guidelines for enabling technologies", Päivi Topo and colleagues assessed ethical and social dimensions of technology directed to older users. Internet-based shopping services and multimedia programs for stimulation and relaxation of people with dementia were analyzed, using interviews with and participatory observations. Also conceptual and methodological issues in studying the role and ethics of technology were addressed. The researchers emphasized the importance of involving the users, both old people themselves and, for instance, the service providers, in the process of technology implementation from the very beginning. Multimedia can be successfully used in dementia care if expert knowledge of the disease and its symptoms are taken into account.
- (ii) The project "Future home of the elderly", lead by Anna-Maija Ylimaula,

focused on three topics, information technology, fashion design, and tableware design. The group analyzed the meanings related to the usability that emerge in the interaction between the users and the product. The meanings attached to (a) fashion design and (b) tableware to older people, and the concepts of ageing reflected in these products were examined by using interviews and ethnography, and finally prototype products were produced.

- (iii) In the project "The village community as a resource for the aged in the sparsely populated areas of Lapland", Simo Koskinen and his group examined the everyday life of the ageing villagers in remote rural parts of Lapland. Their aim was to support the ageing people by creating arenas for their activity, encourage interaction between generations, and take technology and products into use to support independent living. Different strategies to support living at home and in the village were built. Products such as stable boat, snow pusher, easily put-on blanket cover, and lamb-wool product were designed and produced. In this study social, cultural and anthropological research were combined with studies on functional capacity and design.

Supporting ageing research in the future.

The program came to an end by the end of 2002, and it was evaluated by two panels. The scientific panel consisted of four international experts. The panel of relevance consisted of two persons involved in ageing policy, services, and old people's own organizations. According to the panels, the general aims of the program were fulfilled. The main problems seen by the panels were the short period of only three years, and the scarce resources for the Coordinators to publish a common final report, and make the results better

known also to policymakers. The researchers who participated in the projects found the multidisciplinary nature of the program important and fruitful, but they also criticized the short funding period.

At present, the Academy of Finland is promoting research on ageing through national and international collaboration. Targeted funding for internationalization of ageing research, particularly for collaboration with British research projects, were granted to five projects. The Academy is an active partner in the ERA-AGE project. In Finland, a National Forum on Ageing Research brings together researchers and research funders to plan future priorities and strategies for funding and implementation of ageing research.

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Calendar of Events

April 5, 2005

Disability Research Institute Annual Symposium
National Press Club, Washington DC, USA
(Internet event)
Organizer: Disability Research Institute
Info: www.dri.uiuc.edu/symposium2005.asp

April 14-15 2005

AT the Edge 2005
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Organizer: Alberta Consortium for Rehabilitative and Assistive Technology
Info: www.acrat.ca

April 21-23, 2005

Barrier Free 2005
Osaka, Japan
Organizer: Osaka Prefecture Council on Social Welfare
Info: www.itp.gr.jp/bf/

April 28-30, 2005

National Safety Symposium: Crime Prevention and Independent Living
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Organizer: The Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres
Info: www.cailc.ca

May 6-8, 2005

3rd Annual Congress of the International Academy on Nutrition and Ageing
Saint Louis, Missouri, USA
Organizer: Boomer Educational Consultants, Saint Louis, USA
Info: www.boomeredu.com/ianaconference.htm

May 24-27, 2005

5th International Conference on Gerontechnology
Nagoya Congress Center, Nagoya, Japan