Demographic change in the EU, the oldest-old and the need for innovative models of more efficient elderly care

Demographic change will be a key challenge in the EU in the next few decades. In some European countries the rapidly increasing old-age dependency ratio will result in only two people working for every pensioner by 2050. Moreover, the cohort of the oldest-old (above 80 years of age) will grow disproportionately. A large part of this increase is projected to materialise up to 2030, when the fastest population ageing process is expected to occur.

The economic burden of an ageing population to society is twofold: strained pension systems and increasing health care costs. Analysis shows demographic developments are expected to push up public spending on health care by almost 2% of GDP on average in most EU Member States between 2007 and 2060.

Consequently, long-term care for older people that is both more efficient and more cost effective has become a key issue in the EU and elsewhere. The university research centre receiving support under EIBURS is expected to set up a research programme focused on reviewing traditional and innovative approaches to addressing the issue. More in-depth research should pursue the following questions of interest to an ageing population:

- Budget requirements for health care in different EU countries in the next two decades to address the needs of an ageing population, and the oldest-old age cohort in particular
- Strategic approach and preparedness of EU countries for addressing the infrastructure and human resources needs
- Organisational models (including private sector participation) and technologies to provide services that will become important
- Cost implications and financial instruments to establish/sustain care infrastructure
- Strategies for the implementation and scaling-up of successful care models in the future

Expected activities and outputs comprise:

- Qualitative and quantitative research (including surveys, interviews, literature review, etc.)
- Reports, in-depth policy studies and models to forecast financing needs
- Organisation of seminars, dissemination events
- Creation of databases