

# International migration in Europe: welfare policy and practice for older people (PPIOP)

an ESF Scientific Network

Elderly people constitute a growing proportion of the European population, and are increasingly mobile. As a result the number of elderly people migrating between European countries is increasing. There is a growing need to focus specifically on the needs of such people and their socio-economic impact on the communities they move into.

This Network has been established with the objectives of coordinating the necessary research on elderly migration, and also of spreading awareness of the issues among relevant policy makers and welfare organisations. Much of the basic research is already being conducted within national programmes, and the ESF is playing its usual role of unifying some of the individual projects into a coherent European-wide programme. The Network will add value to the participants' research and recommendations by exposing them to the independent scrutiny of experts from other academic disciplines as well as policy makers and welfare practitioners.

This Network will draw together understanding from three primary research fields to develop a deeper understanding of the social and economic issues created by the migration of elderly people within and into Europe. These are international migration, the socio-demographics of population ageing, and the question of how well social provisions such as housing, home help and health services meet the real needs of the people concerned. Further progress is needed both within these fields and in coordinating the results in order to meet the Networks' four specific objectives, which are:

- To maximise the standardisation and comparability of the multidisciplinary research already taking place.
- To deepen and extend the subject coverage.
- To make the research as relevant as possible for the task of policy formulation.
- To raise the quality and impact of research findings within relevant programmes.

The Network is a continuation and expansion of an Exploratory Workgroup involving three workshops during 1999 with the title, "European Dimensions of Changing Retirement". The participants of this workgroup agreed to found this Network, which is running from 2001 to 2003, to conduct research into the processes underlying the growth of expatriate populations in Europe, identify more accurately the degree of social inclusion these people have achieved, and also ascertain the requirements they have.

The Network is closely associated with the OPAIR (Older People Abroad in Europe) group. Members of OPAIR are pursuing similar research goals but as the projects are nationally funded they tend to focus on migration in and out of specific countries. The ESF Network is complementing this work by compiling the results into comparative studies, focusing more on contacts with policy makers, and disseminating research findings. The ESF Network will also create a common framework of concepts, definitions, research hypotheses and analysis plans, which will help combine the individual research outputs into generic findings that will be of use to all countries, including those that lack programmes of their own.

It is important to recognise the significant differences among various expatriate elderly people in Europe. For example, the majority of expatriate nationals of northern Europe living in southern countries, particularly Spain, only emigrated after they retired. By contrast many emigrants from southern European countries such as Italy and Greece to the north were economic migrants moving in search of work when they were relatively young. They then "aged *in situ*." The socio-economic characteristics of the populations are very different, as are the requirements of the older people concerned, their integration into local communities, and their entitlement to various health and welfare services.

The Network is focusing equally on all elderly migrants irrespective of their origin, not just those who have moved within Europe. The ethnic minorities who may have originated outside Europe raise different issues again, for example the coexistence of parallel communities within a single city or small geographic region.

The Network is holding two meetings a year for each of its three years. Small numbers of academic or policy experts are attending these meetings to help evaluate research results or methods, and most importantly assist in framing proposals for further research. The final meeting in 2002 will also focus on producing a summary of the output of the various programmes, drawing conclusions from them, and disseminating the results within a common European context and format. These results and conclusions will then be communicated to policy makers. The final goal then is to present some concrete practical proposals that will help address the issues raised by the migration of elderly people.

This Network was approved by the ESF Network Group in November 2000 for a three-year period



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The ESF Network scheme is coordinated from the Foundation's Strasbourg headquarters. For further information and application procedures contact:  
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