European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing: The Case of the Greek EIP on AHA Network

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ABSTRACT

Demographic ageing societies require a timely and well-planned response containing its negative social and economic effects. The European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA) is a major European Commission led policy initiative to address the challenges of demographic change in Europe and turn it into an economic opportunity, capable of offering better prospects for the ageing population in terms of quality of life and overall health and well-being. The Greek EIP on AHA Network has been developed as a interdisciplinary scientific society, aiming at coordinating multiple remarkable but fragmented trials and group of people in Greece and aligning them with the activities of EIP on AHA.

KEYWORDS
Active and Healthy Ageing, Greece, Integrated Health, Reference Sites, Scaling Up

INTRODUCTION

The broad concept of active and healthy ageing was proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the process of optimizing opportunities for health to enhance the quality of life as people age and it applies to both individuals and population groups (Bousquet et al., 2015). “Healthy” refers to physical, mental and social well-being. “Active” refers to continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the simple ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force. Therefore, active ageing also links to maintaining autonomy and independence for the older people.

The demographic change and aging is a common challenge in Europe. The rising number of elderly people with multiple comorbidities will need advanced and sophisticated support on an outpatient basis with innovative approaches, enabling them to live longer with a better quality of life.
and decreased functional decline. Cumulative evidence has shown that collaborative, integrated and person-centered care provision is the effective reply and the way forward to sustainable and efficient care systems.

To fully unleash the potential of aging in the European Union, the European Commission, within its Innovation Union policy, launched the first European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (García, 2013). The challenge of aging, common to all European countries, presents a considerable potential for Europe to show its comparative advantages and lead the world in providing innovative responses.

EIP ON AHA

The EIP pilot on Active & Healthy Ageing (AHA), launched in May 2011, was the first case that a wide group of stakeholders came together to develop such a Partnership. The European Commission, acting as a facilitator and coordinator, provided organizational and operational support as well as chaired the Steering Group through two Commissioners; for Health and Consumers and Digital Agenda (EIP on AHA, 2011).

The overarching target of EIP on AHA is to increase the average healthy lifespan by two years by 2020 and pursue a triple in for Europe:

- Improving the health status and quality of life of European citizens, with a particular focus on older people;
- Supporting the long-term sustainability and efficiency of health and social care systems;
- Enhancing the competitiveness of the markets for innovative products and services, responding to the ageing challenge at both EU and global level, thus creating new opportunities for businesses (EIP on AHA, 2011).

The strategy of the EIP on AHA initiative was based on a positive vision on ageing around three core areas: prevention & early diagnosis, care and cure, ageing and independent living, and a focus on six concrete actions groups. Moreover, horizontal actions have been identified that address framework conditions and promote connections between the different priority areas of work.

In February 2012, the Commission launched the first call for the involvement of stakeholders beyond those that participated in the Steering Group to implement together the priorities and actions identified in the SIP. The second Invitation for Commitment to contribute to the Action Plans opened on 20 December 2012 and closed on 15 February 2013.

The six Action Groups that were formed developed their Action Plans, which were presented at the Conference of Partners of 6th November 2012. Since spring 2012 almost 600 commitments have been submitted by groups of stakeholders bringing together public authorities, technology companies, health providers, industry, and non–governmental organizations. The EIP on AHA is now in its implementation stage with more than 3,000 partners involved (300 leading organizations are actively forming coalitions and consortia, covering stakeholders from 11 EU Member States, representing approximately 1,000 regions and municipalities (EIP on AHA, 2015a).

The Partnership aims to achieve its goals by bringing together key stakeholders (end users, public authorities, industry), all actors in the innovation cycle, from research to adoption, along with those engaged in standardization and regulation. The Partnership- united around a shared vision that values older people and their contribution to society-provides these actors with a forum in which they can cooperate, identify, and overcome potential innovations barriers and mobilize instruments. The Partnership aims at improving the framework conditions for uptake of innovation, leveraging financing and investments in innovation and improve coordination and coherence between funding for research and innovation at European, national and regional level in Europe. By this way, it will
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