

## Mutual Learning: Joint pan-European research improves the understanding of ageing societies

Extension of SHARE study allows for EU-wide country-comparisons

Munich, July 2016. Tackling the common challenges of ageing societies will be substantially improved by extending the coverage of the SHARE survey to all EU member states. The fact that European societies are continuously ageing, leads to a situation that has never existed before. In order to cope with these unprecedented circumstances, EU wide collaboration is essential. SHARE, the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe is the largest pan-European social science panel study and able to advance this joint process: "We succeeded in integrating the last remaining uncovered EU countries in the survey. This is a great novelty that allows us to investigate ageing societies in all of the European Union", Axel Börsch-Supan, Scientific Coordinator of the survey said.

The European Commission paved the way to include eight new countries in the survey, because SHARE is an important source of evidence which helps to better cope with challenges in the health, employment and social sector. Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health & Food Safety emphasizes: "Europe is turning increasingly silver and it looks like this trend will continue in the decades to come. In order to tackle the challenges of ageing societies, it is important to learn from each other. Our aim is to strengthen country-specific and cross-country evidence to facilitate dialogue and policy action. The SHARE study makes an important contribution to this purpose." Ruth Paserman, Deputy Head of the Cabinet of Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility also explains the benefits of the extension: "It is a great success that many more countries now participate in SHARE. Researching the ageing societies in all EU member states is absolutely necessary for mutual learning. SHARE will help us deliver reforms aimed at extending working lives and making social protection systems sustainable in our ageing societies."

Ageing is one of the major challenges of the 21st century. Many of the current pension systems in European countries are unsustainable. The costs of health care are steadily rising and intergenerational cohesion seems to be threatened. "Awareness of the fast ageing processes which European societies are going through is causing emotional debates. It is of crucial importance to base these debates and political decisions on facts rather than feelings", Axel Börsch-Supan summarizes. Through its unique concept, data to generate such facts is exactly what SHARE provides.

SHARE now covers 26 countries of the European Union as well as Switzerland and Israel. Data from England and Ireland are collected in the harmonised studies English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) and the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA). Thus, pan-European research on effects of our ageing societies and their implications can be extended to all EU countries. Thanks to the efforts of the European Commission, SHARE is able to implement a sample size which allows country comparisons for researchers and policy analysts. Even better, many countries enlarge this sample in order to give researchers better possibilities to investigate country specific subjects and to learn more about national challenges of ageing.

SHARE data are available for researchers free of charge and are very well used: about two publications based on SHARE data are published every week. They cover economic, health and social science topics from retirement saving to active ageing and care at the end of life. The first wave of data collection with all new members will start in 2017.

**About SHARE:**

SHARE, the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) is a multidisciplinary and cross-national panel database of micro data on health, socio-economic status and social and family networks of more than 123,000 individuals (approximately 293,000 interviews) from 20 European countries and Israel (Wave 1 to 6) aged 50 or older. The data are available to the entire research community free of charge. SHARE responds to a Communication by the European Commission calling to "examine the possibility of establishing, in co-operation with Member States, a European Longitudinal Ageing Survey". SHARE has become a major pillar of the European Research Area, selected as one of the projects to be implemented in the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) in 2006 and given a new legal status as the first ever European Research Infrastructure Consortium (SHARE-ERIC) in March 2011. SHARE is centrally coordinated by Prof. Axel Börsch-Supan, Ph.D. at the Munich Center for the Economics of Aging (MEA), Max Planck Institute for Social Law and Social Policy.

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