Occupational Therapy for the Ageing European Population – Are We Ready to Meet the Challenges?

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THE LUND DECLARATION

EUROPE MUST FOCUS ON THE GRAND CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME
How Could Occupational Therapy Make Stronger Contributions?
Promoting independent living

Our health declines as we grow old. But there is much that can be done to slow down this decline, and environments can be made much friendlier towards people suffering from various health impairments and disabilities. Active ageing also means empowering us as we age so that we can remain in charge of our own lives for as long as possible.

- Health promotion and preventive health care
- Accessible and affordable transport
- Age-friendly environments, goods and services
- Maximising autonomy in long term care
- Tailoring technology to boost / encourage independent living
- Adapted housing
HEALTHY AGEING

• Three mutually exclusive levels of healthy ageing (excellent/very good/good) can be defined, based on measures of global cognitive function, short-term memory, activities of daily living, and self-rated function

• The biological validity of the concept is supported by strong associations with mortality and longevity
The most common perceptions of healthy ageing are having/maintaining physical health and functioning, leisure and social activities, mental functioning and activity, and social relationships and contacts.

Health is embedded in the everyday experience - staying healthy is maintaining the ability to function in a community.
The ENABLE-AGE Project:

Enabling Autonomy, Participation, and Well-Being in Old Age:
The Home Environment as a Determinant for Healthy Ageing

The consortium:
- Latvia
- Sweden
- United Kingdom
- Germany
- Hungary
To examine, from a European perspective, the home environment as a determinant for "Healthy Ageing". Recommendations for evidence-based housing solutions across Europe.

- In very old age
- In private households
- Living alone
Experiences

Disciplinary boundaries
Linguistic barriers
Cultural differences
Societal differences
Methodological Issues

Definitions
Translation of instruments
Data treatment
Analysing qualitative data
Example: Definitions

Old and very old age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (at T1)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Latvia</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75-79 years old</td>
<td>Women</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>378</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Men</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>80-84 years old</td>
<td>Women</td>
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<td>165</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>171</td>
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<td>Men</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>85-89 years old</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>188</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>566</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total N (T1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>397</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>1918</td>
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<td>Total N (T2)</td>
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<td>322</td>
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<td>179</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>1356</td>
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</table>

Housing types

Sheltered housing/assisted living
Example: Translation of instruments

The EU consists of 27 member states
Many different languages
Ecological validity
Resources versus methodological quality
Snapshots from European Studies on Ageing - With Input from Occupational Therapy
Home Modification Frequencies – Germany & Sweden

(Oswald, unpublished material)

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Use of/Need for Assistive Devices

Figure I. Number of used and needed AD (%)

a The participants in the German sample had highly significantly less AD than the Swedish, p<0.0001.

b The participants in the UK sample had highly significantly less AD than the Swedish, p=0.001. They expressed significantly higher need for AD than the Swedish (p<0.0001) and the German (p=0.003).

c The participants in the Hungarian sample had highly significantly less AD than the Swedish, the German and the UK (p<0.0001). They expressed significantly higher need for AD than the Swedish (p=0.001).

d The participants in the Latvian sample had highly significantly less AD in use than in the Swedish (p<0.0001), the German (p<0.0001) and the UK (p<0.0001). They expressed significantly higher need for AD than the Swedish (p<0.0001) and the German (p=0.006).

Löfqvist et al., 2008
Complexity
Impact on activity & participation
Changes over time
Combinations of devices
Adaptation of physical environment
Adaptation of task performance

(Löfqvist et al., 2009)
Restrictions to Do More Activities Outdoors – Results from Latvia

(Tomsone et al., unpublished material)
Over time, very old people manage increased frailty by means of three, intertwined processes concerning changes in everyday life:

- **The turning-points**
- **The struggle**
- **The negotiations**

These processes

- take place through the context of “the homelike functional home”
- a state of mind labeled “the awareness of frailty”

(Haak et al, 2012)
Overall Conclusions

The functional and meaningful home is important for participation, autonomy and independence in very old age, but people negotiate, struggle and experience turning-points, as frailty takes its toll.

There are differences in societal support systems, but their impact on health along the process of ageing remain to be investigated.
Overall Conclusions

Studying home & health among very old people requires attention to objective as well as perceived aspects of housing, in a differentiated manner.

Consistently across our studies, accessibility (defined as an aspect of person-environment fit) is related to aspects of health, while environmental barriers are not.
Implications for Societal Planning

A better understanding of older European’s housing situation

Evidence-based results relevant to older people, non-governmental organisations, estate owners, building constructors, and municipalities

Evidence-based instruments have been developed and tested in large scale – with innovation potential

Contribution to a more fine-tuned debate on housing in old age – influence on policy and legislation
Co-ordinator: Alan Walker, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

Swedish Partners:
Centre for Ageing and Supportive Environments
Lund University

Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research
The Innovation Union Flagship Initiative “Active & Healthy Ageing”

• Promote and enable EU citizens to lead healthy, active and independent lives until old age

• Ensure the sustainability of social and health care systems

• Create a European and global market for innovative products and services related to active and healthy ageing

• Involvement of patients/advocacy groups in the research process
The Occupational Therapy Perspective is Strong & Future-oriented, with Great Potential to Support Active & Healthy Ageing
How Should this Message be Packaged & Delivered?
• Follow, engage in, and utilise the public debate
• Focus on the problem and how to contribute to the solution
• Generalise knowledge from the individual level to the societal level
• Be open to a more generic terminology – avoid the intra-disciplinary language
• Publish and present outside occupational therapy
Why Engage in European Projects?

Contribute to problem solutions at different levels
Contribute to European development - influence European policies
Expand your views on research
Develop your network – make new friends
Increase your research funding
Learn about European developments & research politics
Recruit new students & staff
European Year for **Active Ageing** and **Solidarity between Generations** 2012
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