

Due to the progressive ageing of the population and consequent need for more care provision, long-term care (LTC) for frail elder people has been presented as a great challenge for the welfare state in most European countries and on a European Union-wide scale. One of the most typical responses to growing LTC needs in many European countries has been the development of ageing in place strategies. Such strategies encourage care at home and in the neighbourhood.

However, LTC policy reforms in Europe have been based on the implicit assumption that elderly people live in housing conditions that are adequate to their needs. This assumption is however contradicted by a number of situations in which frail older people live in very poor housing conditions due to low income, presence of physical or social barriers, or lack of public services in the neighbourhood.

This project is intended to challenge the assumption of adequate housing conditions of frail elderly by incorporating housing dimension into the comparative social policy research on LTC. The research framework is based on comparisons within two pairs of following countries:

- 1) the Netherlands and Italy: countries that have different LTC schemes and different housing systems;
- 2) Austria and Czech Republic: countries that have similar LTC, but different housing systems.

The selection of the first pair of countries (NL and IT) will allow to understand if aging in place policies have different effects due to different housing conditions of the elderly, while the selection of the second pair of countries (AT and CZR) will allow to understand the impact of housing conditions on implementation of a similar ageing in place strategy.

The aspects of the housing which need to fit the care needs of frail elderly people will be derived from disciplines in which the issue of housing as a crucial dimension of the quality of life of elder people has been extensively studied, i.e. housing studies, urban studies and gerontology. The applicant will identify housing dimensions that are important for LTC policy and for care arrangements. For each dimension the applicant will deliver its theoretical elaboration and measurement and he will examine its policy implications. Apart from using already available comparable sources, the applicant will invest time to collect and standardise national data in order to obtain refined indicators (or completely new measures) that take into account the situation of the elderly people in a given country. Finally, the quantitative analysis will be conducted. In order to enrich the empirical analysis and to present a comprehensive overview of the existing possibilities related to new conceptualisations and new operationalisation, the applicant will conduct statistical analyses on different datasets that are most suitable for answering the research questions.

The topic of housing conditions has been largely overlooked in the comparative social policy research on LTC. However, there is an urgent need for the new approach in LTC care regimes literature that takes into account housing dimensions. In the next years the group of elderly homeowners in Europe will become much more diverse. As many of them will have a low income; social policies will also need to face the pressing problem of 'dual ageing' of the homeowner population, that is, the homeowners themselves and the property they occupy. Moreover, the result of the project will be important for policy learning between countries: as there are some European countries in which policy-makers are considering implementation of Cash for care programs supporting aging in place as a major change in LTC policy (i.e. Poland), the need for more detailed knowledge about determinants of effectiveness of these programmes is growing.