

## **The role of institutions for health, attitudes and behaviours in later life**

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Political regimes have enormous impact on formal and informal institutions, that in turn affect individual tastes and identities. It might seem that the influence of socialism and communism in the countries belonging to or dependent of the Soviet Union ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Although the transformation to capitalism was completed successfully in the majority of post-communist countries, international statistics still reveal significant differences between them and other European countries. The proposed study focuses on the two following outcomes relevant for demographically ageing Europe: later-life health and caregiving behaviours. These two outcomes are important determinants of demand for and supply of long-term care, respectively. We examine the research problem using panel data from GGS (Generations and Gender Survey), SHARE (Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe), including retrospective biographical interviews SHARELIFE, WVS (World Values Survey) and ESS (European Social Survey).

The proposed research aims to investigate the determinants of the current health status as well as caregiving attitudes and behaviour of people who experienced life in socialist (or communist) regimes in comparison to people who do not have such experience, because of their place or time of birth. The analysis will therefore include adults in all ages living in post-communist and other European countries. The reasons for the diversity in attitudes, behaviours and health will be sought in the contact with socialist institutions in the teenage years characterized by special vulnerability to external influences (i.e. impressionable years). We will examine the importance of education, in particular compulsory schooling, in shaping life-long preferences and attitudes, concerning firstly family roles and obligations in providing care and financial support to family members in such a need, and secondly behavioural risks such as physical inactivity, unbalanced diet, or alcohol and nicotine consumption, which strongly affect health in later life.

A unique feature of the study lies in the use of the reforms to education systems implemented in European countries, including the post-Soviet bloc, in the past century, which enables the identification of the impact of education in the communist era as opposed to other important factors (including those occurring during the transformation). The entry age to and the number of years of compulsory schooling along with the information on physical education and family values in the curricula allows accurate comparison of the effects of communist education and of the education in capitalist systems. These results are significant, because little is known about the causes of strength of family values and poorness of health in post-communist countries compared to other European countries. In addition, the results will help to better understand the importance of education in shaping pro-health habits and health in later life, as well as the importance of experiences during impressionable years in shaping attitudes toward caregiving.

The results of the study will help to develop more efficient policies aimed at securing sufficient support of long-term care, which is one of the most urgent challenges faced by ageing Europe. They will also help to understand the long-term consequences of education, thanks to which more effective health prophylaxis will be possible. Last but not least, a relevant contribution of the study is a better understanding of the contemporary consequences of communism.