

POPULATION AGEING: THE RESEARCH/POLICY INTERFACE

Alan Walker

**Professor of Social Policy and Social Gerontology
University of Sheffield
UK**

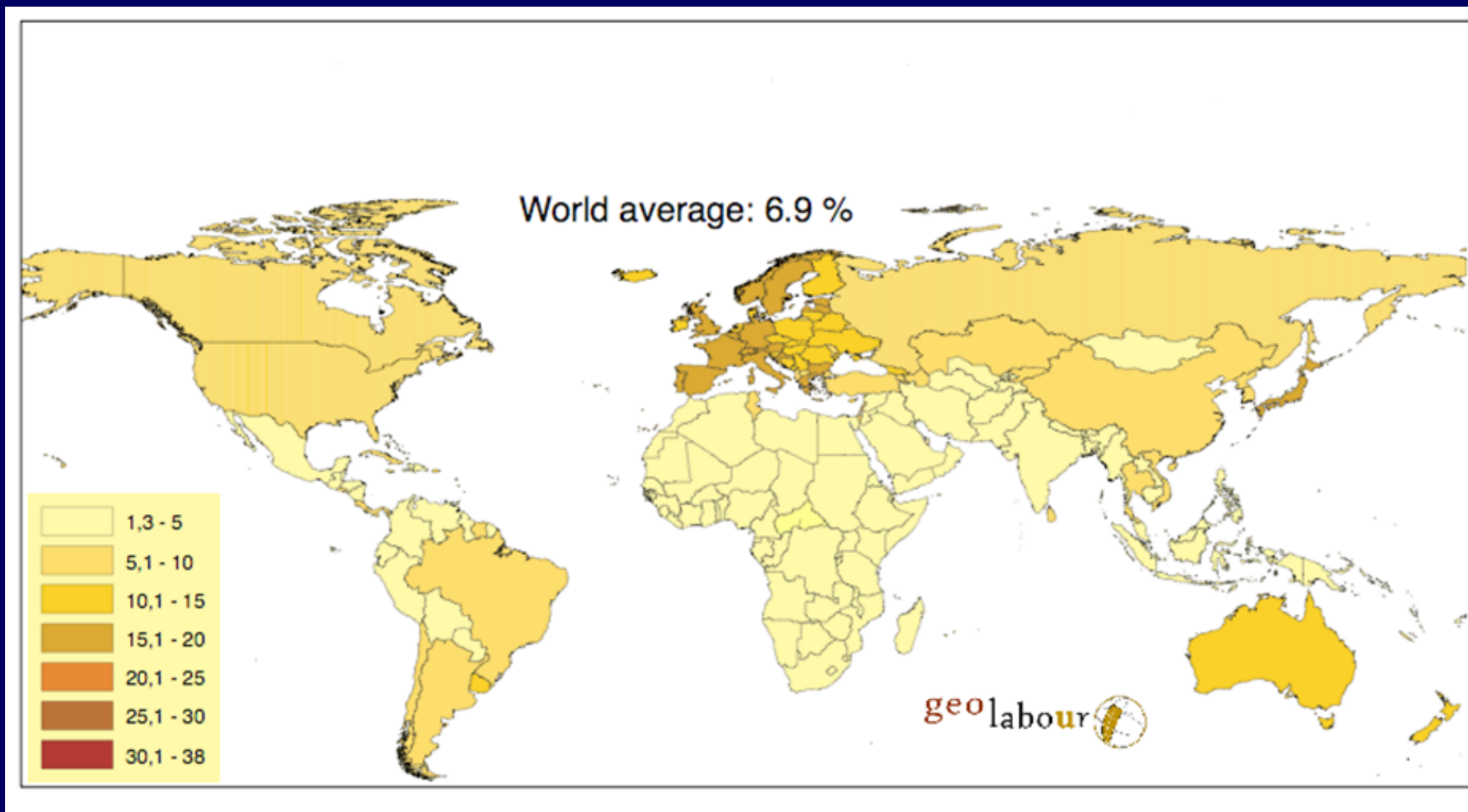


**Friday Forum on Population Ageing Research and
the Policy Interface: International Perspectives,
16th October 2009**

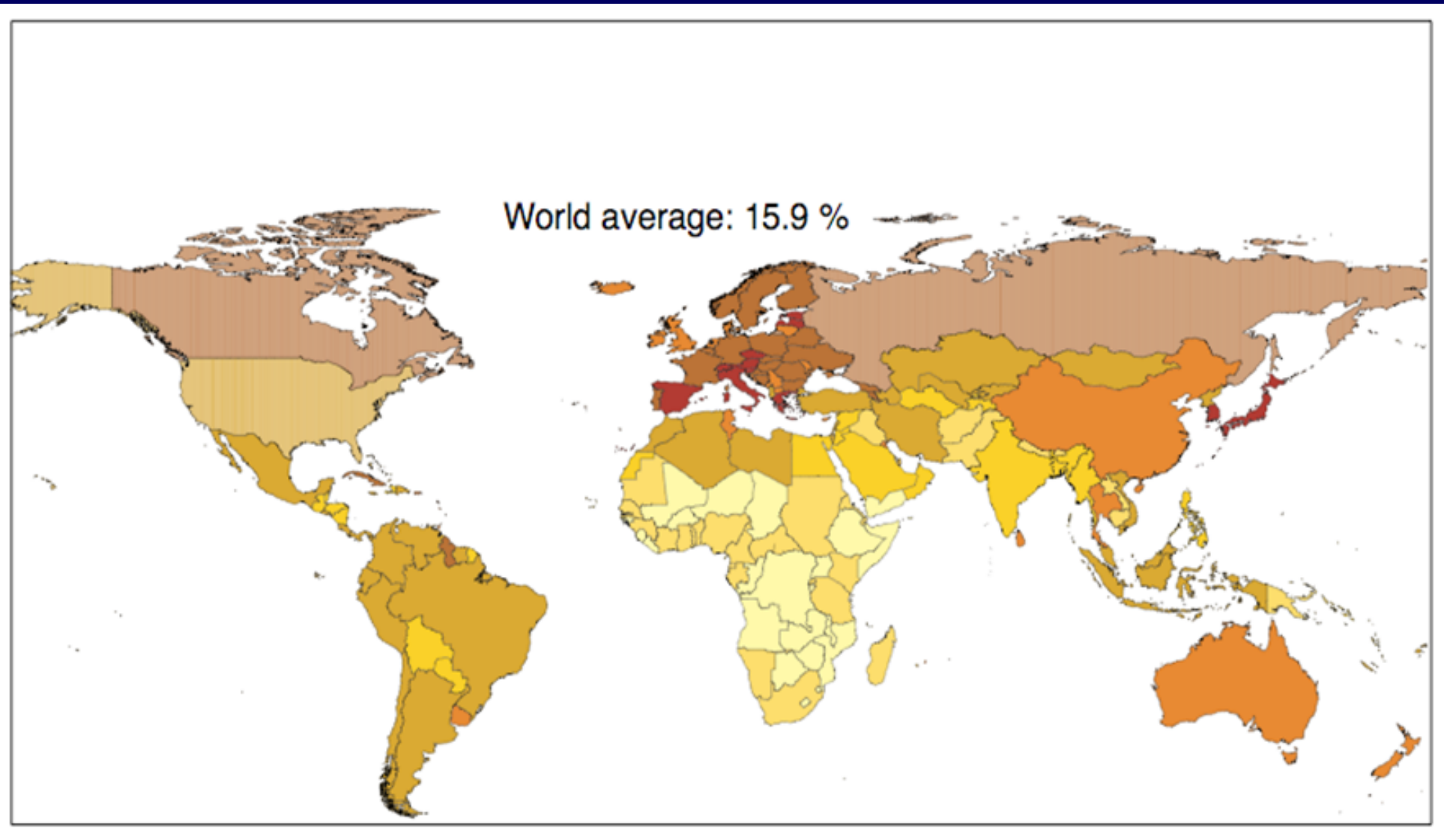
POPULATION AGEING: THE RESEARCH/POLICY INTERFACE

- **THE DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVE**
- **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLICY AND RESEARCH**
- **UK/EU EXPERIENCE**

SHARE (%) OF PEOPLE AGED 65+ IN THE POPULATION 2000



SHARE (%) OF PEOPLE AGED 65+ IN THE POPULATION 2050



THE EMERGENCE OF AGEING AS A POLICY ISSUE

- **Demography and Policy Privilege**
- **Ageing Labour Force**
- **Social Care and Health Care Costs**
- **Globalisation**
- **Research**

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND POLICY

Ideal = evidence-based policy and practice

Reality = rarely ideal, usually haphazard

Mutual dissatisfaction

FACTORS CREATING DISSATISFACTION

- **Unrealistic Expectations**
 - **Different worlds, different needs**
 - **Policy is a process, sometimes disjointed**

DECISION MAKING

Looking at specific real-life policies we cannot find stages in which problems are defined, the alternatives analysed, then benefits and cost weighed, then 'the' decision made. Everything not only seems to be going on at once, it is.

Heclo and Rein, 1980

DECISION MAKING

Those social scientists who expect research to be authoritative enough to determine policy choices are giving insufficient weight to the many and varied sources from which people derive their understanding and policy preferences.

... People in official positions often do not catalogue research separately in their minds. They interpret it as they read it in the light of their other knowledge, and they merge it with all the information and generalisations in their stock.

Weiss and Bucuwalas, 1980

DECISION MAKING

Government officials:

... recommend, advise, confer, draw up budgets, testify, develop plans, write guidelines, report, supervise, propose legalisation, assist, meet, train, consult – but decide? It is not a concept that seems to describe aptly the flux of activities that engage officials even at the top rungs of complex organizations.

Weiss, 1980

FACTORS CREATING DISSATISFACTION

- **Unrealistic Expectations**
 - **Different worlds, different needs**
 - **Policy is a process, sometimes disjointed**
- **Inadequacy of existing models**
 - **Rational**
 - **Engineering**

TOWARDS ENLIGHTENMENT

- **Multiple functions of research**
- **Wide range of information sources**
- **Policy is a process**
- **Specific practice barriers**
- **Policy without research**

THE ENLIGHTENMENT MODEL

- **Research not instrumental but helps to frame understanding**
- **Key challenges for researchers:**
 - **Accessible findings**
 - **Timeliness**
- **Key challenges for policy makers:**
 - **Open to questions from research**
 - **Continuous dialogue**

THE ENLIGHTENMENT MODEL IN PRACTICE

UK: Growing Older Programme

New Dynamics of Ageing Programme

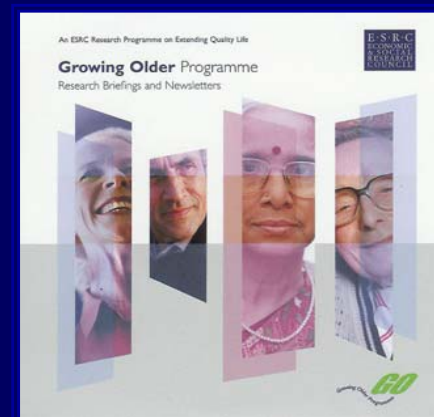
EU: The European Research Area in Ageing

THE ESRC GROWING OLDER PROGRAMME

- **The user involvement imperative**
- **Policy and practice orientation**
- **Policy/practice links**
- **Findings for policy/practice communities**
- **Policy/practice workshops**
- **Policy summary**
- **Policy/practice conference**

POLICY OUTCOMES: UK strategy on ageing, social exclusion policy, social care practice, quality of life assessments.

GROWING OLDER: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ESRC PROGRAMME



ESRC ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Research Findings: 19 Growing Older **GO**

From the Growing Older Programme

Older People in Deprived Neighbourhoods: Social Exclusion and Quality of Life in Old Age
Thomas Scharf, Chris Phillipson, Allison E. Smith and Paul Kingston

This research examined the circumstances of older people living in socially deprived areas of three English cities. In seeking to provide new insights into the nature of inequalities within older age, the study addressed the conditions of social exclusion in deprived urban neighbourhoods and the processes that contribute to social exclusion in later life.

The focus on older people in deprived neighbourhoods is closely tied to contemporary public policy concerns. In recent years, such neighbourhoods have been subject to considerable social policy intervention, linked to attempts to reduce the geographical divide between Britain's most deprived areas and the 'mainstream of society'. In this respect, the research sought to examine the degree to which residence in an area of concentrated poverty might compound the impact on older people of other forms of social exclusion, and lead to a diminished quality of life.

The research was undertaken in the three most deprived electoral wards in Liverpool, Manchester and the London Borough of Newham. Data collection consisted of a survey of 600 people aged 60 and over in the three cities, and semi-structured interviews with 130 people in the same age group.

Summary of key findings

The study highlighted the multiple risks of social exclusion faced by older people in deprived areas, showing that that these risks are significantly higher than in other areas of Britain.

- Poverty affects nearly half of people aged 60 and over in deprived urban neighbourhoods.
- Older people living in deprived areas of England are at least twice as likely to experience poverty as those in Britain as a whole.
- More than one in ten older people in this study found it difficult or very difficult to manage on their current incomes – almost half of older people in poverty said they had gone without buying clothes in the previous year. Fifteen per cent of this group had occasionally gone without buying food. Half of those in poverty had gone without a holiday.
- Close to one in ten older people in poverty have lived in poverty for most of their lives.
- A significant minority of older people in deprived areas could be described as being socially isolated and/or severely lonely. Around one fifth were socially isolated, while one in seven were severely lonely.
- Older people were found to be disproportionately vulnerable to serious crime. Very few of them said they would feel safe when leaving their home after dark.
- Many older people could be considered to be excluded from involvement in formal social relationships within their communities. Around one quarter were

GO Findings: 19

June 2005

www.growingolder.group.shef.ac.uk

THE NEW DYNAMICS OF AGEING RESEARCH PROGRAMME

www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk



The screenshot shows the homepage of the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) website. The header includes the NDA logo and navigation links: Home, About, News, Events, Newsletter, Documents, URLs, Contact, and Login. The main content area features a large image of an elderly man running, with the text: "The New Dynamics of Ageing programme is a five year multidisciplinary research initiative with the ultimate aim of improving quality of life of older people. The programme is a unique collaboration between five UK Research Councils - ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC and AHRC - and is the largest and most ambitious research programme on ageing ever mounted in the UK." Below this are links for "Read More", "Latest News", and "Bulletin Board". A section titled "Who got that cash - THES" dated 04/01/2008 describes funding for research into improving the quality of life of the elderly. An "EVENTS" section lists two workshops: a BBSRC/NDA workshop on Biological Research (closed) on 03/03/2008, and a SPARC/NDA funding opportunities workshop on 07/03/2008. A "Recently" section features an interview with Alan Walker from Policy World.

www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk



THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA IN AGEING (ERA-AGE)

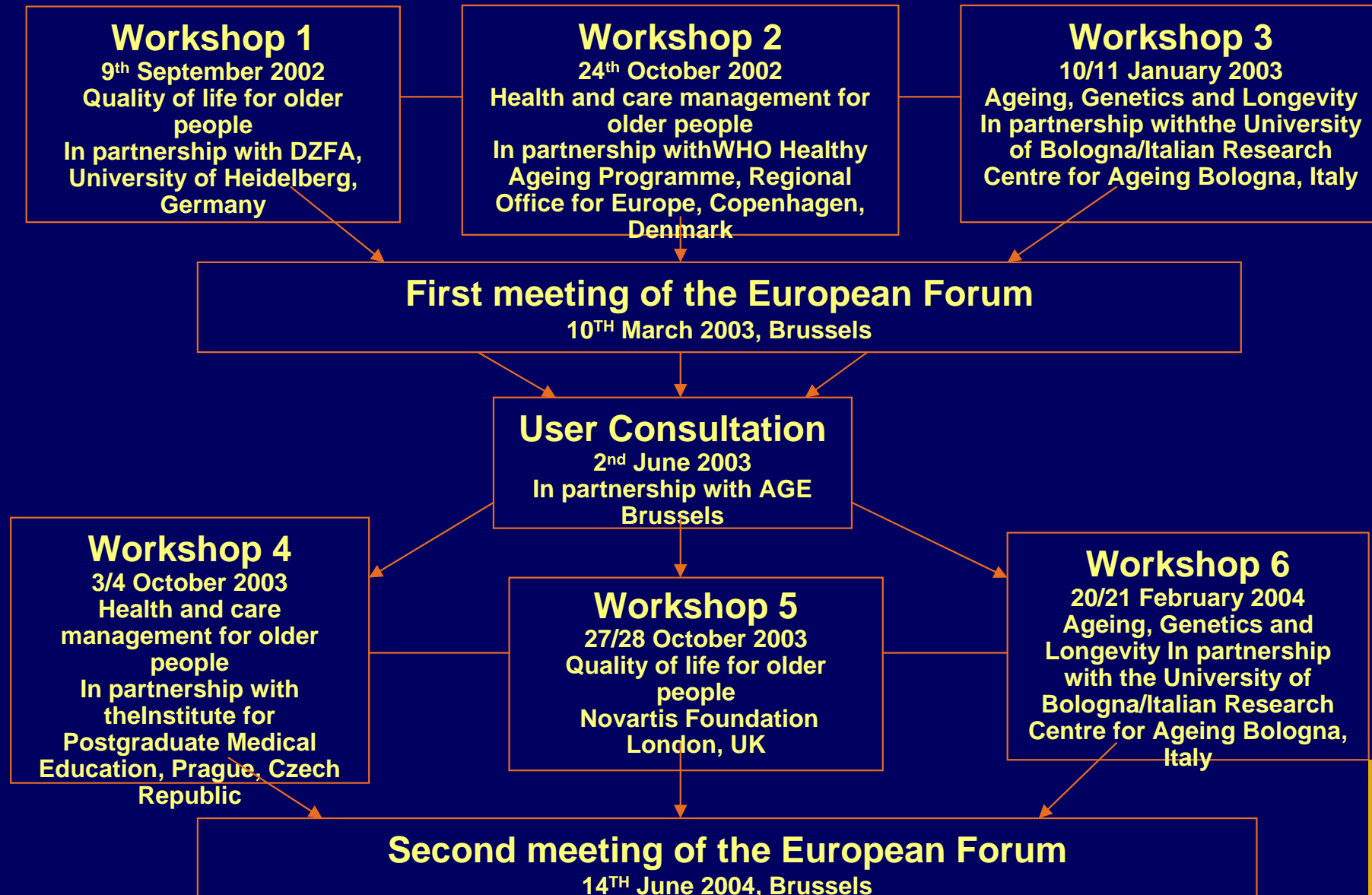


THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA IN AGEING (ERA-AGE)



www.shef.ac.uk/era-age

EUROPEAN FORUM ON POPULATION AGEING RESEARCH: TIMELINE OF EVENTS



OLDER PEOPLE: LEFT IN THE COLD?

Why involve them in research?

- Human rights as research subjects**
- Research needs their understanding about ageing and service use**
- Political motives: empowerment, self-identification, challenge to ageism**

POPULATION AGEING: THE RESEARCH/POLICY INTERFACE

- **The Demographic Imperative**
- **The Relationship between Policy and Research**
- **UK/EU Experience**
- **Conclusion**