

Expert Opinion Poll Results Report

"Quality of Life in Old Age - What is missing? Share your knowledge with us?!"

1) Summary

The Regional Innovation Network "Healthy Ageing" ("RIN")¹ was initiated by the association "Gesundheitsregion KölnBonn e.V." and is funded by the North-Rhine Westphalian Ministry of Innovation, Scientific Affairs and Research ("MIWF NRW")². From 22nd July till 15th November 2013, the RIN conducted an expert opinion poll to identify need for action as well as priorities in the field "Quality of Life in Old Age". The results of the survey will be used to identify priorities in securing and improving the quality of life in old age. Once such priorities have been identified, the Network's focus groups will proceed to work on them.

In a preliminary survey, 30 subjects reviewed and adjusted the questionnaire. Following that, the invitation to participate in the survey was sent to 576 preselected potential subjects. The main survey's most important findings result from assessments given by 144 experts who participated the survey. The findings are documented below. 88 representatives from 82 differing institutions have also agreed to work with us on addressing the mentioned issues.

Analysis of the survey questionnaires showed that the following issues represent the five most important fields of action:

- Disease Prevention/Health Promotion
- Integration in Society
- Treatment of typical age-related diseases
- Social response to age-related dementia
- Barrier-free housing/ Room design

However, any other issues mentioned in the survey were invariably rated as relevant as well.

During analysis of the survey results, the decision was made to form the following focus groups in order to address the most important and urgent aspects:

- Health Promotion & Disease Prevention
- Housing for the Elderly
- Integration in Society
- Geriatric Medicine

All these issues have many important aspects in common, which is why the experts identified urgent need for action in these fields.

¹ <http://www.rin-ageing.de>

² Ministry of Innovation, Scientific Affairs and Research in North-Rhine Westphalia

2) Background Information

With its research strategy "Fortschritt NRW" ("Advancing North-Rhine Westphalia") the North-Rhine Westphalian Ministry for Innovation, Scientific Affairs and Research has reoriented its research policy: "Fortschritt NRW" stands for policy-making that places human beings at its centre.³ New concepts and ideas as well as a new definition of innovation will be required to meet the great challenges facing society: "Regional Innovation Networks" function as tools of the related new approach to research. Their objective is to bring private-sector economy, science, and consumers together at local level in order to develop solutions that are suitable for implementation in the local market⁴.

One of the most important challenges facing society today is how to accommodate the steadily growing number of elderly and very old people. Great effort will be required to ensure sustained good quality of life for this population group.

With respect to scientific research and practical application, the Rhineland can take recourse to a wide-ranging expertise and excellence specifically where research of age-related health-care needs are concerned. In light of the above, the Ministry of Innovation, Scientific Affairs and Research in North-Rhine Westphalia agreed at the beginning of 2013 to fund the Regional Innovation Network "Healthy Ageing", which was established by the association "Gesundheitsregion Köln/Bonn e.V.

The Regional Innovation Network "Healthy Ageing" seeks to organise and support cross-disciplinary exchange among experts. The differing scientific disciplines' patterns of perception shall be brought together and the various specialists encouraged to assume differing points of scientific view in order to develop integrated solutions and generate specific implementation opportunities for the local market. This process will create a knowledge base that can facilitate innovations for the benefit of the targeted population. The Regional Innovation Networks have been invited to collaborate with the Ministry and, by way of this collaboration, develop recommendations for specific political action.

The expert opinion poll "Quality of Life in Old Age - What is missing? - Share Your Knowledge With Us?!" that serves as a basis for the Innovation Network's future work was conducted to identify the fields in which priority action is needed to secure and improve the quality of life in old age. In keeping with the Regional Innovation Networks' inter- and transdisciplinary approach, experts from various walks of life - eg private-sector economy, science and research, education, associations, and professional societies - were surveyed. Analysis of the survey led to the establishment of focus groups addressing the fields of action that were rated as priorities.

³ <http://www.wissenschaft.nrw.de/ministerium/leitlinien-des-ministeriums/fortschritt-nrw/>

⁴ <http://www.wissenschaft.nrw.de/forschung/fortschritt-nrw/global-herausforderungen-lokal-meistern/>

3) Survey Methodology

Presented below is the expert opinion poll "Quality of Life in Old Age - What is missing? - Share Your Knowledge With Us?!" that was conducted in the period from 22nd July till 15th November 2013.

The questionnaire consisted of mainly closed-ended questions, with an open-ended comment field added to invite individual suggestions and comments concerning fields of action that the closed-ended questions had omitted. The invitation to participate in the poll was sent via e-mail. The questionnaire itself could be completed online via the "Unipark" survey software.

In a trial survey, a spot sample of 30 subjects tested the content, structure and acceptability of the draft questionnaire.

Care was taken to recruit the subjects from different walks of life, so as to ensure that the target group for the main survey was already represented in the trial survey. Suggested improvements were incorporated in the final survey questionnaire.

The information letter containing the link to the online survey and a pdf version of the questionnaire were e-mailed to 576 recipients on 22nd July 2013. Besides completing the questionnaire online via Unipark, the subjects had the option of filling in a paper copy of the pdf document and faxing it to 0221-12 606 43-33, or sending it by ground mail to the association "Gesundheitsregion KölnBonn e. V., Im MediaPark 4d, 50670 Cologne.

The cover letter also invited the recipients to forward the e-mail with the questionnaire to friends and colleagues who might be eligible as subjects and ask them to participate in the survey. In addition, a link leading to the survey was published on the home page of the Regional Innovation Network "Healthy Ageing, www.rin-ageing.de.

The first reminder was sent three weeks after the first mailing (on 12th August 2013), and the second reminder was sent another five weeks later (on 25th September 2013).

For further evaluation, the primary data collected with the online survey software were exported into an Excel spreadsheet, where they were coded and counted for statistics.

4) Results

A total of 144 experts participated in the survey.

Demographic Information

The largest proportion of subjects answering the survey belonged to the categories "Association/Society/Professional Body" and "Scientific and Research Institutions", followed by the category "Government Agency/Regional Authority/Municipality"

Category	#	Category	#
Association/ Society/ Professional Body	23	Outpatient Health-Care	1
Scientific/ Research Institution	21	Pharmacy	1
Government agency/Regional Authority/Municipality	20	Medical Technology	1
Hospital	15	Information & Communication Technology	1
Long-term care facility	12	Politics	1
Educational Institution	12	Workplace Health Management	1
Housing Industry	6	Treatment Facility	0
Sundry Outpatient Care	5	Building Services Engineering	0
Payers	5	Skilled Crafts & Trade	0
Sundry	4	Retailing sector	0
Other Hospital Care	3	Financial Service Providers	0
Pharma Companies	3	Exhibition/ Event Management	0
Consulting Firms	3	Hotel & Tourism Industry	0
Medical & Health-Care Supply Retailer	2	Treatment at a health resort/ Wellness	0
Services close to home	2	Sports & Leisure Activities	0
Consumers/ Patients Organisations	2	TOTAL	144

Table 1: Professional background of polled experts

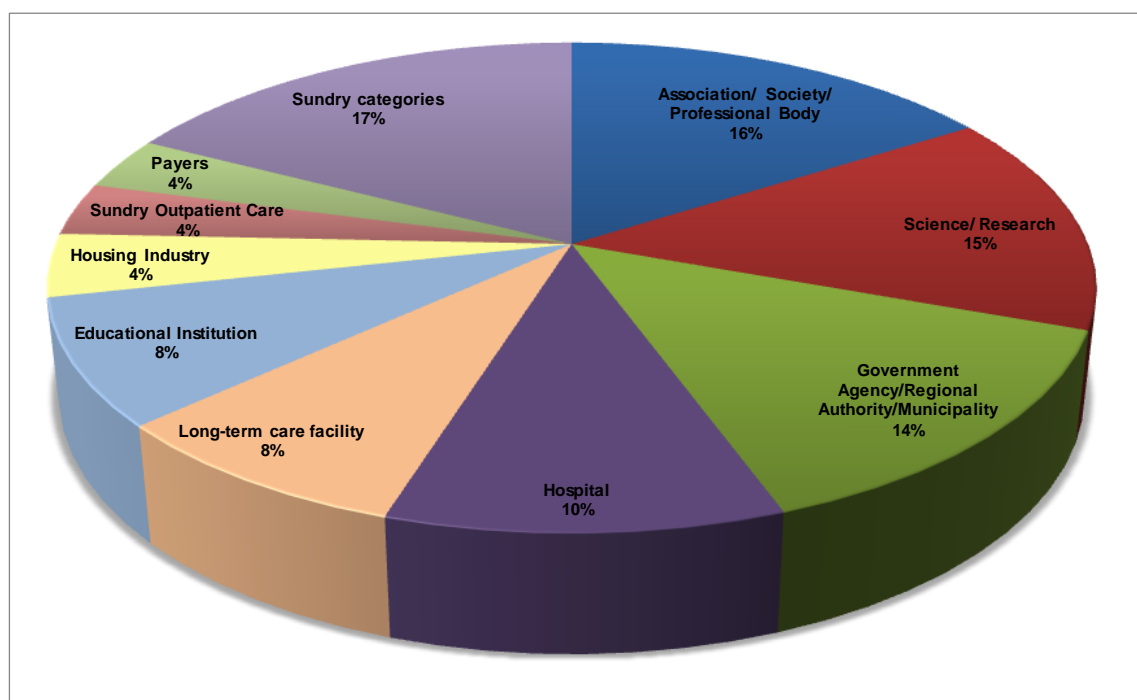


Figure 1: Professional background of polled experts

Fields of Priority Action

A count of the issues rated as "very important" or "important" ranked the surveyed fields of action as follows:

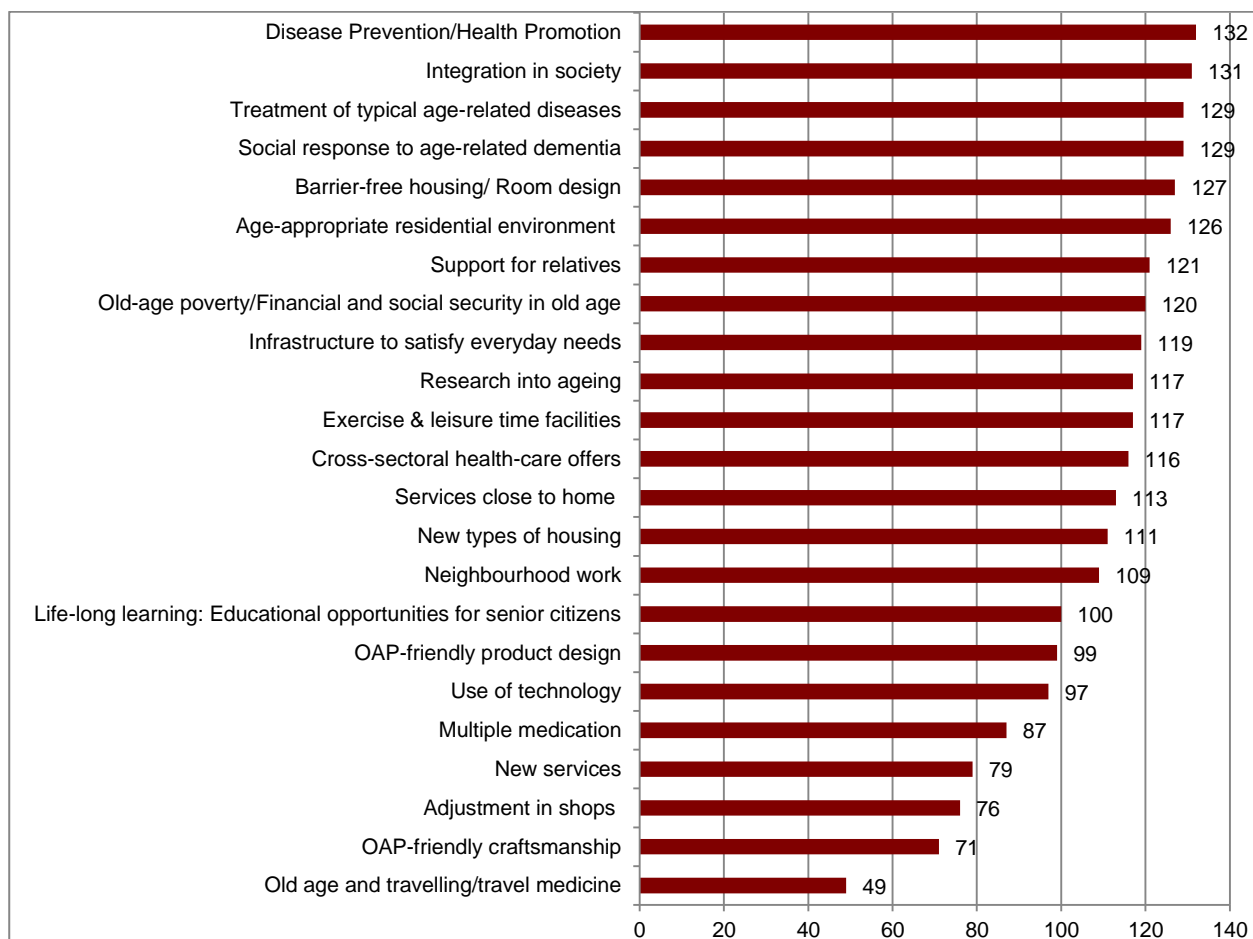


Figure 2: Fields of action rated as "very important" or "important" for ensuring the quality of life in old age (questionnaire item 3)

Based on the frequency of mention, the survey showed that the following fields were in need of priority action (rating of "very important" and "important"):

- Disease Prevention/Health Promotion
- Integration in Society
- Treatment of typical age-related diseases
- Social response to age-related dementia
- Barrier-free housing/Room design

However, any other issues mentioned in the survey were invariably rated as relevant as well. Only very few fields of action were rated as "unimportant".

When comparing the priority ratings for the 5 most important fields of action on the basis of the polled experts' professional background, the survey showed differences in prioritisation. On the

whole, prioritisation within any given category reflected the professional background of the polled experts.

Categories	n	1	2	3	4	5
Association/ Society/ Professional Body	23	Disease Prevention/Health Promotion	Age-appropriate residential environment	Cross-sectoral health-care offers	Social response to age-related dementia	Integration in society
Science/ Research	21	Disease Prevention/Health Promotion	Research into ageing	Treatment of typical age-related diseases	soziale und gesellschaftl. Teilhabe	Support for relatives
Government Agency/ Regional Authority/ Municipality	20	Social response to age-related dementia	Integration in society	Old-age poverty/Financial and social security in old age	New types of housing	Barrier-free housing/ Room design
Hospital	15	Research into ageing	Treatment of typical age-related diseases	Disease Prevention/Health Promotion	Social response to age-related dementia	Cross-sectoral health-care offers
Long-term care facility	12	Social response to age-related dementia	Integration in society	Support for relatives	Disease Prevention/Health Promotion	Treatment of typical age-related diseases
Educational Institution	12	Disease Prevention/Health Promotion	Social response to age-related dementia	Integration in society	Old-age poverty/Financial and social security in old age	Exercise & leisure time facilities
Housing Industry	6	Neighbourhood work	Integration in society	Old-age poverty/Financial and social security in old age	Barrier-free housing/ Room design	Age-appropriate residential environment
Sundry Outpatient Care	5	Treatment of typical age-related diseases	Barrier-free housing/ Room design	Age-appropriate residential environment	Services close to home	OAP-friendly product design
Payers	5	Disease Prevention/Health Promotion	Treatment of typical age-related diseases	Cross-sectoral health-care offers	Neighbourhood work	Support for relatives
Sundry categories	25	Disease Prevention/Health Promotion	Barrier-free housing/ Room design	Social response to age-related dementia	Age-appropriate residential environment	Infrastructure to satisfy daily needs
Total	144	Disease Prevention/Health Promotion	Integration in society	Treatment of typical age-related diseases	Social response to age-related dementia	Barrier-free housing/ Room design

Table 2: Field of action ratings per category

Willingness to Collaborate with the Regional Innovation Network "Healthy Ageing"

A total of 88 experts said they were willing to collaborate on addressing the mentioned issues, with some of them willing to take up on more than one issue. The following diagram illustrates which fields of action the experts were willing to address.

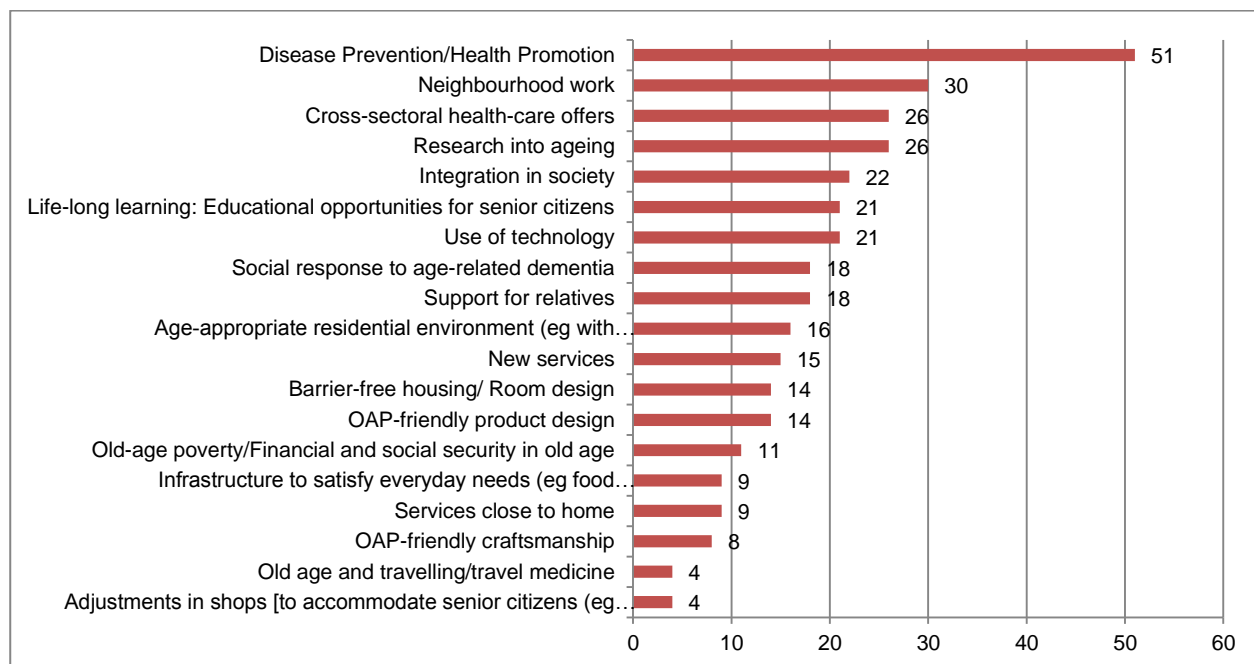


Figure 3: Willingness to collaborate on addressing the identified fields of action

A clear indication of how seriously the polled experts were interested in a collaboration to address these issues was the high rate (88.24%) of respondents who gave their consent for the collection and storing of their personal data.

5) Interpretation and Evaluation

During analysis of the survey results the decision was made to form the following focus groups in order to address the most important and urgent aspects:

- Health Promotion & Disease Prevention
- Housing for the Elderly
- Integration in Society
- Geriatric Medicine

All these issues have many important aspects in common, which is why the experts identified an urgent need for action.

The field of action most clearly prioritised by the experts, "Social Response to Age-Related Dementia", affects all of the four previously mentioned focus groups, so each group will take it up and address it from its own particular point of scientific/professional perspective.

The fact that almost none of the individual issues mentioned in the survey were rated as unimportant bears witness to the complexity of the situation as a whole and documents the necessity for interdisciplinary, cross-sector collaboration.

6) Conclusion and Next Steps

Given the diversity of the relevant aspects in this field, restricting the number of fields of priority action to just a few is certainly arbitrary but necessary for the sake of manageability. It does not mean that any aspects not included in this initial phase will be left unattended in the future. A simple count of the number of votes does not reflect their possibly differing weight, and opinion polls conducted only among experts will invariably render an incomplete picture of the situation as a whole. To further address the issues identified by the Regional Innovation Network, the perspective of the target group (elderly people, their relatives and their social environment) must be included to greater extent when assessing the various issues' relevance.

As a next step, focus groups will be established to address the first 4 identified fields of action. The survey respondents who expressed their interest in addressing them will be invited to join the project. In line with the Regional Innovation Networks' approach, these work groups with interdisciplinary and cross-sector staffing shall list and coordinate required action, research questions, priorities and approaches to solutions for their respective focus. Their work results shall serve as a basis for deepening and refining the work of both the focus group as well as other work groups.

A public meeting on 12th May 2014 with Minister Svenja Schulze will offer a first opportunity to involve political decision-makers and a broader audience.

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