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Gerontology Research Center (GEREC), Universities of Jyväskylä and Tampere, Finland

Katja Kokko and Marja Jylhä

A multidisciplinary Research Unit in gerontology was established in 1986 at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. In 1994 it was renamed the Finnish Centre for Interdisciplinary Gerontology. The University of Tampere, in turn, was the first university in the Nordic countries to establish a professorship in Gerontology in 1976. Since 2012, the Gerontology Research Center (GEREC; <http://www.gerec.fi/en>) has been a joint effort between the universities of Jyväskylä and Tampere. Researchers from the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences and the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy in Jyväskylä and from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine and Life Sciences in Tampere participate in GEREC. The researchers represent a range of related disciplines, such as gerontology, epidemiology, geriatrics, health science, and sport and exercise science, along with social sciences, biogerontology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, statistics, and economics. GEREC is also involved in the Centre of Excellence in Research on Ageing and Care (CoE AgeCare 2018–2025; see <http://www.ngf-geronord.se/GeroNord.html>; 2-2017). GEREC has a director and vice-director, one post located in Jyväskylä and one in Tampere, and an advisory board composed of leading scholars in ageing research.

GEREC provides a multidisciplinary environment for researchers interested in studying ageing. The researchers come from various research career phases, that is, post-graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, and academy research fellows, or are university researchers or teachers, and professors. Some 75 researchers are affiliated with GEREC. The GEREC researchers are also members of several national and international research networks. GEREC researchers have been successful in obtaining external research funding, including an ERC Advanced Grant, H2020/Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Networks funding, project funding and funding for research posts from the Academy of Finland, the Ministry of Culture and Education, and various private foundations. In 2016, GEREC was one of the main organizers of the 23th Nordic Congress in Gerontology, held in Tampere.

The activities of GEREC comprise research, post-graduate training, and societal interaction. Its main research themes are as follows:

- Active ageing, life space mobility, and physical activity
- Health, functioning, longevity and biological ageing
- Life course, retirement, and agency
- Services, care and politics

GEREC contributes to post-graduate training in its host universities. The aim is to educate experts in the field of aging. As a joint training venture between the two universities, GEREC organizes an annual summer school on gerontology. The summer school invites all GEREC researchers to participate and is centered around a specific theme each year; for example, the theme of the 2017 summer school was “Old age in the 2040s in Finland”. GEREC’s

mission is to communicate its research results to both the scientific community and a wider audience.



Picture: Miikka Kimari