

## Eurag

### Edmée Mangers-Anen

President

I am honoured and pleased to be with you today on behalf of EURAG and in my own name.

If I may, I would like to begin by telling you a little about EURAG, the **European Federation of the Elderly**.

EURAG was founded in 1962. It is the oldest European organisation of and for older persons. It is a **non-profit, non-political and non-denominational** association. Its registered office and headquarters are in **Luxembourg** and its General Secretariat in Graz (Austria). It also maintains **representations with the European Union in Brussels, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the World Health Organisation in Copenhagen and Geneva, the United Nations in Vienna and New York, the International Labour Office in Geneva, the UN International Institute on Ageing in Malta and the International Social Security Association in Geneva.**

EURAG's members include organisations, public and private institutions, and natural persons, all of whom are interested in issues relating to older persons or deal with the problems of the elderly.

Our federation is present in **34 European countries**. Its activities extend from **Portugal** to **Russia** and from **Malta** to **Iceland**, as well as **Israel**.

Through its affiliates, EURAG is in touch with millions of older persons in Europe.

EURAG's objectives are the following:

**Protecting the independence of older persons**  
**Increasing participation in decision-making**  
**Promoting European integration**  
**Improving the social situation and integration within society**  
**Developing personal capacities**  
**Promoting mutual support**  
**Preventing all types of age-based discrimination.**

To achieve its objectives, EURAG organises or participates in **international congresses, colloquia and meetings**; it drafts and disseminates proposals addressed to its members, to parliaments and to governments and publishes **information bulletins** on given subjects, as well as a monthly newsletter of brief, topical articles, "**EURAG-Information**". These two publications come out in four languages: German, English, French and Italian. EURAG also drafts bibliographical notes on problems related to ageing.

EURAG encourages contacts and experience-sharing in the European area, cultural exchanges between older persons and the creation and development of networks, particularly to promote "civil dialogue".

Our association also maintains networks and study and working groups, for example: the **Training** group that deals with senior citizens' universities, the working group on **Eastern and Central Europe**, which develops and maintains relations with

organisations for older persons in these countries, and the study group for the Romance-language countries, namely Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and French-speaking Switzerland.

This EURAG group recently put out its fourth publication, entitled: "**Personnes âgées- Solidaires, Autonomes - Participantes**" (The Elderly - Solidarity, Independence, Participation). It was published on 19 November 1999 in Turin. A fifth study has just been initiated. Its working title is: "Maîtrise de vie et vieillissement: s'exprimer, se former, s'intégrer" (Independence and Ageing: Speaking out, Learning, Participating).

As far as volunteering is concerned, EURAG has not remained inactive in relation to the proclamation of 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. Two major events are planned:

- one in Berlin in April 2001 at the office of "Sozialwerk Berlin e V.", an illustrious example of a commitment to voluntary work and mutual support.
- the second in Bratislava in June 2001, sponsored by the Slovak section of EURAG.

EURAG's next international congress will be held in June 2002 in Turin.

One of EURAG's main concerns at present is the position it will be adopting on the establishment of a so-called "**Europe's Older People's Platform**".

EURAG is not, as a foregone conclusion, opposed to joining such a "Europe's Older People's Platform", creation of which was proposed by the Commission's Employment and Social Affairs DG, provided that:

- the identity, existence and independence of EURAG is not threatened
- the new body does not compete with EURAG's activities on the ground
- the new structure does not represent too great a financial burden in the short term and especially in the medium and long term
- the influence of the European Commission does not overshadow that of member organisations, which must be fairly represented in all future bodies.

EURAG wonders whether its membership of the "**Platform of Social Non-governmental Organisations**" might not already be sufficient to guarantee dialogue with the European Commission, the European Parliament and so on.

EURAG is prepared to examine **all other suggestions for cooperation, consultation or even mergers** with existing European associations for older persons with a view to forming an even more powerful and influential organisation.

Thank you very much for your attention.