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**“Senior Organisations and Their Effectiveness and Impact in Society”**

Contribution by Dirk Jarré, President of EURAG

**“The Role of the European Federation of Older Persons in European Ageing Policies”**

*The European Federation of Older Persons*

*Fédération Européenne des Personnes Agées*

*Bund der älteren Generation Europas*

*Federazione Europea delle Persone Anziane*

Since its foundation in 1962 the European Federation of Older Persons, EURAG, has always endeavoured to help to shape and support sound ageing policies in Europe - not only in the interests of its own members and older persons in general but also for the benefit of society at large. In earlier times EURAG has mainly concentrated its efforts on putting forward demands and recommendations to politicians and other decision makers through position papers and contributions to important conferences like the First World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna in 1982 and the Second World Assembly on Ageing twenty years later in Madrid in April 2002.

But even though EURAG had played a key role in coordinating the civil society contributions to the “Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing” of the United Nations – and could be rather satisfied with its content - it became soon evident that the crucial issue connected to such a well-intended and promising plan will always reside in the difficult mechanisms of a concrete and sustainable implementation process and its monitoring. Thus EURAG decided right after the Madrid World Assembly to get heavily involved in the Ministerial Conference of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, UNECE, that was held in Berlin some month later, in October 2001, to negotiate and proclaim a “Regional Implementation Strategy” for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

The work of EURAG and its civil society allies had been so appreciated by the 56 member states of the UNECE that they were given the opportunity to make a formal common statement at the end of the Berlin Conference in which they presented publicly most substantial and convincing arguments in respect to necessary further action of European governments to make their commitments a reality for people. In recognition of EURAG’s input and merits, its today’s president Dirk Jarré was appointed vice-chair of the newly created Task Force “Monitoring the Regional Implementation Strategy on Ageing” of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. And when this Task Force became, some years later, the governmental “Working Group on Ageing” of the UNECE he was nominated



*EURAG is a member of the Platform of European Social NGOs ([www.socialplatform.org](http://www.socialplatform.org)) in Brussels and has Participatory Status with the Council of Europe as well as Consultative Status with the UN*



the official representative of civil society in this Working Group, and became even member of its Bureau – a very unusual arrangement in the UN system indeed.

In this position, which he holds ever since 2008, he is strongly involved in all the relevant discussions and decision-making processes between the representatives of the Focal Points on Ageing of the 56 UNECE member states. Thus he has extended possibilities in helping to shape the European Ministerial Conferences on Ageing that take place every 5 years in order to monitor progress made in ageing policies. He can also contribute to the substance of the Ministerial Declarations proclaimed at these high-level conferences by which governments commit themselves to realise further action as part of the implementation process of the “Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing” of the UN. In addition he has been entrusted with the conceptual preparation of the officially sponsored “Civil Society Fora” that are part of these Ministerial Conferences and that produce each time highly appreciated “Political Declarations of the NGOs” on European ageing policies and action.

To adequately identify and formulate civil society concerns and demands he communicates intensely with other relevant European social networks through the “Social Platform” in Brussels (in which he has been vice-president for many years) and with the membership of the UN “NGO Committee on Ageing Vienna” in which he serves as co-chair. Furthermore he uses the reflections and findings of a large research project of the European Union on “Social Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing”, SIforAGE, in which EURAG is one of the 18 consortium partners and holds an important bridging position. Only recently the “NGO Committee on Ageing”, together with the “SIforAGE Project”, has published a remarkable compendium of 31 concrete ageing policy related comments and recommendations, grouped in seven distinct sections of particular concern, under the title *“Recommendations for Decision Makers to Promote Active Ageing in a Society for All Ages”*. This publication has been widely distributed to representatives of European governments, administrations and civil society organisations and found high interest. We already can see how our proposals and our language find their way into other documents, declarations and decision-making processes. Parts of it will undoubtedly be reflected in the next UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in 2017 and, in particular, in the Ministerial Declaration on further commitments and future action of UNECE member states.

This brief story about the proactive engagement of our organisation, the European Federation of Older Persons, goes to show how important it is not just to contribute to nice policy plans and declarations of international organisations and governments but to make sure that one becomes part of the indispensable implementation process – with its conceptual work on concrete targeted policies, on sound strategies, as well as on real programmes and action – and finally on monitoring and assessment that may lead to necessary adjustments or even new orientations.