Letting the “beginning of the beginning” behind

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The European Journal of Ageing (EJA) has entered, in 2007, its fourth volume. It seems only a short time ago that we began with a first issue in December 2004. Since then we published regularly four volumes each year. We are very grateful to Springer for their commitment to the Journal. Our special thanks go to Ms. Evelien Bakker from Springer, for nurturing the journal at all levels, providing excellent advice in terms of strategic decisions regarding the journal, and doing a superb job in advertising the journal. Also, Ms. Dagmar Orth from Springer, Ms. Ursula König from the University of Heidelberg and Ms. Fadime Kursun from the VU University Medical Centre provide excellent technical and logistic assistance. We extend our appreciation to our consulting editors and editorial board members, who are handling the major share of the review task.

At the start of this fourth year, a bit of retrospection is in place. We believe that so far we have attained quite an interesting and stimulating scope of contents and that we are well on track in light of our mission statement, that is, publishing articles on the social, behavioural and health-related aspects of ageing. Also, both the organisation of special sections, a strategy particularly followed in 2005, and the publication of free submissions, the main pathway in 2006, have con-

tributed to a broad and at the same time in-depth coverage of relevant research on ageing. In terms of ‘hard’ indicators of success, such as citations of EJA articles, we still have limited results. A count of citations through Google Scholar shows that, in 2006, articles published in the EJA during 2004–2005 had been cited 29 times in various journals, 16 of which were journals other than the EJA. This certainly is an encouraging result for a relatively new scientific periodical. The single best cited article so far, with four citations in journals other than the EJA, is Ferring et al. (2004). We are furthermore pleased that the EJA has started to be indexed in 2006 with PsychInfo, which will certainly help the distribution of research published in the Journal.

We are also happy to report that the submission rate of the EJA is slowly but steadily increasing and it seems rather clear to us that the Journal has become an important target for research papers emerging from European countries. In 2006, we had 44 papers submitted with 4 papers declined because of a misfit with EJA’s mission. Of the remaining 40 papers, 9 were accepted, 4 rejected and in 27 cases the decision is still pending. Another fact is that in 2006 the number of countries from which articles were submitted has increased to 15. In particular, we had our first publication from a non-western country (Habib et al. 2006). Nevertheless, the large majority of the papers published in EJA originate from northern and western European countries. This implies that we clearly need to increase our effort to recruit submissions from eastern and southern Europe.

What is ahead of us? We regard the years 2007 and 2008 (i.e. the fourth and fifth year of the journal) as very important to attain sustainable implementation of

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the EJA. This will need huge additional effort by us, the consulting editors and editorial board members, and Springer. In particular, we have to work hard to further increase the submission rate and improve the standard of the Journal. The conference of the European section of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) in St. Petersburg, 5–8 July 2007 (see announcement in EJA issue 4/2006), will provide an excellent opportunity to promote the Journal. As to contents, two special sections are being planned, one on the role of home visits and one on mental health and well-being in middle adulthood, which will appear at the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008. We have also invited scholars for reactions on papers in EJA's "Critical Positions in Ageing Research" section. As a beginning, a series of reactions on the article of Tesch-Römer and von Kondratowitz (2006) will appear in the journal. Our goal with this strategy is to nurture the discussion culture of the scholarly European ageing research community. In particular, cross-cultural

research is fundamental for European ageing research, but the theoretical, methodological and empirical challenges coming with this are still not well tackled. We hope that with our series of reactions papers on the Tesch-Römer and von Kondratowitz paper to bring this field a step ahead.

To close, there is much ahead of us, but we have in our view now clearly left the "beginning of the beginning" of the Journal behind us.

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