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A new ageing research journal: introducing the *European Journal of Ageing*

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Background

Research on ageing, education in gerontology, and evidence-based means to improve the lives of older individuals have grown considerably across Europe. National governments have recognised the need for scientific data that monitor the ageing population, and that guide policy measures. Moreover, since the 1990s the Framework Programmes of the European Commission have stimulated a series of cross-national research projects on ageing. These recently initiated studies use state-of-the-art concepts and methods, and many are characterised by a multidisciplinary approach. In short, European ageing research has not only increased in quantitative but also qualitative terms.

As a consequence, proper dissemination of the findings from European ageing research becomes of critical importance. A new scientific periodical would be highly instrumental to this purpose. For one, the concentration of major European scientific work on ageing in one journal will bring credit to the synergies among research groups which frequently is lost when their publications are divided across a variety of international journals. Second, a new European journal of ageing will contribute to improve the visibility and the impact of European ageing research at large and may thus fuel the European Commission's priority of making Europe a world force, also with respect to ageing research.

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The *European Journal of Ageing*

Against this background, we are happy and proud to introduce the first issue of a new ageing research journal, fully titled the *European Journal of Ageing: Social, Behavioural and Health Perspectives* (EJA). The mission statement developed for the EJA reads as follows:

The *European Journal of Ageing* is an interdisciplinary journal devoted to the understanding of ageing in European societies and the world over. It publishes original articles on the social, behavioural and health-related aspects of ageing and encourages an integrated approach between these aspects. Emphasis is put on publishing empirical research (including meta-analyses), but conceptual papers (including narrative reviews) and methodological contributions will also be considered. The *Journal* welcomes expert opinions on critical issues in ageing. By stimulating communication between researchers and those using research findings, it aims to contribute to the formulation of better policies and the development of better practice in serving older adults.

The EJA's focus on social, behavioural and health-related areas of ageing research entails a preference for papers simultaneously touching upon at least two of these areas. With the term 'social' is meant the full scope of social scientific ageing research from the micro- to the macro-level of analysis. With the term 'behavioural' the full scope of psychological ageing research including life span approaches based on a range of age groups from young to old is envisaged. The term 'health-related' denotes social-epidemiological and public health oriented research including research on functional health in the widest possible sense. The synergy envisaged among these priority themes accords well with a growing tendency in the field of ageing to build strong linkages between the

social, behavioural and health dimensions. Thus the EJA strives for multidisciplinary, however within a reasonably limited scope of disciplines. Considering the fact that in the European journal landscape excellent journals already exist that address issues of ageing in disciplines such as biology, geriatrics, geropsychiatry, neuroscience, occupational therapy and rehabilitation, we have decided not to encourage submissions from these fields, unless they show a clear overlap with the social, behavioural or health domains as defined for the EJA. The publication language of the EJA will be English (Fig. 1).

The ambition of the EJA is to provide a forum for high-level ageing research from Europe and from around the world. In order to achieve this aim it is an

absolute prerequisite to have an excellent team working together on all the major levels needed to make a scientific journal a success: providing advice on research themes and foci most important for the journal, developing a convincing format, setting up and maintaining a state-of-the art review procedure and promoting the journal wherever and whenever possible. To achieve this an outstanding board of consulting editors has been created (Fig. 2). From this place, we would like to thank our consulting editors very much for taking up this role. In addition, 35 scholars have agreed to serve as members of the editorial board of the EJA, and we are thankful and honoured to have such an outstanding selection of highly regarded colleagues supporting the EJA (Fig. 3).

Fig. 1 Background story on the “birth” of the EJA

It all began with an e-mail interchange around January 2002, in which – only as a side note – the idea of starting a new European ageing journal was brought up between us. For both of us, it was a secretly cherished but never expressed desire to be a journal editor. At this point in time, however, we both agreed that so many other important things waited to be done, but that the journal idea should be kept in our minds with an unspecified priority. But the journal virus was in us and became more and more virulent over time, all other day-to-day duties notwithstanding. It did not take very long until our “journal sickness” asked for more treatment. In a first attempt of self-treatment, we began to seriously consider the existing ageing research journal landscape world-wide and in Europe, even though we were already well-informed in this respect. Perhaps we still hoped to be cured by the simple insight that there already is a critical mass of aging journals on the European market and thus no need for another journal to be established. However, a detailed journal by journal analysis unambiguously revealed that this was not the case. Although we established that excellent European journals already exist on biology, geriatrics, and rehabilitation, this was not the case for an interdisciplinary journal focusing on ageing and the social sciences, psychology, and health sciences. After having obtained this insight, we also sought treatment from colleagues. But, once again, what we quite consistently heard was: “Continue!” Then, another event came up which further shaped our growing journal idea, i.e., the European Congress of Gerontology of the International Association of Gerontology in Barcelona in July 2003. We thought that this would be an ideal occasion to further challenge our idea and thus we prepared a little market survey and distributed our questionnaires among the interdisciplinary conference audience. An analysis of the responses showed that most respondents clearly supported the view that there is a need for a new European ageing journal with a broad social, behavioural and health-related scope (see below). And that this journal is needed *now*. From this time on, it became very obvious to us that we should not longer try to get cured from our journal sickness – and that we simply should accept and develop it the best we can. The outcome so far is the first issue of the EJA and, to be honest, we still cannot believe that our journal virus has carried us this far.

Responses to the questionnaire on the need for a new European journal on ageing: Aspects of ageing specified by respondents who indicated a preference for a new journal

Respondent	Combination of aspects of ageing
003	Social, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, community
004	Special issues on topics multidisciplinary contributions
005	Social science, health, geography, policy
007	Ageing and society in Europe
008	Sociology, psychology, health (social gerontology)
009	Social and behavioural gerontology, incl. public health and health systems research
012	Biomedicine
018	Bio-Psy-Social
020	Active and productive ageing
021	Physical activity, functional performance, health
024	Human ageing, interventions, processes of ageing, underlying environmental and individual factors
026	Medical anthropology, epidemiology, social gerontology, sociology
028	Social, health, policy

Fig. 2 Consulting editors of the EJA

Svein Olav Daatland, research professor, NOVA, Norway
 Prof. Rocio Fernández-Ballesteros, Autonomia University of Madrid, Spain
 Prof. Marja Jylhä, University of Tampere, Finland
 Prof. Pasqualina Perrig-Chiello, University of Bern, Switzerland
 Prof. Alan C. Walker, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

Last but not least, Springer-Verlag (Heidelberg, Germany) has agreed to serve as the publisher for the EJA. Thanks to Springer's enthusiastic and constructive response to our ideas and its state-of-the-art technical support, we have gained a very strong basis to start the EJA. In particular, Dr. Rolf Lange from the beginning provided us with his experience and good advice. Meanwhile, a EJA website has been opened on the Springer homepage (<http://www.springeronline.com>).

The EJA will be a periodical with initially four issues a year. The year 2004 will be an exception with only one

issue. Starting as early as possible was an important goal when the EJA was established. So, here we are.

On the first issue

It did not take us long to decide that a special issue on 'The Potential of Cross-European Studies of Ageing' would be an ideal one to start the journal off with. The number of just-completed or ongoing cross-European studies is so large that their results could

Fig. 3 Editorial board of the EJA

Social Sciences

Prof. Axel Börsch-Supan, Mannheim Research Institute for the Economics of Aging (MEA), Germany
 Prof. John Bond, University of Newcastle, United Kingdom
 Dr. Neena Chappell, University of Victoria, Canada
 Prof. Ruud Kempen, University of Maastricht, The Netherlands
 Prof. Kees Knipscheer, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
 Prof. Martin Kohli, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
 Prof. Ariela Lowenstein, The University of Haifa, Israel
 Dr. Heidrun Mollenkopf, German Centre for Research on Ageing at the University of Heidelberg, Germany
 Prof. Chris Phillipson, Keele University, United Kingdom
 Dr. Nardi Steverink, University of Groningen, The Netherlands
 Dr. Zsuzsa Széman, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Hungary
 Prof. Mats Thorslund, Stockholm University, Sweden

Behavioural Sciences

Prof. Dr. Manfred Diehl, University of Florida, Gainesville, U.S.A.
 Prof. Dieter Ferring, University of Luxemburg, Luxemburg
 Prof. Boo Johansson, Göteborg University, Sweden
 Prof. Andreas Kruse, Ruprecht-Karls-University of Heidelberg, Germany
 Prof. Frieder R. Lang, Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany
 Prof. Mike Martin, University Zürich, Switzerland
 Prof. Nancy Pedersen, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden
 Dr. Marc Roeland, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium
 Prof. K. Warner Schaie, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, U.S.A.
 Prof. Jacqui Smith, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, Germany
 Prof. Clemens Tesch-Römer, DZA German Centre of Gerontology, Berlin, Germany

Public Health / Health Services Research

Dr. Kristen Avlund, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
 Dr. Pascale Barberger-Gateau, University of Bordeaux 2, Bordeaux Cedex, France
 Prof. Sölve Elmståhl, Malmö University, Sweden
 Prof. Kenneth Ferraro, Purdue University, West Lafayette, U.S.A.
 Prof. Emily Grundy, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, United Kingdom
 Prof. Susanne Iwarsson, Lund University, Sweden
 Prof. Angel Otero, Autonomia University of Madrid, Spain
 Dr. Brenda Penninx, Department of Psychiatry, Vrije Universiteit Medical Center, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
 Dr. Jean-Marie Robine, Equipe Inserm Démographie et Santé, Montpellier Cedex, France
 Dr. Andreas Stuck, Zieglerspital Bern, Switzerland
 Prof. Gerdt Sundström, Institute of Gerontology, Jönköping, Sweden
 Dr. Katarzyna Szczerbinsak, University of Jagiellonski, Krakow, Poland

easily fill two issues. The studies that are reported on in this issue are necessarily a selection. We hope that this collection of articles does what we intend it to do: to show potential. By starting with cross-European studies we do not mean that the EJA is open only to cross-nationally collaborative research. Certainly the EJA welcomes submissions from stand-alone studies in single countries.

The articles in this issue are grouped in three sections. The first section titled 'Completed and Ongoing Cross-European Research: A Selection of Empirical Findings' includes seven contributions addressing a wide range of ageing-related issues. The base of these presentations is provided by major European research consortia, i.e. CLESA (Minicuci et al., 2004), ESAW (Ferring et al., 2004), EURODEP (Braam et al., 2004), FAMSUP (Glaser et al., 2004), FELICIE (Tomassini et al., 2004), MOBILATE (Mollenkopf et al., 2004) and OASIS (Motel-Klingebiel et al., 2004). All of these investigations strive for a cross-national European research perspective, while the set of countries involved is quite diverse from study to study. Under the second heading titled 'Challenges of Cross-European Research: Examples', the issue of achieving satisfactory validity and reliability in both survey research and qualitative research in a cross-national setting is treated based on the experiences of the European research consortia EN-ABLE-AGE (Iwarsson et al., 2004) and PROCARE (Billings, 2004). The third section titled 'Cross-European Network Building and Harmonisation of Educational Activities' opens the floor to two major thematic network initiatives (ProFaNE; Skelton et al., 2004; STELLA; Rudinger et al. 2004) and to the European Master Programme in Gerontology (EuMaG; Heijke, 2004). This section also includes a report on a meeting under the auspices of the European Association of Population Studies (EAPS) with representatives from a number of cross-European studies and networks (Glaser, 2004).

We believe that this special issue provides ample evidence for the notion that at present European ageing research in the social, behavioural and health area has much to offer. Findings with respect to cross-country similarities and differences in such diverse concepts as quality of life, social inequality, life satisfaction, depression, disability-free life expectancy, outdoor mobility, social relations and housing are presented side by side in this issue. On a higher level, then, this collection of articles has an added value analogous to single cross-national comparative studies. Where the research themes overlap, consistencies or discrepancies between studies can be noted. Consistencies will add to the scientific validity of the findings, discrepancies will show where further research is needed. While thus contributing to our evidence basis on ageing in Europe, the papers also make it very clear that cross-European ageing research is still struggling with major problems. Among these are making research designs and measurement instruments comparable across highly diverse countries, dealing with a diversity in research standards and

expertise, and the interpretation of similarities and differences in cross-national findings.

Future issues

It is our hope that forthcoming papers submitted to the EJA will contribute to the successful coping with these and other challenges. Also, it should be emphasised that the present special issue of the EJA was not planned to present cross-European research in a comprehensive manner. Of course, many more cross-European studies exist. Each collection of studies is almost by definition incomplete. We are happy to report that papers from other major research groups such as EUROFAMCARE and SHARE are being considered for publication in the EJA beginning with the first issue in 2005, forthcoming in March.

Special sections for the next three issues of the EJA have already been proposed. The first issue in 2005 will feature a section of contributions on 'Social Engagement and Health', based on various European studies. In this issue also a 'debating corner' will be launched, to stimulate debate on ageing beyond the confines of academia. Furthermore, special sections on 'Urban and Rural Ageing' and 'Intergenerational Relations' are in the preparatory stage for later issues in the year 2005.

A final word

A new journal will survive only when excellent research is submitted on a regular basis. This will become the most critical factor in the successful development of the EJA. That is, we need *your* input and willingness to submit to the EJA. We are looking forward to work with you in making the EJA a first-rate journal in its field as soon as possible.

Dorly Deeg and Hans-Werner Wahl
Editors-in-Chief

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