

Starting ISG

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V. Taipale, R. Pieper. Starting ISG. Gerontechnology 2007; 6(4):187. The background is elucidated of the foundation of the International Society for Gerontechnology in 1997.

Keywords: COST A5, gerontechnology, ageing issues

Ten years ago the International Society for Gerontechnology (ISG) was officially founded at the office of the public notary in Munich, Germany. The documents were signed by the undersigned: Vappu Taipale, the President of the Helsinki Conference, and first chair of ISG, and by Richard Pieper, the President of the Munich Conference. Here are the 'parents'!

The momentum of the signing was naturally only an administrative affair, albeit a solemn one. However, it had to be done in order to get an official status for our activities. Notaries are seldom any palaces, and the time needed for two signatures is just a short while.

More important was the background. The signing was preceded by an intensive discussion whether to start with an international society or different national ones. There were many memorable sessions of the COST A5 (Ageing and Technology) 'ingroup' where several dedicated persons, first and foremost Jan Graafmans and Herman Bouma, with us decided to move forward with the ISG.

The spirit of the time made us all convinced that the cause of gerontechnology would simply pick up speed very quickly.

It was clear that global ageing means millions and millions old people in need of support of their independent living, and gerontechnology would be just the competence in place. We anticipated that the world-wide society would be a fact within a few years in practically all European countries and then beyond in USA, Japan and elsewhere – forming an international community. There were of course national and cultural differences - especially between the Scandinavian, the US and the Japanese approaches, as reflected in the congresses following the foundation, namely Munich, Miami and Nagoya. But cultural differences are enriching and challenging the development of the ISG, as we are confident will be demonstrated again by the coming conference in Pisa.

The progress of ageing issues in world politics, national development or in the scientific community might not have happened quite as hoped or expected, but still we have a steady history of growth and development of themes and interests represented in the ISG. And the world around us needs this concept and knowledge – and above all the engagement of researchers and developers, and the involvement of older people in the design of their and our future environment!