

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS,

Anita Harting, the Netherlands, lobbyist of Wise Older Women.

Through her work with Dutch lobby group Wise Older Women (WOUW), Anita Harting witnessed an increasingly vocal leadership and international self assertiveness among older women has in the last decade. This movement has raised issues such as how dramatic population changes will result in growing numbers of older women leading increasingly longer and possibly solitary lives. These women are vulnerable to poverty and disabling chronic conditions such as osteoporosis and diabetes. So for Anita the importance of pensions and the battle

against poverty ranks very high. 'Many older women' and especially single older women suffer from a lack of proper social security.'

To raise such issues Anita joined the Amsterdam WOUW group in 1990 and in 1995 joined a delegation to Dublin where older women's groups had begun laying the foundations for the Older Women's Network (OWN) Europe.

'We wanted our own platform. Large international organisations, such as those lobbying in Brussels, rarely involved older women at the top or had insight into our experiences.'

OWN Europe has now grown with support from Wemos holding a conference on Older Women and Social Exclusion to mark the United Nation's 1999 Year of the

Older Person and firmly establishing its future.

Anita's work with WOUW has also involved lobbying the UN. In 1995 she was in Beijing to observe the UN's International Women's Conference and the debates over its Platform for Action. She believes older women have achieved an enormous amount of preparation, of consciousness raising. 'Nowadays older women feel more self confident to manifest their views. Previously there was little mention of issues such as population changes, today it is mentioned more and more.'

Crucial to her work has been the partnership with Wemos which has helped organise conferences and raise EU funding. 'We would never have been able to do these things without the collaboration of a large professional NGO with resources like Wemos, which because of its idealistic background also has a better understanding of the older women's movement.'

