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50 Years of Europe and Counting!



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When, on the March 27, 1957, France, Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy signed the Treaty of Rome for a European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), the basis of our European Union was thereby founded.

50 years later, the concept of an economic community has become a group of 27 states, which cooperate in new domains, such as domestic and foreign affairs. Despite cultural differences, linguistics, and traditions, this unity rests on common values: freedom, democracy, constitutionality, respect for human rights and equality before the law.

Europe has negotiated a major turn-around during this halfcentury: after a confrontation of states, it has evolved in the direction of a solid union.

These years have been positive for European citizens: after two world wars, we have lived for more than 60 years in a European Union in peace, which has brought prosperity as well as rapid development (economic and other) to numerous member states.

The dynamics of six enlargement phases, and the will to pool resources and to work together is reflected also at a more modest level: numerous hospital management associations were already members of the EAHM, despite the fact that their countries were not yet members of the EEC, the EC or the EU.

Such a collaboration does occasionally run into difficulties, generally caused by misunderstandings. The EAHM, as others, is confronted with the challenge of bringing members together and to demonstrate the advantages and the future, positives perspectives.

It is also important for the EU to explain - now, as always – its decisions which seem bureaucratic to its citizens and to explain to them the concrete benefits which a united Europe brings them.

This positive evolution for Europeans expanded into domains for which the EU had no direct jurisdiction, but their development is indirectly linked to the EU. Included in this is healthcare. Without the Union, not only it would be impossible to collaborate between countries in healthcare, but patients from one state would not be able to benefit from healthcare services in all European countries.

Now we need to spread the message. The quality of healthcare services must be defined at a European level, and may be enhanced by a reciprocal exchange of experience.

We, the hospital managers, must contribute and we can, by our leadership, progressively prepare our establishments for a European healthcare system.

Hospital management will occupy a central place in the development of the European healthcare economy, which represents one of the essential elements of the economic development of member states.

One can summarize the concept of future governance of European hospitals by a brief and expressive formula: a communal governance of health establishments by a partnership of decision-makers. The foundations of our European Association of Hospital Managers are built on this philosophy, in respecting the diversity of European healthcare systems.

One must hope that the first results of the European study on hospital governance, carried out in collaboration with HOPE, the European Hospital and Healthcare Federation, can influence the conception of European hospital governance of tomorrow. The results of the survey show numerous differences and similarities which exist between member countries of the EAHM.

It is in this context that the reflection on hospital governance in Europe will be reinforced at our next congress in Graz in 2008. European hospitals and healthcare will emerge stronger.

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