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### Interview: Heinz Kölking

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**Mr. Heinz Kölking, the new President of EAHM took some time to speak to (E)Hospital during the congress in Zurich. He talked about his objectives for the four upcoming years, highlighting that the association must work together to overcome the challenges facing our hospitals today.**

**(E)Hospital:** First of all, congratulations, you have been Vice-President for 4 years and now you are President of EAHM. What can we expect from the next 4 years?

**Kölking:** First of all, I have to say that because of the regular change of Vice Presidents and Presidents we are constantly evolving as an association, which is very important. Every new President elected gets the chance to set new directions and create new initiatives, and this is what I want to do.

**(E)Hospital:** The former President Paul Castel focused on the internal reorganisation of the association (such as the creation of the statutes), and on modernisation. What are your key objectives?

**Kölking:** Within the last few years, we have tried to regenerate the basic organisation and objectives of the association. This was necessary, from a juristic and formal perspective. An essential task, this was very hard and time consuming. As decided by the Board and the Executive committee, my focal point will be with regard to structure, which is essential as we are affected by an enormous change of structures in European hospitals. So I want to involve and realign the work of the association in this environment. Due to my own experiences I know that there is a lot of work to be done to ensure successful association activities. Not only because of our colleagues but also because of the basic conditions in which we are working.

**(E)Hospital:** So the focus for EAHM will be on the one hand the integration of the national associations and on the other hand the support of the work of Hospital Directors?

**Kölking:** Yes, exactly. We will also do some structural work on the basic conditions in cooperation with the national associations of hospital directors. However, the focus has to be on the level of the management and due to structural change there is a lot to do. We have to better organise the running of our hospitals so that we can cope with current challenges. Demographic change is putting pressure patient care and aging healthcare workforce is also of great concern. In addition to this, there is an economic pressure not only to ensure the quality, but also to improve it. Good management is required here, i.e. hospital directors who can form and develop new structures. This is the mission we have in Europe. Therefore we have to form a common commitment of hospital managers in Europe, i.e. a common idea of what hospital management should be. However, this is not just about technology but also about human resources management, and human resources management requires an idea of the targets of our social commitment.

**(E)Hospital:** Many people are saying that hospital directors are being overtaken by health managers as the most effective form of hospital management. What do you think about this idea?

**Kölking:** First of all I have to say that it is not possible for one person to take care of all management responsibilities. However, the top management, no matter if it consists of one, two or three people, has to have a comprehensive knowledge of the hospital system and the ability to organise the management successfully. The question if the manager should be an economist or a person in the medical profession is secondary; a manager should understand the way a hospital works and should be able to have empathy for employees and patients. If this is true, they can be a successful manager. There are many tools and training programmes for managers that we must standardise and pass on to colleagues. This is very important for the next generations of hospital managers.

**(E)Hospital:** How do you rate this year's congress, "Roadmap to Top Quality" in comparison to previous congresses?

**Kölking:** I don't think that it is necessary to compare congresses. The congress was, just like Graz, a highlight for our association and our work. I think that the colleagues in attendance will gain from the congress through the high quality presentations and exchange of experiences. The presentations have shown us the newest trends in quality management, highlighted the common problems we all have and indicated where we

can find proper solutions.

This year, the focus was rightly on quality. However, you can't see quality as a isolated factor but in connection with financial conditions. It is our challenge to find the perfect balance between quality and financial conditions to ensure the best healthcare for patients. All in all, the congress was excellent.

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