

## The Challenge of Change

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With the evolution of the European Union, we are witnessing a parallel, multidimensional process of structural change which has impeded the creation of a shared Europe. The failure of efforts to establish a European constitution and mounting scepticism among citizens about the direction in which the Union is moving are symptomatic of this trend. Structural changes stemming from globalisation and the enlargement of the EU to the east are the underlying reason for public dissatisfaction. Workers and skilled employees are being displaced across the Union as a result of the different economic fortunes of Member States and the ageing of the workforce.

It is appropriate, therefore, in this era of structural adjustment to review the workings of the European Union, while safeguarding the necessary advances proposed in the Constitution. It must be possible to streamline the text and facilitate more effective decision-making in the EU. Europe's external political profile must also be significantly enhanced, albeit in a manner that does not compromise the identity of the Member States.

The process of change poses a major challenge for the European Union and its Member States. While we should not dismiss the risks involved, where there are risks there are also opportunities. We must accept change and take a proactive role in creating a viable Europe, one which responds to changing circumstances.

The process of change is closely linked to the delivery of health services in European countries. Demographic developments place considerable pressure on solidaritybased social insurance systems, while offering medicine an opportunity to overcome the challenges of ageing. As people grow older, maintaining good health and mobility becomes increasingly important. For this reason, it is vital that the focus of medicine shifts towards preventive and curative measures to treat citizens and chronic diseases. The expansion of healthcare and growing innovation in this sector will also stimulate economic growth in Europe and its constituent parts.

Hospitals will have a special role to play in these developments, given their role, in partnership with industry, in fostering medical innovation. Moreover, they will be a crucial element in achieving progress towards integrated healthcare and the provision of services across the healthcare spectrum. Hospital managers have confronted this challenge by helping to shape change in hospitals and elsewhere. They work in their national associations to create the conditions that will ensure success in the future.

The European dimension is also crucial. Most national associations of hospital managers (currently 26) have banded together in the EAHM to meet the challenges confronting them and to develop and implement common strategies at European level.

*(E-)Hospital*, too, must adapt. The decision has been taken to cease publishing three distinct language versions. The decision was taken for economic reasons and will deliver greater efficiency and afford the *(E-)Hospital* team an opportunity to streamline our work on behalf of the EAHM. The EAHM (the Board, Executive Committee and Editorial Board) has agreed a new direction with the publisher and editorial staff.

The printed edition of *(E-) Hospital* will appear primarily in English, although abstracts of specialist articles, the editorial column and the EAHM news will continue to be published in English, German and French. Published articles will be made available as PDF files online in the original language of the author. The EAHM and *(E-) Hospital* ask readers for their understanding and call on national associations to support our new policy.

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