

WELCOME ADDRESS BY PROF. VARDAS

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the third Spring Summit meeting of our Association. I would like to give a brief presentation of the goals of this meeting and at the same time summarise EHRA's strategic policy and plans for the next four to eight years.

EHRA now has a six-year history. The construction of our Association, which I should remind you was the first of the ESC Associations to be developed, was certainly not an easy task. It was necessary to enlist colleagues, believers in the idea of a serious and large scientific union of European arrhythmologists, to devote valuable academic time, to win over the sceptics, and have sincere and extensive talks with many associates in the ESC countries, in order to lay the foundations and to build our Association.

The birth of EHRA was followed successfully by four other ESC Associations.

Here I would like to humbly remind you that the field of arrhythmias is a pioneering one. Indeed, the Europace conference was the first large scientific special event to be organised by the ESC, and already has a history going back more than thirty years, while the Europace journal was also the first ESC subspecialty journal by far.

The birth of EHRA arose as a historical, organisational and professional need, initially from the amalgamation of the two ESC working groups of pacing and arrhythmias.

An invaluable legacy of that effort was the General Assembly of National Delegates of the Working Group of Cardiac Pacing. Even today, that network still forms the backbone of our Association. By organising this annual meeting, whose main participants are the National Delegates, EHRA is aiming at a number of targets, of which the most important are the following:

- To help colleagues from all over Europe get acquainted and to contribute to a deeper understanding of the realities, difficulties, policies and plans of the National Working Groups.
- To set up a well organised workshop, focusing on topics of wider significance, such as this year's focus: "Inequalities in Healthcare in Europe – the Case of Arrhythmias".
- To promote the "multipolar" nature of the structure of EHRA.
- To bring together important stakeholders, such as politicians, health economists, industry, as well as arrhythmologists, who together can be the prime movers in the success of EHRA's mission.

There can be no doubt today, that the application of a long-term strategic plan, such as the one mapped out by the decisions of EHRA's Board, requires a multidisciplinary approach. EHRA's mission is summed up in a single phrase: To reduce the impact of sudden cardiac death in ESC member countries and to improve the quality of life of patients with arrhythmias.

The pursuit of this mission will involve dozens of projects and requires a strategic plan, with professionalism, vision, and continuity. This plan can be summarised as follows:

1. Harmonisation of education and training in our profession (core curriculum, syllabus, exams, accreditation) in ESC member countries. Uniform standards of education and training are just as much a necessity as are standards for laboratory procedures.
2. Recording of the realities in the field of arrhythmias in the ESC member countries, with a view to evaluating whether and how the ESC/EHRA Guidelines are being applied.
3. Prompt updating and adaptation of our strategic goals according to needs and to technological developments. e-Health and personalised healthcare are a good example.
4. Participation in collaborative networks at both the European and a more global level.

Indeed, EHRA's primary political plan, which is at the same time a scientific plan, seeks to promote our Association unceasingly as the undoubted leading organisation for arrhythmias in Europe and beyond. I am sure that a large number of colleagues, all of you here, are already fighting to achieve this goal. For this goal **can** be achieved!

Thank you.