

EAHP 2022 - Opening ceremony speech

András Süle dr. – President

Ladies and Gentlemen, esteemed guests, dear colleagues and friends,

This is a truly heartwarming moment to welcome you all, in person, to the 26th Congress of the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists. After 6 years, the Congress is back in Vienna, this precious gem of a city in the very heart of Europe. We are immensely grateful that you all could come and more than 2200 of you could spare the time and effort during these trying times to join the largest hospital pharmacy event in Europe.

This year's Congress marks three special anniversaries, making today a genuinely historic moment for our Association.

First and foremost, it was almost exactly 50 years ago on March 6th, 1972 in The Hague when a group of devoted hospital pharmacists from several European countries have decided to set the foundations of a European hospital pharmacy association. And soon, EAHP came to life and the first General Assembly was scheduled for 1973 to be held in Munich.

Unsurprisingly, EAHP (just like the world around us), has changed a lot since then. Now the association counts 35 members within the European Economic Area and also has Egypt as its first associate member beyond Europe as well. The team behind EAHP has also grown to support its continuous transformation into a comprehensive, scientific, educational, policy and advocacy body for our profession. It is, therefore, now the time to extend my nod of appreciation and sincere thanks to the Scientific Committee, its chairman Prof. Thomas de Rijdt and vice-chairman Gunar Stemer, all our working groups behind the steering wheel of our numerous projects and our project specialist Gonzalo Marzal, the Office with our events team and its leader Chris Irons, our accountancy and senior bookkeeper Patricia Thonus, our amazing policy & advocacy officer Stephanie Kohl, our awesome managing director Jennie de Greef, and of course, the whole Board of EAHP. All of you have my most sincere appreciation and I thank you for all your efforts and accomplishments.

Looking at the past couple of years of EAHP from my personal history's point of view, there are also a couple of notable coincidences, highlighting the year of 2012, where I first became involved in the workings of EAHP as a new delegate to its General Assembly, exactly 10 years ago. 10 years is also a rather long period and indeed, a lot has happened since then. Joke aside, these 10 years also saw the formulation of the European Statements of Hospital Pharmacy and EAHP's policy efforts becoming wrapped around their implementation.

Most of you know that our vision for the role of hospital pharmacists in healthcare is incorporated in the Statements. But they do not only represent our perspective on hospital pharmacy: both patients' and fellow healthcare professional organizations were involved in the consultation process from the very beginning all in order to seek their input and their endorsement.

Just like many other professional areas, hospital pharmacy practice is also highly diverse among our countries, with different emphasis on certain aspects of our activities. We are seeing regions with highly advanced clinical pharmacy services, some others with oncology pharmacy practice, and parts of Europe where compounding and aseptic procedures are exceptionally advanced. What EAHP set out for with the statements was to deliberately act in a future-proof and forward-thinking way. The goal was not to describe the present or the near future of the early 2010s, but to create an overarching compass to all of our countries and all of our healthcare systems, so that on the long run, via implementation, differences would smooth out and the profession could evolve along the same deep principles. Looking back at these past 8-10 years, it is exciting to remember how the Statements seemed a bit overly optimistic, or even outright far-fetched at first sight for many of us. And yet, as of now, clinical pharmacy services are blooming all over Europe, the cognitive services of pharmacists are getting recognized on a much broader scale, we are there to tackle shortages, participate in clinical trials, deal with vaccines and follow-up on our patients through different interfaces between levels of our healthcare systems to ensure their proper and seamless transition of care.

This clearly means that the Statements stood the test of time and they do work. They, however, do not work by themselves. They work because of you all. I would like to seize this opportunity to acknowledge and applaud all national associations, their implementation ambassadors and at most, all of you individual hospital pharmacists involved in the everyday practice of our precious profession. This project simply could never be successful without you and without your marvelous achievements.

EAHP keeps constantly exploring the opportunities to assist you with the implementation at national and hospital level. We support that on three levels:

- Gathering practical evidence and best practices
- Education
- Policy and advocacy efforts

And that brings us to the third, rather peculiar anniversary. It has been two years since we had the opportunity to meet up in person. And what two years those have been. It is by no means an understatement to say that these were (and I'm afraid, they still are) unprecedented times in our lifetimes.

Just like in the old Monty Python sketch in which whenever anyone pointed out that “Nobody expected the Spanish Inquisition”, the Spanish Inquisition would just rush in from the sidelines: no one would have expected such a broad, overwhelming, debilitating and crippling pandemic to happen in our lifetimes with such state-of-the-art healthcare systems in place. And yet, it happened. And it took its toll big time. Our hospitals went into overdrive, healthcare professionals, including hospital pharmacists did all they could to keep the pace and, preferably without burning out and yet, we have started to lose people and the death toll still keeps rising even as we speak.

I would just like to hope that they can look back on us right now, from wherever they are, and sigh with a slight relief that probably things slowly start to get better.

Sadly, however, I’m in doubt if they can hear us, as the rumble of tanks, guns, rockets of the aggressor and the painful cries of the victims are way, way too loud and way too sorrowful.

May we take a moment of silence for all our patients, colleagues, friends, relatives and neighbors whom we lost these past years.

Despite all the tragedies and suffering the pandemic has brought upon though, hospital pharmacy and hospital pharmacists have prevailed. We indisputably have secured our places within frontline healthcare teams. With the advent of new therapies and all the challenges that evidence-based medicine had to face, the changing roles of hospital pharmacy sped up, putting us behind the steering wheels of therapeutic decision-making, medicines procurement, management of shortages, antimicrobial and antiviral stewardship, and, most recently of all, vaccinations.

Looking back now, I am fully convinced that this evolution of our roles has been in the best interest of our patients and could serve as a new dawn for our position within healthcare systems where we not only focus on products, but equally on our patients as well.

Let us all prepare for our changing roles within this rapidly changing world. EAHP for sure is going to be there to support our profession fostering this shift towards cognitive pharmacy services. We are excited to see the European Council of Pharmacy Education Accreditation come to life, marking a new chapter for EAHP’s educational activities. With our Special Interest Groups we set up a new modality to facilitate multiprofessional and international collaboration in order to conduct research, develop guidelines and position papers. We are determined to reinforce EAHP’s policy and advocacy activities by engaging in an even closer collaboration with EU institutions. And last, but not least, we are determined to develop a

novel hospital pharmacy workforce planning policy agenda, in cooperation with European faculties of pharmacy, fellow pharmacy and student organizations in order to secure a sturdy foundation for our changing roles.

We are incredibly excited to show you all our perspectives on these topics and sincerely hope that our congress program will serve you all well and you all can find your personal daily doses of interesting thoughts, new achievements, inspiring debates and also some food for thought.

I wish you all a great time in Vienna!
Welcome to the Congress!