It is a great honor for me to have been given the opportunity to be President of ERA-EDTA. This important Society encourages information, teaching and research in the field of clinical nephrology, dialysis, renal transplantation and related subjects and reports advances in those fields.

The year 2011 very well matched these aims. Of note: during the first half of 2011 the ERA-EDTA President and Secretary-Treasurer were G. London (France) and A. Covic (Romania), who were succeeded only after the Prague congress by the current Secretary-Treasurer and President. I cannot therefore take credit of our successes for 2011 since much of the work was done by my predecessors – I do hope to continue their good work and keep the successes of our Society going in this growing positive trend.

The ERA-EDTA Congress in Prague was a substantial success. The meeting was for the first time since three years held by ERA-EDTA alone, in contrast to the two previous congresses, which were respectively organized in collaboration with the International Society of Nephrology (ISN – Milan) and the German Society of Nephrology (DGfN – Munich). 1,989 abstracts were received of which 132 were accepted as a free communication and 1,151 as a poster. The general scientific content was received very well. The Congress was attended by 7,826 colleagues from 126 different countries. Compared to the last Congress organized by ERA-EDTA alone which was in Stockholm, the number of participants increased by 14.5%. A substantial increase was observed in the participation from countries outside Europe, especially from the Arab and Asian regions. I would like to take advantage of the present report to thank all those who made the success of this event possible, beginning with V. Tesar, President of the Congress, I. Rychlich, Congress Secretary, and the Scientific Committee selecting an outstanding programme.

The still growing series of educational courses covering the whole of Europe as well as the countries bordering Europe and the Mediterranean Sea, are two other examples of our commitment towards education. The continued medical education (CME) activities, under the leadership of Goce Spasovski, in 2011 included a total of 35 very successful courses.

The fellowship programme offering opportunities for young researchers and clinicians to accomplish short or long stays abroad for extending their research or for learning new skills was also very successful with 41 applications submitted to the scientific advisory board (SAB) chaired by H. Murer. Of all the received applications in 2011, 11 long-term and 8 short-term fellowships were approved by the Council.

To encourage scientific activities, our Association launched the ERA-EDTA Research Programme of which the main purpose is to favor nephrologic research collaboration via large international networks throughout Europe. Like in 2010, also in 2011 three extended
research projects were accepted: 1. STARMEN – EUR 595,500.00 – coordinator Manuel Praga; 2. LUST – EUR 900,000.00 – coordinator C. Zoccali; 3. The EuroCYST Initiative – EUR 1,000,000.00 – coordinator A.L. Serra. Consequently, a total amount of EUR 2,495,500.00 was invested in European research, covering the broad field of nephrology. I would like to express my gratitude to Giovanni Cancarini as well as to all SAB members for their great efforts in the management of the fellowship and the research programs, because the process of judging all the submitted projects is delicate and time consuming.

In 2011 the ERA-EDTA also supported the activities of 4 Working Groups: 1. IWG - the Immunonephrology group chaired by R. Coppo; 2. EURECA-m which deals with the link between chronic kidney disease and cardiovascular disease and chaired by G. London (previously chaired by C. Zoccali); 3. EUDIAL, the work group on hemodialysis and related techniques led by B. Canaud; and 4. The WGiKD group on rare and inherited kidney disorders chaired by O. Devuyst. The Council recently decided to create a fifth work group, on transplantation, having D. Abramowicz as its chair, which is currently starting its activities.

In 2011, ERA-EDTA extended its international activities. Our collaboration with the International Society of Nephrology (ISN) was consolidated. The agreement to sponsor one or two fellowships presented to ISN by young nephrologists living in developing Countries of the ERA-EDTA area was changed into a permanent commitment for two long-term or four short-term fellowships. In addition, it was decided to sponsor together with ISN not only common CME courses in the ERA-EDTA area, but to add two CME courses to be held outside of the ERA-EDTA area in emerging countries, preferably in countries with non English speaking background.

In addition, also the contacts with the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) were started again and, as a first step it was decided to exchange speakers at the mutual congresses from 2013 onwards and to merge the glomerulonephritis databases from the two continents.

At the congress in Prague the first contacts were also made with the colleagues of the Chinese Society of Nephrology, and these contacts will further develop in 2012.

Other initiatives are considered in this area and are currently being discussed by the Council. These will include also a renovation of the contacts with the European national societies. ERA-EDTA also gives special grants for young presenters at national society meetings: these include free ERA-EDTA membership for three years as well as a free congress registration for one of our meetings.

ERA-EDTA has also started more in depth contacts with European Union. We are part of the European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA) together with the ISN, the International Federation of Kidney Foundations (IFKF), the European Dialysis and Transplantation Nurses Association / European Renal Care Association (EDTNA/ERCA) and the European Kidney Patients’ Federation (CEAPIR). The intention is to make renal diseases and their consequences more visible to the European Union, and its administrators as well as its politicians, so that more European support is offered for research and other kidney related initiatives. We are grateful to N. Lameire and Y. Pirson for their help in making this possible.

To attract young nephrologists, as well as to help nephrologists from low income countries, our Society continues to offer reduced membership fees to those members; the council is working on an extension of this initiative to include members from all over the
world. Travel grants are offered, throughout the year, to young nephrologists both to participate in our annual Congress as well as to participate in our CME Courses – a total of 105 grants were given in 2011.

Since 2010 the activities of the Society are crosschecked by the ERA-EDTA Ethics Committee, chaired by J. Bernheim. We are grateful for their many useful suggestions. In 2011, the ERA-EDTA Awards were granted, for the first time, during the opening ceremony of the Prague congress. The first awardees were N. Lameire, E. Ritz and S. Shaldon. The Council is working on an approach whereby more targeted groups would be awarded, e.g. young and senior researchers, or colleagues who had a specific impact on the history and development of ERA-EDTA.

With regard to the two ERA-EDTA journals, Nephrology Dialysis and Transplantation (NDT) and NDT-Plus, 2011 was characterized by a partition of the two editorial boards, essentially to obtain an impact factor for the latter journal. C. Zoccali became Editor-in-Chief of NDT and succeeded N. Lameire who was nominated Editor Emeritus by the Council. A. Meyrier was nominated Editor-in-Chief of NDT-Plus. In addition, it was decided to change the name of NDT-Plus into Clinical Kidney Journal (CKJ) which became effective starting February 2012. We wish to thank the editors and the editorial boards for their continuous efforts to improve the standard of both journals. Our special gratitude also goes to P. Stenvinkel for his efforts in keeping our electronic educational journal (NDT-Educational) up to date as well as intellectually and visually attractive.

The ERA-EDTA Registry, under the leadership of C. Wanner and K. Jager, has continued to offer essential epidemiologic and statistical information about kidney disease in Europe, and has been essential, for quite a few years now, in generating scientific information about these issues, in communications at congresses as well as publications in peer reviewed journals.

The European nephrological guidance body, which changed its name in 2008 from European Best Practice Guidelines (EBPG) to European Renal Best Practice (ERBP), remained active in producing position statements and in the preparation of their first larger guidance documents (one on crush in disasters chaired by M. Sever; one on the preparation for transplantation chaired by D. Abramowicz and P. Cochat; and one on hyponatremia chaired by G. Spasovski). Since June 2011, the ERBP advisory board is coordinated by W. Van Biesen.

In 2011, ERA-EDTA started allotting the title of Fellow of ERA (FERA) to colleagues who fulfilled the necessary criteria. In 2011, 87 people received this affiliation, but the society is currently actively working on extending this group. The full regulations regarding who is eligible for this title will soon be available on our web-site.

Finally, the Council also decided to involve more actively the group of young nephrologists and young researchers in nephrology in its activities. To allow this, a “Young Nephrologist Platform” will be created under the coordination of the Secretary Treasurer, A. Wiecek. ERA-EDTA is currently working on a structural outline of this body and its duties.

Hence, the Society is very active in many areas, with the intention to propagate scientific and clinical progress and visibility of European nephrology. A lot of structural changes are being accomplished which need to be condensed in tenable and foolproof regulations.
Also this has taken a big deal of work and time from a large number of people in 2011. All this would be impossible without the efforts of many. My special thanks go to all officers and ordinary council members, as well as to the staff of the ERA-EDTA administrative office, for their continuous involvement and participation in the many activities of ERA-EDTA.

Best wishes.

Raymond Vanholder
ERA-EDTA President