On 12-13 October 2013, the ERA-EDTA National Societies’ Meeting took place in Würzburg, Germany. Twenty-five national societies were represented at the meeting, which according to Prof. Raymond Vanholder, the President of ERA-EDTA, was a definite success and a promising kick-off for more intensive collaboration between the ERA-EDTA and the national societies.

But what was the aim of this particular meeting? As Prof. Vanholder pointed out, “The ERA-EDTA is a big association, we now have nearly 7,000 members, but to become politically even stronger and to promote kidney health in Europe and increase the standard of care, more members would be desirable”. The idea behind the meeting, which was initiated and chaired by Prof. Christoph Wanner and Prof. Ziad Massy, was to increase the activity of the national societies and their willingness to encourage their members to become ERA-EDTA members. “The ERA-EDTA offers a lot to the national nephrological societies and is therefore an attractive partner. We want to discuss how the ERA-EDTA and the national societies can inspire each other and how we can utilise synergies”, commented Prof. Wanner.

Under the banner “What ERA-EDTA can do for you”, various programmes, initiatives and ideas were presented and discussed that could be of importance for the national societies and which could support them in various ways. “It is not only the question of how to raise financial support, although that, too, is important. The really critical questions for the future are how kidney health can be better positioned within medicine and health economics and how to attract young academics to this field of medical specialisation”. In this we need to act in concert and share important information.

- The European Fellowship Diploma in Nephrology
  Prof. Jorge Cannata-Andia, Spain, presented the initiative of the UEMS (European Union of Medical Specialists) aimed at harmonising nephrology training in the European Union and at establishing a European Fellowship Diploma in Nephrology (Development of Renal Specialty Certificate Examination (SCE)): nephrologists from all countries could take an examination which has been adapted by the Royal Colleges of Physicians (UK), and thus prove that they meet European standards. This European exam is optional and does not replace the exam in the country the student comes from or has studied in, but is an additional qualification which would help nephrologists find a job in another country.

National societies should draw their members’ attention to this!

- The European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA): Brining Kidney Topics into Horizon 2020
  Prof. Norbert Lameire gave a picture of the EKHA, a non-profit organisation representing the key stakeholders in kidney health in Europe. Its aim is to reduce the burden of kidney disease in Europe. A very important target group for the EKHA is the European Parliament, for which the EKHA’s “Member of European Parliament (MEP) Group” for Kidney Health was specifically formed. Its objectives are to act as a hub for exchanging information and data on kidney health and the burden of disease, to support the development and implementation of targeted EU policies and to address specific EU recommendations and national policies which have an impact on the lives of kidney patients. Lobbying is considered a vital factor in this regard, but EKHA has only a very limited budget. The MEP programme has also been created to link national activities to EU activities, thus giving national societies a direct link to EU health policy.

Another focus of the EKHA is to collaborate with the European Commission. The EKHA met in April with officials from the European Commission’s “Directorate General (DG) Research” to promote the inclusion of kidney disease in calls for proposals under “Horizon 2020”. The officials from DG Research gave an overview of the EU-funded projects addressing kidney disease: in the framework of FP7, approx. EUR 118 million was allocated to kidney research. Horizon 2020 is the successor to FP7, but the research topics in calls for proposals under Horizon 2020 will be much broader and will allow for a multitude of disciplines to work together in consortia. Projects should be horizontal, integrated, multidisciplinary, multinational and have European added-value, rather than being narrow in scope or disease-specific. “EKHA members should therefore start thinking about broader projects for potential projects that will respond to
the major requirements of Horizon 2020”, Prof. Lameire pointed out. A first deadline for proposals/grant requests is mid-March 2014.

The EKHA also tries to bring value to the national level. In mid-September this year, a survey was sent out that seeks to understand the needs of national societies. Whoever has not received the survey should contact the ERA-EDTA headquarters.

- How clinical research can be strengthened in Europe: an umbrella strategy?

The host of the meeting, Prof. Christoph Wanner, discussed the extent to which ERA-EDTA could serve as an umbrella for various research projects in different countries. So far, ERA-EDTA has provided many research, education and teaching programmes and has given grants to clinical research projects such as VITA-VASK Study, STARMEN, 4C Study, VALIGA, LUST or The EuroCYST Initiative. More than one hundred researcher are now working on these projects, some of whom are organised in ERA-EDTA working groups, but they may also form a nucleus for further research work and apply together for European projects like “Horizon 2020”.

As Prof. Wanner pointed out, the ERA-EDTA together with the National Societies could form an umbrella for these projects. The ERA-EDTA is prepared to provide an efficient and functioning infrastructure, e.g. the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), which also issues recommendations on the ERA-EDTA’s funding of projects, the work groups, the website, the press office, and the possibility of publishing in high-impact journals (like NDT). The ERA-EDTA Registry and the European Renal Best Practice Board can also be used as support teams and last, but not least, there is the Annual Congress to support networking. In this context, Prof. Wanner noted that eastern European countries are still under-represented in working groups and with regard to congress contributions. “We therefore have to work at bringing colleagues and researchers from these countries onto the stage.”

National societies from Eastern Europe should make visible potential young speakers from their country in preparation for the 2015 Congress in London.

- The Young Nephrologists Platform (YNP)

Prof. Andrzej Wiecek gave a comprehensive overview of the work of the YNP. Its main objective is to invite young nephrologists to different activities of the ERA-EDTA and to give them an opportunity to work together, share experience and influence the association from the perspective of the younger generation. The YNP has created a special junior membership category with a reduced ERA-EDTA membership fee (from January 2014: 35 EUR) that includes free online access to NDT and CKJ.

The ERA-EDTA also supports young nephrologists by offering Young Fellowships (long- and short-term), which can be applied for twice a year. In addition to that, each national society can award an ERA-EDTA grant to the young nephrologists who submitted the best abstract to the national congress. This grant includes three years’ free ERA-EDTA membership, plus one free congress registration. Since 2011, the ERA-EDTA Stanley Shalndon Award for Young Investigators has been conferred for outstanding scientific achievements on young investigators. The awardees receive EUR 10,000, plus three years’ free ERA-EDTA membership. ERA-EDTA also grants free memberships for end-of-CME test scores and offers travel grants and free congress registrations for young people. National societies should draw the attention of their young members to these funding programs and grants!

- Free online access to NDT and CKJ for members of national societies

Prof. Markus Ketteler introduced an idea of special collaboration between the ERA-EDTA and the national societies following the “Italian Model”: in return for registering 60 new ERA-EDTA members (equivalent to 5% of the Italian society’s members) for two years, all members of the Italian society receive free online access to NDT and CKJ (a print subscription is not included). If a national society is interested in a good deal like that, contact the ERA-EDTA’s headquarters!

- ERA-EDTA Registry: implementation of new PRD - primary renal disease - codes

Prof. Christoph Wanner drew attention to the new PRD codes that have been published in a free booklet. It is available on request from k.j.jager@amc.uva.nl or eracoding@amc.uva.nl, or can be downloaded from the website. Get yourself a copy!

- Involvement in the life of the Association

Last, but not least, Prof. Ziad Massy appealed to the representatives of the national societies who were present in Würzburg to become more active and involved in the ERA-EDTA, for example by participating in the General Assembly, submitting candidacies to become Council members or by joining working groups. ERA-EDTA Members should seize these opportunities!
Over 7600 delegates coming from 127 countries attended the 2013 ERA-EDTA Congress, held in Istanbul on May 18-21 2013, and took advantage of a high quality and varied programme which incorporated the latest developments and ideas in basic, translational and clinical science.

Shortly after the meeting ERA-EDTA circulated an electronic congress feedback questionnaire aimed at collecting impressions, suggestions and remarks related to this event.

Not only the results of the survey provided the Association with very useful information aimed at improving the quality and the organization of future congresses, but the completion of the questionnaire was also linked to a very important initiative, named Altruistic Support by Questionnaire (ASQ), that will help young doctors living in developing countries to attend the ERA-EDTA Congress in Amsterdam next year!

Considering the number of completed feedback questionnaires, during last meeting held in Würzburg, the ERA-EDTA Council decided to offer 4 grants to presenting authors (younger than 45) of accepted abstracts coming from developing countries (annual GDP < USD 10,000 a year).

The grant consists in a flat fee (calculated considering the country of residence of the winner) that is meant to cover travelling, board and living costs to travel to the Congress. Each grant also includes a free registration for 51st ERA-EDTA Congress in Amsterdam.

The selection of the winners will be performed by the Chairman of the ERA-EDTA Paper Selection Committee taking into consideration the following parameters: quality of the abstract, age of the presenting author, the GDP of the country of residence and, finally, an equal geographical distribution of the grants.

We warmly invite young doctors, especially those living in developing countries, to submit an abstract for the upcoming ERA-EDTA Congress in Amsterdam. The deadline for abstract submission is January 24, 2014. For further information visit www.era-edta2014.org (section TRAVEL GRANTS).
An Exciting New Season of CME Activities

From Jorge B. Cannata-Andia, Chairman, on behalf of the ERA-EDTA CME Committee

Continuous medical education (CME) has been a priority for the ERA-EDTA throughout the last decade. In order to increase this programme, the ERA-EDTA has worked on two different levels. First of all a CME Committee was created in 2002; this committee was first chaired by Prof. Rosanna Coppo and, in 2009 and up to May 2013, by Prof. Goce Spasovski. Secondly, in 2009, the ERA-EDTA decided to be more actively involved at the European Union level and decided to appoint a Chairman to the Renal Section and Boards of the European Union of Medical Specialties (UEMS).

As a result of these initiatives, the CME activities experienced an important growth: in fact, in 2002 the ERA-EDTA supported 4 CME Courses, while, in 2013, almost a decade later, 31 CME courses were or will be held in 18 different European and Mediterranean countries. The expansion of the ERA-EDTA CME activities continues (see figure 1), in fact the ERA-EDTA Council has recently approved 34 CME Courses for 2014 to be held in 19 different European and Mediterranean countries. The topics of the ERA-EDTA CME courses for 2014 cover a wide range of areas of Nephrology, most of them are clinically orientated but always aiming at covering translational aspects of Nephrology.

These 34 CMEs include, among others, 14 CME courses organised by the ERA-EDTA itself, alone or in collaboration with other scientific societies and working groups - see list below.

**Figure 1. Distribution of the 2014 ERA-EDTA CME Courses throughout Europe and Mediterranean country**

As figure 1 shows, the ERA EDTA CME Courses are spread throughout the ERA-EDTA geographical area. However a priority for ERA-EDTA is to know the regional needs for this kind of activity. To know more about these different needs, the ERA-EDTA CME Committee recently circulated a survey which was however answered in an heterogeneous way (see figure 2). The Association considers this type of information as extremely important to meet the different geographical demands, thus the ERA-EDTA CME Committee is planning to insist on this aspect to obtain more information from Europe and the Mediterranean countries.

All these successful activities are achieved thanks to the effort of many people, but mainly the ERA-EDTA CME Committee and the ERA-EDTA Headquarters. The former has been recently renovated, Professors Goce Spasovski, Ivan Rychlik and Meguid El-Nahas have stepped down and Professors Halina Resic, Laszlo Rosivall and Elena Zakhara have been elected as new members. I would like to thank those who have left for the great work done and those who are joining the Committee for accepting this new challenge. I also would like to thank the secretarial help of Valentina Cocchi, Monica Fontana Faughnan and Anna Maria Manara for their work in supporting the ERA-EDTA Educational programmes.
The European Kidney Health Alliance is an alliance of non-profit organizations representing all key stakeholders in kidney health in Europe. These organizations are: the European Kidney Patients’ Federation (CEAPIR), the European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses/ European Renal Care Association (EDTNA/ERCA), the European Renal Association – European Dialysis and Transplant Association (ERA-EDTA), the International Federation of Kidney Foundations (IFKF), and the International Society of Nephrology (ISN).

There are now also two national associate members: the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Nephrologie and the Sociedad Española de Nefrologia.

EKHA articulates its **mission** around five fundamental objectives:

1. Raising awareness of the importance of kidney health and of the need for action to improve the early detection of chronic kidney disease so that preventative strategies can be introduced to minimise its consequences.
2. Promoting a uniformly high standard of care for those with kidney disease throughout Europe by developing consistent strategies for educating and training throughout the EU.
3. Supporting the development of novel strategies and therapeutic approaches for the detection and management of kidney disease through research and its translation into clinical practice.
4. Cooperating with EU health organizations addressing areas linked to kidney disease.
5. Facilitating exchange of information between the European Kidney Community, the EU institutions and organizations in charge of health policy throughout the EU.

In addition, EKHA is an important partner in the European Chronic Disease Alliance. Working in partnership in the fight against chronic disease, the European Chronic Disease Alliance is calling for an EU strategy on chronic disease. EKHA indeed emphasizes the message at the level of the EU that chronic kidney disease (CKD) is both a cause and consequence of many other chronic non-communicable diseases because it acts as a risk multiplier, is associated with high health-care costs, and is easily identified, while early detection and appropriate treatment of CKD improves outcomes and, at the same time, contains costs.

At a recent meeting with the presidents and/or leaders of several national nephrology societies organized by the ERA-EDTA Council, I had the opportunity to present the activities of EKHA in terms of our interaction with the EU Parliament via members of the MEP Group for Kidney Health, and the EU Commission, particularly DG Health & Consumer. I also emphasised the inter-relationships between EKHA, ERA-EDTA and the national societies of nephrology.

Most notable to national societies are upcoming opportunities for EU research funding via two major programmes. The first is the European public health programme:

**Health for Growth – Annual Work Plan 2014**

This new health programme is designed to help EU countries respond effectively to economic, demographic and social challenges facing their health systems and to enable their citizens to stay healthy for longer. The programme will seek to:

- Make healthcare services more sustainable and encourage innovation in health
- Improve public health
- Pool knowledge and best practice between EU countries to address common problems

A call for proposals for projects under the Public Health Programme is launched every year. The next call for research proposals will come in early 2014, and deadlines to submit are generally 3 months after the calls are launched. EKHA will ensure ERA-EDTA members receive the relevant information as soon as it becomes available.

The second major programme is:

**Horizon 2020 – EU Framework Programme for Research & Innovation**

Horizon 2020 is the European grant and subsidy framework for Innovation and Research & Innovation. Running from 2014 to 2020 with a €70 billion budget across all sectors, Horizon 2020 will focus on stimulating Excellence in Science and Tackling Societal Challenges and will encourage academia, industry, and small and medium-sized enterprises to work together in collaborative projects to this end.

Horizon 2020 is currently still passing through the normal EU legislative procedure and the following timeline is foreseen:

- Vote on Horizon 2020 in the European Parliament: October/November 2013
- Adoption by the Council of the EU: November/December 2013
- Adoption of work programme and publication of first calls for proposals: 11 December 2013

Deadlines to submit proposals for research and requests for grants are generally 3 months after the calls are launched, so EKHA would encourage ERA-EDTA members to start thinking now about possible research projects so that they will be ready to draft a proposal as soon as the calls are launched. EKHA will ensure ERA-EDTA members to receive the details as soon as they become available.

For more information please contact info@ekha.eu
From Daniel Abramowicz, Chairman of the Descartes Working Group

Membership status
Since the first newsletter in February 2013, the number of ordinary members of the Descartes working group has increased to 393.

Cooperation between Descartes and the ESOT Kidney Committee
The Descartes working group and the ESOT kidney Committee (www.esot.org/OrganizationChart/KidneyCommittee.aspx) had a two day meeting in Fulpmes (Austria) March 7-8, 2013. The discussions were very open and fruitful and a major statement from the meeting was that both groups were in favour of a close collaboration with the ultimate scope of becoming the joint leading network for research and educational activities in Europe for kidney transplantations. Providing the medical community guidance on the treatment of patients and standards of healthcare as well as pushing the authorities to allot more funding for research in the field of transplantation was seen as other goals that could be achieved by this collaboration. Relating to research, the trial in the elderly (see below) was presented to the ESOT Kidney committee by Descartes and it was decided to continue this as a joint venture between the two groups. The ESOT kidney committee presented an update on the HESPERIS course and it was decided to investigate if it would be possible to make this a common task in the future.

ERBP guideline on transplantation
The European Renal Best Practice (ERBP) under the auspices of the ERA-EDTA has prepared guidelines concerning the evaluation and preparation of donor and recipient of a kidney transplant, in the pre-transplant and peri-operative period. During the spring of 2013 members of ERA-EDTA as well as members of the Descartes working group were invited to review these guidelines. A total of 675 experts responded to this call and the guidelines have now been finalized and are to be published in the near future. The Descartes Board wishes to thank all Descartes working group members participating in the review process for their valuable collaboration.

Scientific activities
The Descartes initiative on a pan-European trial on optimizing the immunosuppressive therapy after kidney transplantation in the elderly was conceived in the autumn of 2012. Since then progress has been very fast. As already mentioned the study is now proceeding as a joint venture with the ESOT Kidney Committee. A major obstacle to such a study, the funding, seems to be manageable as the study synopsis has received very good reviews from major potential sponsors. At present Descartes is funding the writing of the detailed protocol, and the more detailed planning of logistic and economical aspects of the study is on-going.

The Descartes initiative on operational tolerance starting with a survey in European centres is proceeding as planned. The first step was to approach the group from Nantes (Sophie Brouard and Magali Giral) well known for their research in this field. This approach has been successful, and the study is now proceeding as a joint Descartes/Nantes initiative. At present work is done to launch a survey to define the prevalence of tolerant and nearly tolerant patients across Europe. The intention is that this mapping can be the basis for further investigations based on biological material from these patients.

Educational activities
The ERA-EDTA Istanbul Congress 18th-21st of May 2013 included a full-day Descartes-ESOT CME course with 4 separate sessions (Transplantation in children; How to improve the renal transplant activity in Europe; How to improve long term graft function; Problematic patients in transplantation list: planning the strategy) as well as a joint ESOT-Descartes symposium (Pre-emptive and living kidney transplantation list: planning the strategy) as well as a joint ESOT-Descartes symposium (Pre-emptive and living kidney transplantation: the way to improve patients outcome?). Both the CME session and the symposium were well attended with an average of approximately 150 participants for each of the 5 sessions.

Recent events related to Descartes
During the ESOT Congress in Vienna, 8th-11th of September 2013 a joint Descartes-ESOT symposium was organized on Sunday 8th. The 10th Transplant Academy was scheduled instead for Friday 15th of November 2013 in Amsterdam. The Academy carries on a tradition of science focused presentations by a select panel of expert speakers complemented by hands-on interactive workshops.

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Editor-in-Chief: Andrzej Wieczek
Co-Editor: Mehmet Sukru Sever
Managing Editor: Silvia Menoni
Graphic design: Gianluca Evangelista

ERA-EDTA
c/o ERA-EDTA Administrative Office
Via Spolverinì 2
43126 Parma - Italy

www.era-edta.org