

Letter from the President

Zagreb, 20 March 2019

Dear EEBA Member,

It is my great pleasure to address you as the new EEBA President, and to present you with my vision for the three years of my Presidency. I would like to express my gratitude to the Immediate Past President John Armitage for his achievements in the development of the Association, and I warmly welcome Philip Maier, as the recently elected Vice President, who will succeed me as EEBA President in February 2022.

Over the past few years EEBA has increased its influence with European regulators, such as the European Commission and the Council of Europe, supported new eye bank funding initiatives to promote the transfer of knowledge, facilitated the implementation of the Single European Code; and most importantly *“provided tissues and cells of optimum quality and safety for transplantation”*, thus helping restore vision to many European patients.

Some of the key issues that I would like to see addressed in the future by the Association are:

1. **Revision and update of data in the EEBA Annual Directory.** The Directory, recently transformed from being a “printed” paper document into a web-based electronic edition, remains the principal “representative of our Association”, a fundamental document that for almost three decades has collated data on eye banking activities in Europe. We should all be grateful to Andrea Gareiss-Lok, Claus Dieter Lok, Gary Jones and John Armitage for their efforts in maintaining this important register and for seeking to review and reorganize the data set that is collected for the Directory. It is vital that we finalize in the near future this revision and update so that we can publish a meaningful core data set in our Directory, ensuring that it remains a relevant and useful resource for both EEBA Members and other interested parties.
2. **Support for “pre-cut” tissue preparation in European eye banks.** Notwithstanding the fact that many European eye banks already prepare good quality “pre-cut” tissues for both DSAEK and DMEK surgeries, it should be our goal to foster the increasingly vital role of eye bankers who have the responsibility of having a “part of the surgery” in their hands. Pre-cut tissue prepared in the eye bank can decrease the number of accidental tissue-loss in the operating room and thus increase the availability of donor corneas in Europe. We must bear in mind that in many European countries there is still a shortage of donor tissue and therefore any improvements in tissue preparation and distribution will help to increase the number of corneal grafts performed in Europe, fulfilling the needs of our patients and respecting the gift of donation entrusted to us by our donor families.
3. **Development and promotion of good practice guidelines for corneal donation.** Our Association should renew its efforts in elaborating and disseminating good practice guidelines for corneal donation and to continue to keep our **Medical and Technical Standards** constantly updated in order to keep pace with the many changes that are occurring in the day-to-day practices within European eye banks.

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4. **Cooperation with scientific and regulatory EU organizations.** In recent years, EEBA representatives have worked hard to develop links with the leading EU regulatory and scientific authorities, so much so that today the Association is recognised as a prime stakeholder on issues concerning EU tissues and cells legislation and a valuable associate for other allied scientific associations and organizations seeking prospective partners. This close **cooperation with scientific and regulatory EU organizations** should be maintained and fortified whenever and wherever possible. The presence of our Association at some of the key ophthalmology gatherings, such as EUCornea and SOE, should also be maintained through the organization of EEBA-led symposiums in order to advance our cooperative links with corneal surgeons.
5. **Annual EEBA Meetings.** The holding of the Annual EEBA Business and Scientific Meeting, which has traditionally been held in mid-January, quite often results in travel problems for some EEBA participants. To this end, I suggest that we re-examine the possibility of moving this Meeting to mid-March or April when winter is over and accommodation prices are still at low-season rates. Such a shakeup, naturally, would entirely depend on the wishes of EEBA members!

I am truly honoured to have been elected as EEBA President for the second time, and I take this opportunity to thank the EEBA Membership for once again placing their trust in me to serve them and our Association! The *European Eye Bank Association*, even though it is a professional technical-scientific society, still manages to kindle the spirit of friendship and to foster reciprocal support arrangements between its member eye banks and eye bankers, and this is the value that I appreciate most and this is the spirit that I would like to keep alive for future days. During my Presidency, I would be happy to receive comments, assistance, complaints and praises for decisions made by the EEBA Committee and myself, so that every EEBA Member feels involved in the development and future of our Association.

Yours sincerely,



Iva Dekaris
EEBA President



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