



Dear ESPES Members,
Dear colleagues and friends,

The 2020 has been a particular year. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many changes and restrictions that in one way or another have forced us to modify our professional and personal life. In order to protect the others and ourselves, besides to wear continuously a mask, we are obliged to keep a safe distance and to stay a part from our relatives and friends. We canceled our joint meeting in Vienna (ESPES/IPEG/EUPSA) previewed last June, we canceled many other congresses, courses and workshops and we stop traveling. Instead, many of us were concentrating our professional activities dealing with the Pandemic in our hospitals. Some others have faced different experiences and consequences, particularly for those friends and colleagues that unfortunately have lost a member from their family or a closest friend due to this situation, we send them our sincere condolences.

Many things have change, but as behind any problem there is an opportunity, this pandemic have also forced us to find and develop new strategies in order to continue to keep our Society moving on. Thanks to the kind support of Prof. Jacques Marescaux with his IRCAD team, as well as the commitment of Prof. Philippe Montupet (congress chairman) and all members of the ESPES EB, the speakers and all participants we were able to perform our 1st E-Congress (X ESPES Congress) last September in Strasbourg, France with great success, at zero cost and free for all participants. There were 444 connections to the IRCAD platform from 78 different nations all around the world and 197 additional participants in YouTube live. The replay of the congress online will be available for one year (so far 549 visits in YouTube), you can find the access link in our ESPES website (www.espes.eu). We were able to have a short General Assembly where we informed the current financial and membership status and announced the next XI ESPES Annual Congress in September 15th-17th 2021 in Lugano Switzerland. We introduced the new H. Secretary in the Executive Board, Dr. Maude Lindeboom from Netherlands, and we took the opportunity to thank Dr. Isabela Draghici for her great commitment with the Society in the past 3 years.

Since October, the ESPES EB is working hard with the organization of our next XI ESPES Annual Congress and to create new projects. By mid-January 2021 the abstract submission and early registration will be open. We really hope that the Pandemic situation will be under control by September in order to allow us to meet in Lugano, Switzerland.

ESPES is continuously interested in supporting European and non-European countries in teaching and spreading excellence in pediatric MIS. As part of the new projects, we have created in the EB the ESPES ped-LAP (Pediatric Laparoscopic African Project) a virtual Master that will be target to improve training and knowledge in pediatric MIS to different African Countries. This online course will be also open to other non-African countries and members and non-members of ESPES. You will find additional information in our ESPES website. Moreover, we continue to develop the project of the ESPES E-Learning platform that Henri Steyaert and the EB members started at the beginning of this year. Special thanks to all members of the Executive Board for their great job and their continuous support and commitment with ESPES.

For 2021 there will be also the call to candidatures for new President elect and 3 Executive Board members, additional information will follow soon in our website.

Finally, the Christmas season is arriving and we know that this year will be a special one, it will be a time for reflection. Let's concentrate and enjoy our closest family that will surround us and make a nice and lovely toast for those relatives and friends that will be far and for those that have left us. Let's be grateful for our health and for what we have. Better times are still to come soon!

On behalf of all members of the ESPES Executive Board we wish you a Merry Christmas and a New Year 2021 full of health, love and prosperity.

Sincerely,

Mario Mendoza-Sagaon
ESPES President

