

# The Need for Global Connection and Collaboration

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Dear Readers, Members, and Friends of AsMA, It is for me a great honour and also a real pleasure to be your first Belgian President. Belgium is a small country buried in the middle of Europe, but this has forced us to work together with all our neighbors, understand their different languages and cultures, and has even led to our hosting the main European Institutions (European Council, Parliament and Commission) as well as the Headquarters of NATO in our capital Brussels.

Discussing and understanding sometimes difficult or sensitive issues from different cultures with different backgrounds and experiences is certainly often a challenge. But finding the best solutions for everybody around the table is naturally the final goal. Sometimes we waste our time and effort in discussing a small part of the problem, forgetting that we fundamentally agree on the greater part of the issue. We have many common challenges, technically, scientifically, and politically, but potentially also many common solutions from different cultures and organizational styles which we should consider with an open mind. We in Europe have found that working together wherever we can is much more effective than working against each other, even if the way forward can be long and hard. In the light of the outcome and the difficulties experienced along the way, it is clear that the system is not perfect, but I believe collaboration is the best option we have.

We can see a similar tendency for collaboration in the world of aerospace, often for the sake of business or for better advocacy and representation. Airlines work together to be more profitable; air navigation services look for synergies to be more effective; aircraft manufacturers work together to be more competitive; pilot associations work together to be more representative; aviation regulators make bilateral agreements to ensure greater harmonization, etc.

Our aerospace medicine and human performance field is not immune to this need for global connection and collaboration, and AsMA has an important role to play by creating, stimulating, and supporting collaborative activities in our field. We have the knowledge, the experience and the organizational capacities to do this, and I see this as an obligation for our Association. If we want to have a voice in the world of medicine and human performance, with influence on the industry and politicians, we must be seen as a united community, busy with scientific and evidence-based work.

Therefore I want to see my year as AsMA President in terms of stimulating contacts and collaboration with other aerospace medicine associations around the world, and also with other partners

in aviation such as professional and leisure pilots and ATCOs. The theme of my year in office will therefore be "Aerospace Medicine sans frontières" (in which I use, sadly, only two languages).

I want to use my President's pages this year to put some of the existing aerospace medicine communities in the spotlight, some of them well known in their countries but perhaps not always in other countries, and show how AsMA can collaborate with them now and in the future. It is an attempt to make our motto of being a worldwide family, in which I strongly believe, visible and concrete.

So in my President's page I will give the floor to our colleagues and partners to inform our members and readers of what is going on in our field, and explore how AsMA can work together with them. I will call it "The AsMA Global Connection Story" and for each edition of the Journal I will interview a president, leader, or actor from these associations and organizations. They will give you some information about who they are, what their association or organization is and does, the relationship between their association or organization and AsMA (we already work closely with some but should forge contacts with others), how future collaboration can be strengthened or may develop, and what role they would like to play in this process.

This follows the ideas behind the transformation of the "International Activities Committee" into the GLOC, our recently reshaped "Global Liaison and Outreach Committee", which is trying to promote links with existing associations and organizations around the globe, divided into seven regions. The difference here is that AsMA does not want only to explore and support existing aerospace medicine and human performance activities all over the world, but also to acquire information about what is going on in these regions with a view to making better use of the information and data as part of a holistic approach. Certainly this will not all be achieved in one term, but did they not say that 'Rome wasn't built in a day'?

I therefore invite you to listen with me to some contributors to aerospace safety across the world in the next editions of the AsMA Global Connection story in your Journal!



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