



**NEWSLETTER
OF THE EUROPEAN
FEDERATION OF
PARASITOLOGISTS
No 10**

February 2020

Dear fellow parasitologists,

Before an even larger part of 2020 will have disappeared into memories, let me share some personal impressions from the past year. Looking at the media, any optimistic outlook to life keeps being challenged from several directions (and I won't mention SARS-2). Climate change starts biting - many of us have colleagues and friends in Australia and were provided with first-hand accounts, just to give one example. Political developments take place that would have been disbelieved a few years ago. Fuelled by a global economy that challenges the wealth and influence of the 'rich' countries, it seems to be increasingly attractive for voters (and this applies to many countries) to 'take back control' and retreat to the concept of 'nation' or the cosy of ethnic uniformity. Immigration and mobility are perceived as threats, not opportunities. Of course, this is the perception of an 'old white man' in a wealthy country, and the mood will be different in countries with a lower proportion of white-haired people like me. But, depressingly, even there, and the world over, we see a mushrooming of regulations and policies that provide obstacles to international cooperation, often perceived as infringements on national sovereignty. I am not sure if the presence of a certain virus variant is a good reason for national pride, but, in effect, the re-nationalisation of research on biological material is worrying and concerns most of us who work in

international networks. As Europeans we thought we had overcome this problem, not the least as an achievement of the European Union. For our young colleagues it is completely normal to study or work in another European country. But you all know what is happening right now in Big Politics, and even intra-European mobility is on attack from certain quarters that gain influence. In my student days, travelling to an institute in a neighbour country was still a big issue (and, for a German, not always a pleasant experience). Do we want to return to that? I am not particularly good in preaching, so let me stop this by saying that I am not writing to make you feel bad, but to remind all of us, and especially our younger colleagues, that all this freedom which we, as Europeans and as scientists, presently enjoy is not granted by nature. We will have to live with this 'new world order', I am afraid, but we can counteract nationalist and racist tendencies by promoting international scientific cooperation and support our colleagues in disadvantaged places. There are numerous small actions that will help. A variety of funding sources for exchange of personnel waits to be tapped, and we should all check if there is still some bench space in our lab for a young colleague from a country that is less blessed with resources (even if such research stays do not immediately result in high-flying articles...). Even with a strained time schedule, we could squeeze in a scientific meeting in one or the other out-of-the-usual-way country. Having attended NICOPA in Iran a few months ago, I was impressed by the activity of our colleagues there despite a most difficult environment for research. We should remind ourselves, that the **European Federation of Parasitologists** was founded in the most serious period of the Cold War, in the 1960s, by parasitological societies from both East and West (including both Germanys), so overcoming different political systems and cooperation across political, societal and religious borders is the point of our organisation's existence. Keep this in mind, and strain to make a difference at least in our small field! If you face bureaucratic problems (e.g. for obtaining visa for visiting researchers), and

you think it might help, do not hesitate to contact the EFP board for support. And now, the most important part of this letter: there is an excellent opportunity upcoming in a few months to get an update on the current state of European parasitology, to meet old research partners and search for new ones. This is what you do: you and your colleagues and students register for this years **European Multicolloquium of Parasitology (EMOP 2020)** 25-29 August in the interesting and easily reachable city of Belgrade. Check out the congress website www.emop2020.org where you will see that our Serbian colleagues have done an excellent job to create an attractive event with an impressive list of plenary speakers. Registration and abstract submission are open, the latter until 20 May. EFP, together with the local organizers, will financially support the attendance of students and offer awards to young scientists. For details please check the websites of the congress or of EFP (www.eurofedpar.org).

Hope to see you all there!

Thomas Romig
President, European Federation of
Parasitologists

ps 1: Hollywood finally acknowledged the importance of parasites. A step forward.
ps 2: The US president found it annoying that the parasite was not American. See first section of my letter.