



**Presidential address by the
President of the European Federation of Sports Medicine Associations
Dr. Maurizio Casasco**

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,
Dear friends,

It is for me a pleasure and a great honour to open, as President of the European Federation of Sports Medicine Associations, the XI EFSMA Congress here in Portorose.

I want to thank the Slovenian Sports Medicine Association and its President, Prof. Petra Zupet, my esteemed Secretary General, for this opportunity and for the organization of such a high-level Congress. Thanks to its rich programme, focused on the protection of young athletes' health and on the prescription of physical exercise, and to the participation of prestigious international experts, this Congress will offer a great opportunity of cultural discussion and development.

EFSMA is called to carry out an important task for all Europe, where the issues of progressively ageing population and spread of non-communicable diseases are more and more tragic: to promote the importance of protection of health through sports and physical activity for every age and to foster the maximum distribution of the culture of personalized physical activity, prescribed just like a medicine, as tool of prevention and therapy.

During my speech given in the United Nations Headquarters in New York on July 2018 on prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, convened by the President of the General Assembly with the support of the World Health Organization, I illustrated how physical activity represents the first and most useful tool – which is, unlike other methods like the reduction of calories, available at zero cost to everybody for a healthy world – to reduce inflammation, which is at the origin of non-communicable diseases.

Recent epigenetic studies have shown the positive effect of physical exercise on germ cells. This is extremely important for transgenerational epigenetic inheritance. In short, primary prevention starts even before conception and continues throughout our whole lifespan, in order to improve the balance between biological and chronological age.

We cannot cut the risk to zero, but we can act to reduce it significantly, starting from our experience with Olympic athletes. The efficacy of correctly prescribed physical exercise can be tested first on them, and the results appropriately applied to the whole population. The EFSMA guidelines “Exercise Prescription for Health” embody the Hippocratic culture of the “right dose”

of exercise for preventing and reducing the risk of NCDs. I also want to underline the importance of EFSMA's fight against obesity and addiction on drugs, alcohol and smoke.

EFSMA's mission, thanks to the transfer of knowledge to the whole social system, can lead to an improvement in health and quality for each person, with the consequent reduction of future medical expenses for the good of all the community and the entire system.

The base to do all this is the recognition of Sports Medicine as a primary specialty in the European Union. Thanks to my, and my predecessors, great commitment and thanks to the efforts of UEMS-MJC President for Sports Medicine, Prof. Nicolas Christodoulou, to whom I want to personally express my gratitude, we are very close to our goal: only 4 Countries have still not completed the procedure with their European Committees. We must continue to champion this fundamental objective, following and supporting these Countries.

In order to achieve our mission, we must reinforce our scientific production, starting with our Guidelines, particularly the "Exercise Prescription for Health", which expressly represent one of the most important themes of this Congress and will be implemented further for the harmonization between all the European countries. We must foster the development of scientific studies and research projects applied to all Sports Medicine fields, also collaborating more with the main national and international scientific organizations. I really share with the FIMS President the vision of what could be achieved in this field if there was a strategic global alliance in this area. A global alliance that focuses on true collaboration and implementation of initiatives and programmes with a similar objective but adapted to the social, cultural and economical reality of our continent. Imagine what we could achieve together instead of spending time and resources acting independently.

We must do our best to enlarge the scope of our studies, examining for example the relationship between Sports Medicine and women, also in consideration of the great results recently achieved by women's sports, to face the high number of questions that remain open in this field, from the influence of gender in the physiological response to exercise or to the recovery from an injury, to sexual maturity process and other issues connected to physiological changes.

We must reinforce the exchange of knowledge and competences through, for example, the online distribution of our scientific journal "Medicina dello Sport", with impact factor and Scopus indexed, to all members of the National Associations to promote research especially amongst young physicians.

We must also be more open to technological development.

In the last 10 years we have observed the world we used to know change as never before, especially because of technologic innovation. Access to knowledge generates more knowledge: not only because more people can access to it, but also because it makes possible to discover new relationships between information. The challenge is to embrace new technologies to go from data to information, not to discover a new technology itself.

If we were able to create a transnational database, EFSMA could really take its place inside the institutional European contest!

In this complex and ever changing world, competences shall be our strategic investment. But what is competence? Different definitions of this concept share one feature: in addition to knowledge and skills, competence requests transversal properties that involve the whole range of social and interpersonal relationships.

But scientific production, research, diffusion of knowledge in Sports Medicine, digital development, are not enough.

We need to realize that a better communication, starting with the relationship with media, is the essential condition to promote EFSMA's identity and spread its opinions and knowledge.

Moreover, in order to reinforce our position, it is extremely necessary to build and manage stronger relationships with the European system and our territory.

Regarding the European system, we must build a special open relationship especially with the new European Commissioner for Health, Stella Kyriakides from Cyprus, who oversees the protection of public health in Europe.

Regarding our territory, we must continue promoting the opening and development of relationships with the East Europe, where EFSMA hasn't yet established many roots in spite of the important scientific competences of the area, also without neglecting a stronger and direct relationship with the Associations that will host the next Olympic games: Summer 2024 in Paris and Winter 2026 in Milano-Cortina.

With reference to our international politics, I want to highlight the importance of the connection with our base, the International Federation of Sports Medicine, and also with all the International Bodies Concerned.

It is certain that EFSMA and FIMS connection is a preferential relationship of constant and real collaboration, a partnership, as proved by the strong European leadership in FIMS since its foundation in St. Moritz in 1928, after the Winter Olympic Games, and by the high number of European National Associations recognized by FIMS.

For this reason, I would like to thank the FIMS President, Prof. Fabio Pigozzi, and the FIMS Secretary General, Prof. Norbert Bachl, for the loyal and tireless collaboration that surely overcomes the professional relationship.

In these years as President, I have tried to bring my personal contribution to achieve our common and shared objectives. If I succeeded, it was also thanks to your contribution, starting with the significant work of my predecessors, André Debruyne, Norbert Bachl e Joe Cummiskey, that we want to mention with great affection.

It is thanks to your commitment if Sports Medicine is becoming more and more important in all Europe, and this objective is the result of your daily work, aimed to give this expertise the recognition it really deserves.

This shall be an encouragement and a help to all young European physicians to love Sports Medicine and to get more knowledge.