



Experience of being chair and co-chair of the ECMC and reasons why you should be the NEXT

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Shareable abstract (@ERSpublications)

This article provides testimonials of the past and current chairs and co-chairs of the ECMC (@EarlyCareerERS) and a glimpse of the NEXT programme, along with participants' experiences. <https://bit.ly/3LzvqKf>

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In this article, we provide an overview of the experience of being chair and co-chair of the Early Career Member Committee (ECMC) of the European Respiratory Society (ERS) from past and current officers – Niki Ubags (past chair), Maxime Patout (past co-chair), Sara Cuevas Ocaña (current chair) and Thomas Gille (current co-chair) (figure 1). The past chair and co-chair share their main achievements and challenges as leaders of the ECMC, and how the position has impacted (or is impacting) their career. The current chair and co-chair provide their view of the ECMC for the future and the goals to achieve during their mandate.

We also outline the ERS Networking EXcellence Training (NEXT) programme and provide testimonials from ERS members who were invited to participate in the first edition of the programme, and selected to present their work in the Science slam session at the ERS Congress 2022. Find out the reasons why you should be NEXT!

Experiences as chair and co-chair of the ECMC

Niki Ubags (past chair of the ECMC)

Chairing the ECMC for the past 3 years has been an invaluable experience, in which I (together with the ECMC members) have not only tried to represent the voice of all ERS early career members (ECMs) and build new initiatives for them, but also had the opportunity to develop my own skills and network, and most importantly, build friendships. Although challenging at times to juggle my job, committee work and family life, it was a pleasure to work with a very dedicated team of ECM representatives (figure 2) who all worked hard and created a supportive environment in a very challenging time, to ensure we could implement initiatives for and by ECMs.

Personal highlights were:

- 1) The kick-off of the NEXT programme – seeing 50 excellent ECMs who participated in this programme in the venue at the start of the programme was great and provided such a positive atmosphere! Seeing





FIGURE 1 Past and current chairs and co-chairs of the Early Career Member Committee. From left to right: Sara Cuevas Ocaña, Niki Ubags, Maxime Patout and Thomas Gille.

participants flourish during the presentation workshop and all the discussions and interactions throughout this day brought me a lot of energy and motivation, and it was a wonderful start to the 2022 ERS Congress.

- 2) The inclusion of ECM chairs in almost all Congress sessions (and during ERS seminars, courses and webinars) and seeing them learn and succeed in this new role.
- 3) Finally, meeting all members of the ECMC and many ECMs in person at the ERS Congress in Barcelona. Being able to interact with ECMs when “running into each other” in the hallways of the Congress, or being able to introduce one another to other ECMs or potential collaborators and mentors. Networking as a whole was one of the main challenges of our term. It was phenomenal to finish our term on such positive note.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my co-chair Maxime for his support and inspiration, and for taking on this task together 3 years ago. Moreover, we could not have done this without the guidance, support and mentorship of the ERS leadership, officers and staff, who have all worked hard to make it a positive and inclusive environment for the ECMs.

Maxime Patout (previous co-chair)

Over the past 3 years, we have built on the work of previous committees to further increase the involvement of ECMs in all ERS activities. Moreover, we aimed to extend this involvement in activities and committed ourselves to develop new initiatives. Being involved with the ECMC is an amazing opportunity to be involved with ERS activities. The ERS is a rich society that has a lot to offer to ECMs. The ERS is fully dedicated to improving the education and training of ECMs.

During our time serving in the ECMC, we had to face several challenges (namely the COVID-19 pandemic...) but we were very fortunate to have strong support from the ERS leadership and office to develop new initiatives such as the ECMC surveys and the NEXT programme.

It was a great honour to serve as co-chair of the ECMC and I was more than pleased to be able to work with Niki who was a wonderful chair with both resolution, organisation and openness. Working with the ECMC was also an uplifting experience given the variety of profiles and the enthusiasm for taking on new tasks.

Statement as the new chair and co-chair of the ECMC

Sara Cuevas Ocaña (current chair) and Thomas Gille (current co-chair)

Following the mandate of Niki Ubags and Maxime Patout, Sara Cuevas Ocaña and Thomas Gille were elected as chair and co-chair of the ECMC, respectively, in September 2022. The most evident aspect when first getting involved with the ERS is the high commitment of ERS officers to provide the best quality science, education and advocacy for the respiratory community. The same commitment is reflected

in each member of the ECMC. The ECMC consists of a group of motivated ECM respiratory professionals who represent the voice of the ECMs within each ERS Assembly. In addition to ensuring the needs of ECMs are heard, each ECMC member is in charge of one or several tasks within the ERS portfolio, such as preparing articles for this Early career forum (further information on the roles of ECMC members is provided in [1]).

The previous committee has not only ensured that ECMC representatives are involved in each of the ERS activities but has also raised the profile of ECMs by setting up very successful initiatives that are completely ECM led, such as the NEXT programme. The hard work of the previous ECMC has resulted in a more integrated participation of the ECMC, increased collaborations with related societies and has further highlighted the key role that ECMs play in the respiratory field.

During our mandate, we are highly committed to continue the amazing initiatives established by the previous committee, with special emphasis on building on the success of the NEXT programme in 2022. We are also eager to maintain established collaborations with other national societies. An example of these collaborations was with the Malaysian Thoracic Society, where we presented a summary of the ERS Congress 2022 at their annual congress in 2022, in a session entitled “Best of ERS 2022”. Additionally, we will focus our efforts on ensuring that as many ECMs as possible are included in all ERS activities, from all countries, specialties and career paths. We would love to cover the most relevant aspects of your professional and personal career needs, but we cannot do it without your input.

The good news is that we have systems in place to collect your interests and to let you know when opportunities are available to chair sessions at the ERS Congress, write articles, *etc.* The initial and simplest step to let us know that you want to get involved in ERS activities is by filling in the competence list *via* MyERS (<https://my.ersnet.org/>). Be as specific as possible with your interests, your experience and your expertise. In addition, you should choose the Assembly(ies) which is/are more relevant to your field to receive the most up-to-date information on upcoming events, resources and opportunities to be involved. You can find many useful training opportunities in the content posted on the



FIGURE 2 Members of the Early Career Member Committee (ECMC) and leadership of the ERS. From left to right: Carlos Robalo Cordeiro (current President of the ERS), Thomas Gille (co-chair of the ECMC and Early Career Member (ECM) representative of Assembly 1), Mona Lichtblau (ECM representative of Assembly 13), Maxime Patout (past co-chair of the ECMC), Niki Ubags (past chair of the ECMC), Holly Keir (ECM representative of Assembly 10), Maria Joana Catarata (ECM representative of Assembly 11), Karen Moor (ECM representative of Assembly 12), Cristina Ardua-Garcia (outgoing ECM representative of Assembly 7), Sara Cuevas Ocaña (current chair of the ECMC and ECM representative of Assembly 3), Matteo Bradicich (ECM representative of Assembly 4), Susanne J.H. Vijverberg (incoming ECM representative of Assembly 7), and Marc Humbert (past President of the ERS). Members of the ECMC not in the picture: Christoph Fisser (Assembly 2), Carolina Gotera (Assembly 5), Orianne Dumas (Assembly 6), Merel Hellemons (outgoing ECM representative of Assembly 8), Dorina Rama Esendagli (incoming ECM representative of Assembly 8), Joana Cruz (Assembly 9), Amanda Dandanell Juul (Assembly 14).

Experience of the NEXT programme and Science slam 2022

Susanne Vijverberg

I really enjoyed participating in the first edition of the ERS NEXT programme in Barcelona. It was a great opportunity to meet and network with peers in an informal, yet educational setting, and learn from the leading respiratory experts. The programme was diverse, the sessions were very interactive, and the atmosphere was very good. The ECMC really made us feel welcome. Furthermore, it was an honour to be introduced to the ERS leadership. One of the highlights was the inspiring keynote lecture given by past ERS President, Professor Mina Gaga, on leadership in respiratory medicine, where she shared experiences of her own journey and the challenges she encountered. The lecture given by the Chief Editor of the *European Respiratory Journal (ERJ)*, Professor James Chalmers, on writing and publishing was also highly informative. It provided unique insights into the considerations of the *ERJ* editorial board as well as advice on how to prepare the best possible manuscript. The interactive sessions also made it possible to exchange views and ideas between the participants. One of the challenges for many of us is to find the optimal academic work–life balance. Round table discussions on how peers deal and/or struggle with this helped me understand that finding the optimal balance is a continuous process that requires regular reflection, which is often overlooked. Overall, participation in the NEXT programme helped me to expand my professional network, reflect on my own journey and improve my research skills such as networking and storytelling.

Justine Devulder

The NEXT programme was an amazing experience that taught me new skills but also allowed me to connect with other ECMs. We benefited from specific training that helped develop our research skills, including communication, leadership and the importance of a good work–life balance. The communication aspect of the programme focused on effective ways to present our work to our colleagues and gave us advice on how to deliver clear and concise communications as well as how to engage with an audience.

The work–life balance segment was one of the highlights of the programme for me. It encouraged us to reflect on our professional and personal goals and how to better manage our time in a healthy way. We shared our different experiences and feelings, which helped us realise that many of us have difficulties managing our time. This session allowed us to exchange tips for prioritising tasks and setting boundaries.

Overall, the programme gave me new insights and practical skills to enhance my professional life. It was an intense but very interesting day that allowed us to network with other ECMs in a relaxed atmosphere. I highly recommend similar programmes to anyone looking to develop their skills and connect with other respiratory ECMs.

James Parkin

I feel incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity to present at the ERS Congress in Barcelona in September 2022. I was able to go thanks to an ERS Young Scientist Sponsorship, which helped cover my expenses. But that wasn't the only perk – I was also invited to the first edition of the ERS NEXT programme, which was held the day before the Congress started. It was an amazing experience! The event took place in a beautiful hotel in Barcelona, with delicious food and coffee available throughout the day. I got to meet and connect with ECMs from all over the world. The day included workshops on presentation skills, chairing at conferences, manuscript writing, and work–life balance, which were helpful. My favourite session was on manuscript writing with Professor James Chalmers, who gave lots of tips on manuscript writing and the whole submission process in general. Another highlight was the chairing session – as an ECM, I have not yet had the opportunity to chair a session, and hence found this very helpful. Overall, the NEXT event was a fantastic experience and helped me feel well-prepared for my presentations at the main conference.

Final remarks

This article presented the experience and views for the future from the ECMC leadership, as well as tips on how to get more involved in ERS activities. We also provided information on the new initiative promoted by the ECMC and organised by the ERS – the NEXT programme – along with testimonials from some of the participants in the first edition. We hope this article will encourage ECMs to start or continue their involvement in ERS activities and hopefully be the NEXT!

Conflict of interest: N. Ubags reports a role as European Respiratory Society Officer – past ECMC chair, and current secretary of Assembly 3, group 3.3. M. Patout reports grants or contracts from Fisher & Paykel, and Resmed, outside the submitted work; consulting fees from Philips Respironics, GSK, and Resmed, outside the submitted

work; payment of honoraria for lectures, presentations, speakers bureaus, manuscript writing or educational events from Philips Respironics Elivie, Resmed, Bastide, Fisher & Paykel, Chiesi, SOS Oxygène, Jazz pharmaceuticals, Asten Santé, Loewenstein, Air Liquide Médical, and Antadir, outside the submitted work; support for attending meetings and/or travel from Asten Santé, outside the submitted work; participation on a Data Safety Monitoring Board or Advisory Board for Resmed, and Philips Respironics, outside the submitted work; stock or stock options for Kernel Biomedical, outside the submitted work; receipt of equipment, materials, drugs, medical writing, gifts or other services from Philips Respironics, and Resmed, outside the submitted work. S. Cuevas Ocaña reports support from the European Respiratory Society to attend ERS congress as an ERS officer, outside the submitted work. T. Gille reports personal fees from Boehringer Ingelheim, personal fees from Roche, non-financial support from Oxyvie (oxygen provider), non-financial support from LVL Medical (oxygen provider), non-financial support from Vitalaire (oxygen provider), non-financial support from Asten (oxygen provider), outside the submitted work. J. Cruz reports a role as European Respiratory Society Officer – representative of the Early career members of Assembly 9, outside the submitted work. The remaining authors have nothing to disclose.

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