



## 25 years of EUROSPINE

For the past 25 years, EUROSPINE, the Spine Society of Europe, envisions itself to be the driving force, and primary and preferred partner for all spine care issues in Europe and beyond. Its mission is to optimise patient care and prevention of spinal disorders. To achieve this, EUROSPINE provides and support life long learning, research opportunities and quality assurance activities. EUROSPINE stands for bringing together a community of all stakeholders across disciplines, professions and countries that will advance spine care.

The history of EUROSPINE started with two predecessor organizations, the European Spinal Deformity Society and the European Spine Society.

The **European Spinal Deformity Society (ESDS)** was founded on the 16th of October 1982 in Dubrovnik, during a meeting which was hosted by Marko Pecina from Zagreb in Croatia. The ESDS had eight founding members (Table 1). Pierre Stagnara (1917–1995), well known from the „Stagnara-wake up-test“, was a deformity surgeon from Lyon in France and Alf Nachemson (1931–2006, „Mr. Disc“ (EUROSPINE and Kandziora, 2018)) from Stockholm in Sweden, have been the first two presidents of this society. Together with Giorgio Monticelli, from Rome, Italy, they organized the first congress of the ESDS, which took place in Rome from 16 to 19th of April 1986. The abstract book of this first three-day-congress (Fig. 1) included exactly 30 abstracts. After this successful start, ESDS developed excellently with a substantial membership growth. They ended up with 245 members in 1996. The presidents of ESDS are shown in Table 2. The last president was Rudolf Bauer, from Innsbruck, Austria and the last elected (incoming) president was Carlos Villanueva from Barcelona, Spain.

The **European Spine Society (ESS)** was founded a couple years later on September 6th, 1989 in Brussels, Belgium, during a meeting hosted by Richard Bouillet from Brussels. ESS had twelve founding members listed in Table 3. The idea to establish a new European society was already created the previous year during an ISSLS meeting in Kyoto, Japan by Jiri Dvorak, from Zurich, Switzerland, Franco Postacchini, from Rome, Italy and Michael Sullivan from London, UK. After the first high-flying congress from 24 to 25th of October 1990 in Zürich, Switzerland ESS also made a tremendous development ending up with 174 members in 1996. ESS put a great effort in setting up the institutional framework for a modern scientific society and hired the first full-time staff members. The presidents of ESS are shown in Table 4. The last incoming president of that society was Jiri Dvorak.

Although both societies were doing very well, they finally decided to join forces and the first combined meeting took place in October 16–19th, 1996 in Zurich, Switzerland. It was hosted by two locals Dieter Grob, for ESDS and Jiri Dvorak, for ESS. The abstract book included 40 abstracts and is depicted in Fig. 2. Due to the great success of this

meeting ESDS and ESS decided in 1997 during their general assemblies to fuse both societies in the upcoming year and to have a new name and logo.

Hence, the **Spine Society of Europe (SSE)** was founded on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1998 during the Second Combined Meeting of ESDS and ESS, which took place in Innsbruck, Austria. The abstract book of that meeting is shown as Fig. 3. It included already 46 abstracts. The Spine Society of EUROPE (SSE) was first registered in Brussels and received a wonderful blue-egg-like logo (Fig. 4). Carlos Villanueva, Jiri Dvorak and Gordon Findlay were the first 3 presidents and the first annual meeting of the SSE took place from 7 to 11th September 1999 in Munich, Germany locally hosted by Michael Mayer.

In the following years, SSE established 3 major achievements which are still very important for EUROSPINE.

1. **Spine Educational Events** started in 2002. At that time, the courses took place twice a year alternating between Barcelona, Spain on the one side, led by Carlos Villanueva and Ferran Pellise, and Liberec, Czech Republic, led by Petr Suchomel and Richard Lukas. These training courses took place until 2009. After that, between 2010 and 2013, they were held in various cities throughout Europe, before they were condensed in the so called Education Week of EUROSPINE which still takes place once a year.
2. **Spine Tango** registry was also founded in 2002 designed to prove effectiveness of spine care. It started as paper-based including mainly demographics and surgery details, but developed quickly to an electronic, web-based, state of the art registry including all aspects of spine pathologies, treatments and follow-up. Although Spine Tango has gone through many changes, it still remains the largest international European Spine Registry and is the basis for multiple national spine registries like Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, etc.
3. **Patient Line** was established in 2005 initiated by Ferran Pellise, Phil Sell and Dieter Grob. At that time, it was highly innovative and unique, because it was exclusively designed for spine patients as a platform for information and exchange. Most recently Patient line was updated and still represents an important asset of EUROSPINE being visited 100.000 times a year and translated into 13 different languages.

The last activity of SSE took place from 25 to 28th of October 2006, in Istanbul, Turkey. During that meeting on 27th of October it was decided to rename the society now calling it **EUROSPINE**. Further, the logo (Fig. 4) was changed and the society moved from Brussels, Belgium to Uster-Zurich, Switzerland.

Today, EUROSPINE (list of presidents: Table 5, logo: Fig. 5, current

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**Table 1**  
Original list of the founding members of ESDS.

Founding Members  
of the European Spinal Deformity Society  
16 October 1982

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P. Stagnara - France  
A. Nachemson - Sweden  
W. Taillard - Switzerland  
K. Zielke - Germany  
G. Monticelli - Italy  
G. Costanzo - Italy  
A. Vincent - Belgium  
P. Klisic - Yug.

**Table 2**  
Presidents: Of the ESDS.

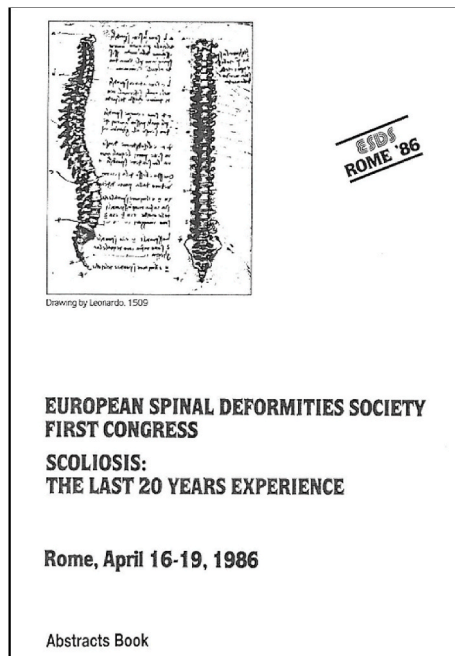
- 1982 Pierre Stagnara, FR
- 1983 Alf Nachemson, SE
- 1986 Giorgio Monticelli, IT
- 1989 Ben Veraart, NL
- 1992 Charles Picault, FR
- 1994 Alan Gardner, UK
- 1996 Rudolf Bauer, AT

**Table 3**  
Original list of the founding members of ESS.

*Founding Members  
of the European Spine Society  
1989, Brussels, Belgium*

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*M. Benoist - France  
R. Bouillet - Belgium  
A. Deburge - France  
J. Dvorak - Switzerland  
G. F. G. Findlay, U.K.  
J. Krämer - Germany  
F. Postacchini - Italy  
U. Rodegerdts - Germany  
M. Sullivan - U.K.  
P. van Akkerveeken - the Netherlands  
E. Velikas - Greece  
A. Vincent - Belgium*



**Fig. 1.** The title page of the first abstract book of the ESDS congress 1986.

Executive Committee Fig. 6) is a very successful, highly acknowledged, non-profit, non-government organization with a clear vision and mission. One of EUROSPINE major achievements was the integration of all specialists dealing with spinal pathologies into the society, which resulted in a real multidisciplinary cooperation. Further, in the last 17 years EUROSPINE has not only continued the excellent work of ESDS, ESS and SSE, it also successfully established a tremendous amount of new activities:

**Table 4**  
Presidents: Of the ESDS.

- o 1990 Michael Sullivan, UK
- o 1992 Alan Deburge, FR
- o 1994 Franco Postacchini, IT
- o 1996 Jürgen Krämer, DE

- EUROSPINE has established an annual meeting which is by far the largest spine meeting in Europe, regularly hosting ca. 4000 people.
- With EuSSAB (European Spine Society Advisory Board), EUROSPINE has created a common umbrella and communication platform for almost all national European spine organizations, representing approximately 10,000 spine specialists in 26 European countries.
- As a scientific organization promoting research, EUROSPINE developed Research Courses, founded on a yearly basis clinical and non-clinical Research Grants with a financial support of up to 100.000 € and initiated this scientific journal; Brain and Spine.
- As an educational society, EUROSPINE has developed surgical and non-surgical educational programmes with basic and advanced courses, spine fellowships, Spine Tuesday webinars and EDISC

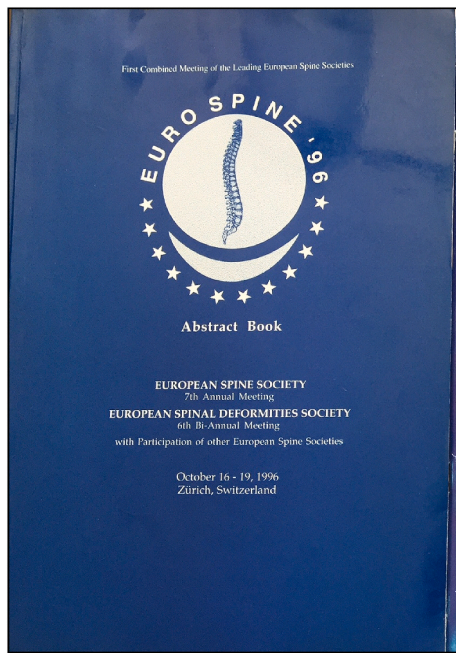


Fig. 2. The title page of the abstract book of the first combined ESDS and ESS meeting 1996.

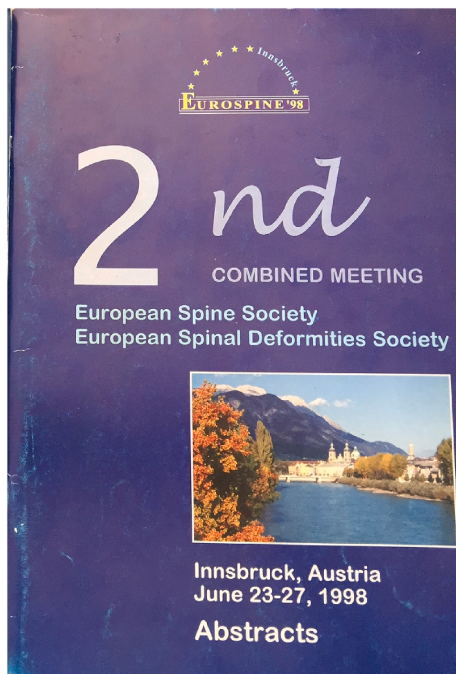


Fig. 3. The title page of the abstract book of the second combined ESDS and ESS meeting 1998.

(EUROSPINE Diploma in Interprofessional Spine Care) which allows spine care professionals worldwide to obtain basic and advanced diplomas in spine care. These educational events and diplomas are now integrated into a Europe-wide network of educational programmes through the Diploma Equivalence Programme, which is recognised in most European countries and by European organizations such as EANS and EFORT.

- As a society dedicated to quality management, EUROSPINE has established an institutionally independent certification programme for spine centres, the Surgical Spine Centres of Excellence (SSCoE)



Fig. 4. Logo of the spine society of Europe (SSE).

Table 5  
Presidents of EUROSPINE.

1999	Carlos Villanueva, ES
2000	Jirí Dvorák, CH
2001	Gordon F.G. Findlay, UK
2002	Norbert Passuti, FR
2003	Dieter Grob, CH
2004	Petr Suchomel, CZ
2005	Max Aebi, CH
2006	Michael Mayer, DE
2007	Charles Greenough, UK
2008	Robert Gunzburg, BE
2009	Federico Balagué, CH
2010	Hans-Joachim Wilke, DE
2011	Ciaran Bolger, IE
2012	Jean-Charles Le Huec, FR
2013	Ferran Pellisé Urquiza, ES
2014	Philip J. Sell, UK
2015	Haluk Berk, TR
2016	Michael Ogon, AT
2017	Margareta Nordin, SE
2018	Frank Kandziora, DE
2019	Tim Pigott, UK
2020	Everard Munting, BE
2021	Everard Munting, BE
2022	Thomas Blattert, DE
2023	Marco Teli, IT



Fig. 5. Current logo of eurospine.

programme, and Spine Tango, a web-based medical registry providing tools for patient follow-up and outcomes measurement which provides a collective evidence base of treatment effectiveness, patient safety and best practice. To date, 37 centres in 13 different countries have been certified. Spine Tango has documented more than 800'000 forms from 17 countries.

- EUROSPINE, in recognition of the need for an integrated approach to spine care, becomes a member of the World Rehabilitation Alliance of the World Health Organization working with other members from various sectors including: member states and state bodies, inter-governmental and nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions. Rehabilitation is seen as playing a central role in optimizing functioning of individuals especially those with spine conditions which is very prevalent and with accompanying disabilities. EUROSPINE is positioned to contribute and to support the WHO Rehabilitation 2030 initiative in co-developing rehabilitation advocacy messages and connecting, collaborating, sharing, and learning with other members



**Fig. 6.** Current ExCom of EUROSPINE (from the left to the right) Beat Leimbacher (Switzerland), Paulo Pereira (Portugal), Dominique Rothenfluh (Switzerland), Johann Van Lerbeighe (Belgium), Ahmet Alanay (Turkey), Marco Teli (Italy), Thomas Blattert (Germany), Lisa Roberts (UK), Christoph Siepe (Germany), Everard Munting (Belgium), Javier Pizones (Spain), Yann-Philippe Charles (France); not on the picture: Carmen Vleggeert-Lankamp (Netherlands).

towards a happier, healthier, more active and more meaningful lives of the general population.

- And last but not least, EUROSPINE founded the EUROSPINE Foundation to support research and to do charity work.

EUROSPINE, already in its silver jubilee, will continue to support a spine care community within its membership of various generations and to foster diversity, equity and inclusion within the organisation. The Annual Meeting will continue to grow and develop as the must attend event in spine. High quality education offers, research opportunities and quality assurance activities will continue to advance an integrated, multidisciplinary and interprofessional spine care.

EUROSPINE will celebrate its 25th Anniversary at the EUROSPINE 2023 in Frankfurt from 4–6 October (<https://www.eurospine.org/events/annual-meeting/2023/>).

[org/events/annual-meeting/2023/](https://www.eurospine.org/events/annual-meeting/2023/), 2023). We would like to invite all of you to celebrate together with us.

## References

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