



# SOCIETY LIFE

## Reflections on my years as president of ESTRO

### Interview with Ben Slotman

*Question: Would you like to discuss your achievements & challenges during your time as president of the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO)?*

If you ask me to describe my two-year term as president in one or two words, I would say: “crisis management”. The COVID-19 pandemic had an enormous impact on our Society and required many changes in policy and practice. As president, I, the senior management of the office and Board members had to take many difficult decisions, and often without all information being available. We had to act on best guesses; for instance, on how the pandemic would evolve. A president is in very close contact with the office to discuss tactical and operational issues. During the pandemic, video-conferencing became the new standard of work and we could involve the whole ESTRO Board more often than previously to decide on the most important issues. In the past, the Board met for whole days but only a few times a year in Brussels. The meetings of the councils and committees were also held digitally. This new method reduces our carbon footprint and also saves us all a lot of time. I trust that we will keep these COVID-induced changes in the future, as their use will help in our attempt to increase the participation of our members in the Society.

I am fortunate to have experienced three annual meetings during my presidency: the delayed 2020 meeting, which was held online late that year; the 2021 meeting, which occurred in the summer in Madrid but was run as a hybrid event; and the last meeting, which was held live in Copenhagen. These were very successful meetings for various reasons. I am also very proud that the activities of the ESTRO School were adjusted very rapidly after the start of the pandemic, and continued successfully. We have seen that we can attract new groups through the provision of online educational activities.

Last year, we started a discussion on reform of the governance structure of ESTRO. Under the leadership of our new president, Anna Kirby, I am sure that we will streamline processes, reduce overlaps, increase transparency and enable more new members to participate than has been possible until now. I am confident that these changes will be very beneficial for the organisation.

Presidents start their term with two years as president-elect, then serve as president for two years, and after that as a past president for two years. This ensures that presidents do not undergo ‘cold turkey’ after they end their terms. So I am still busy as past president; and besides, the additional free time that I might have had has filled rapidly with other obligations. There is always enough to do!



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