

## **2002 Vienna, Austria**

6th EFNS Congress, Vienna, Austria, 26 - 30 October 2002

### **Thanks to Vienna!**

The 6th congress of the European Federation of Neurological Societies was held in Vienna from October 26 to 29, 2002 ; and Vienna was a perfect host for this event: a modern congress-centre structured to the needs of a major international meeting, a perfect organization (thanks to Mrs Elisabeth Ribar-Maurer and the teams of the Wiener Medizinische Akademie and of Mondial Congress) which made sure that things ran smoothly, and a city the charm of which was lighted up by a sunny and bright autumn.

More than 3500 participants attended the exciting program in which distinguished speakers covered in nine main themes, the most frequent neurologic diseases and for which many oral and poster presentations were selected from the more than 900 abstracts submitted. Within the regular program, ample space was provided for special discussions of selected topics in focused workshops, a forum specific for the EFNS congresses giving time for exchange of opinions and transfer of state-of-the-art knowledge in rapidly progressing fields. Eleven teaching courses gave young neurologists the opportunity to effectively update their knowledge and skills in clinically relevant areas. The scientific program was enriched and broadened by satellite symposia on important issues sponsored by various pharmaceutical companies, which also set up a large and impressive exhibition.

In the 10 years since the EFNS was founded in Vienna, neurology has progressed considerably by utilizing advances made in neuroscience and introducing methods from basic research into management of neurological disorders. This merging of a thorough knowledge of ethology and pathophysiology with clinical experience has improved the management and treatment of patients with neurologic diseases. Target-orientated designed pharmacological agents old to new therapeutic strategies and all these achievements have revolutionized clinical neurology and have changed daily clinical routines. It was the objective of the 6th Congress of the EFNS to cover these new developments, and the high attendance of the scientific sessions and the vivid discussions of the oral and poster presentations prove that this goal was attained.

However, a congress would not be perfect without a social program facilitating the exchange of opinions in a personal way and bringing people together at an informal level to start cooperations and friendships.

Certainly, no other city in the world would be more suited to attain this goal than Vienna: Vienna has a long tradition for international gatherings, most famous being the "Wiener Congress" starting in November 1814 and lasting until March 1, 1815 when Napoleon set an abrupt end to this congress which was mainly concentrated on social exchanges and less interested in advancing political affairs or even science. However, the EFNS took advantage of this tradition and organized a ball hosted in the City Hall of Vienna where the "Congress danced". This was certainly the social highlight of these days which was to be remembered, but there was also an Opening Ceremony held in the Vienna Konzerthaus where the Philharmonic Orchestra of Brno under its conductor Norbert Pfafflmayer played typical Viennese music from Beethoven to Strauss (with some Wagner) and Prof Semir Zeki, University College, London, gave a

formal talk on `Neural concept formation: Dante, Michelangelo, Wagner`. At the adjourn of the sessions on the last day, a Farewell Party in Viennese style concluded these memorable days and a great event in European neurology.

Wolf-Dieter Heiss  
President of EFNS

## **The EFNS Congress in Vienna 2002, the Austrian view**

From October 26 to 29, 2002, the EFNS and the Austrian Society of Neurology OEGN, [www.oegn.at](http://www.oegn.at), as the local partner, organized the 6th congress of the EFNS in Vienna, Austria. This event marked the rise and development of the EFNS and neurology as a medical science. Almost 4000 participants from 70 countries attended, representing neurologists of East and West. This congress was recognized for continuous medical education (CME) by the EACCME (UEMS) and the American Medical Association (AMA), and fulfilled the high international standards of quality.

In the last decade, the EFNS has become a strong and effective organization of European neurologists representing about 12 000 neurologists in East and West Europe. The EFNS congress not only provided excellent scientific sessions, but also education and political aspects of neurology in the enlarging Europe(s) were part of the meeting.

For the newly founded Austrian Society of Neurology (OEGN) it was a special occasion and an honour to host this congress with so many participants. The benefit for the local society to organize such a large congress is manifold. It is not only the update and import of new neurologic techniques and therapies, but also education, structural meetings and informal discussions-or both-at, for example, poster exhibitions during or even after the meeting. The congress had an ambitious scientific programme, based on all major neurological topics. Additionally, several teaching courses and special interest seminars served the education and the special interest of the participants. Needless to say, that also the social programme was very attractive, not to forget the EFNS hall at the town hall of Vienna, which many considered to be the highlight.

Special attention was given to press information and meetings to promote neurology among the public. Approximately 100 press articles on the congress, several of them focusing on particular neurologic diseases were released. Also, the scientific department of the Austrian radio broadcasted an interview devoted to stroke and the fate of stroke patients.

We realize that promotion of neurology should also include promotion of neurology among the public and thus an increase of awareness of neurologic diseases. The EFNS and the OEGN launched a so-called awareness meeting jointly with the health authorities of the city of Vienna, inviting patients, relatives and patient groups to listen to recent neurologic developments and engage the public in lively discussion.

Also, one further goal of future congresses, and in the sense of promotion of neurology as a whole, is the invitation and participation of related health groups. A nurse's session which took place in Copenhagen in 2000, was now followed by a meeting of the association of Physiotherapists in Parkinson's Disease Europe. These joint meetings should improve neurological care of the patients from all health groups.

Finally, the site of Vienna reflected the origin of the EFNS. In 1991, the Pan-European Society had its meetings in Vienna, and the EFNS was founded. The last 11 years have not only seen neurology prosper worldwide, but also, the EFNS becoming the organization for European neurology.

And yet, there is always much to do. Neurology needs to continue its upward stride. Apart from the need of science education, our specialty must guarantee for appropriate neurological services equipped with modern techniques, and even more important with qualified and educated neurological manpower. Harmonization is a continuous education.

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Austrian Society of Neurology