

The European Society of Musculoskeletal Radiology (ESSR) was founded in 1993 and the first annual meeting was held in Bonn, Germany.

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, we are deeply honoured and grateful to have the opportunity to talk to Professor Maximilian Reiser (Munich, Germany), who was one of the founding members of ESSR.

Interview April 2018



When and how was the idea born to set up a European MSK meeting?

In the late 80-ies of the last century Prof. Josef Lissner and other eminent European radiologists decided to “reinvent” the European Congress of Radiology as a modern and innovative forum for the advancement of our discipline in Europe. At the same time the iron curtain came down and communication with Eastern European radiologists greatly intensified- an exciting and stimulating period. Prof. Holger Petterson and I were encouraged by the ECR leadership to think about a MSK subspecialty society. So we assembled MSK radiology experts from all over Europe and decided to create the European Society of Musculoskeletal Radiology (ESSR) and to organize annual meetings, the first of which was organized by me in Bonn, the former capital of Western Germany (until 1989).

What were the main objectives at the time?

The objectives of the newly founded society and of the first ESSR congress were to promote MSK radiology, to provide information and education and to enhance the exchange of ideas and strengthen personal ties among European MSK radiologists. These general ideas and visions have not changed over the years. The structure and the organization of the ESSR congresses, however, have become much more sophisticated, professional and elaborate.

What are -to your opinion- the major improvements in MSK radiology?

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) was a real “game changer” which allowed to visualize the soft tissues, the joints and the bone marrow which could only be indirectly depicted using radiography. With MRI even new diseases, such as the bone marrow edema syndrome could be identified. Another disruptive innovation was and is ultrasound diagnostics of the MSK system which also allows for highly precise interventions. Both new modalities made MSK radiology an indispensable discipline in the management of diseases and traumatic injuries of the bones, joints and vertebral column.

How could ESSR contribute to exchange knowledge in MSK imaging in Europe?

ESSR is one of the most active and successful subspecialty societies in European radiology. The annual congress attracts more and more participants. The traditional means of communication, however, are more and more supplemented (but not replaced) by electronic media and direct interaction via social media. Webinars are another effective and highly accepted means to enhance knowledge and to strengthen cooperation, to offer job opportunities and to build up networks.

What would be your advice for young radiologists to build up a career in MSK radiology?

My first advice would be: MSK radiology is a fascinating field of radiology which will become more and more important due to demographic changes as well as increasing mobility and physical activity of people. So- please consider to become MSK radiologist. You will not regret it!

In the near future it will no longer suffice to be excellent in interpreting and reading radiological exams and in performing interventions. You should also become professional in healthcare economy and IT, so that you will be able to cope with the challenges of quantitative imaging, radiomics and artificial intelligence. Cooperation with clinicians and empathetic communication with patients play also a crucial role and have to be part of your professional development.

To your opinion, what are the main future targets that our society should focus on?

In my role as dean of our medical faculty, as president of the German and European societies of radiology and as editor in chief of European Radiology I found that radiology in general and also MSK radiology has major deficits in initiating and performing multi- center trials, focusing on healthcare outcomes and cost- effectiveness. Therefore, data published in highly ranked journals proving the value of radiological procedures are sparse. To my opinion, ESSR should encourage and coordinate such studies which are vital for our discipline.

Finally, is the future bright for MSK radiologists?

President Abraham Lincoln said that *“the best way to predict the future is to create it”*. I sincerely believe that the future of MSK radiology and MSK radiologists offers huge promises and potential. To achieve this hard work and dedication are required.

Maximilian Reiser

ESSR Honorary Member

