Dr Ignacio RIESGO, Spain

President 1995 – 1996

Mrs. Pupato, President of HOPE; former Presidents; Kris; members of the audience

First I would like to start by thanking you very much for inviting me

I was only President for a short period of time, so I didn't deserve the 5 minutes that the organization so kindly gave to me, because my contribution as President was limited. However, I was a member of HOPE for almost 10 years, so I'm not going to speak about the contribution I gave to HOPE, but about the contribution of HOPE to the Spanish hospitals.

We as Spanish delegation joined HOPE, in 1985. Spain joined the EU in 1986 but at that time it was custom for the countries to join HOPE one year before the country became a member of the EU. Maybe to start the learning process. At the time, in Spain the Socialist Party got into power in 1982 and one of the first decisions in healthcare was to change practically all the Directors in public hospitals. These positions had been occupied by inspectors and the new Government wanted to give a more managerial profile to them. So far so good. Therefore, they decided that to substitute these inspectors, they were going to appoint clinicians as new managers of hospitals. That was my case and the case for the vast majority of new public hospital managers in Spain.

So, we were very excited to get to this new position, with a lot of projects and desires for change, but with no idea of what management was. And we had two serious diseases: First, we were young and, second, we were inexperienced. The first "disease" has been "cured". Unfortunately, we are not young any more. I'm not so sure about the second disease. Obviously, that was a good recipe to make mistakes and so we really did. We made a lot of mistakes. My thesis is that there would have been more mistakes and bigger ones, had it not been for what we then called the Hospital Committee of the EU.

What the Spanish delegation saw in the Committee from the beginning was a selected group of professionals (Brian Edwards, Denis Doherty, Georges Costargent, to mention only a few), with a lot of managerial experience, precisely what we lacked, dealing in a very professional way with a lot of issues
• Liability of hospitals
• Waiting lists
• Rights of hospitalized children
• Financing of hospitals
• Ethical/Legal problems and hospital management
• East/West hospital cooperation in Europe

• The Elderly and hospitals
• European social dialogue and hospitals
• Charter of the hospital patient

To mention some of the issues in which we have the opportunity to collaborate. Matters that were very far from our initial primitive approach to hospital management. What we tried was to extend these ideas and these approaches among our colleagues and healthcare authorities, although not always successfully.

Let me tell you an anecdote. A visit that I had the opportunity to make to the hôpital St-Luc, in Brussels together with Jacques Massion. How Jacques was received by all the personnel, doctors, nurses, assistant nurses, cleaners, etc. and the interchange of comments and experiences with them was for me an important lesson. Impossible to do the same at that moment in a public Spanish hospital, with all the fights that were taking place at that moment, given our intention to change things very rapidly.

The happiest period I spent in the Committee was my time as Vice-President, because I had the opportunity to see very closely the efforts and the work of the then President Massion and General Secretary Kris Schutyser. I have been since then a member of many Boards, but I never attended again meetings with around 30 points on the agenda, all of which analysed in depth. Those were the types of agendas that Kris prepared. Kris has been the engine of HOPE for many years, he even invented the name HOPE for the Committee.

It has been a great honour and a pleasure to be a member of this group and I appreciate very much the invitation.

Thank you very much