

Welcome 2021!



Julia Haubrich

Dear reader,

Normally, the editorial for the first issue of the new year would be a welcome opportunity to bid farewell to the old year and to greet the new one with excitement and joy. The difficulties of the previous year lie behind; in Europe, the days are getting brighter and longer again, and we view the new year with optimism and good intentions. Spring is on its way, and we imagine warmer temperatures, flowers growing and sun on our skin.

However, 2020 was a year that the world will certainly not forget anytime soon. Who would have expected, at the beginning of last year, that a virus would change and threaten the world as we knew it? That many of us would have to mourn the loss of loved ones? That many would have to spend their last hours alone, some without the possibility of saying goodbye? That a triage system would be implemented in European hospitals? That crematoria would be filled far beyond capacity?

The first lockdown in March 2020 saw Europe experience many of these situations. After a brief sigh of relief in summer, autumn brought a new wave, which in December led to another lockdown here in Germany, and indeed in other European countries, with some seeing more moderate restrictions and others being under stricter regulations.

Meanwhile, we have had to get used to things that we would not have thought possible a year ago. Mouth and nose coverings, plexiglass screens and floor markings are now part of our life. Social distancing has become an every-

day practice, as has monitoring the number of kilometres we can travel from our home and the number of people from different households we are allowed to meet. Holidays to other countries are forbidden, and most of us have never stayed in the same place for such an extended period. Working from home and home-schooling are now part of our standard vocabulary and, as a parent of young children, I can confirm that organising education and childcare is indeed a challenge. Though the German state offers support, entire industries such as the arts and culture and hospitality and events sectors have suffered tremendously, and remain fearful of the difficulties yet to come.

Now, at the start of 2021, coronavirus still has the world firmly under control. Finally, however, there is hope: vaccines have been developed impressively quickly, and getting back to normal seems a realistic aim in the near future. In Germany, though, the start of the vaccination campaign was extremely slow, despite the fact that we consider ourselves well-organised. Too few vaccines, inconsistent regulations and excessively bureaucratic procedures for making appointments are just some of the difficulties we are facing. At this point, as we seek to get a large number of people vaccinated to achieve herd immunity and thus return to a more normal way of life, we fear that we still face a long stalemate before we finally find our way out of the pandemic.

2020 will not be forgotten quickly, and it is already certain that this pandemic year will remain in people's memory. When we discuss it in the future, everyone will have



something to say about it, simply because we have all been affected to a greater or lesser degree. In our "Short communications from the scientific societies", we hope to offer an insight into the current situation for societies in different countries during this period.

Our hopes to get back to the life we once knew are focused on 2021. Let us all try to look ahead with optimism despite the adverse circumstances, and may this journal be a pleasant distraction.

We wish you all the best, and above all, a healthy 2021.

Julia Haubrich
Editor