Dear colleagues,

The journal *European Surgery-Acta Chirurgica Austriaca* is making a new start that will we hope take it into a successful future.

The observant reader will have noticed both the new editorial board with its new editor-in-chief Univ. Prof. Dr. Martin Riegler and Springer Verlag as the new publisher. Both have committed themselves to an ambitious program that should guarantee prosperous years ahead.

The Austrian Society of Surgery has therefore once again granted continued and renewed support of the journal as its official journal, a status it has enjoyed since 1969. One of the important steps to success will be internationalisation achieved by acquiring support from other national surgical societies. A wider dissemination will ensure a higher quality of material submitted to the journal for publication. The other measure will be a constant striving for impact points in order to be listed in Current Contents. Both goals will be vigorously pursued by the new editorial board.

These are exciting times for *European Surgery-Acta Chirurgica Austriaca* and we should give it all the support we can in order to help it achieve a firm stand in a nowadays very competitive market.

Michael Starlinger
President, Austrian Society of Surgery

The journal *Acta Chirurgica Austriaca* was founded in 1968 by the Austrian Society of Surgery (Österreichische Gesellschaft für Chirurgie) with the aim of providing surgeons working in diverse fields with a forum for scientific information. The editorial team at the time was headed by R. Gottlob and P. Fuchsig.

It was, moreover, to be a journal that would be representative of the developments in surgery and its related fields in Austria, and the fact that it long featured in "Current Contents" of the Institute for Scientific Information Philadelphia and had an "impact factor", albeit a small one, was gratifying. It was therefore common practice to document the personal career graphs of each scientist working in the field of surgery in the *Acta Chirurgica Austriaca*.

The loss of the impact factor later resulted in decreasing acceptance in the academic world, and although the last editorial team made valiant efforts and had numerous useful ideas (for example the international orientation), the decline seemed irreversible. The culminating point was reached in the autumn of 2002 when the Editor in Chief stepped down, and shortly afterwards, Blackwell Publishers pulled out.

However, this development triggered off a spate of new ideas about the objectives, but more importantly, about the meaning and purpose of a journal like Euro-

pean Surgery-Acta Chirurgica Austriaca. An obvious and plausible option seemed to be collaboration with one of the established European journals. Those under consideration were "Der Chirurg", "Langenbecks Archives of Surgery" and the "British Journal of Surgery". At this point, it is fitting to recognise and thank the publishers in question for the generous offer.

After weighing up the pros and cons and after detailed discussion, the committee members of the Society of Austrian Surgeons nevertheless decided in June 2003 to keep the *European Surgery-Acta Chirurgica Austriaca* running and promote it further.

The primary reasons were:

- The takeover by the well known Springer Verlag Wien New York.
- The new opportunities for Austria as a result of the growth eastwards of the European Union.
- Easier publishing conditions for Austrians in their own journal (stringent selection criteria will naturally continue to apply).
- The chance of providing a broad information base for scientific activities in the country.
- Finally, as a basic prerequisite, a strategically intelligent concept worked out by the new editorial team, including numerous innovations with national and international orientation.

The fear that one would insist on maintaining the original identity for mainly nostalgic reasons could be allayed to a large extent by the objectives and concepts of the new publishers. In the course of these discussions, as in discussions in other fields, doubts about the necessity and advantages of globalisation were expressed. The next few years will prove whether the decisions made were correct and whether the expectations of those in their favour have been fulfilled.

The journal can count on the support of the committee of the Austrian Society of Surgery. An essential prerequisite would be acceptance by the universities, for this would, for obvious reasons, be the best way to guarantee and safeguard a high professional standard. Therefore, at this juncture, an appeal is being made to those carrying out research as well as to those evaluating it to put the journal on a priority basis: extending their support to *European Surgery-Acta Chirurgica Austriaca* and granting recognition to it as a standard journal; naturally not indefinitely, but for the present period at least.

The next few years will entail much hard work for those responsible but also, hopefully, bring much success.

In this sense, may the journal *European Surgery-Acta Chirurgica Austriaca* be recommended gladly and often.

Rudolf Roka
General Secretary, Austrian Society of Surgery