



Gerhard Lang

# WOC 2010 will bring eastern and western Europe closer together

**The 2010 World Ophthalmological Congress (WOC) will be held in Berlin, Germany from June 5 - 9 next year. In this interview, Colin Kerr, executive editor EuroTimes, the official media partner for the congress, talks to WOC 2010 president Prof Gerhard Lang about the plans to make WOC 2010 an outstanding success.**

**ET:** Explain the significance of choosing Berlin as the venue for WOC 2010?

**Prof Lang:** This is the third time that the DOG (German Society of Ophthalmology) will host this prestigious international meeting with Berlin following in the footsteps of Heidelberg (1888) and Munich (1966). The DOG and the AAD (German Academy of Ophthalmology) congresses will also take place under the umbrella of the World Congress in Berlin.

The International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) are the sponsors of WOC and every two years they award the hosting of the WOC, which is usually held in a different continent on each occasion. In recent years the congress has been held in Sydney, Australia (2002), Sao Paolo, Brazil (2006) and Hong Kong, China (2008) so now it is Europe's turn. We were awarded the Congress in 2002 and we have been preparing for it for the last seven years.

As the old and new capital of Germany, we believe that Berlin is a unique link between Eastern and Western Europe thus representing the ideal location for the WOC® 2010. It is an exciting city with a unique culture, history and architecture and we believe this will be a major attraction for delegates who will come from all over the world to attend the congress.

**ET:** What is your message to delegates from Eastern Europe who will have a unique opportunity to meet with their colleagues 20 years after German reunification?

**Prof Lang:** The DOG was always internationally oriented and Eastern European countries have symposia at the DOG meetings on a regular basis for many years. At the last DOG meetings we were able to welcome delegates from more than 90 countries. Berlin, in the heart of Europe, is easy to reach by car, bus or short flights from everywhere in Europe, especially East Europe.

**ET:** There have been major advances in ophthalmology in German society since reunification in the last 20 years and there have also been major advances in the world of ophthalmology. How will WOC 2010 in Berlin reflect these changes?

**Prof Lang:** A brilliant scientific programme is crucial for the success of a meeting. Supranational and national societies will organise symposia and subspecialty days

devoted to glaucoma, cataract surgery, retina and refractive surgery. We will have delegates attending and presenting from all over the world and I am looking forward to hearing the different perspectives

**ET:** The World Congress in Berlin will give delegates the opportunity to reflect on the old and new Germany, but also the changes in ophthalmology that are being led by a new generation of ophthalmologists. How will the congress reflect these changes?

**Prof Lang:** Next year in Berlin delegates will get the opportunity to hear from the opinion leaders, the stars of ophthalmology, but we also want young ophthalmologists to submit papers and take part in the symposia and scientific sessions and also in the instruction courses which are a very important part of the programme in Berlin.

**ET:** What are the major challenges facing ophthalmologists in 2010 and how will the World Congress address these challenges?

**Prof Lang:** There is no better place than a World Ophthalmology Congress to focus on the current state and future of our profession. WOC 2010 will raise awareness of the disparity of eye care between industrialised and developing countries and we will also be seeking to intensify international cooperation.

In Europe a major challenge for ophthalmologists is reimbursement as new services and technologies are not always accompanied by an increase in fees but this is obviously not the case in other regions. WOC 2010 will give us an opportunity to look at different models of modern practical management of patient care and WOC 2010 is the perfect stage to pass on our perspectives on these issues. We must also not forget to use our skills, knowledge and teaching to help those in underdeveloped countries with the right action plans and this will be one of the key themes of the congress.

**ET:** One of the major highlights of the WOC is the opening ceremony which reflects the unique cultural heritage of the host city. What can we look forward to in Berlin next year?

**Prof Lang:** The Opening Ceremony on Saturday June 5 will have many surprises and is definitely not to be missed. The WOCtoberfest which takes place on Monday June 7 will be an original Bavarian-style "Octoberfest" with typical music, entertainment, food and beer and also non-alcoholic and vegetarian options. At this point, we are inviting all delegates and their families to wear their national attire or traditional costume to this event, to celebrate this truly international occasion.

**ET:** What are your plans for the exhibition

which will be one of the highlights of WOC 2010?

**Prof Lang:** The exhibition will provide an excellent overview of new developments and products. This is a very important feature of the congress because it gives delegates an overview of the products that are on the market and the new technologies that are coming to the market. At WOC 2010, delegates will be able to attend lectures and hear about a new machine and device and then after the lecture they can go to the exhibition and find out more information.

**ET:** What else can delegates look forward to at WOC 2010?

**Prof Lang:** We will also work to ensure that every delegate finds what he or she wants – top-line research, comprehensive ophthalmology, instructional courses, wet labs, refreshers, overviews, video programme and posters or keynote lectures by ophthalmological celebrities and field leaders. With three meetings under one roof (AAD, DOG and WOC) it is also a great opportunity for continuing medical education. The AAD programme (June 3 – 6) and part of the DOG programme will be presented in German language and simultaneously translation in certain halls is planned.

**ET:** Please discuss the collaboration with EuroTimes and its importance for WOC 2010?

**Prof Lang:** We have chosen EuroTimes as our official media partner and I am looking forward to our cooperation together. EuroTimes is a modern journal with a worldwide distribution which will help us to highlight the scientific programme of WOC 2010 and also inform

delegates about "what else there is to do in Berlin and Germany. In EuroTimes, we will provide more congress-specific information over the next year and during the congress delegates will also be able to find out what is going on in the special EuroTimes newsletter ET Today which will be distributed to delegates.

**ET:** How can people learn more about WOC 2010 and the Berlin meeting?

**Prof Lang:** The best source, in addition to EuroTimes, is our website [www.woc2010.org](http://www.woc2010.org) with links to the DOG ([www.dog.org](http://www.dog.org)) the AAD ([www.aad.to](http://www.aad.to)) and ICO ([www.icoph.org](http://www.icoph.org)) homepages.

**ET:** Every congress has a different atmosphere and spirit. What do you hope will be the special spirit of WOC 2010?

**Prof Lang:** In 1857 Albrecht von Graefe founded the oldest ophthalmological society of the world – the DOG, just before the German ophthalmologists went to the first International Congress of Ophthalmology in Brussels. Twenty years after reunification we are proud to show Berlin as it is now with the old architecture and history but also as a modern European centre which is the shooting star of European cities. As the old and new capital of Germany, we believe that Berlin is a unique link between Eastern and Western Europe thus representing the ideal location for the WOC 2010. It is an exciting city with a unique culture, history and architecture and we believe this will be a major attraction for delegates who will come from all over the world to attend the congress.

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