With 160 delegates from 30 countries the EFPC Istanbul conference co-organized with TAHEV (Turkish Foundation of Family Medicine) can be called a success already knowing that the previous “small” EFPC 2011 conference in Graz, Austria, had only a number of 80 delegates: a doubling of the total number with as a result: more stories, more viewpoints, richer exchanges. The well-known debate corners where policy posters are presented and statements are defended included some interesting new developments if it comes to the integration of Primary and Secondary care provision like the Turkish pilot of setting up integrated town hospitals which serves both primary and secondary health care issues presented by Prof Ilhami Unluoglu, chair of the TAHEV Board of Trustees’, or the way an integrated comprehensive needs-based capitation system to enhance quality of primary care has been introduced in the Community Health Centres of the Belgian Primary Health Care system. Other examples of the Turkish developments of the integration of care were provided by Prof Mehtap Tatar of the Hacettepe University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Health Care Management. The contribution of invited workshops of linked networks like the International Hospital Federation (IHF) and the International Foundation for Integrated Care (IFIC) resulted in the clear outcome that more collaboration is needed between those networks. This was emphasised by Dr Hans Kluge (WHO-Copenhagen) in his key-note which encompasses the WHO Europe Framework for Action towards Coordinated/Integrated Health Services Delivery (CIHSD). A common understanding of the key-principles and values is needed together with an exchange of running projects. The optimal co-creation between primary and secondary care was discussed in the Mental Health workshop, organised by the EFPC Working Group in which it was stated to see them as different and equal. The (scientific) identity of mental health in primary care was explained by Dineke Smit, of the Dutch Association of Primary Care Psychologists.

The conference had a great kick-off with live-drama played by a Turkish semi-professional theatre group of Primary Care providers. They presented a patient, her relative and her doctor in confusion caused by the lack of integration which was based on a real-life script prepared by Dr Pauline Boeckxstaens of the Department of Family Medicine and PHC of Ghent University (Belgium). The presented case confronted the conference delegates with some core issues to be resolved by the stakeholders of the health care community: policy makers, academics and practitioners, all very well presented at this EFPC conference. Confrontations continued during the conference like the extreme beauty of the Bosporus during the boat-trip and the Turkish cultural highlights on the one hand, but also the awareness that Turkey is neighbouring countries like Syria and Greece! The current situation in Greece was explained in a very transparent way by Dr Pavlos Theodorakis, president of the National Primary Health Care Committee, working close with the EU Task Force for Greece and international experts for the implementation of the primary care sector reforms in Greece. He made clear that some crucial changes in the mentality of Greek professionals and patients are needed. A switch from national towards local governance of the health system with a larger role for the community will be crucial according to the international experts. In this respect references were made to the research projects coordinated by NIVEL like the EU funded projects PHAMEU and
QUALICOPC. The PhD thesis written by Dionne Kringos based on the findings of the PHAMEU project mainly was cited regularly.

The community orientation was even more highlighted during the launch of the International Federation of Community Health Centres. Besides a presentation about the Belgian community health centre developments, a clear video-recorded statement of the Australian partner, CHA, represented by its president Trevor Carr was showed in which he stated to expect much of a global exchange of experiences and knowledge regarding issues like research on cost-efficiency and educational strategies to create a workforce able to practise in a community oriented approach. It provided a boost for the European members of the Alliance for Community Oriented Primary Care services (ACOPC) to meet during the conference and make new plans for the future like mapping the current Community Health Centres in the different countries of Europe. A link may be created with the studies on Health Care in New Towns, presented by the Dutch Jan van Es Institute which provide insight in how planning can play a role when communities are starting to develop.

The importance of the nursing profession within Primary Care and the community orientation was emphasised both by Katja Neubauer, deputy head EC unit for Healthcare Systems and by Prof Marieke Schuurmans, Chair Nursing Science University Medical Centre Utrecht. A problem noticed in this respect was the lack of clear definitions for allied health professionals like health assistants, working in Primary Care too. This might be a topic for the EFPC to focus on, as for Integrated Care in general and in particularly for Community Health Centres the involvement of supportive staff in the health care process is the grease in the innovation machinery. Fortunately nurses are also represented in the newly formed EFPC Advisory Board: the new composition of the Board was approved during the General Assembly at the first day of the conference. An enthusiastic group of 19 members from a large range of different countries and professions will start their work as advisory board members this autumn with the ultimate goal to create a better link with the professionals they represent. A wonderful side effect of this governance change is a dramatic drop of the average age of the EFPC governance bodies. Also within the delegate list of the conference it was recognized that many more young persons were present resulting in a price for the youngest participant: 22 years! This brings us to the future of the EFPC: the EFPC 3.0 version for which Dr Cagri Kalaca provided many ideas. In the closing debate on “Balancing The Primary And Secondary Care Provision For More Integration and Better Health Outcomes”, Dr Risto Mietunen (Board member of the International Hospital Federation) and our Chairman prof. Jan De Maeseneer, explored the future relationship between hospitals and PHC addressing the challenges of increasing multi-morbidity. The dialogue illustrated the core message of this Conference: it is essential to build bridges like those in the city of Istanbul, that bring together different worlds... In the 2014 Conference in Barcelona, with our Catalan hosts, we will combine live action with a Working Group on “theatre & Primary Care” with social media and on-line communities to increase the societal impact of the EFPC and being a leading force in influencing the health care policy making in Europe. We hope you join us in this mission!

Prof Jan De Maeseneer, Chairman of the European Forum for Primary Care

Assoc. Prof. Mehmet Akman, on Behalf of TAHEV Board of Trustees

Diederik Aarendonk, Coordinator of the European Forum for Primary Care