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SCHWEIZERISCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR HERZ- UND THORAKALE GEFÄSSCHIRURGIE
SOCIÉTÉ SUISSE DE CHIRURGIE CARDIAQUE ET VASCULAIRE THORACIQUE
SOCIETA SVIZZERA DI CHIRURGIA DEL CUORE E DEI VASI TORACICI

SGHC: NEWSLETTER JUNE 2026

Dear colleagues, dear members of the SGHC/SSCC,

It is with great gratitude, humility and enthusiasm that I address you for the first time as the newly elected President of the Swiss Society of Cardiac and Thoracic Vascular Surgery – the SGHC/SSCC.

The General Assembly held on 10 June 2026 in Basel marked an important moment for our Society. I would like to sincerely thank all members present for their trust and for the open and constructive spirit of the discussions. I am deeply aware that taking over the presidency of our Society is both an honour and a responsibility. The SGHC/SSCC represents a small but highly specialised and essential community within Swiss medicine. Our voice matters for our patients, for our trainees, for our hospitals, and for the future of cardiovascular care in Switzerland.

First and foremost, I would like to express my warmest thanks to Prof. Enrico Ferrari for his presidency and his dedicated work over the past years. Under his leadership, and together with the Board, the Society has continued to develop in a professional, collegial and forward-looking way. The annual report presented in Basel highlighted several achievements, including the strengthening of our national registry, the development of the SGHC eAcademy, the regular newsletter, the scientific sessions of the annual congress, and the Society's active role in important national discussions.

The General Assembly also confirmed the transition within the Board. I am grateful for the confidence expressed by the members and look forward to working with the new Board in a spirit of continuity, responsibility and openness. I would also like to thank all Board members, auditors, the Young Surgeons representatives and MeisterConcept for their commitment and for the many hours of work invested in the service of our Society.

AFTER THE GA: CONTINUITY, RENEWAL AND RESPONSIBILITY

New board composition

Christoph Huber – president
Oliver Reuthebuch – vice-president
Omer Dzemali – secretary
Enrico Ferrari – past president

David Reineke – board member
Lars Englberger – board member
Alexander Kadner – board member
Eva Roost – board member
Jürg Grünenfelder – board member

Finances, sustainability and a changing sponsoring environment

The General Assembly approved the 2025 financial statements, the 2026 budget, the annual membership contributions for 2027, and granted discharge to the Board. The financial situation of the Society remains stable, which is reassuring and reflects careful management over recent years.

At the same time, the discussion clearly showed that our sources of income are changing. Traditional models of industrial support are no longer sufficient or appropriate in their previous form. Industry partners increasingly need transparent, purpose-driven and clearly defined projects to support. This transition is not only a financial challenge; it is also an opportunity to develop more meaningful, ethical and future-oriented forms of collaboration.

The SGHC eAcademy has become an important tool in this context. It is not only an educational platform for our members and trainees, but also a clearly defined project through which industry partners can support postgraduate education and continuous professional development in a transparent and valuable way.

SGHC Cardiac Surgery Registry

A major achievement of recent years is the SGHC Cardiac Surgery Registry. The registry now includes more than 4,000 anonymised patients, with participation from a growing number of Swiss cardiac surgery centres. This is an important milestone for our specialty.

A strong national registry gives us the possibility to better understand our activity, monitor quality, support benchmarking and provide credible data in political, regulatory and scientific discussions. It is also increasingly important in a healthcare environment in which transparency, quality documentation and outcome measurement are becoming central.

I would like to warmly thank Prof. Oliver Reuthebuch and Prof. Lars Englberger for their outstanding commitment to this project. Their work has been essential in bringing the registry to its current level. The next steps will include improving completeness, data quality and quality control processes. The idea of involving one or more non-Board members in data quality assessment was discussed and should be further developed.
In the longer term, we should aim for broad participation of all Swiss cardiac surgery centres. A national registry only reaches its full value when it truly reflects the national reality. Participation should therefore be understood not only as an administrative task, but as a collective responsibility towards our patients, our profession and the credibility of our Society.

SGHC eAcademy and continuous education

The SGHC eAcademy was also presented during the General Assembly. All members have now been pre-registered and are warmly invited to actively use the platform. The eAcademy already contains a substantial and growing number of educational videos and will continue to expand.

It offers an important opportunity for trainees, young surgeons, established surgeons, perfusionists, operating room nurses and other professionals involved in cardiac surgery. I would like to encourage all centres to contribute content. Educational videos, recorded lectures, technical demonstrations, animations and structured teaching material are all highly welcome.

The success of the eAcademy will depend on the active contribution of the entire Swiss cardiac surgery community. We should not see it as a project of one person or one Board, but as a shared educational platform for our specialty in Switzerland.

Continuous medical education will become increasingly important and increasingly visible. The SIWF/ISFM processes and the FMH framework remain central for our specialty. During the General Assembly, we also discussed the fact that continuing medical education requirements may in future be monitored more closely, including random checks. The current requirement of 150 credits over three years remains an important professional obligation.

As part of its efforts to modernise continuing medical education, the SGHC piloted the EduTrust platform during the 2026 General Assembly, using QR-code registration, satisfaction assessment and automatic digital certificate generation. A total of 32 certificates were issued. The initial feedback was encouraging, with 74% of respondents satisfied or very satisfied, including 35% satisfied and 39% very satisfied.

SIWF / ISFM, FMH Ärztekammer and the Professional Codex

The SGHC continues to work closely with the SIWF/ISFM, the FMH Ärztekammer and the relevant national bodies responsible for postgraduate and continuing medical education. Much of this work takes place behind the scenes but remains essential for maintaining the quality, recognition and credibility of our specialty.

We are pleased to report that the SIWF has recently confirmed that the processing of applications for the Swiss specialist title in Cardiac and Thoracic Vascular Surgery is now essentially up to date. Current delays have been reduced substantially and should not exceed approximately three months from submission to final decision. This represents an important improvement for trainees and young specialists entering independent practice.

Closely related to these activities is the ongoing work on professional standards and professional conduct. The recent addition to the FMH Code of Conduct, adopted by the Ärztekammer, explicitly addresses unacceptable behaviour such as bullying, harassment, racism, gender discrimination and other forms of inappropriate conduct.

This topic is not merely theoretical. It directly affects the quality of our training environments, the well-being and safety of our teams, and ultimately the quality of care provided to our patients. Cardiac surgery is a demanding discipline that requires commitment, resilience and high standards. However, excellence and pressure can never justify disrespectful, intimidating or discriminatory behaviour.

As a Society, we strongly support a professional culture based on excellence, responsibility, integrity, respect and fairness. Maintaining such an environment is a shared responsibility of trainers, trainees, department leaders and professional societies alike, and is essential to ensuring the continued attractiveness and success of our specialty.

Ambulatory tariffs: current status

Regarding ambulatory tariffs and reimbursement, the current status is encouraging. The application for the relevant "Dignität" has been re-submitted. The respective concerned professional societies have approved the requests.

The applications are now being reviewed and should be accepted and formally approved in the course of this year. This should allow the SGHC to regain the required Dignität at the beginning of next year.

This is an important step to ensure that ambulatory cardiac surgical activities are correctly recognised and reimbursed within the Swiss tariff framework.

TAVI, structural heart interventions and the role of cardiac surgery

The General Assembly also discussed the current status of TAVI. The certification and recognition process for heart teams is ongoing, and the question of the age threshold for reimbursement remains important.

The SGHC/SSCC has taken this topic seriously and has involved its members through a survey. The Board has also insisted that the specific perspective of cardiac surgery must be heard before final decisions are taken by the authorities. The fact that the BAG agreed to receive delegates from our Society before taking a final decision is important.

This is not about opposing progress. It is about ensuring that innovation is introduced responsibly, with appropriate indications, robust evidence, high-quality training and true heart team decision-making. The same principle applies to all new technologies: cardiac surgeons must not remain passive observers. We must remain active contributors, critical partners and, where appropriate, leaders.

Aortic surgery, HSM and new endovascular frontiers

The future of aortic surgery was also present in several discussions during the congress and the General Assembly. Aortic surgery remains one of the domains in which cardiac surgery has a central role and a major responsibility.

This is particularly relevant in the context of highly specialised medicine in Switzerland. New endovascular and hybrid concepts, including EndoBentall and endoarch technologies, will have major implications for HSM aortic surgery, institutional requirements, training, registry documentation and the definition of expertise.

As SGHC/SSCC, we must follow these developments very closely. The implementation of complex aortic technologies must be based on competence, structured training, appropriate institutional governance and transparent outcome documentation. Cardiac surgeons must remain fully involved in the evaluation, implementation and governance of these therapies.

Cardiovascular Medicine and academic visibility

Another important point was the future collaboration with Cardiovascular Medicine. Prof. Peter Matt presented the project of re-establishing a Swiss-based cardiovascular journal with international ambition and clear Swiss identity. The journal is designed as a heart-team journal and includes Swiss cardiac surgeons in the editorial structure.

I encourage our members to consider this platform for scientific contributions, case reports, reviews and original manuscripts. A visible academic platform is important for our Society, for our young colleagues and for the international visibility of Swiss cardiovascular medicine.

EACTS and the European perspective

We had the great opportunity and privilege to welcome Prof. Patrick Myers, Secretary General of EACTS and member of the SGHC/SSCC. He gave a broad and inspiring overview of the missions, objectives and strategic priorities of EACTS.

His presentation highlighted the professionalisation of the Association, the development of a strong secretariat, the diversification of funding, the support of research and innovation, the importance of education and fellowships, the European board examinations, guidelines, registries, humanitarian engagement and the support that EACTS can offer to national societies.

He also underlined that the future of cardiac surgery will require us to remain proactive in structural heart interventions, transcatheter therapies, innovation, databases, robotics and new educational formats. His message was clear: national societies such as ours should be actively connected to EACTS and should make use of the resources, platforms and opportunities available at the European level.

Prof. Myers warmly invited all SGHC/SSCC members to actively participate in the 40th EACTS Annual Meeting, which will take place in Barcelona from 7 to 10 October 2026. This anniversary meeting, held under the theme “Honouring our History, Inspiring our Future”, will be an important opportunity for the European cardiothoracic surgical community to come together, exchange, learn and shape the future of our specialty.

Further information and registration are available on the official EACTS Annual Meeting website.

Swiss Perfusion delegate (Thomas Döbele)

We also had the opportunity to hear from the Swiss perfusion delegate. The situation of perfusion training and professional recognition remains strategically important for the entire cardiac surgery ecosystem.

Cardiac surgery cannot function without highly trained perfusionists. The possibility to train perfusionists in Switzerland through the MAS pathway is therefore a national asset that deserves our continued attention and support. Training, recruitment and professional recognition of perfusionists are not isolated issues; they directly affect the quality, safety and sustainability of cardiac surgery in Switzerland.

Young Surgeons

The Young Surgeons also presented their activities and priorities. Their engagement is essential. Training the next generation is one of the most important missions of our Society.

The reports from European training initiatives and the planned practical courses show that our junior members are motivated and well connected. We should continue to support them actively, not only financially but also through mentorship, access to educational material, hands-on training and opportunities to contribute to the eAcademy.

The SGHC/SSCC Young Surgeon Award was also highlighted. In the future, it would be meaningful to further connect this award with active contributions to education, including content creation for the eAcademy. This would strengthen both the visibility of young surgeons and the educational mission of our Society.

Senning Lecture and SGHC/SSCC Young Surgeon Award 2026

The General Assembly also reminded members of the Senning Lecture and the SGHC/SSCC Young Surgeon Award session during the congress. These moments are important for our Society because they connect history, academic excellence and the promotion of younger colleagues.

The SGHC/SSCC was honoured to award the 2026 Senning Lecture to Prof. René Prêtre in recognition of his outstanding contributions to cardiac surgery and for his exceptional national and international visibility, which have greatly contributed to the reputation and influence of Swiss cardiac surgery worldwide.

Named after the pioneering Swiss cardiac surgeon Åke Senning, the Senning Lecture represents the highest distinction awarded by our Society and honours individuals whose careers have had a lasting impact on the field of cardiovascular surgery. Prof. Prêtre delivered a moving and inspiring lecture reflecting on his humanitarian commitment and his efforts to develop congenital cardiac surgery programmes in low- and middle-income countries. His presentation reminded us that excellence in cardiac surgery extends beyond technical achievement and includes a commitment to education, solidarity and improving access to life-saving care for children around the world.

We congratulate the 2026 SGHC award winner, Dr Islam Salikanov of the University of Basel's Departement of Cardiac Surgery, and thank all contributors to the scientific programme. The quality of the submitted abstracts and presentations demonstrates the vitality of cardiac surgery research and training in Switzerland. This year best abstract award was given to Rares Eniu from Geneva.

New members, resignations and remembrance

During the General Assembly, the proposed new ordinary members, junior members and non-physician members were presented and approved by vote. We warmly welcome all new members to the SGHC/SSCC and look forward to their active participation in the life of our Society.

New members approved by the General Assembly 2026

Ordinary members
- David Santer
- Bettina Langhammer-Stortecky

Junior/non-physician members
- Vanessa Spring
- Milica Oluis
- Fritzi Carol Benz
- Mirjam Bittner
- Carmen Mostert

Change from junior member to ordinary member
- Filip Dulguerov
- Ion Vasiloi
- Michael Voutat

Resignations

Ordinary members
- Rafael Trunfio
- Achim Karsten Häussler (deceased)
- Andreas Künzli

Junior members
- Daniel Dimanski
- Laina Passos

During this agenda item, the Assembly also paused to honour the memory of Achim Häussler (19.11.1969 – 06.10.2025) a highly valued and dear colleague who passed away far too early.

Following the moving words of Prof. Omer Dzemali, the members observed a minute of silence; our thoughts remain with his family, friends and colleagues.

Thanks to our sponsors and industrial partners

The SGHC/SSCC warmly thanks its industrial partners for their important support, in particular for the SGHC eAcademy and the educational mission of our Society. Purpose-driven and transparent sponsoring allows us to develop meaningful projects in postgraduate education, continuous professional development and knowledge sharing.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of

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- Edwards Lifesciences

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- Atrivion
- Fehling Instruments
- Mussler Medical

We also hope to further broaden this support in the coming year and invite additional industrial partners, including major actors in our field, to contribute to the educational and scientific development of the Swiss cardiac surgery community.

Sponsoring must be transparent, ethical and linked to meaningful projects. Education, training, quality improvement and innovation are such meaningful projects. We will continue to develop this model and invite our partners to support the Society in a way that is aligned with our professional values and with the needs of our members.

New SGHC webpage

Following a necessary technical migration from our previous website, we are pleased to introduce the new SGHC/SSCC website. We warmly invite all members to explore the updated platform, discover its resources, and stay informed about the latest activities of our Society at www.sghc.ch.

Looking ahead

The next General Assembly will take place during the joint SGK/SGHC annual meeting from 16 to 18 June 2027 in St. Gallen. Until then, the Board will continue to work on the major strategic topics discussed in Basel: the registry, the eAcademy, continuous education, professional standards, TAVI and structural heart interventions, aortic surgery and HSM, young surgeon training, collaboration with EACTS, and the sustainable financing of our Society.

I look forward to working with all of you. The strength of the SGHC/SSCC lies in the expertise, commitment and collegiality of its members. Our specialty is changing rapidly, but cardiac surgery will remain central to the treatment of complex cardiovascular disease. To do so, we must remain united, proactive and scientifically grounded.

With my warmest regards,
Prof. Christoph Huber
President SGHC/SSCC
Swiss Society of Cardiac and Thoracic Vascular Surgery

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