

Dear colleagues and dear friends,

My name is Dr Maria Theodorakopoulou, and above all, I am an intensivist.

For more than twenty-five years, intensive care medicine has shaped not only my career, but my identity. My professional journey from surgery to intensive care and clinical nutrition has taught me that the care of critically ill patients demands multidisciplinary thinking, genuine collaboration, and the courage to lead through uncertainty.

Alongside clinical work, teaching has been a constant in my career: medical students, residents, postgraduate trainees, ICU nurses, and allied health professionals. It has reinforced a conviction I hold deeply that education is one of the most powerful tools we have for improving patient care, and that knowledge shared is lives saved.

Over the years I have had the privilege of serving intensive care medicine in many capacities: from the bedside and hospital leadership, through national responsibilities during health crises, to the boards of our professional societies. In the Hellenic Society of Intensive Care Medicine I have been elected to the Executive Committee in every election since 2009 serving as Treasurer, Vice-President, and most recently two consecutive terms as President (2021–2026). At the European level, I have served ESICM as Country Representative, committee member, contributor to educational initiatives, referent for the INDICATE project, and most recently as Treasurer (2023–2025).

The trust my colleagues have placed in me through these successive elections has been both an honour and a responsibility. It is that same sense of responsibility that brings me before you today.

I stand before you with humility and determination to ask for your trust to serve as President of our Society.

Intensive care medicine is, of course, about technology, protocols, and survival curves. But it is also about something more fundamental: **responsibility**. It is about restoring not only life, but a life of dignity and quality for patients, for their families, and for the professionals who dedicate themselves to their care.

Intensive care is, at its heart, a team effort. ESICM must continue to support and represent the entire ICU community: physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, and researchers whose collaboration is not optional but essential. Through my years of involvement in ESICM I have witnessed the extraordinary strength of our Society: its diversity, its scientific excellence, and its unique ability to unite professionals across borders, cultures, and healthcare systems. That strength is something to build on, not take for granted.

If elected President, my vision for ESICM will be guided by five core principles summarised in one word: **HEART**.

H — Harmony Across Europe and Beyond

Europe is not uniform. Our healthcare systems, resources, and clinical realities differ greatly and ESICM must reflect that diversity, not smooth over it.

ESICM must remain a home for every intensivist: from highly resourced academic centres to smaller hospitals in less privileged regions, from established leaders to professionals just beginning their careers. Inclusion must not be symbolic it must be structural. I will actively foster collaboration across countries, healthcare systems, and cultures, while strengthening ESICM's partnerships with societies and colleagues worldwide, so that every intensivist genuinely feels represented within our Society.

E — Excellence in Education

Education is the most powerful equalizer in medicine and ESICM's most enduring contribution to patients.

I will work to make ESICM educational programmes more accessible, more affordable, and more innovative. That means expanding digital learning opportunities, strengthening regional and inter-society collaborations, and developing mentoring initiatives specifically designed for young intensivists and emerging leaders because the future of our specialty depends on the professionals we invest in today. Our goal must be clear: to ensure that knowledge and expertise reach every intensivist who needs them, regardless of geography or resources.

A — Advancing Research and Innovation

Research has been central to my professional journey from nutrition and metabolic monitoring in critical illness to sepsis, rapid diagnostics, and workforce wellbeing. I understand both the potential and the practical challenges of clinical research in our specialty.

As President, I will support the development of collaborative European research networks that are pragmatic, inclusive, and focused on clinically meaningful outcomes. I will champion innovation that translates into bedside impact not innovation for its own sake, but innovation in service of our patients. And I will ensure that our commitments to sustainability and greener ICU practice move from aspiration to operational reality.

R — Representation of Members

ESICM's greatest strength is its members.

Our Society must continue to represent intensivists across all professional stages, specialties, and geographic regions. Early-career colleagues, clinicians working in under-resourced environments, nurses and allied health professionals, researchers and educators all must feel heard, supported, and empowered within ESICM. I am committed to strengthening that dialogue: to listening before deciding, to ensuring the Society evolves in genuine response to the needs of its community, and to making representation a reality rather than a stated value.

T — Transparent and Responsible Leadership

Serving as ESICM Treasurer has deepened my conviction that governance must be transparent, accountable, and financially sustainable.

Trust is the foundation of any leadership. Transparency is what earns and sustains that trust. ESICM's continued growth must be guided by financial responsibility, strategic clarity, and honest, open dialogue with its members not decisions made behind closed doors. I will lead

with the same standards I have applied in every role: accountability to those who placed their trust in me, and clarity about where we are going and why.

Beyond strategies and structures, I bring something deeply personal to this candidacy: gratitude.

Gratitude for the mentors who guided me and believed in me before I believed in myself. Gratitude for the colleagues and teams with whom I have worked, disagreed, learned, and grown. Gratitude for a Society that has connected me to extraordinary professionals across borders and cultures, and made me a better intensivist and a better leader.

Intensive care medicine teaches us humility every day. It reminds us that no single person has all the answers, that the best decisions are made together, and that no one leads alone. Leadership like critical care itself is a collective effort.

If you entrust me with this responsibility, I will serve ESICM with integrity, inclusiveness, and complete dedication. I will listen before deciding. I will unite. I will work to ensure that ESICM continues to be a leading voice for excellence, compassion, and innovation in intensive care medicine for our members, for our specialty, and above all, for our patients.

Together, we are stronger. Together, we care better. Together, we shape the future of intensive care in Europe and beyond.

With respect and commitment,

Dr Maria Theodorakopoulou