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The End of an Era: a Tribute to Professor Herman Nys

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Editorial

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The End of an Era: a Tribute to Professor Herman Nys

An academic journal, at its best, is more than a repository of scholarship; it is the intellectual heart of a community. It chronicles the evolution of a field, sparks debate, shapes discourse and provides a platform for both established and emerging voices. For such a community to thrive, it requires a steward — a figure with the vision to see the field not just as it is, but as it could be, and the dedication to guide it there. For more than three decades, *the European Journal of Health Law* (EJHL), and indeed the entire European health law community, has been fortunate to have such a steward in Professor Herman Nys. It is, therefore, with a profound mixture of immense gratitude and deep respect that the Editors of the Journal announce his decision to step down as Editor-in-Chief.

Professor Nys's story is inextricably woven into the very fabric of the EJHL. His involvement dates back to its inception in 1994, a time when 'European health law' was more of an aspiration than an established, coherent discipline. The legal landscapes across the continent were fragmented, and the cross-border dimensions of healthcare, patient mobility, and biomedical research were only beginning to present the complex challenges that are now central to the field. From that inaugural year, as a member of the first Editorial Board, Professor Nys was instrumental in charting the journal's course. For 31 years, his presence has been a constant — a source of stability, wisdom, and intellectual rigour. In 2010, he became one of the editors and in 2012 — after the resignation of Prof. J.K.M. Gevers, he assumed the role of Editor-in-Chief, a position he has held for the last 14 years.

During this tenure, he has not merely overseen the journal's operations; he has meticulously cultivated its identity, expanded its reach, and solidified its reputation as the preeminent international publication dedicated to health

law in Europe. His leadership was never a passive or purely administrative affair. On the contrary, Professor Nys has been one of the journal's most active and influential contributors, with no less than 25 contributions in which he figured as first or co-author and an almost uncountable number of summaries of cases of the European Court of Human Rights or the European Court of Justice. A thorough review of the *EJHL*'s archives reveals a scholar in constant dialogue with his field. In his publications for the Journal, he did not simply report on the law; he illuminated it, making sense of its trajectory and anticipating its future directions. Through this constant stream of scholarship, he has done more than edit a journal; he has actively constructed its intellectual foundations, brick by brick. To appreciate the legacy of Herman Nys is to appreciate a particular intellectual style: one characterized by deep analytical power, a meticulous comparative approach, and an unwavering commitment to fundamental rights. He possesses a rare ability to dissect the most intricate legal problems and present their core components with elegant simplicity. His work is always grounded in a firm ethical framework, emphasizing the primacy of human dignity, autonomy, and justice in healthcare.

Beyond the pages of the *EJHL*, his role as a mentor is a recurring theme among those who have had the privilege to work with him. Furthermore, his vision extended to building the institutional architecture necessary for a trans-national field to flourish. He was a co-founder and driving force behind the European Association of Health Law (EAHL), recognizing early on the need for a formal network to connect scholars and practitioners across national borders. The synergistic relationship he fostered between the EAHL and the *EJHL* has been instrumental in creating a cohesive and dynamic European health law community.

As we mark the end of his tenure as Editor-in-Chief, we are not saying goodbye. We are, instead, expressing our deepest gratitude for a legacy that is both foundational and enduring. Professor Nys has built a journal that is far more than a publication; it is a vibrant forum for debate, a crucible for new ideas, and a powerful catalyst for the further development and harmonization of health law in Europe.

On behalf of the all the editors and the editorial team of the *EJHL*, past and present, and the global readership that has benefited so profoundly from his work, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Herman Nys. We wish him the very best in all his future endeavours and look forward to his continued contributions to the field, which will undoubtedly continue to enrich us all for many years to come.

To express our gratitude to the energy and passion that Herman Nys put in the Journal over all these years, this issue of the European Journal of Health Law is a special issue in which the different editors have each written a contribution. *A Journal Amicorum* in honour of Herman Nys!

Tom Goffin

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Mette Hartlev

Titti Mattson

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