Dear ORPHEUS Members,  

We soon say goodbye to 2018 and can start to both reflect on the year that has been, but more importantly about the new year ahead of us. Here follow some of my personal reflections.

I am sure that you will agree that the highlight of the year was the annual congress in Reykjavik, Iceland – the country of fire and ice! Not only were we blessed with great weather, but with so many people attending this was a fantastically successful event organized by Helga Ögmundsdóttir and her team. I consider that the programme had something for everyone and am still reflecting on what we heard from both the Icelandic filmmaker and the young female entrepreneur as inspirational talks. Looking forward to the New Year then it is with great delight that we will be convening at the 14th Annual Orpheus Conference in Dublin during March 21st–23rd 2019. See the website for more information: http://www.ucd.ie/orpheus2019/. Make sure you register as soon as possible, as with the famous Irish hospitality this is an event not to miss!

As usual our EC members have been busy participating in various thematic training workshops, including events in Izmir and Kocaeli (Turkey), Chester (UK), Zagreb (Croatia), Braga and Covilhã (Portugal), Dublin (Ireland), Sumy (Ukraine) and Nashville (USA) to mention just a few. ORPHEUS will gladly fund the travel of 2 teachers to take part in national events (workshops, symposia) that you organise either locally or nationally on an aspect of Doctoral Training. The purpose of our 'Best Practices' approach is to spread these best practices, and this can be facilitated through structured use of the specific expertises existing within our ORPHEUS community. It is in this way that we can continue to improve what we do by working together. Please consider organising an event and get in touch with our secretary Oksana Sulaiieva if you are interested in exploring this possibility.

ORPHEUS Labelling visits have recently been conducted at the University of Oslo, Norway, and the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal. ORPHEUS Self-Evaluation certificates were awarded to Sumy State University, Ukraine, and the AMC
Graduate School, Amsterdam, Holland. I cannot impress enough upon all ORPHEUS members how useful undertaking the self-evaluation procedure could be for your University. This gives you the possibility to benchmark your doctoral training programmes against the ORPHEUS Best Practices, giving you the possibility to reflect upon what you are already doing well, as well as indicating potential areas for improvement. It is my ambition that all ORPHEUS members will at least conduct the self-evaluation themselves, but the more that conduct an interactive dialogue with the Labelling Board the better. The greater the number of institutions that go through this process, the more useful data we can generate. A follow-up research paper to the previous publication comparing North American and European practices is currently being finalized, in which Mike Mulvany took the initiative to compare practices in Scandanavia and the UK. These type of studies are important as a way of learning about the similarities and differences in the way doctoral education is conducted at different institutions, but they also serve to highlight the good use of the ORPHEUS self-evaluation system.

Our membership is the essence of ORPHEUS. The organization is what you make of it and we hope to continue to expand, but this requires your involvement. During 2018 we welcomed the Acibadem University Graduate School of Health Sciences, Istanbul, Turkey; the University of Bezmi Alem, Turkey; and the Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia as new members of our community. We encourage all existing members to continue paying their membership fees as this will facilitate the conduct of more activities for our members, and of course we also encourage all members to take advantage of such possibilities.

It has been an honour for me to represent you, ORPHEUS, during my many travels during the year. Our organization is well respected throughout the world and interest continues to grow. It is extremely rewarding for me to consider that our annual conference attracts more participants than any other doctoral education event in Europe (at least those that I have attended!) and that makes me very proud of us all.

It just remains to wish you all a very relaxing and enjoyable holiday period, and to express my best wishes to you all for 2018.

Professor Bob Harris President of ORPHEUS December 2018