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38th General Assembly of EAHM

The 38th General Assembly of our association, the EAHM, focused mainly on two topics: the amendments of EAHM Statutes and the report on activities.

Activity Report

Being half way through the term of the current Board and Executive Committee, a report on the activities was given by the EAHM President, Mr. Paul Castel.

Reacting to a consultation on crossborder healthcare by the European Commission, EAHM called for a common approach to the definition, assessment and improvement of quality standards in healthcare (services) as well as for the development of a European accreditation model for healthcare services.

EAHM continued to explore this theme by organising the seminar "Quality Assessment Tools in Hospitals: towards a voluntary European Accreditation System?" on November 16, 2007 in Düsseldorf. This first seminar was a success and gathered about 70 delegates, with a follow-up in (E)Hospital 2007/5 and 2008/1.

The European Commission and stakeholders, including EAHM, are consulting and reviewing options on how to enhance the quality of healthcare in the European Union with a special focus on quality standards in hospitals.

A framework for common standards for European hospitals allowing the comparable assessment of hospitals is in the

scope of this work. EAHM will continue to support this through its Scientific Subcommittee (SCC) and may call its members for action in the near future.

Since the exclusion of health services from the service directive (spring 2006) and given the many ECJ rulings, clarity and legal certainty is needed.

Therefore and also to support cooperation between national health systems, the Commission prepared a directive on the application of patients' rights related to crossborder healthcare, which provides a Community framework for safe, high quality and efficient crossborder healthcare (published July 2 2008).

This initiative is high on the agenda of our Subcommittee for European Affairs (SCEA) which will prepare a position on this draft directive in the near future.

In 2007, EAHM conducted a survey looking at the current situation of free mobility of health professionals and its impact in hospitals.

This revealed that most hospital managers would welcome measures to address current problems with foreign staff (e.g. trainee doctors) such as language barriers, bureaucratic barriers and lack of cultural integration. Various suggestions were submitted to EAHM in order to develop focused action: standardising training and/or professional

standards, creating common registrars or relaying agencies.

EAHM is in the process of taking up the role of developing actor, creating awareness around financially and ethically related problems, taking note of regional projects in this area and generating debates around the issue.

At the start of French Presidency of the EU in June 2008, EAHM launched a call for moving health and hospital care forward within Europe, towards a balanced cooperation of public and private actors, towards an evaluation of quality and safety and towards a governed and managed healthcare.

The health programme 2008-2013 is in its first year. One of 3 main objectives of this programme is health information and knowledge.

While IT vendors are organised on a European scale and standardisation is done at European level (e.g. CEN), the need for a representation of hospital IT managers is growing, to ensure that hospitals are working together in the field of IT. Therefore the Executive Committee decided to launch a Working Party IT managers.

In the current economic situation, pressure on hospital budgets is strongly increasing. Many hospitals are facing deficits. So the demand for privatisation is getting higher.

But the delivery of healthcare involving the state and/or social insurance schemes is a complex exercise of balance. It uses price setting, third parties (the payer) and includes the duty to provide services.

Therefore healthcare cannot be considered as a typical market. Introducing market competition and privatisation will not work without regulations by public authority.

The work started by the SCEA will be continued in order to come forward with a position. Given the importance of this topic, it will constitute the main theme of our 2009 seminar.

More fundamental work has been done by the Scientific Subcommittee through its support of the ongoing European study on hospital governance.

Results, which will be available before the end of this year, will help us better understand the variation in governance settings across Europe and may provide our members with options to improve the governance within their hospitals.

On top of the seminar on accreditation, EAHM held its 2nd European Psychiatric Symposium, organised by the Working Party Psychiatry on 27-28 March 2008 in Berlin. About 100 delegates participated. The theme of the seminar was "How to improve productivity in mental healthcare?"

The Executive Committee decided furthermore to attribute the organisation of the 2012 congress to Greece.

Amendments of EAHM Statutes and Accounts

Modifications to the statutes are mainly made for two reasons. First, some modifications complete the existing rules or render them more precise.

This regards e.g. the status of elected members (as President, Vice-President, members of the Executive Committee or the Board) or decision powers of the General Assembly,

Furthermore some articles of the statutes needed to be brought in line with French law or needed to be rewritten to ensure the good functioning of the association. Examples are the tendering of accounts, the status of the Secretary General and the dissolution of the association.

The proposed modification of statutes has been accepted unanimously by the General Assembly.

The standing orders, dating from 1971, will need to be updated in order to implement the modification of statutes.

This gives also the opportunity to integrate the statutes of our subcommittees and working parties as well as the mission statement for organising the EAHM congress.

This work is in progress and will be presented for approval to the Executive Committee in early 2009.

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In the absence of the Secretary General, accounts were presented by Asger Hansen:

The accounts for 2007 end with a surplus due to received sponsoring contributions and a decrease in personnel costs compared to the budget. Overall, expenditures remain within the foreseen budget.

The year-end financial statement contains provisions for doubtful clients and legal study, while the provision for new activities has been increased, resulting in around 8,500 euros being transferred from 2007.

The proposed budget for 2009 includes a small increase of income, leaving room for some new activities in expenditures. The auditors, Ms. Pelgrin from Luxembourg and Mr. Timmerman from the Netherlands, certified the accounts as accurate and they were approved by the General Assembly.

New members

The General Assembly has accepted the candidacy of Romania and of "All- Ukrainian Head Doctors' Association".

Three members of the Executive Committee have been replaced: Gianluigi Rossi (Switzerland) is replaced by Christoph Pachlatko, Radoslav Herman (Croatia) by Herman Haller and Seppo Tuomola (Finland) by Rauno Ihalainen. Mr. Rossi, Herman and Tuomola were warmly thanked for their active contribution to EAHM activities.

Conclusions

The president thanked the many people active in the association.

The programme for next year presents again many new challenges. He invited those present to join the congress in the afternoon.

The theme linked leadership with challenges, and the President expressed the hope that the participants would return home with many novel thoughts and ideas.

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