



Luxemburg, 16 October 2021

Minutes of the Section Meeting (*approved*)

Date: 16 October 2021, 8:30-17:00

Location: Ministère du travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Economie sociale et solidaire

Address: 26, rue Sainte Zithe, 2763 Luxembourg

Section meeting

1 *Welcome and introductions*

The president gave the thanks of the group to *Nicole Majery* and *Marc Jacoby* for organizing this live-meeting after one and a half year of virtual meetings. She underlined the importance of personal contacts beside the official programme. She welcomed *Robert Goerens* and *Bob Greis* as representatives of the Luxembourg ministry of labour, where issues of occupational health and safety are.

She greeted also the new members *Molina Cabildo* (Spain) and *Brynjar Jakobsen* (Norway). Unfortunately these new members could not participate.

Participants and apologies

PARTICIPANTS: Hosts: *Nicole Majery* (Luxemburg), *Marc Jacoby* (Luxemburg). *Alenka Škerjanc*, president (Slovenia), *Simon Bulterys*, treasurer (Belgium), *Klaus Ernst Stadtmüller* (Switzerland), *Ole Carstensen* (Denmark), *Karl Hochgatterer* (Austria), *Fabriziomaria Gobba* (Italy), *Pedro Gustavo Reis* (Portugal), *Marcin Rybacki* (Poland), *Thomas Kraus* (Germany), *Theodore Bazas* (Greece), *Tom O'Connell* (Ireland).

APOLOGIES: *Milan Tuček* (Czech Republic), *Milan Milošević* (Croatia), *Ole Carstensen* (Denmark), *Ferenc Kudász*, secretary (Hungary), *Ivo Iavicoli* (Italy), *Satu Rannisto* (Finland), *Kari Reijula* (Finland), *Emil Vancu* (Romania), *Elena Pauncu* (Romania), *Jolanta Walusiak-Skorupa* (Poland), *Mari Cruz Rodriguez Jareño* (Spain), *Nerys Williams* (UK), *Jelena Macan* (Croatia), *Maija Eglīte* (Latvia), *Yogindra Samant* (Norway), *Brynjar Jakobsen* (Norway), *Davor Romih* (Slovenia), *Begoña Martínez Jarreta* (EASOM).

2 *Meeting with Commissioner Nicolas Schmit*

Mr. Schmit: At the Council meeting on 15/Oct/21 there was a good discussion on the new strategy. Work continues of reviewing certain substance limits. A new report on asbestos will be adopted next week by the European Parliament. A lot of buildings in Europe still contain asbestos and with the reforming a lot of buildings we have to look for the health of building workers. Mental health of workers is also in the focus of the Commission. Digitalisation, teleworking and intensification of work all contribute to that burden.

Dr. Škerjanc: Presents the UEMS and the Section's work and achievements. She asks for a contact person at the Commissioner's department.

Mr. Schmit: Stated that OM is integral part of safety at work. OM was probably not involved sufficiently in the work on occupational health and safety of the Commission. OM plays a great role especially during the pandemic. The working conditions of the personnel in the health sector need to be looked at, especially at some exposure to certain substances in the profession. In the process OM should be implicated much more. Also the European Parliament gets more and more interested in these questions.

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UEMS: OM lacks sufficient recognition by politicians and other actors. How could we improve that situation?

Mr. Schmit: OM is a recognised speciality all over Europe. In many countries there are not enough occupational doctors. But there are also different systems, which we cannot change from a European level. We can only underline the role of OM in the strategy and ask the Member States to take measures.

UEMS: What should be done on European level on the requirements for training.

Mr. Schmit: There should be common criteria for the training of occupational doctors. We need sufficient well trained occupational doctors. There is the question if the EU can impose the recognition of a special illness as an occupational disease. The recommendation on occupational diseases will be updated. Also COVID-19 and other diseases will be included.

Dr. Bazas: As regards the official status, the Section of Occupational Medicine is part of UEMS, which represents over 1.6 million European medical specialists, and consists of delegates appointed by the elected Board of national medical associations of over 30 European countries. To improve the level of recognition of the specialty of occupational medicine, it must be acknowledged that the specialists in occupational medicine are the only specialists who can adequately and best assess the occupational health risks, diagnose occupational diseases (ODs), and make recommendations as to their prevention, management and treatment. For this to happen, the 2003 Commission Recommendation should (with due consideration of the necessity of resetting the degree of application of the principle of subsidiarity, in this instance) be replaced by a new EC Directive listing ODs and the medical criteria for their diagnoses, so as to minimise their being underdiagnosed and underreported. This, in turn, will make European Statistics on ODs reliable, making it possible to learn about the true magnitude of the financial burden they impose on national social security/insurance systems. Some EUROSTAT surveys on ODs (e.g. those of the EODS) are voluntary and their coverage not European-wide, and also inaccurate on account of being based on erroneous, unconfirmed primary data.

Dr. Majery: There is underreporting of ODs also in Luxembourg.

Mr. Schmit: Does the section have an official status? Do you have special relationship to EU-OSHA? If the section has the opinion that one aspect has to be regarded at, you could do better in saying ‘*we have a point here in the field of health on the workplace*’ you should get direct to the Commission. It would be useful to have an official exchange with the Commissioner and EU-OSHA and other services in the DG.

Dr. Škerjanc: The Section does not have an official relationship with the European Commission (EC). A communication we sent to EU-OSHA was not responded to.

Mr. Schmit: The safety officers through their European organization have an official relationship with the EC, whilst you don’t. However, Health and Safety at Work also includes health. To have a useful discussion on all these issues we discussed today, I shall invite you (the Section), the representatives of EU-OSHA and the EC Directorate responsible for occupational health and safety, to Brussels.

After the Commissioner left, Dr Bazas asked to contribute to a letter that Dr Škerjanc intends to send to the Commissioner mentioning the salient issues to be discussed in the aforementioned Meeting, and also to be included in the team which would meet with the Commissioner, so that he can offer some further useful input.

3 Presentations from the host country

Robert Goerens presentation explained how occupational health service is organized in Luxembourg for the around 450.000 workers in the country, of whom around 200.000 are

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cross border workers. There was quite a lot of discussion about the highly regulated process of reclassification of a worker who is on long-term sick leave or classified unfit.

The budget for occupational health service has to be provided by the employer. Regulation defines that to be 0.2 (maximum) of the salary sum of a company, which has to be paid to the OH-service. In Dr. Majery's service that means 56€ per worker. See *Annex 1*.

Marc Jakoby presented the *Association Luxembourgoise de Santé au Travail (ALSAT)*, where not only occupational physicians can participate but also other experts in occupational health. The ALSAT has actually 119 members, 95% of the around 100 occupational medicine physicians are organised in that multidisciplinary association. Actual main projects concern the improvement of regulation and promotion of specialized training at the University of Luxembourg. See *Annex 2*.

Nicole Majery mentioned the actual situation of the training of young doctors for occupational medicine: she is the only trainer recognized by the university. The allowance is to be renewed until next year, but there are a lot of obstacles to be cleared. Occupational doctors from Luxembourg mostly got their training up to now in Belgium, France or Germany. See *Annex 3*.

4 Minutes of the last meeting (2021 on-line)

The minutes of the last meeting were anonymously accepted.

5 Information from UEMS Central (Alenka Škerjanc)

European Training Requirements for Otolaryngology and Maxillo-Facial Surgery cannot be implemented, because both specialities are opposing each other.

6 Information on the website (Ole Carstensen)

Dr. Carstensen is retiring soon and our website is connected to the hospital where he is working. Dr. Bulterys has suggested to UEMS Central to create a common web-site and the sections could use that for their purpose. This suggestion is being discussed at the minute in Brussels.

7 Section finances (Simon Bulterys)

20 countries made their 2021 contributions. Since last meeting there were 8150€ of income up to now. Of it 2800€ were due to the 4 exams. The actual balance is 13,344.39 €, however it is varying over the months. Conclusion: We will end the year with 12-14,000€, which is OK for the continuity of the association.

Dr. Škerjanc and Dr. Bulterys had discussion at UEMS about how UEMS could take over some administrative work in treasury. It might be that most secretary work could be taken over by UEMS. But UEMS will probably have to pay added value tax for its service. The upcoming board will have to deal with the issue and propose a decision to the section. See *Annex 4*.)

8 Report on the European Exam in Occupational Medicine held 30/August/2021, Brussels (Alenka Škerjanc)

There have been 4 candidates, all passed. The exam follows the ETR of Occupational Medicine. Hazard recognition at the workplace is the main topic of the exam. Of 150 questions 50 have the level of one credit, 50 have 2 credits and 50 have 3 credits, altogether 300 credits. Dr. Škerjanc then gave an overview on the history of the UEMS exam: UEMS decided to introduce the idea of an European exam to enable the free movement of doctors in Europe. UEMS introduced the sections in the seventies, OM section was established in 1997. OM is a relative young section but is quite quick in introducing a

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common exam. A very important role played Nicky Cordell from the UK, on whose initiative the ETRs for OM were defined and then adopted by the section. In 2014 the UEMS Council adopted our ETRs which were presented there by Dr. Škerjanc.

In the following years the concept of the exam, the relating organisational procedures and the questions were prepared, mostly by WG1 in the section. The first exam took place in January 2020, just before the pandemic.

For the future:

- We must achieve that the national responsible institutions support strongly the European exam.
- The section should organize (online-)meetings for interested candidates and successful examinees as part of the preparation.

9 Report of the President stepping down (Alenka Škerjanc)

When Dr. Škerjanc started 14 years ago only 14 countries were represented in the section. We are now more than 20 countries actively involved. Workplace visit were introduced on Fridays and meetings with national associations that gave view into the OM situation and education in the host country. The section was successful in preventing that health care workers were exempted from the regulation in the European Working Time directive. The European appraisal of Occupational Medicine was achieved in half of the time some experts thought before.

10 Section board election

The election procedure was observed as outlined by the rules of UEMS. Twenty countries were able to vote. Six of them gave proxies beforehand, two additional proxies were given by the two candidates present. Three countries did not give proxies, so 17 ballots were valid for each election.

Elected were:

- *Prof. Dr. Fabriziomaria Gobba* as president 16/17 (one blank)
- *Dr. Ferenc Kudász* as secretary 17/17
- *Dr. Nicole Majery* as treasurer 17/17

11 Forming new Working groups

All the WGs are going to be formed with a new start from the beginning (new members, heads etc.) to be efficiently active and proactive

Dr Bazas proposes to enlarge the scope of WG “Advocacy for OM” as to include also “tasks and activities of OM during the pandemic”. In this connection, he also mentioned that this subject would also be dealt with, in the framework of the ongoing work of the UEMS ad hoc WG on COVID-19, of which he is a Member. The idea was discussed and mostly welcomed. The WG “On European Appraisal” has to continue.

If there are other important issues and ideas which will be discussed during the next meeting.

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12 Working groups report

There were no reports on the WGs work.

13 Co-operations

EASOM

The 2020 Summer School was cancelled because of the pandemic.

In 2021 EASOM had organized 2 webinars which can be viewed on:

www.youtube.com/channel/UCKa9uGPJ23_ZpLaF11KKUJw

Dr. Škerjanc reminded that she underlined during the webinar that the exam is not supervised by the Section but by UEMS.

EU-OSHA and the Healthy Workplaces Campaign on musculoskeletal disorders

Ferenc will take the role of the communicator between the section and EU-OSHA.

ETUI

The contact of the section to ETUI relies on personal contacts. This contact should be continued also when persons retire. Dr. Reis will contact Dr. Tuček on this behalf.

14 CME (and related) events

- Panhellenic Congress of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
Athens 5-7 November 2021 - in Greek
- [International Occupational Health – Current situation and future trends](#). Helsinki, 16-17/November. If you wish to participate please contact Dr. Reijula.
- DGAUM Jahrestagung 2022
- Italy; Webinars
- ICOH Congress: Special section on “European Appraisal of OM” confirmed already

15 Next meetings

Spring 2022: Slovakia? Brussels UEMS house?

Autumn 2022: Aachen

As there was no offer on the spot: we ask all members for considering to organise a meeting.

16 Any other business

The section agreed that Ferenc shall represent the section in the Beat-Cancer taskforce. He will report on this issue to the section.

Dr. Bazas reported that, by a Greek regulation introduced at the beginning of the pandemic, any doctor can and may provide occupational medical services to any company, regardless of its size and magnitude of occupational health risk. He would gladly send this Regulation to the President of the Section. He asked the Section for a letter of support to be utilised in Greece for the purpose of preventing the occupational medicine specialty from declining further. Dr. Škerjanc reminded that there is a document on our website about the tasks of occupational medicine which could be a basis of arguments. Dr. Bazas replied that that document is of no use on this occasion and that the Panhellenic Society of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, asked him to express its disappointment for this lack of support on by the section in this regard

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17 End of meeting and Gala dinner

The meeting closed at 17:00 p.m.

The delegates were invited to a dinner by the Ministry of Health.

For Sunday a city tour was organised.

The Section is grateful to our hosts for the well organised meeting and for the hospitality.

Alenka Škerjanc

president

Klaus Ernst Stadtmüller

keeper of the minutes