



UNION EUROPÉENNE DES MÉDECINS SPÉCIALISTES
EUROPEAN UNION OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS
Association internationale sans but lucratif International non-profit organisation

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1. Introduction

It is with great satisfaction, amidst a very difficult year, that I present my second Secretary-General report. As it has happened with everything this year, this document will also be heavily conditioned by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

During 2020 countless live meetings of the UEMS Executive and Bodies had to be either cancelled, postponed or turned into online meetings and that included the UEMS Council meeting that was planned to be held in Brussels, in April 2020 and the CME CPD Conference due to occur in Seville in March 2020 among many others.

But, as it was mentioned in my previous report, the COVID-10 situation has not managed to stop UEMS activity. What was witnessed by all of us was the exact opposite, as the above-mentioned pandemic outbreak posed new challenges and difficulties to UEMS activities. As such, a healthy dose of innovation and a lot of hard work was, is and will be, needed to help us to keep on traveling the stormy waters of this situation, as a second wave of this deadly disease impacts Europe and threatens to keep on severely impacting the work of all UEMS bodies.

As Secretary General of the UEMS it is my duty to acknowledge and to thank all the hard work of the UEMS Office team, at times working from home, in an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear, were unsurpassed in their commitment to the organization. Only their hard work and capability to make the extra effort that was, at times, needed permitted us to keep the organization functioning normally.

A special thanks is also due to all colleagues from all levels of the UEMS that, faced with the necessity of fighting every day for their patients' lives against a deadly disease, that many times threatened to overcome the capabilities of our National Health systems, nevertheless found the time and willingness to collaborate with the organization on a voluntary basis.

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2. The UEMS Office in Brussels

Table 1: Current workforce of the UEMS Brussels Office

Staff and working time structure

(Based on data SEPT. 2020)

| | Full time | Part time | | | | Total (FTE) |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-------------|
| | | 4/5 | 3/4 | 1/2 | 2/5 | |
| Accreditation dpt | 2 | 2 | | | | 3.6 |
| Administrative and financial dpt | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 |
| Internal & External affairs dpt | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Section administrative dpt | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Internship | | 0 | | | | 0 |
| Head office management | 1 | | | | | 1 |

Full Time Equivalent (2020 Vs 2019)

8.6 (Vs 9.4)

TOTAL Number of staff (in Oct. 2020)

10

Some points are important to highlight at this stage:

1. Two employees left in February 2020. One person was hired in September to support the accounting department and the UEMS is in the final stages of hiring another person to support the Office and EACCME teams.
2. From the middle of March until the end of May, teleworking was made obligatory by the Belgium government. UEMS complied with its obligations and the staff worked from home during all that period.
3. In May 2020, the anti-epidemic measures were relaxed but the recommendation was that, whenever possible employees should work at home. The UEMS Office team started some activities at the Domus. A Decision was made to have a minimum of one person in each Department (direction-

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finances/accreditation) present at the Domus in order to assure the good running of the work. Instructions were regularly sent to the staff in order to allow everyone to work in a safe environment.

4. This situation is expected to last until the end of 2020 or until a new decision is made by the Belgium government.
5. This situation brought us new challenges that the UEMS Enlarged Executive, Bodies and Team were capable of overcoming thanks to a healthy dose of anticipation, innovation capability and a lot of hard work.
6. The difficulties already mentioned in my previous SG report, regarding the increase of the workload, aggravated by the difficulties brought by the pandemic situation keep on afflicting our work and making it extremely difficult to implement new projects.
7. Further assessments of this situation will have to be made as UEMS activity returns to normal.

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3. The Domus Medica Europaea

Table 2: Income generated by the DME in the 2015-2020 period (Period comprised between 1st January – 31st August 2020)

| | TOTAL 2015 (VAT excl.) | TOTAL 2016 (VAT excl.) | TOTAL 2017 (VAT excl.) | TOTAL 2018 (VAT excl.) | TOTAL 2019 (VAT excl.) | TOTAL 2020 (VAT excl.) |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tenants | € 25.000,00 | € 41.000,00 | € 84.000,00 | € 85.516,03 | € 96.000,00 | € 88.900,00 |
| Meeting rooms | € 7.546,00 | € 19.018,00 | € 21.370,25 | € 10.940 | € 7496,75 | € 0,00 |
| Services | € 970,00 | € 4.440,00 | € 5.475,00 | € 3.120,00 | € 4.200,00 | € 4.512,00 |
| Parking | € 1.300,00 | € 5.600,00 | € 1.305,12 | € 1.050,00 | € 4.500,00 | € 7 290 ,00 |
| TOTAL | € 34.816,00 | € 70.058,00 | € 112.150,37 | € 100.626,03 | € 107.712,25 | € 100.702,00 |

Some points are important to highlight at this stage:

1. There was no use of the DME for meetings and other events by the UEMS bodies and NMA's in 2020 until now, and none is expected to occur until the end of the year.
2. During 2020 the European Society of Radiology decided to reduce its rented space in the DME. Consequently, a small office ready to accommodate 2 employees is for rent.
3. The last 3 parking spaces still available have been rented.
4. Total income of the DME in 2020 is expected to be reduced by 6,51% when compared with 2019 (€ 107.712,25 in 2019 vs € 100.702,00 in 2020).

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4. Finances

The documents related to the Treasurer report, financial forecast of 2020 and the proposed budget for 2021 have been circulated and will be discussed in the Board and Council meetings that will be held virtually on the 16th and 17th of October.

We would like to highlight the following issues

1. UEMS continues to honour all its financial obligations, be it the loans for the DME or our financial obligations to external parties.
2. Even in an atypical year like 2020, with the cancellation of so many events capable of generating revenue to the UEMS, our organization is expected to have a positive end of year position of € 483,172.89.
3. The income of the UEMS exams is expected to have a reduction of 29,3% in 2020. For 2021 the UEMS EEC and Bodies are developing strategies to allow that purely online examination become the norm. COVID-19 will shape our lives for a long time to come and we have to be aware that the “day after” will be very different. Thus, the UEMS is already preparing itself for a moment when travelling will be reduced not only to deal with the pandemic but also aiming to minimize costs for the examinees and the UEMS Bodies and, most importantly, protect the environment.
4. EACCME income is expected to be reduced by 24,4% in 2020, which accurately reflects the extent of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on Live Educational Events across Europe with the vast majority of events, being cancelled, converted to virtual or postponed to 2021.
5. Further information is contained in the Treasurer’s interim report and the proposed budget for 2021 that has been made available to all NMA’s and UEMS Bodies.

5. EACCME

EACCME was, and still is, severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

5.1. EACCME meetings

EACCME meetings were greatly impacted by the COVID-19 situations which led to the postponement of the UEMS Conference on Evidence Based CME-CPD in Europe which was scheduled to take place in Seville on the 6th and 7th of March 2020.

Before that, on the 11th of January of 2020 the UEMS Advisory Council meeting took place in Brussels.

5.2. EACCME Agreements

- Accreditation Council for Oncology in Europe: Agreement signed on 11th January 2020.
- Finnish Medical Association: Agreement signed on 11th January 2020.
- Renewal of the Agreement of Mutual recognition of Accreditation with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada is currently underway and is expected to be signed before the end of 2020. This agreement is a 1-year extension of the existing agreement. During this time conversations will continue aiming to reach an agreement on the subject of the mutual recognition of accreditation of ELM's which were not contemplated in the previous agreement.
- Renewal of the Agreement with the European Society of Cardiology is underway and is expected to be signed before the end of October 2020.
- Negotiations to signing of an agreement of Mutual Recognition of Accreditation with the Dutch Medical Association are currently underway and is expected to be concluded in the first trimester of 2021.
- Negotiations to signing an agreement with the Pan-Hellenic Medical Association for the recognition of Accreditation of events held in Greece in the Greek language is underway and are expected to be concluded in the first trimester of 2021.

5.3. IT Developments

The creation of an alternative pathway for accreditation of packages of webinars was concluded and implemented in August 2020.

A new pathway for the faster accreditation of webinars related to COVID-19 was concluded and implemented in April 2020.

5.4. Support of allied healthcare professionals to develop accreditation systems

Discussion with the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) continues. The signing of a MoU is projected to occur by the first semester of 2021.

5.5. Measures implemented to respond to COVID-19 impact on EACCME

Early in the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, EACCME was faced with the necessity to adjust its rules in order to accommodate the requests that started coming from providers. The following measures were put into practice and are still in place at this time:

1. Implementation of a special review and accreditation process for COVID webinars: this special review and accreditation process allows providers to submit an application for a webinar on COVID 19 up to one week prior to the start of the webinar. The UEMS-EACCME will take care of having the review done as expeditiously as possible and have it completed before the date of the webinar.
2. Reduction of the deadline for submission of events for accreditation from 12 to 7 weeks prior to the date of the event.
3. Possibility to postpone an accredited event or an event in review at no extra cost.
4. Possibility to stream or transmit live an event that had been accredited as a LEE at the date planned for LEE or at another date, with the option to shorten the original programme for organizational purposes, at no extra cost.

The implementation of these changes had one major principle in mind, which was to allow some flexibility without compromising our principles.

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A special mention and acknowledgement are due to the EACCME team. The drawing and implementation of these measures required a very large mobilization, work capacity and dedication from all the team in a very short period, with frequent communication and, at times, exhaustive discussions with providers, being necessary to face the and overcome the challenges that this situation posed to all of us.

5.6. EACCME in figures (data for 2020 until 31st of August)

LEE: Live Educational Events

ELM: e-Learning Material

REV Pack: Journal revision package

WEB PAC: Webinar Package

Table 3: Comparison of EACCME Activities from 2019 and 2020 (Period comprised between 1st January – 31st August)

| | 2019 | | 2020 | | 2020 vs 2019 |
|-----------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------------|
| | Number | € | Number | € | |
| LEE | 1.693 | 861.609 | 1122 | 570.739 | -34% |
| ELM | 63 | 87.500 | 135 | 149.630 | +71% |
| REV Pack | 3 | 5.000 | 5 | 4750 | -5% |
| WEB Pack | - | - | 2 | 3700 | - |
| Total | 1.759 | 954.109 | 1.264 | 728.819 | -24% |

As predicted in the previous SG report, the activity of EACCME faced an overall reduction of the total number of events and an obvious shift in the trend of accreditation, with the number of ELM's accredited growing by 71% and, at the same times, the number of LEE's being reduced by 34%, as many live meetings were substituted by virtual ones.

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Table 4: Number of applications per type of LEE (Period comprised between 1st January – 31st August)

| Type of LEE | Submission of applications | Canceled |
|-------------------|----------------------------|----------|
| < 100 pax | 551 | 22 |
| 101 – 250 pax | 263 | 14 |
| 251 – 500 pax | 133 | 4 |
| 501 – 1,000 pax | 87 | 4 |
| 1,001 – 2,000 pax | 41 | 1 |
| 2,001 – 5,000 pax | 28 | 1 |
| > 5,000 pax | 19 | |

Table 5: Type of ELM (Period comprised between 1st January – 31st August)

| Type of ELM | Submission of applications | Canceled |
|----------------------|----------------------------|----------|
| Individual module(s) | 108 | 2 |
| E-platform | 25 | |
| App | 2 | |
| E-library | 0 | |

The measures adopted in the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, that were described above, seem to have been effective in lowering the number of cancellations of educational events. Nevertheless, the situation is still evolving and EACCME continues to monitor it. New measures will be taken, if needed, to make sure that EACCME is able to answer swiftly and decisively to providers' necessities.

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5.7. EACCME income (Period comprised between 1st January – 31st August)

EACCME income was during this period, in 2019, € 954.109,60. In 2020 it was € 725.119. This is a 25% reduction on income from EACCME in this period.

Table 6: Comparison of EACCME income 2019 and 2020 (Period comprised between 1st January – 31st August)

| 2020 | WEB PACK | REV PACK | LEE | ELM |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| | Income | Income | Income | Income |
| JAN | 1 | 500 | 237 | 106.145 |
| FEB | 1 | 1.750 | 232 | 113.562 |
| MAR | | | 144 | 73.365 |
| APR | | | 35 | 11.475 |
| MAY | | | 67 | 39.425 |
| JUN | | | 102 | 57.475 |
| JUL | 3 | 2.500 | 167 | 102.117 |
| AUG | 2 | | 138 | 67.175 |
| | 2 | 5 | 4.750 | 1122 |
| | | | 570.739 | 135 |
| | | | | 149.630 |
| TOTAL | | | | 725.119 |
| 2019 | 3 | 5.000,00 | 1.693 | 861.609.60 |
| | | | 63 | 87.500,00 |

This data is in line with the perceived reduction of the total number of educational events across Europe and shows that although EACCME lost income, that income was lost on events that altogether did not occur and not on events that occurred but were not submitted for accreditation. This fact leads us to believe that as the situation tends to normalize, so will the number of events submitted for accreditation with EACCME and the subsequent income generated by those submissions.

6. Internal Issues

During this period, several issues demanded the attention and action of the UEMS Enlarged Executive.

6.1. Section of Surgery

In the past months, the Section of Surgery requested that the UEMS executive reimbursed the section for the outstanding EACCME[®] fees, which have been suspended from 2014 to 2016 to help pay for the construction and loans of the *Domus Medica Europaea*. Although it has been told for many years that the current UEMS finances did not allow us to proceed with the reimbursement of these outstanding dues and the intention is to reimburse them gradually and proportionally if and when the funds will be available to do so the Bureau of the Section of Surgery demanded that these fees be reimbursed, as the Section had a project to create a new website.

After examining financial situation of the Section of Surgery, the UEMS Executive decided that the Section was in a very good financial situation, and therefore did not need additional support from UEMS and thus would not be eligible to receive funding from the internal fund which was set to help UEMS Bodies in need of financial support.

The UEMS Executive organized a teleconference on 14th September with the Bureau of the Section to openly discuss the situation and the reservations that existed. The details of the current financial figures of the whole organization, and the figures of the Section were shown and openly discussed. The Bureau was also reminded of the decision to reimburse proportionally and gradually the outstanding EACCME[®] dues once the overall financial situation of the UEMS allows, which was not the case at that time. The Bureau was also reminded that the internal fund (which, one must be reminded, is a completely different “entity” from the outstanding EACCME[®] fees) can only be used by UEMS Bodies in financial need.

The Bureau of the Section disagreed with the way the situation was handled and decided to resign from their position. In their statement, the Bureau of the Section expressed their distrust on our organization, on account of a perceived lack of transparency.

Regarding the issue of the transparency, the Executive takes this opportunity to resoundingly rejects any suggestion that UEMS decisions and management are not transparent. Many decisions were implemented in the past three years to further improve transparency:

1. All reports (Secretary General, CEO and financial) have been made available to the Bureau of Sections as part of UEMS Councils’ supporting documents

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2. To include Sections in the decision-making of the UEMS, the Advisory Board was created to discuss and bring to the Executive and Council's attention the issues faced by the Sections.

3. In addition, the three Chairs of Groupings of Sections are now members of the UEMS Enlarged Executive Committee, and they represent the Sections in the everyday management of UEMS. They are consulted when decisions need to be made and can share the information they have access to with other Sections.

3. Meetings of Treasurers are also organized regularly, and they can talk directly with the UEMS accountant and Treasurer.

4. There is also a representative of the Sections in the committee of the internal auditors of the UEMS finances.

5. The Team of the UEMS Office in Brussels is available to all UEMS Bodies for special meetings to address all financial matters related to their work.

The UEMS Executive disagreed both on the substance and on the format of Bureau's opinions, but, with regret, accepted the Bureau's decision to resign. As per UEMS rules, the UEMS Secretary General, acts as interim President of the Section until new elections are organized.

The National Delegates of the Section and the Chairs of the Divisions of the Section have already been contacted to pave the way forward and to ensure that the work of the Section and the Divisions will continue and advance.

It is important to highlight again that the UEMS is one organisation, one legal entity under Belgian law and that the UEMS Bodies are working groups (not independent entities) established by the UEMS Council to serve certain areas of specialist practice. The UEMS EC is working in close collaboration with all UEMS Bodies to support their work, is always open to constructive dialogue for all UEMS matters but also have a duty to protect the overall wellbeing of the organisation and its statutes and rules of procedure.

6.2. European Training Requirements

Due to the cancellation of the Council meeting that was to be held in April in Brussels, UEMS Bodies that were due to have their ETR's presented were given the option to undergo an online driven discussion and vote of the ETR's or the opportunity to postpone the discussion and vote for the October Council meeting.

The following ETR's were approved:

- Cardiology
- Neuroendocrine Neoplasia Medicine

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- Paediatric Urology
- Rare Adult Solid Cancers
- Rare Diseases
- Sexual Medicine

Following the consultation period, several suggestions were made by NMA's and UEMS Bodies in an attempt to improve the online process of discussion of the ETR's.

A working group composed by the UEMS Secretary General, UEMS Vice-President Prof. Nada Cikes and UEMS Chair of Grouping 1 Prof, Rijk Gans is working on a document with the aim of incorporating the suggestions made during the last consultation period, on the future process of reviewing and approval of the ETR's.

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7. External Issue

7.1. UEMS collaboration with AVAAZ

UEMS collaborated with the platform AVAAZ in the elaboration of the study “*Facebook's Algorithm: A Major Threat to Public Health*” in which it was described how global health misinformation spreading networks spanning at least five countries generated an estimated 3.8 billion views on Facebook in the last year and that health misinformation spreading websites at the heart of the networks peaked at an estimated 460 million views on Facebook in April 2020, just as the global pandemic was escalating around the world.

On this issue the UEMS SG was quoted on the BBC online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-53820225> and had the opportunity to be interviewed by an European news site based in Brussels: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/health-consumers/news/facebooks-algorithm-a-threat-to-public-health-doctors-say/>

8. Final remarks

“See you in Limassol!”

This phrase was the last words in the previous Secretary General report.

Looked upon now, it seems it was written a long time ago and not in last April.

Indeed, much has changed since April, many plans that the UEMS Executive and Bodies had made had to be put on hold or modified to comply with the needs posed by the uncertain times that we live in.

The difference today is that we are getting used to live and go about our day-to-day life in these exceptional times. Many of the tools that we use routinely nowadays were habits that we gained in the last months and, habits that will probably stay with us long after this crisis has passed.

UEMS has already, on many occasions, proved to be an innovative but also resilient organization and the COVID-19 situation has helped to reinforce this notion in all of our minds.

Only a resilient organization, full of exceptional people, is able to face major challenges like the consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic and still look with confidence to the future.

Only an innovative organization, is able to find solutions in a short time, to answer the needs of its external partners, being able, in doing so, to limit its losses and, at the same time, transmit an image of solidity to the exterior.

In the coming months all of us in UEMS will have to keep vigilant and prepared to take any necessary measures aiming to protect the organization and keep it on the right track.

The UEMS Enlarged Executive has done this since the first day and will keep on doing it, with resilience and determination.

But the work of the UEMS must go on and will have to continue to adapt to the new times. The utilization of virtual tools to support our work (teleconferences, UEMS exams, ETR’s approval and so on) will keep on growing and becoming more efficient.

EACCME will continue to look forward and to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead. The importance of EACCME for the UEMS requires us to keep on finding ways to support our partners and at the same time engage with them in trying to find new content and formats of accreditation for medical education.

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So, as a conclusion, I would say that 2020 will be remembered as one of the more difficult years for the UEMS. But my personal belief is, as stated in my previous SG report, “that an organization like ours, full of exceptional people, will surely find a way to emerge from the turbulence of these days stronger and better prepared to tackle the challenges of the future.”

João Miguel Grenho
UEMS Secretary General