



# The Newsletter of European Medical Specialists

UEMS News 2007 / 05

7<sup>th</sup> December 2007

## Summary

The legal proceedings on university access against Austria before the European Court of Justice were suspended for five years further to a European Commission's decision.

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The UEMS will organise 3 days of celebrations on the occasion of its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in April next year. Mark your diary!

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UEMS Sections & Boards convened on 17<sup>th</sup> November in Brussels for a meeting of the Council of European Specialty Medical Examinations and discussed items relating to European Examinations

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## Outcomes from the UEMS Advisory Council on CME Brussels, 24.11.2007

*On 24<sup>th</sup> November last, the UEMS Advisory Council on Continuing Medical Education (CME) convened in Brussels. Participants to this meeting were presented with major developments in the field of European accreditation of CME and debated a number of currently-discussed issues. These notably included the new web-based EACCME application system; the EACCME accreditation process as set out in the mutual agreements with the national authorities, the UEMS Specialist Sections and the Accreditation Boards; as well as ways of improving and developing this system further.*

This yearly meeting of the UEMS Advisory Council on CME aims to bring together all stakeholders involved in the accreditation of CME in Europe in order to discuss how to improve the current system. Once again, the UEMS was delighted to welcome Dr Aparicio representing the American

Medical Association.

The system of the EACCME (European Accreditation Council for CME) which was established by the UEMS in 1999 aims to bridge the national accreditation authorities' systems by allowing the cross-border recognition of CME activities for European medical doctors. This organisation is based on the quality requirements developed by the UEMS which define the criteria for assessing these events.

In order to ensure all partners' commitment to an efficient running of the system, mutual agreements have been agreed between the National Authorities on one hand and the UEMS Sections and/or Accreditation Boards on the other hand. Currently, 28 UEMS Sections and/or Accreditation Boards and 14 national authorities have signed this mutual agreement, with the Slovenian Medical Chamber, the Romanian College of Physicians and the European

*Since its development the EACCME has become well established as a unique resource within European CME; it has ensured that CME credits are internationally transferable throughout Europe and the USA, and has seen applications and approvals increase in a near-exponential manner, reaching over 1000 in 2007. The UEMS wishes to continue to build on these successes, and recognises the importance for this of ensuring that the EACCME adapts to changing circumstances.*



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## From our Members - The Austrian Medical Chamber

### European Commission proceedings on university access against Austria suspended for five years

*As reported in an earlier issue of the UEMS Newsletter (UEMS News 2007/01), the European Commission was taking action against Austria before the European Court of Justice for infringing the regulations on the free movement of students in the EU, notably in medical studies. Further to contacts between the Commission and Austrian authorities, this procedure was put on hold for a period of five years in order to collect further data on this issue.*

In 2005 the ECJ decided that students from all over the European Union could freely apply to any Austrian medical university to obtain a medical degree. The Austrian government then quickly adopted a new law introducing quotas for university access. That law stipulates that 75 % of study places are to be reserved for applicants with a secondary education diploma acquired in Austria, 20 % are to be reserved for students from other EU-countries, while the remaining 5% are reserved for students from non-EU countries.

Austrian universities use entrance exams to find the most suitable candidates for admission to a medical degree. As a matter of fact, the number of students interested in taking up medical studies is quite high (For Vienna only, 3.500 persons apply for 740 study places at the Medical University). Many of these candidates are – mainly for language reasons – students from Germany. After the new Austrian legislation was implemented, the European Commission (EC) took action against Austria, which – at the occasion of the recent Lisbon summit – has been suspended for five years in order to obtain more data and to evaluate the situation further.

What is the background? The Austrian government supported by the Austrian Medical Chamber gathered data and initiated a number of studies, which showed that Austria would have a lack of doctors, if free university access for all students, especially to those from Germany, were introduced. It is known that 1/3 of those

presenting themselves to the entrance exams – in knowledge of the 20% quota – are from Germany, 1% comes from other EU countries, 63% are from Austria and the rest are non EU-citizens. There are fears that German students, after having obtained their medical degree will go back to Germany, leaving Austria with the costs of having paid for their medical education, as in Austria the study of medicine is more or less financed by taxes, while students only pay 363 € per semester. Even the German government was not in favour of the European Commission's move to bring new proceedings against Austria, as Germany was afraid that its strong numerus clausus system could be easily undermined.

Austria wanted to have an annex to the new EU treaty, allowing Austria to limit access for EU-citizens to medical universities. Mr José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, refused to include such an annex, however, it was agreed with the Austrian govern-

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*The legal proceedings on university access against Austria were suspended for five years further to a European Commission's decision.*

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Board for Accreditation in Cardiology signing mutual agreements during this year's meeting. Thanks to an introductory lecture given by **Dr Helios Pardell** (*Director of the Spanish Accreditation Council for CME*) on the regulation of conflicts of interests in CME, attendees had the opportunity to open the meeting with a fruitful exchange of views on this controversial issue.

In his progress report (UEMS 2007/25), **Dr Bernard Maillet** (*Secretary-General of the UEMS*) gave an overview on progress in the accreditation process. The number of applications has steadily increased each year at an approximate rate of 40%. It has hence become a major challenge to continuously guaran-

tee the quality and value of the system. The recognition of European CME credits (ECMECs) between countries plays a crucial role in this respect.

A new web-based application, presented by **Dr Zlatko Fras** (*President of the UEMS*), will contribute to the current efforts in harmonising the process and improving the communication between European and national assessors. This version of the website will be officially launched on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008. At a later stage, further developments will be added to the current pilot in order to host feedback systems or deliver certificates to participants and a personalised CME record for individual specialists.

An update on CME

Structure and Developments in European countries was also given by participants in order to bring the document on CME in the European countries (UEMS 2006/21) edited by **Dr Leonard Harvey** (*Honorary President of the UEMS*) up to date. A new version for 2008 will be issued in the New Year.

Further to last year's meeting, a taskforce was set up in order to look into ways of improving the overall system and updating the current standards for assessment. A consultation paper (UEMS 2007/23) based on the work of this taskforce was presented by **Dr Edwin Borman** (*Vice-President of the UEMS*) and will pave the way to further developments, such as notably

in the field of eCME/ eCPD.

The meeting ended with a closing lecture by **Prof. Lino Gonçalves** (*President of the European Board for Accreditation in Cardiology & Secretary of the UEMS Section of Cardiology*) on "Future improvements in European CME-CPD" where he notably mentioned the potential for an organisation such as the UEMS to become even more active in fields like individual certification. *All documents have been displayed on the UEMS website and an extensive report (UEMS 2007/26) of that meeting will be made available soon. Please contact the Secretariat of UEMS, should you need any further information.*

## UEMS Advisory Council on CME

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## EC proceedings against Austria suspended

ment that the EC, together with the Austrian government, would study the situation further for a period of five years in order to evaluate, whether universities will produce an adequate supply of medical doctors in relation to the Austrian population, or

whether the fears of the Austrian government will come true.

There are high suspicions, notably supported by the Austrian Medical Chamber, that this question will directly affect the supply of the medical workforce in Austria, notably because of the

obvious discrepancy between the Austrian population and its medical training system with that of its larger neighbour. The study, to be conducted over the next five years, will certainly help present a clearer picture of this situation.





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### Mark your diary!

As already announced, the UEMS will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in April 2008. The programme has already been defined as follows:

- 17<sup>th</sup>- S&B Pres&Sec Meeting
- 18<sup>th</sup>- Conference & Gala
- 19<sup>th</sup>- Council Meeting

## UEMS 1958–2008 – A celebratory Anniversary Brussels, 17-19.04.2008

As has been announced on several occasions, the UEMS is to celebrate its 50 years of activity, as the oldest medical organisation in Europe, in Brussels next year. For this purpose, a series of celebrations will be organised from 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> April 2008.

This three-day event will aim to combine the usual meetings of the UEMS constituent bodies together with a major Scientific Conference with contributions from illustrious political and medical figures according to the following schedule:

**17<sup>th</sup> April** – Meeting with the Presidents and Secretaries of the UEMS Sections & Boards

**18<sup>th</sup> April** – Scientific Conference & Gala

**19<sup>th</sup> April** – Meeting of UEMS Council

These celebrations will naturally aim to give a wide overview of the UEMS past, current and future activities on the European scene.

A certain number of printed publications featuring the UEMS History and achievements will also be issued on this occasion. This will be an opportunity for the UEMS constituency to advertise their fields of interest and activities to a wide European audience.

**Invitations and relevant information will be sent out shortly. Watch your mailbox!**

UEMS Sections & Boards and UEMS National Member Associations are kindly invited to elaborate their Annual Reports in the light of the main key areas of interest of the UEMS, i.e. postgraduate training (PGT), continuing medical education and professional development (CME-CPD), and quality assurance (QA) in specialist practice. Articles and contributions should be sent to the UEMS Brussels Office before the end of December.

## Meeting of the Council for European Specialist Medical Examinations Brussels, 17.11.2007

**The Council for European Specialist Medical Examinations (CESME) convened in Brussels on 17<sup>th</sup> November last in an aim to follow up on meetings held in February and June 2007.**

This meeting brought together representatives of the UEMS Sections of Allergology, Cardiology, Dermatology, Internal Medicine, Neurology, Paediatrics, Physical and

Rehabilitation Medicine and Surgery, who discussed items related to the broader issue of European Specialty Examinations in the framework of the "Glasgow Declaration".

The main outcomes of this document underline the non-exclusivity of European Exams in terms of assessment tools in medical training or access to practice in EU countries.

Participants also agreed that in future the CESME should operate as an advisory group under the banner of the UEMS Council and its working group on postgraduate training.

A number of items were still undebated at the end of the meeting. Hence, it was agreed to discuss these further at the next meeting to be held in Brussels on **16<sup>th</sup> February 2008**.

**If you have any views with regard to the issues covered in this Newsletter, do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat of UEMS.**