



UNION EUROPÉENNE DES MÉDECINS SPÉCIALISTES

EUROPEAN UNION OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

*Association internationale sans but lucratif
organisation*

International non-profit

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REPORT OF THE OFFICER FOR EU & INT'L AFFAIRS

UEMS COUNCIL MEETING

BRUSSELS 18 & 19 OCTOBER 2024

PRESIDENT: PROF. VASSILIOS PAPALOIS
TREASURER: DR OTHMAR HAAS

SECRETARY-GENERAL: DR JOÃO GRENHO
LIAISON OFFICER: DR MARC HERMANS

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The **newly elected Officer** for EU and International Affairs¹ took office on the EEC meeting of 12th January 2024 during the live meeting of the EEC in Brussels.

Mrs Isabelle Dumaine, dedicated co-worker on EU affairs and I tried to have **regular meetings** with each other, live or on line.

Since January 2024, Mrs Dumaine has been working on the **UEMS communication**. She presented a strategy in February to the EEC. The biggest milestone in 2024 was the launch of the new UEMS website in May. It aims to strengthen UEMS social media presence and communication, to increase UEMS visibility toward practitioners, EU actors, and decision makers. In order to successfully share UEMS' vision on all hot topics in the EU environment, input from UEMS bodies not only would be highly appreciated, but simply is necessary.

In 2024 UEMS started taking in **2 approved EU-funded projects**. *KEEPCARING* addresses mental health of healthcare professionals in surgical departments, starting in July. *DISCERN-DSS* aims at empowering Indonesian Health Higher education on digital soft skills training through co-creative practices and Digital Scenario Based Learning (D-SBL).

Early September, Mrs. Dumaine replied on behalf of UEMS to **the mandatory survey** shared by the European Commission. This survey represents an obligation of the Commission to monitor the implementation of the Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications. Thereby, she did follow up the request from the UEMS Section of Physical & Rehabilitation Medicine.

She's delivering a very valued and appreciated contribution for her **monthly update on EU affairs** and her background knowledge of the functioning of the EU institutions.

Throughout the whole year, Mrs. Dumaine participated in meetings, webinars, short conferences organised by European organisations, or the European Commission to follow-up developments of EU policies on health-related topics.

Recently the Section of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine invited your Officer for EU and International Affairs to attend it's autumn meeting.,

It became an excellent occasion to learn more about many aspects of this Section. The personal, formal and informal contacts clearly contributed to a better understanding of the issues that this particular Section is experiencing. An EEC member sharing a meeting of a UEMS body, is at least for me, a kind of contact definitely could increase the quality of relations

¹ An acronym would be much easier, but it's very difficult to find one when all the vowels of the alphabet are involved without one single consonant 😊

between colleagues serving as a delegate, and the EEC. To me, this remains food for further consideration and deserves more attention within UEMS circles.

After consultation with the colleagues of the Enlarged Executive Committee, I did regularly attend **European Medical Organisations' meetings** such as AEMH, CEOM, CPME, EJD, FEMS and UEMO.

One initiative however deserves more attention: the **European Academy for Clinical Leadership's** activities. As a shared initiative, started some years ago by AEMH and UEMS, the EACL attracted mainly (almost) end of career colleagues to get its recognition. We now we're looking at steps to adjust the criteria framework to get more younger colleagues oriented to this initiative. It might be worthwhile to inform younger colleagues to illustrate their leadership qualities for the jury and get recognition for these competencies.

Early this year the **European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies** organised a very interesting webinar. Exploration of the websites of the different research units that presented their findings during the webinar offered very interesting information on medical deserts and how to detect and prevent them, . Attendants got information about AHEAD, OASES, ROUTE HWF, TASHI and METEOR. Interested readers can find relevant data on the different websites².

On the 26th and the 27th of March the Belgian EU presidency organised a **High-Level Conference on the Future of the EU Health Union**. The Belgian Minister of Health had invited Ministers and Secretaries of State from different EU countries, composing a political panel from one side, but the floor was mainly given to all kind of professionals and stakeholders. Medical professionals and patients were given a quite short time slot to share their viewpoint, disappointing for many delegates.

The viewpoint from doctors was presented by Martin Balzan, our well known colleague from Malta. Starting at this conference, **Martin and the Office agreed to develop a statement**, intended to be widely shared by other stakeholders. It became quickly clear that estimating the numbers of medical doctors in the different EU countries is a demanding task for many reasons. The above mentioned European Observatory's webinar allowed UEMS to refer to an excellent literature basis for a later collaborative project, chaired by Martin. The document supported by

² The following research projects were highlighted during the webinar (websites checked on 01/10/2024)

AHEAD Action for Health and Equity Addressing Medical Deserts <https://ahead.health/>

OASES Promoting Evidence Based reforms on medical deserts <https://oasesproject.eu/>

ROUTE HWF A Roadmap OUT of mEdical deserts into supportive Health WorkForce initiatives and policies <https://route-hwf.eu/>

TASHI Task Shifting and Health System Design <https://tashiproject.eu/>

METEOR Mental Health: Focus on Retention of Healthcare Workers <https://meteorproject.eu/>

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many EMOs addresses different actual aspects of the health work force shortages. This final version of this statement shall be sent around very soon.

A personal contact from the UEMS with the KULeuven research group of Prof. Goderis, leading researcher of the METEOR project (cfr. supra), turned out to offer an excellent basis for later collaboration with UEMS.

At the same conference, I've met **Mr. Tomas Zapata from WHO Europe**. He invited UEMS to take part in a broadly conceived survey on the health of doctors and nurses. The whole procedure has been meticulously developed and is now running through its last preparational phases. The project is supported by the EU and is intended to guide future EU policy. The link to the online questionnaire will be sent by WHO to our UEMS members, the national medical associations, with a kind but firm request to forward the link to their individual members. The official presentation took place on Tuesday 22nd of October.

On 11/06 UEMS took part in a meeting in Amsterdam, organised by both **CPME and the Royal Dutch Society of Pharmacists**, the Dutch branch of PGEU, the European Community Pharmacists association. The first half of the day, presenters addressed shortages of medicines, the role of official authorities on a national and an EU level. The first half of the afternoon speakers then illustrated problems due shortages of medical devices. The second half of the afternoon, Mr. Mathias Wismar, manager of the European Observatory for Health Care Systems and Policies, spoke about the shortages of health care professionals. After we did put a question during the debate, he acknowledged the fact that the administrative difficulties concerning changes, adjustments and adaptations concerning medical health care workers, were not as much linked with DG Health or other directories but are mainly situated at the level of DG GROW., a bit to the surprise of the audience. This stresses the fact that medical aspects are more seen as economic issues than health related issues. The problems experienced on an EU level during the pandemic has clearly illustrated the weakness of the EU with regard to preparedness to health related crises.

At this meeting, your Officer made a contact with the **European Patient's Platform**. After a first meeting together with Mrs. Dumaine, participation at their meeting organized on 16th October allows for meeting newly elected MEPs and other stakeholders.

The **4th World Summit in Competency-Based Education in Healthcare Professions** took place in Basel from August 22nd to 23rd. After an introduction by Prof. Monika Brodmann Maeder (CH), Prof. Leila Niema-Murola (Finland) gave your UEMS delegate the honour to present as the first plenary speaker on "*The UEMS aiming at Competency Based Education*".

Much to my personal surprise, this lecture elicited quite some questions with a global audience. Especially during discussions afterwards, mainly on the criteria with regard to ETRs, accreditation and Continuous Professional Development as conceived by UEMS. The

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programme³ itself offered an exhaustive panel of colleagues and educationalists already for a long time and deeply involved in the matter at stake. A main focus of this event was the concept of Entrustable Professional Activities. The whole was very successful. It certainly deserves a lot of interest from UEMS in the coming years.

The **Association for Medical Education in Europe**⁴ started immediately afterwards its annual congress in the same city. Although established as a European association it's a globally leading organisation on medical educational aspects. The event itself was simply very impressive. It offers an exhaustive programme confronting participants with a first difficulty to choose which symposium, workshop or course *not* to follow.

Many issues raised during the congress might certainly guide the development of our criteria for ETRs' updates in relation to recent findings about scientific and experiential aspects of training and assessment. To just name a few: remediation interventions for underperforming trainees, input from medical students, offering training in Low & Middle Income countries, the place of Artificial Intelligence in training.

The congress took place in a hybrid format, even with some respect to global time zones. Many sessions are recorded and remain accessible to subscribers afterwards. Prof. Janczukowicz from Poland was announced as the newly elected president for AMEE. When we had a chat after a session, he asked to stay in touch with UEMS.

The next congress takes place in Barcelona. As the previous congress on CBE mentioned in this report, this congress certainly deserves UEMS' attention.

Very recently, thanks to our participation in EU wide activities, UEMS was invited to be member of a consortium to set up a study with the acronym **Care2Care** under the title "*Promote mental health and wellbeing among healthcare workers in Europe*". The consortium will submit an open call to get funding from the **European Cooperation in Science and Technology**⁵.

As you might remember during the spring meeting in Brussels, the establishment of a **UEMS Task Force (TF) for EU & Int'l Affairs** was announced.

On behalf of the Executive Committee we express our grateful thanks to our colleagues Prof. Akyol Umut (TR), Dr. Brittlebank Andy (UK), Prof. Cikes Nada (HR), Prof. Halilah Hannuh (FIN), Prof. Krajewski Romuald (PL), Dr. Naishad Patil (IE) for their engagement.

³ For those interested, the programme was still available at <https://cbme-world-summit.org/program> (visited on 7th October)

⁴ Association for Medical Education in Europe www.amee.org

⁵ European Cooperation in Science and Technology – COST www.cost.eu
<https://www.cost.eu/funding/open-call-a-simple-one-step-application-process/>

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On 16th September, the kick-off meeting took place which you'll find a summary below:

During the meeting participants suggested to develop strategies to increase UEMS' soft power which the TF could contribute to.

The relevance of ETRs in European training programs should increase through a more wide knowledge about their existence. More widely known, they might lead to a quicker implementation and setting up EU wide examinations.

Concerning partnering initiatives, participants suggested to establish working contacts with other stakeholders such as WHO, EMPs and politicians in general, educational institutions with their existing networks (e.g. Royal College of Ireland, perhaps CONFEMEL) and explore common interests. Among these might figure the role of EU Directory General GROW.

The officer announced an initiative to consult UEMS Members and Sections individually and ask them about expectations from UEMS

Finally, I want to thank all my colleagues from the Enlarged Executive and those outside the EEC who have represented the UEMS on moments that nobody from the Executive could represent our Union.

Marc H.M. Hermans
Officer for EU and International Affairs