

European Federation of Societies for Ultrasound in Medicine and Biology



EFSUMB President's Newsletter March 2019

A considerable amount of change within EFSUMB is currently ongoing and it is important that I use this opportunity to inform all members of the proposed changes to take into account several events. These issues are so important that without action the society itself may no longer exist in the future. I think we can all agree that the existence of EFSUMB is essential given the role on the international stage of ultrasound and the pivotal influence we have on the global practice of ultrasound.

Some background information is essential to fully understand the position the society finds itself in, with changes that will need to be implemented in order to sustain a viable future.

The constitution for EFSUMB was drawn up by the founder members in Basle, Switzerland in 1972, with the founding member societies being Austria, Belgium, Finland (resigned 2013), France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Others joined soon after, 1974 – Italy, Greece, Denmark and 1975 – Norway and the UK. EFSUMB was founded on the principle of independent national societies forming a federation to promote research and interdisciplinary collaboration in the field of ultrasound. This principle extended to representation within the WFUMB, as an integral part of the EFSUMB constitution. National society members would declare the membership of the entire society and pay a levy for each individual member, currently set at 7 Euros, part of which was a subscription to WFUMB. With this in place income allowed for managing the society according to the founding aims.

EFSUMB was set up as a charity in the United Kingdom, seen to be a favourable setting for no taxation related to activities for education. This has served EFSUMB

well, and we are currently in a stable financial position, albeit needing to demonstrate that the activities performed maintain the charitable status. This explains the UK based address of EFSUMB, an essential requirement for this process. The downside is that the Executive Bureau (ExB) are responsible for the financial activities and are answerable to the charity commission should things go wrong! Hence good governance and a robust audit system are in place with accountants reviewing the “books” every year. The accounts are visible on the EFSUMB website for all to review.

The policy of all members of the national society being members of EFSUMB had obvious advantages in 1972 when the practice of ultrasound was so limited in comparison to the explosion we see today. A single society was usually the only national society in the country. This is very different today, and nobody in 1972 would have imagined the situation today, with millions of ultrasound users, in many areas of medicine not normal bedfellows. This brings into sharp focus the almost archaic set up of EFSUMB and the need to change – nearly ½ a century on from the first meeting of those ultrasound pioneers.

The important change has come about by the decision of SGUM, the ultrasound society of Switzerland, a founder member of EFSUMB, not to declare all members of the national society as members of EFSUMB. Let me emphasise that this was a process imposed on the society by external governmental sources, with members obliged to declare they wished to be members of EFSUMB actively and not by default. Only 16% of members joined EFSUMB. This is of course a poor reflection on the activities of EFSUMB that we are not seen as important to many people, but also presented a constitutional crisis to the ExB – according

to the constitution SGUM could no longer be the representative society, and would cease to be a member with no voting rights! However, we had no constitution provision for individuals’ members to join, and the members from Switzerland indicating they wished to remain had no place! According to the EFSUMB constitution, if any country had 6 members or more, they had to form a national society, and apply to EFSUMB as a national body. However, the constitution only allows for a single member national society.

EFSUMB has to face the facts of change over the last 50 years in ultrasound, the founding principles have changed, but outstanding work of EFSUMB needs to continue. But it is pertinent that many members of SGUM have chosen not to continue membership, and this situation may be repeated with other national societies obliged to follow local laws and procedures. There must be action to make EFSUMB an attractive society based on the founding principles to promote ultrasound.

That EFSUMB does good work is not disputable; the website, the EUROSON Schools, the guidelines and statements, and most importantly an almost unique position and authority on the safety of ultrasound. What EFSUMB has not done is to promote this good work to its very own members! This was realised with the low “re-joining” from SGUM and the disquiet within DEGUM.

It is very important the EFSUMB is your society and not the property of the ExB or any other committee and should be run at the bequest of members. In order to get a better idea of the current climate and future direction, the ExB has commissioned two tasks; an on line member survey and a Task Force Group, to have visualization of

members feelings and to implement an overall of the structure and forward direction of the society.

We had a limited response to the survey, but several themes have emerged, many known from recent events, and others not so apparent. One strong theme is communication to the members from the ExB, and another is to clearly depict the finances; it was a common misconception that money was spent on unnecessary travel which is firmly not true; the accounts are very clear on this.

The task group has met and made many recommendations for change. One common theme was the accessibility to the website, currently 'free' to all members and non-members alike, this will be changed. The possibility of individual members will be addressed; the position of more than one

national society will also be addressed. A particular issue with the smaller societies was representation on the various committees and the ExB, which they see dominated by the countries favoured by the voting system that prevails in the society; the block voting denies representation to smaller societies. A rotating EUROSON Congress was seen to be outdated. There was no place in the society for sections of ultrasound practitioners in gynaecology. The interests of general practitioners in clinical ultrasound was not represented adequately in the activities and structures of EFSUMB.

It is evident change is very overdue, but to be able to make change that is entirely appropriate for everybody will not be practicable, many will like the changes, others will be indifferent, and some will leave the society. This is inevitable, and must be

faced, as the current situation is not fit for purpose, but change is needed in the best direction for as many as possible.

To this effect, the ExB in collaboration with the task force group will present constitutional change to the Board of Delegates in Granada at the EUROSON Congress, and if passed will seek to implement change immediately thereafter.

I will bring you the results of this change shortly following the congress with a view to hopefully starting a new chapter for EFSUMB.



Paul Sidhu
London, UK