

SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL MEDICINE

MINUTES FOR THE 48th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL MEDICINE, HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM, ON WEDNESDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER 2004, AT 5.00 PM.

1. The minutes of the 47th meeting AGM held in Liverpool were agreed as correct
2. No matters arising were identified as not already on the agenda.
3. The Honorary Secretary's gave her report which is attached. Thanks to retiring members of the committee and to the retiring Chair and Treasurer were noted.
4. The Honorary Treasurer's Report was given by AC as IH not available. The Society's finances were read, checked and reported as healthy with no problems.
5. Carol Orchard presented a report on EUPHA (attached). Discussion then followed on CO's report. Members were interested in whether subscription for the journal would go down if production becomes electronic. However it was thought that costs would be maintained so as to further subsidise EUPHA. The journal makes up much of the weight (and cost) of our own mailing – thus change to an electronic journal might reduce our costs. It was agreed that EUPHA is in a desperate situation. The Faculty of PH has agreed to help with funding as have other organisations in Spain & Germany. This help is likely to allow EUPHA to continue another year. The lack of a strong business plan, the relationship between EUPHA, the Faculty and UKPHA were all discussed along with the role of the European Public Health Alliance. We agreed that EUPHA should find a fundraising plan – and that SSM should help. The meeting supported the idea that the committee should be empowered to make a decision, if practicable, to fund fundraising support to EUPHA of up to £3000 as a one-off payment.
6. Robert West reported on IEA European Federation of Epidemiological Societies. Society members are not automatically members of this federation although we are linked eg. by website. Soc Soc Med members were not keen to be automatically included as actual members of IEA European Federation. And it was agreed at the meeting that we should continue to be cross-represented. Current European Federation issues identified were
 - Funding for research, although the current phase of EU funding does not cover epidemiology
 - Data protection issues rules and regulations. These are making research very difficult throughout Europe. Holland, Sweden and Switzerland are working on solutions.
7. The election of the Chair-Elect, Honorary Treasurer, two Ordinary Members of the Committee and Honorary Members of the Society took place, they are
Chair Elect: Ian Harvey
Hon Treasurer: Aileen Clarke
Ordinary members Laurence Moore
Roger Harrison

Honorary members Professor Sir Michael Marmot
 Professor Nick Wald
 Professor Sian Griffiths
 Professor Klim McPherson

8. Remuneration plans Hon Secretary and for Hon Treasurer's secretarial support were confirmed.

9. Future scientific meetings

The AGM was informed of the following planned locations for ASMs:

Society for Social Medicine 2005	Glasgow
Society for Social Medicine 2006	Leeds
Society for Social Medicine 2007	Cork
Society for Social Medicine 2008	Southampton
Society for Social Medicine 2009	London

10. Other business

SSM input to policy issues was discussed particularly

SSM's role in influencing policy: The declaration of Toledo had been sent to the Chair and it was mentioned as an example of an opportunity for greater engagement in policy/political issues. The Society's aims were discussed. The question was asked whether more proactive lobbying and campaigning were appropriate or whether we should continue to consider contributing to debate on individual issues as arising from the current aims of the society, (which are principally academic and research focused). We have sometimes responded on policy issues. And it was thought that we occasionally have relevant evidence which is not adequately publicised. It was agreed that many decisions are made in the absence of evidence by governments. Should the Society be involved in providing explicit evidence or lobbying to prevent statistics being suppressed? We agreed that we are a scientific society, and should remain as one. The question was asked whether data protection is an area where we should comment. And it was agreed that this is an important area where we have expertise, could make an impact and could comment legitimately within the aims of the society. We also discussed responding to consultation versus lobbying and active campaigning. On certain issues eg. tobacco control/food policy – some thought we should be at least commenting. We also discussed issues of funding of research on public health. The AGM agreed that whilst these are important, SSM is not the forum for many of these issues. It was agreed that many of us belong to other organisations which do campaign, which are professional and political organisations. There was a strongly felt view that SSM is about the science and its high standards. It was agreed that there are certain specific issues which clearly relate directly to the Society's aims and where we should appropriately contribute to local, national and international debate. As an example it was agreed that Data Protection Legislation and its effects in inhibiting research is clearly an area where we aim to maintain a presence.

Society for Social Medicine
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 15 SEPTEMBER 2004

Agenda item 5: Report on EUPHA

1.0 The Association

EUPHA was formed in 1992 as an umbrella organisation for public health in Europe. It brings together about 10,000 public health experts for professional exchange and collaboration and aims to:

- promote and strengthen public health research and practice
- improve communication between policymakers, researchers and practitioners
- provide a platform for the exchange of information, experience and research
- promote effective European joint research and other activities in the fields of health research and health services research.

2.0 Annual Meetings

Annual conferences have been held in different European cities every winter since 1993. At last year's conference in Rome - one of the largest to date - 800 participants heard papers on a wide range of topics (selected from 499 abstracts), and took part in thirty-one workshops.

This year's meeting is in Oslo from 7-9 October. The conference topic will be urbanisation and health (details on EUPHA's website: <http://www.eupha.org>).

3.0 The Journal

EUPHA's primary link with individual members of national associations is through the *European Journal of Public Health (EJPH)*.

A recent review of the journal's performance has been prompted by financial considerations (see below), the opportunity to review EUPHA's contract with the publishers (OUP), and the appointment of a new editor-in-chief (Johan Mackenbach). A draft strategy for improving the *EJPH* will be considered by EUPHA's executive council in October 2004, includes proposals for changes to the layout and editorial content, aimed at producing a livelier magazine.

Central to the proposed changes is a new format which would mean 6 issues a year instead of 4, distributed primarily by electronic means. A small number of hard copies would be sent to member organisations themselves, and to individual members who opted to pay an increased subscription of €23 (roughly £16) a year.

4.0 Sections and projects

EUPHA's sections provide a means of developing multi-disciplinary European networks of those interested in:

- health promotion
- food and nutrition
- epidemiology
- social security and health
- youth
- public health practice and policy
- health services research
- migrant health

- communicable diseases
- utilisation of medicines

Recent research projects have included the public health consequences of man-made disasters, and the future of public health in Europe.

5.0 Organisation

EUPHA's decision-making body is the Governing Council, on which each country has two seats (and on which SSM is represented). Decisions are implemented by a smaller Executive Council, consisting of current, previous and future presidents (hosts of annual conferences), the editor-in-chief, treasurer, and secretary. Day-to-day running of the organisation is delegated to a part-time manager based in Utrecht. A Scientific Committee selects the papers for annual meetings; SSM is represented on this group by Ellen Nolte.

6.0 Finances

The annual cost of running EUPHA is currently just under €90,000 (c. £65,000), nearly half of which has until now been donated by the Dutch Ministry of Health.

EUPHA's President wrote to member organisations in April 2004 informing them that the Ministry's subsidy would cease at the end of the year, forcing the association to review its operations and prepare a strategy for sustaining its finances. The financial strategy is based on changes to the journal (described above) and increased income from conferences, a share of profits from the *EJPH*, membership fees, project grants and institutional sponsors.

The Committee's response to the President's letter was that SSM could not increase the number of members for whom it pays a subscription (all SSM members are automatically EUPHA members). Its financial support could therefore only be increased by means of an additional grant. This could only be made by a decision of the AGM, and a favourable vote was unlikely without a more convincing case being made than that contained in the existing business plan.

We understand that the Faculty of Public Health is prepared to offer a one-off research grant which will help maintain the *status quo* for a further year, enabling EUPHA to review its role and infrastructure and prepare an improved business plan.

7.0 The Future

The SSM Committee welcomes the Faculty's decision and endorses its view that now is an opportune time for EUPHA's role to be reviewed. The organisation has existed for just over ten years, during which time there have been important political and environmental developments in Europe. What began as an umbrella organisation could, if its members so wished, be developed as a forum for the European public health community, enabling issues of common concern to be explored, research partnerships to be forged, and policy to be influenced.

The Committee hopes that the Faculty's generosity will result in the options being fully explored. SSM members are invited to contribute to the debate.

Carol Orchard
SSM representative on EUPHA Governing Council, 2003/4

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