



ANNOUNCEMENT

Major changes in the statutes of the European Society of Cardiology

Important changes to the statutes of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) were introduced on the occasion of the annual ESC congress in Vienna in September 2003. The Extraordinary General Assembly held at the annual congress approved massively the most important changes ever proposed to the constitution of the ESC over the last 20 years. These changes were necessary in order to offer the possibility of better and more far-reaching development in the different areas of expertise of our discipline. The changes paved the way for the official creation of two new Associations, one in the field of echocardiography, and the other in electrophysiology, created from the merged Working Groups on Arrhythmias and Cardiac Pacing.

Associations are registered branches of the European Society of Cardiology. They can be derived from Working Groups or from professional or sub-specialty organisations existing outside of the ESC. The aim is to promote the development of a defined area of expertise in cardiovascular medicine and/or research.

Associations can be created by the General Assembly of the ESC once an official request from one of these organisations has been formally approved by the Board of the ESC. Associations can be created if the number of members of the applicant organisation is greater than 250, provided that the organisation in question already has one of the following activities: sub-specialty journal, sub-specialty congress; as well as current and future funding to support their activities.

Associations will have a President and a Board, and all the other structures necessary to run their activities, such as a congress programme committee, an education committee, etc. Associations can have their own logo, which must be compatible with the ESC principles. They can recruit members and collect membership fees, organise congresses, scientific and educational activities, as well as recommend approval of professional skills and, of course, collaborate with other professional organisations in the same field.

Associations will be a part of the legal entity that is the ESC, and will therefore be subject to the same rules as regards financial management and fiscal position vis-à-vis French law. They will be run according to the rules of Corporate Governance and the ethics of the ESC. Their branding and image will be consistent with that of the ESC.

Naturally, the Associations will remain major contributors to the core activities of the ESC. This implies that the Associations, and the other constituent bodies of the ESC, will contribute to each other's activities wherever necessary, and particularly with regard to congress activities, journals, education, guidelines, surveys, etc.

The Association in Echocardiography, called the European Association of Echocardiography (EAE), was created from the Working Group on Echocardiography, which will now cease to exist de facto. This Association will develop and expand on the former Working Group's activities. The official kick-off of this association was at the occasion of the EuroEcho meeting held in Barcelona in December 2003. Fausto Pinto was confirmed as the President and Alan Fraser as the President-Elect, and all the previous nucleus members were confirmed in the new Board. Elections will be carried out during 2004 to fill the remaining positions in the Board resulting in a small expansion from 11 to 14 voting members.

The Association in Electrophysiology, called the European Heart Rhythm Association, was formed from the merger of the Working Groups on Pacing and Arrhythmias. Lukas Kappenberger was elected President of the Association on 15 October 2003. His mission will be, firstly, with the support of the Nucleus of the new Association, to define the scope of activities of the new European Heart Rhythm Association; and secondly, to develop the membership and also to give a structure to the Association and plan future meetings.

It is imperative now to get the Associations off to a flying start, and to help to build up their membership and continue to work towards creating reference organisations for echocardiography and electrophysiology in Europe. The ESC is happy to have the sub-specialty organisations within its structure and will make every effort to contribute to their success. The process is ongoing and other new Associations may emerge in the near future. Other reforms to the statutes of the ESC are expected in Munich 2004, which will reshape and consolidate the structure of the ESC and make it more effective in accomplishing its mission to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease in Europe.

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