**EURIPA Report 2012 - 13 to WONCA Europe Council**

**Summary**

This year (April 2012 to end March 2013) has seen many changes for EURIPA; it also marked 15 years since its establishment in Mallorca in the Spring of 1997.

A new president was elected at the AGM during the WONCA Europe conference in Vienna and an International Advisory Board was established under a revised constitution, which was adopted at the AGM.

The network continued to make progress by developing its links with the core WONCA Europe networks and connecting with academic bodies, NGOs, rural professional bodies and individual practitioners at the WONCA Europe conference, WONCA World Rural Working Party conference and also at its own Rural Health Forum on Island Pag in Croatia in May 2012.

A new web site was created in early 2013, hosted on the WONCA Europe web site.

Engagement with members increased through regular expanded newsletters and also the introduction of “Hot Topics” to the EURIPA listserver.

**Governance**

A revised constitution was agreed at the AGM in July 2012, which clarified membership, confirmed the composition of the Executive Committee and established an EURIPA International Advisory Board (IAB). Membership of the Executive Committee is attached at Appendix 1. The new President is Dr Jose Lopez-Abuin form Spain and Dr John Wynn-Jones becomes the Immediate Past president to ensure continuity.

The aim of the IAB is to inform and advise the Executive Committee. It will provide a wide and informed range of advice and input needed at national, regional, level and local levels across Europe. Each European WONCA National Association was invited to propose international representatives. In addition, other rural stakeholders such as academics, politicians, rural activists and members of NGOs were also be invited to join. The current membership (at 31st March 2013) is 23 (including 4 expert members) representing 20 countries. Professor Christos Lionis from the University of Crete is the chair and the President also attends. The first meeting of the IAB was in January. The International Advisory Board will meet face to face once a year, will hold audio meetings every three-months and its role will be to inform and advise the President and therefore the executive.

EURIPA no longer has any links with the Institute of Rural Health in the UK as it has withdrawn from international work. A legal status working group was set up as EURIPA is not established as an organisation in its own right. The working group has reported back to the Executive Committee at its meetings and a decision is expected to be made later in 2013 on the way forward to establish EURIPA as its own organisation. Different options in countries across Europe continue to be explored.

**Work programme**

EURIPA continued to address the four principal themes of **quality** (& patient safety), **research**, **education** (& training) and **policy involvement** in its work programme.

**3rd EURIPA Rural Forum, May 2012**

EURIPA held its 3rd Annual Rural Forum meeting in Pag Island, Croatia in May 2012. The Croatian Society KoHOM hosted the conference and undertook the task at short notice. EURIPA could not have done this without the support of KoHOM, the conference organisers (CONVENTUSCREDO) and its chief executive Nina Vrdolijak. The Forum was a resounding success with delegates and speakers coming from across Europe.

The theme was “Training and Education for Rural Practice”. Nine internationally acknowledged speakers set the scene with thought provoking and challenging keynotes. The main conference was divided into workshops based around 8 key education and training themes. Each workshop had 2 chairs, one of whom was Croatian, who produced position papers prior to the conference. Following short presentations and discussion on challenges and solutions at the workshops the position papers were amended to take into consideration the workshop findings.

EURIPA was delighted to welcome Prof. Janko Kersnik (President of EURACT) as a speaker and contributor and look forward to future fruitful links with EURACT.

The 4th Rural Health Forum will focus on research in rural practice and is being held jointly with EGPRN in Malta in October 2013. Planning has been started and a title agreed: Research into different contexts in General Practice/Family Medicine: rural vs. urban perspectives

**Rural Patient Safety**

**Joint Linneaus EQuIP EURIPA Patient Safety Project**: EURIPA met with the Linneaus Patient Safety network representatives at its Forum in Romania in 2011. Following continued engagement EQuiP, Linneaus and EURIPA met in September 2012 in Manchester to discuss patient safety in rural areas across Europe. A literature review was undertaken to inform discussion at the working group. As a result of the meeting the MaPSaF tool(Manchester Patient Safety Framework) has been rural proofed and published on EURIPA’s web site. Supporting documents on patient involvement and an educational resource are in the process of being finalised. The rural proofed tool is currently being translated for piloting in 4 countries. We are grateful to Professor Aneez Esmail of Manchester University and the Linneaus project for his support and guidance in making this happen.

**Special project**

A research project on Out of Hours care is being funded by WONCA Europe. The project aims to help us to understand more about the provision of Out of Hours Care in rural areas including the nature of out of hours care and the support available for rural doctors and whether this requirement has an impact on recruitment and retention. Countries are involved including Norway, Switzerland, Austria, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the UK. After a protracted process the preliminary questionnaire was approved by the ethics committee in Norway and was ready for circulation in early 2013. The project will report at the Prague conference.

**Emergencies:** The Emergencies working party has been revived and is developing web-based training and information using the new web site.

**Hot Topics**

The Executive Committee decided to launch a series of “Hot Topics” using its list server to engage the wider EURIPA membership in current topical discussions on rural health. Two themed discussions (Suggestions for the development of EURIPA and Patient Safety) have been undertaken by the end of March and the third (The Centralisation Agenda) was launched in early April. The reports are being published on the web site.

**External engagement and marketing**

**WONCA Europe working groups**: Three members of the EURIPA executive actively contributed to the working groups on the future of Wonca Europe. With nearly 30% of Europe’s population deemed to be rural, EURIPA believes that all WONCA Europe proposals and policies should be “Rural Proofed”.

EURIPA was actively engaged in the **WONCA Europe Vienna conference** in July 2012 and had a full programme:

EURIPA had 5 workshop proposals accepted:

* Palliative care in rural areas – role of general practitioners - Tanja Pekez-Pavlisko
* Out-of-hours and emergency care - Oleg Kravtchenko
* What can a GP practice attachment offer to a medical student – advantages of a placement in a rural practice - Jose Lopez Abuin
* Encouraging young family doctors to work and remain in rural communities – Jaume Banque Vidella
* Patient Safety in General Practice - John Wynn-Jones

EURIPA members were also speakers at other workshops and sessions:

* The Hippokrates Exchange Programme for Vasco da Gama Exchange Workshop, Fabrizia Farolfi
* Symposium: “General Practitioners / Family Doctors Crossing Borders, a gift or a burden?”, Jose Lopez-Abuin
* Risk assessment for partner violence - EUROPREV & Special Interest Group on Family Violence, Tanja Pekez-Pavlisko

The **World WONCA Rural Health Conference** was held in Thunder Bay, Canada in October 2012 and a few EURIPA members were able to attend. Dr John Wynn-Jones, EURIPA’s immediate past president, was unanimously elected chair of the WONCA World Rural Working Party and takes over in Prague in June 2013. Croatia was successful in its application to host the World WONCA Rural Health Conference in 2015 in Dubrovnik. EURIPA will be a partner in the conference.

**Chance-Erasmus project**: EURIPA is an Associate Partner in this project to develop a European Masters in Migration Health. The rural parts of Europe remain areas where large numbers of migrants work and live. There will be a major event in September 2013 that EURIPA hopes to participate in but as it has not received any funding for engagement in the project it has made attendance at meetings largely impossible.

**WHO-Occupational Health**: EURIPA and the Wonca Working Party on Rural Practice have established links with WHO. EURIPA has also been working with Professor Claudio Colosio and the WHO Global Occupational Health Programme to develop initiatives for the health of those working in agriculture in Europe and around the world.

**Vasco da Gama**: EURIPA sees its growing relationship with VdG as crucial in attracting young dynamic doctors into rural practice. VdG has a representative on the EURIPA executive and the two networks are working closely together to meet our combined aspirations. The rural Hipockrates prize in memory of Claudio Carosino has been successful and last year’s winners will be attending the Prague conference in June 2013. The challenge of getting students in to rural areas is one of EURIPA’s priorities and during the year EURIPA and VdG have developed their use of social networking, as this is particularly relevant to young doctors.

**4th Rural Health Forum and EGPRN**

This Forum will be held jointly with EGPRN in October 2013 and planning has already started (see above). Each network will hold its own separate programme but there will also be the opportunity for joint working and exchange of good practice in research.

**Communicating across Europe: c**ommunication with rural and isolated practitioners across Europe can pose a challenge for a network such as EURIPA as the rural clinicians do not necessarily have links to any academic centre or centre of excellence. Thequarterly newsletter (Grapevine) compliments the listserver discussion group. EURIPA is beginning to use social networking technology and has already established a “Linkedin” group and will begin to use Twitter and Facebook.

**New web site**

EURIPA has been working with WONCA Europe to create a EURIPA sub domain on the main WONCA Europe web site. The Executive Secretary has been trained on how to create web pages and update the web site. The new web site was ready for launch at the end of March and will enable EURIPA to maintain a much more relevant and current web site.

**Future Plans**

EURIPA will continue build on its existing work programme but also develop its activities to expand and develop its network of rural practitioners across Europe, including social media to attract young doctors. With the contributions of the International Advisory Board new initiatives will be identified and the work programme expanded.

**Dr Jose Lopez-Abuin**

**President EURIPA**

**May 2013**