

Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe

**Minutes of the
2nd General Assembly
of the Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe
held in the Marivaux Hotel Congress & Seminar Centre, Brussels
13:00 on Thursday, 1 December 2011**

Present:

Prof Ulf Smith (President)
Prof Karin Sipido (Vice President)
Prof Julio Celis (Vice President)

and 14 members

Apologies:

Prof Laurent Nicod (Treasurer)
and 3 members

1. Opening of the General Assembly

The President, Prof Smith officially opened and welcomed everyone to the 2nd General Assembly. He explained that the Biomed Alliance already has 17 official members.

2. Minutes of the 1st General Assembly, Brussels, Belgium 2010

Since there were no comments, the minutes were approved unanimously and officially signed as a correct record. The minutes will be published on the Biomed Alliance website.

3. President's report

The President, Prof Smith, in cooperation with the Vice President, Prof Sipido, reported on the Alliance's activities from the past year. Prof Smith said that the first six months were spent largely on lobbying and PR activities of the Alliance, which included a number of visits to different ministers/officials of European research and other important EU / EC officials. During his visit to Warsaw, he had the opportunity to discuss the activities of the Biomed Alliance with Prof Maciej Banach, Polish Ministry of Research and the Deputy Minister of Research and Health. He also visited Ministers and the State Secretaries of Sweden, Denmark and several others to introduce the Alliance.

Prof Sipido reported that the four founding societies had a board meeting in February 2011 to create a strategic working plan. Some targets had been identified and rules have been set out on collaborative works. The founding societies contribute its in-house experts on EU policies and the support from each society would be regarded as contribution in kind. Prof Sipido warmly thanked Ingrid Van den Neucker, Edel Fitzgerald (ECCO); Nadia Kamel, Brian Ward (ERS); Muriel Mioulet, Sophie O'Kelly, Ilaria Leggeri (ESC) and Viktor Jörgens, Monika Grüsser and Monica Buckley (EASD).

Following the meeting, a document "*common strategic framework*", was produced. Prof Sipido also reiterated on the lobbying activities, namely publications in medical journals and a meeting with politicians.

Prof Smith had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Herbert Reul, Chair of the Commission of the European Parliament for Research. The Biomed Alliance set up visits with members of Parliament and met with Prof. Maria da Graça Carvalho which led to the invitation to attend an EP meeting on the budget discussion in January 2012. A meeting with the Commissioner M.

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Geoghan-Quinn is being planned where the Executive Members will also meet with Patricia Reilly. Other MEP visits are being planned.

Prof Smith said that due to the activities above, the Alliance is now more recognised and has become a player and noted that there is a need to utilise this position to fight the challenges ahead.

4. Financial report

Prof Sibille from ERS reported on finances on behalf of Prof Nicod, the Honorary Treasurer of the Biomed Alliance. Prof Sibille again confirmed that hours spent by the Executive Committees and other relevant personnel are seen as contribution in kind and are hence absent on the expenditure. The accounts were discharged and unanimously approved by the member societies present with 14 votes. The President thanked Prof Sibille on behalf of the Executive Committee.

5. Presentations by member societies

Due to time constraints, only two societies reported on their activities:

a) Federation of European Biochemical Societies

Prof Tomáš Zima, chair of the Executive Committee of FEBS presented the activities of FEBS.

b) European Society of Radiology

Monika Hierath, head of the EU & Public Affairs/EIBIR/ESMRMB office presented the activities of ERS/EIMBIR.

6. Road map to advance the European Institute of Health Research

Prof Celis explained the urgent need to reach a decision which needs to be approved and supported by all stakeholders. A co-working group of 10 people (6 additional members on top of the 4 Executive members of the Biomed Alliance) will be created to report back to the Executive Committee and the General Assembly. Prof Celis suggested holding a stakeholder meeting in Spring 2012.

Prof Smith also explained to all those present that the aims are to form a platform to interact with different important stakeholders of health research in Europe. It would interact with many societies and institutions including the European Research Council, Science Europe in terms of national funding and EFPIA for issues which would be related to pharmaceutical development. Prof Celis commented that the funds will come from the Horizon 2020 programme.

It was unanimously approved by all members present to start this initiative. It was also requested of those present to propose one or two names of people who may potentially join this working group. The societies are to propose the names with their expertise and political contacts (if any) by 10 December 2011.

7. Horizon 2020 - the new framework for European science

Prof Smith said the Biomed Alliance may participate in the hearing with key MEPs related to Horizon 2020 which would include the funding issues. Prof Celis said the situation surrounding Horizon 2020 is changeable and thus he urged members to be proactive in communicating with the European Commission.

Prof Smith asserted that the priorities need to be identified with input from the scientific community so that this can be communicated to the MEPs during the meeting scheduled in January 2012. Prof Smith asked the members to identify the priority areas and submit this by 23 December 2011.

8. Approval of the Alliance position paper

Prof Smith asked if the position paper which was circulated to the members prior to the meeting, is representative of the members' stances.

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A comment was made, in reference to the first paragraph, that some diseases have been omitted in the list of NCDs, including the areas where the member societies represent. It was suggested that “and many others” is added to the sentence.

The name of the “European Institute of Health Research” was also discussed following the comment made by Dr Alan Vanvossel regarding the use of the word *institute* for it to potentially produce additional burdens due to the EC regulations. It was proposed that *council* will replace *institute* which was supported by the members.

Prof Smith summarised the three proposed changes, specifically the addition of “and many others” in the first paragraph; 200,000 “clinical and basic” researchers on the first page and the replacement of the word “institute” with “council”. No other modification was proposed and the position paper was voted as approved. Once the changes are made they will be put on the Biomed Alliance website.

9. EU funding on research with embryonic stem cells

It was decided that the Biomed Alliance will not get involved with this item but the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) will address this issue as a single society.

Prof Smith thanked everyone for participating in a very constructive discussion and looks forward to making the Alliance a success. He closed the meeting at 15:30.