



# Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe

**Minutes of the 3rd General Assembly  
of the Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe  
Radisson Blu Royal Hotel, Brussels  
Friday, 16 November 2012, 13:30**

**Present:**

Prof. Ulf Smith	President BioMed Alliance
Prof. Karin Sipido	Vice President BioMed Alliance
Prof. Julio Celis	Vice President BioMed Alliance
Prof. Laurent Nicod	Treasurer BioMed Alliance

**18 Member Societies:**

European Association of Nuclear Medicine  
European Atherosclerosis Society  
European Association for the Study of Diabetes  
European Association for the Study of the Liver  
European CanCer Organisation  
European College of Neuropsychopharmacology  
European Federation of Immunological Societies  
European Federation of Neurological Societies/ European Neurological Societies  
European Hematology Association  
European Renal Ass. - European Dialysis and Transplant Ass.  
European Respiratory Society  
European Society of Anaesthesiology  
European Society of Cardiology  
European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology  
European Society of Radiology  
European League Against Rheumatism  
Federation of European Biochemical Societies  
United European Gastroenterology

**Apologies:**

European Society of Hypertension  
European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases  
European Society for Paediatric Research

**1. Opening of the General Assembly**

The President, Prof. Smith officially opened and welcomed everyone to the 3rd General Assembly. The President explained that the Biomed Alliance currently has 21 official members and outlined the importance of their continuous support.



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The President announced that without the tremendous support received from the founding societies, the BioMed Alliance would not have been able to achieve what it has so far.

The President especially thanked Monica Buckley (EASD), Edel Fitzgerald (ECCO), Ilaria Leggeri (ESC) and Nadia Kamel (ERS), who have been instrumental and extremely helpful to the Executive Committee.

The President stated that the main objectives for the Alliance in 2013 should be to strengthen the Alliance membership and to focus on the integration of the EuCHR (European Council for Health Research) into Horizon 2020. In the coming year the Executive Committee will be extended and supported by a working group for the EuCHR activities.

In order to have the maximum amount of political support for the EuCHR it is essential that contact increases with key decision makers at EU and national level, including ministries, national research agencies and members of the European Parliament. The European Parliament is very supportive of the work of the Alliance, in particular our call for strategic, scientific-led health research. Several successful meetings took place in 2012 to garner support from MEPs. At the networking dinner the previous evening, MEP António Fernando Correia de Campos, indicated his full support for our activities and the EuCHR. However more support from the other legislative decision-makers at EU level, the Council (national ministries) is now required to ensure our concerns are taken into account in the next research framework programme, Horizon 2020.

The President stressed how important member support is and how members should inform people with political influence about the Alliance activities, in particular at this time when discussions on Horizon 2020 are ongoing.

The Alliance is currently led by the four founding societies; the Presidency and secretariat is provided by the EASD. The President thanked the founding society members for their commitment and in-kind contributions through the policy officers, but stated that the current situation in terms of personnel is not sustainable long term, especially as the Alliance is now in a crucial phase with regard to Horizon 2020. An experienced senior policy officer employed by the Alliance and based in Brussels, who is dedicated to achieve the objectives of the Alliance is now essential. The founding societies will however continue to offer their assistance. The Honorary Treasurer, Prof. Laurent Nicod will elaborate further in his report, as such a recruitment would have budget implications for 2013.

Prof. Smith announced that Mrs. Teresa Riera Madurell, MEP (lead rapporteur for Horizon 2020) apologised for not being able to attend the welcome dinner and has sent the enclosed letter.

### **2. Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, Brussels, Belgium 2011**

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.



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### 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 reported that the key core activity this year was the European Council for Health Research (EuCHR). The BioMed Alliance has also been supporting the calls by the European Medical Research Council (EMRC) and the Initiative for Science (ISE) in Europe for increased funding of research (the ISE is primarily keen on sustaining funding for basic research through the ERC while the EMRC is advocating for increased funding for medical research), at a time when Member States are attempting to make cuts to the EU budget including Horizon 2020.

The joint European Commission-BioMed Alliance event, 'The Future of Health Research and Innovation in Europe: The Need for Strategic Action' held in Brussels on 23 May 2012 was attended by over 100 high-level participants. The overall conclusion was that this strategic plan is to be put into action. The "why" was unanimously approved.

The BioMed Alliance has also been involved in other communication with officials within the European Commission. The Alliance received a letter from M. Geoghegan-Quinn (European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science) commending the formation of the Alliance and our work generally. There have been several contacts and meetings with the European Parliament and the lead Rapporteurs for Horizon 2020.

A contact programme has also commenced with national ministry officials. Prof. Celis met the Cypriot Ministry of Health, who currently holds the EU Presidency; Prof. Sipido, together with Edel Fitzgerald, Nadia Kamel and Brian Ward, met the Irish Permanent Representative, who will hold the EU Presidency from January 2013, for the allocated six months. In addition, Prof. Smith visited the Ministry of Research in Stockholm, Sweden and the feedback received was that the EuCHR has already been discussed intensively. Contact has been made with other ministries and more efforts will be made to have substantial discussions with these important decision-makers. Prof. Smith asked all members for their full support in contacting the Research Ministries in their own country.

Prof. Smith also reported that the former President of ECCO, Prof. Michael Baumann from Germany has been in contact with the national Ministry hoping to gain support in this important Member State.

The BioMed Alliance attended the World Health Summit in Berlin and Prof. Smith thanked EULAR, EFNS, Prof. Sipido, Prof. Nicod, Prof. José Mariano Gago and Prof. Celis for their contribution at the Summit.



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Prof. Sipido reiterated that all the energy over the past year has been focused on achieving the EuCHR within the Horizon 2020 and that there is a need to enhance the involvement of all members.

Prof. Sipido then reconfirmed the goals and organisation of the Alliance. The mission statement is to promote excellence in biomedical research and to ensure support at the EU level. Prof. Sipido then presented the past and planned activities that will enable these goals to be attained.

The main focus has been on advocacy to form EuCHR within the frame of Horizon 2020. Prof. Sipido stressed that it is essential to increase resources and to enhance all members' involvement. European funding for health research only amounts to 5%, but is essential in biomedical and health research. A EuCHR will seek to align and coordinate also with other funding sources.

As a complementary action, FET (Future and Emerging Technologies) flagships may be targeted when the EuCHR is formed.

In addition to advocacy for appropriate support and funding, the Alliance goals include public awareness, mobility of researchers and the training of young people. Further activities within these goals can be developed.

Working groups can be established to further the goals of the Alliance, e.g. to increase advocacy activities, public awareness, and cross-disciplinary exchange. All Alliance activities should be undertaken within the common interest of all member societies.

The strategy of the Alliance was discussed within the Executive Committee and the outcome has been distributed between members before the Annual Meeting.

The EuCHR core group was established as an extended think-tank, including stakeholders such as patient groups and advisors from the science policy and political world. Their first task was to draft a concept paper to introduce the EuCHR. This paper was subsequently distributed to all members for further input and eventually approved. A follow up meeting will be organised in the near future to discuss the next steps in the process.

In order to increase membership the Alliance is also looking to increase the level of support via "supporting members" who are not specifically biomedical societies, but are to be engaged as stakeholders in the goals of the Alliance, such as patient groups, university organisations and related advocacy groups such as EMRC. This support could be formalized through Affiliate membership, as currently provided for in the Statutes. This is to be encouraged and these affiliates should also be involved in all aspects of strategy.



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### 4. Financial Report

Prof. Nicod reported on the finances for 2012 and the proposal for a budget for 2013.

The expected costs for a part-time employee of the Alliance, based in Brussels, were presented and estimated to be a total of Euro 80.000,00 for 2013. Given the cost of having such a part-time employee it was suggested to increase the annual membership fees for 2014. It was agreed that the 2013 proposed budget should be circulated to all members. A formal vote should then take place at next year's general assembly to make a final decision.

The 2012 accounts were discharged and unanimously approved by the member societies present with 17 votes for and 1 abstention.

The President thanked Prof Nicod on behalf of the Executive Committee.

### 5. Future Activities of the BioMed Alliance in 2013

Member Societies were asked prior to the General Assembly to propose topics they considered interesting and that reflect the mission of the BioMed Alliance. Proposers had a few minutes each to present their suggested topics, which could be organised by a dedicated working group. The 2013 proposed activities were presented:-

- Research into disease prevention
- Demographic changes in Europe and challenges for EU biomedical research
- Migration within and into Europe – relevance for European health
- Personalised medicine for the European citizen – towards more precise medicine for the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease
- Burden of disease, life years, cost of illness, cost effectiveness of treatments, societal impact, healthcare organisation and future needs. Implications for biomedical research in Europe
- Public awareness on biomedical research

It was suggested that it may be beneficial if the Alliance joined existing bodies such as ISE (Initiative for Science in Europe) and EMBO (European Molecular Biology Organisation), however it was agreed that the main benefit of the Alliance is that the clinical side of research can be represented if the Alliance retains its independence.

In relation to the topic proposed, 'Public awareness on biomedical research', it was suggested that the European Commission is already aiming to increase public awareness and that Alliance activities should be focused on other topics where more can be achieved. Prof. Smith suggested that this topic should be discussed by the European Commission and FEBS (Federation of European Biochemical Societies).

It was agreed that Member societies should take this information concerning future activities to their constituency for further feedback and the Executive Committee was given a mandate to formulate a proposal for the activities.



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### 6. Elections and Nominations

a) President (2012 – 2013)

Prof Smith left the room. The re-election of Prof. Ulf Smith, Sweden was unanimously approved with 17 votes for and 1 abstention.

b) President-Elect (2012-2013)

Prof. Sipido left the room. The election of Prof. Karin Sipido, Belgium was unanimously approved with 17 votes for and 1 abstention.

c) Vice President (2012-2013)

Prof. Celis left the room. The re-election of Prof. Julio Celis, Denmark was unanimously approved with 17 votes for and 1 abstention.

d) Honorary Treasurer (2012 - 2013)

Prof. Nicod left the room. The re-election of Prof. Laurent P. Nicod, Switzerland was unanimously approved with 17 votes for and 1 abstention.

e) The member societies present were asked to elect two additional Executive Committee members. Term of office will commence after the 2012 General Assembly until after the 2014 General Assembly. In a secret ballot the societies present were asked to select two of the proposed candidates. The following candidates were elected by the General Assembly:

Prof. Colm O'Morain (UEG/EASL) with 10 votes for.

Prof. Gustave Moonen (EFNS/ENS) with 8 votes for.

f) The member societies present were asked to elect two additional members of the EuCHR core working group. In a secret ballot the societies present were asked to select two of the proposed candidates. The following candidates were elected by the General Assembly:

Prof. Steffen Gay (EULAR) with 14 votes for.

Prof. Vlad Ratziu (UEG/EASL) with 12 votes for.

Prof. Smith welcomed the new members of the Executive Committee and the Core working group.

### 7. Any Other Business

It was raised by EASD that new regulations are in process for medical devices. The actual situation is that the Commission presented its draft proposal of the regulations to the European Parliament and the Parliament just nominated a Rapporteur. Dr. Joergens from EASD offered collaboration and mutual information about this issue. Prof. Smith asked the members present if they were interested in this issue and there was an overwhelming majority in favour. EASD volunteered to circulate information about the issue; it was not decided to prepare any statement on behalf of the Alliance.



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Several other topics for future activities were brought up and the President summarized the discussion by saying that all these proposals would be considered by the Executive Committee and reported to the General Assembly.

Prof. Smith thanked everyone for participating in a very constructive discussion. He closed the meeting at 15:45.