

Minutes General Assembly FESTMIH – December 7, 2007

Verona, Italy

Present: Pierre Ambroise-Thomas (PAT) (France), Zeno Bisoffi (ZB) (Italy, Vice-President), Martin Boeree (MB) (Netherlands, President), Josep Maria Jansa (JMJ) (Spain), Thomas Junghanss (TJ) (Germany), Esther Jurgens (EJ) (Netherlands, NVTG) (minutes), Gunnar Kvale (GK) (Norway), Louis Loutan (LL) (Switzerland), Pascal Magnussen (PM) (Denmark, Secretary), Maija-Liisa Rummukainen (MR) (Finland), Patrick van der Stuyft (PvdS) (Belgium, Treasurer), Stephen Wright (SW) (UK)

Absent: representatives from the Austrian, Portuguese, Swedish, Czech and Slovak Societies

Agenda

1. Opening
2. Minutes GA in Amsterdam 2007
3. Report of the President
4. Report of the Secretary
5. Financial Report by the Treasurer
6. Future FESTMIH (questionnaire)
7. Update TropMedEurope
8. Election Board members
9. Update 6th Congress TMIH, Verona 2009
10. Update 7th Congress TMIH, Barcelona 2009
11. ECDC report, Stockholm 2006
12. European Council on Global Health
13. Any other business

1. Opening (ZB, MB)

President and vice-president welcome all participants to the meeting, the first GA that takes place outside the regular congresses. Earlier this year a meeting took place during Amsterdam Congress (in May) but due to time constraints the main part of the agenda was postponed to this meeting. Today's meeting is important to assess where we are now and to where our ambitious reach. After the introduction participants introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of GA in Amsterdam (May 2007)

Textual

Page 1, list of absentees: a representative from Norway was present.

Page 1, report treasurer: Main expenses in 2007 should be : Main expenses in 2006

After taking note of the textual comments, the minutes were approved.

3. Report of the President (MB)

The main event in 2007 was the 5th Congress in May (Amsterdam). The Congress was successful in many aspects. There was no financial loss, no profit either. The income came mainly from the 1400 participants (468.444 Euro), the expenses were 475.934. Sponsoring totalled up to 140.000 Euro, better than was expected in the months leading up to the Congress. Some other issues: there was no official evaluation done. Suggestion to include this at the Verona Congress. Furthermore, the 'Meet the Professional Session' were programmed too early in the morning. Suggestion to keep this sessions but plan at a different time.

Martin Boeree concludes that if the FESTMIH has wider ambitions than organizing Congresses, there have to be financial and human resources to do so, which will include professionals (part-time employed, or hiring persons for specific activities). Also, the dual function of being President of the Congress and of the FESTMIH at the same time is not ideal.

Comments from participants on the Congress:

- Overall: it was a good congress.
- FESTMIH could have been more visible as the co-organizer of the Conference (all).
- There is a need to increase involvement of national societies in the organisation of the congress (PAT).
- Suggestion for next Congress: add a session on impact analysis of Global Initiatives on Southern Countries (GK).
- Too many parallel sessions, difficulties to chose and some sessions had few participants (TJ). MB indicated that wide variety increases the attractiveness of the programme, and that the ‘Where Are We Sessions’ were programmed to give participants a chance to catch up on the main developments and state of the art in main areas of TMIH.
- Important to look at other means to attract participants (TJ). Similar as in Amsterdam: organize or offer space for side-events, workshops, high level working groups. It was suggested to invite all societies to organise their annual meetings during ECTMIH congresses.
- Zeno Bisoffi welcomes more suggestions for the Verona Congress.

4. Report of the Secretary (PM)

The Secretary refers to the Copenhagen meeting, in March, and stresses the difficulty in updating the addresses and names of contact persons from the national societies. Despite the fact that this ultimately is the responsibility of the delegates, not all societies are punctual in maintaining a link to the FESTMIH Board. PM will officially hand over the secretariat; he has been with the Board since its onset. A successor is yet to be identified. The Board thanks Pascal for his time, dedication and input to FESTMIH.

5. Report of the Treasurer (PvdS)

The Treasurer mentions that there have been few other financial movements in 2007 besides the income from contributions and expenses related to the Board meetings. With no extra activities, the current savings (approx. 30.000 Euro) should be sufficient to cover expenses for the coming years. The positive balance is mainly a result of Hamburg and Liverpool congresses, other congresses were of no profit to the Federation. Discussed was the timing of the collection of the contributions, it would be better to collect them earlier in the year. Some societies still need to pay fees for 2005 en 2006. Regarding the upcoming audit: Patrick van der Stuyft will ask to volunteers (from ITG) to perform this audit. Point of discussion was the possibility to offer reduced subscription TM&IH for members of Societies (some Societies - Belgian, Netherlands and German – offer this to their members). See also under 6.

6. Future (presentation outcome of the questionnaire, EJ)

Questionnaire future activities FESTMIH			
	Yes	No	Comments
1) The FESTMIH has successfully organized 5 European Congresses on Tropical Medicine and International Health. They have become a recognized event with important impact/visibility in this field. Do you/your Society think that this should be the only, significant activity of the Federation?		7	- promote European vision on International health - stimulate research with researchers from DC - role of the Federation should not be limited to the organization of congresses, but there should be more substantial input from the National Societies, like in the scientific committee and / or obtaining sponsoring - there are other activities: lobbying, professional exchange among societies and enhancing common research objectives that could be of interest Conclusion: this question was discussed extensively. See below
2) In previous meetings, it was pointed out that the FESTMIH is not well known to members of National Societies. Do you/your Society think that a stronger feeling of membership to the FESTMIH should be	7		- also a task of the national societies themselves - FESTMIH is not well know to our members, and by engaging in more activities the ‘feeling of membership’ might be improved

Questionnaire future activities FESTMIH			
	Yes	No	Comments
promoted/encouraged?			- as far as the Federation can be considered of an area of common interest and an instrument for reinforcing the common objectives of the societies, more advances in the area of IH can be reached Conclusion: increase the visibility of FESTMIH within and through the national societies
3) The FESTMIH is a Federation of Societies, and not of individual members, as is the case for other European Societies. This was decided long ago, also considering that many National Societies are relatively small, and it is not advisable to have a European Society to compete for associates with the National ones. Would you/your Society be favourable to offer the possibility of an individual association to the FESTMIH, but with the membership to a National Society, too, as a mandatory requirement?	3	3 / possibly	- a clear-cut choice should be made: European Federation or European Society - if that was considered, aspects related to representation and the differentiation between individual and representative roles should be discussed and agreed - undecided: only if linked to clear benefits Conclusion: the Federation should not open up to individual members
4) The TM&IH journal was launched at the first FESTMIH meeting in Hamburg in 1996. This journal is close to the FESTMIH. Do you/your Society think that it would be desirable for the TM&IH to become the official Journal of the FESTMIH?	7		- or: 'endorsed by FESTMIH' - what would this mean to the Society and to TM&IH? - is good for a scientific society to have an 'official voice' Conclusion: yes. Martin Boeree will write to TM&IH board / TJ and PvdS will discuss this at the next meeting of the Editorial Board
5) On the same line (regardless the answer you have given to the previous question): would you/your Society think it would be a good idea to offer all members of the National Societies a subscription to the TM&IH (or to the online version only) at a very favourable rate?	7		- printed version to be preferred - Netherlands society already offers this - better online version only - yes, but not compulsory, only as an additional offer Conclusion: yes, but is an issue to be discussed with the Publisher (Blackwell). Need to look into an option to subscribe to an electronic version only
6) The number of Board members is six. At the last Board meeting in Copenhagen, it was suggested to increase this number (to eight to ten members). Would you/your Society in favour of this?	4	3	- as long as costs with board meetings are kept low - not necessary, but a representative of a society could be invited to (specific) Board meetings (as observer) - increase to a max. of 10 members. However the most important is to have motivated and active Board members - 8 enough to ensure representation of the different societies - no, current level of activities do not seem to justify this Conclusion: no increase for the moment. It was decided to add 2 observers to the Board
7) Some of the Board members suggested that a link should be tried between the FESTMIH (also through National Societies) and National / International NGO dealing with International Health. The main theme of the next Congress will be particularly close to NGO's scope and mandate. Would you/your Society agree and would like to make a special effort in trying to get relevant NGO of your respective countries more linked to your Society and to the FESTMIH?	5	1 / possibly	- yes, but only through the national societies - Belgian Society is already moving in that direction. But tension between scholarly and action oriented objectives - not feasible - yes, but clarify which links should be established - yes: valuable and important Conclusion: this is not possible without change in constitution, possible is to invite them or involve them through national societies
8) Would you/your Society agree to find special sessions of the next Congress/ Congresses to be allocated to NGOs?	6	1	- no, sessions could be allocated to discussing the role of NGOs - yes, eg. in a session dealing with advocacy matter for improving the policy of global health Conclusion: yes in principle is a good idea. Participation of NGOs in Verona will be encouraged

Questionnaire future activities FESTMIH			
	Yes	No	Comments
9) Some of the Board members also suggested that a more formal link should also be sought for between the FESTMIH (also through National Societies) and National Societies of Travel Medicine. Would you/your Society be in favour of this?	3	3	- diverging interests and fundamentally a different field of study. Very few people work at the interface - it might be not advisable to have a formal link, since such societies are often supported by the drug industry - in Switzerland there is not a separate travel medicine association - in Italy the Societies collaborate in many ways, nevertheless distinct areas of interests Conclusion: a formal link is not necessary, because we are different in scope. Functional collaboration is welcomed (they have the funds, we the research capacity)
10) Formal/informal contacts have been made by the President and Board members with the ECDC and WHO. Would you/your Society be favourable to a formal agreement on collaboration between the FESTMIH and these institutions?	4		- depends on the objectives, scope - why, how? - ok formal link with WHO, more unsure what benefit the Society might have linking with ECDC - also approach for this purpose TropEdEurope, TropMedEurope Not discussed
Finally, I ask each Society to draft a brief statement on what should be, in your opinion, the main objectives to be achieved by the Federation and the means the FESTMIH should be provided with, in order to achieve these objectives.			- expansion ambition = expansion level of professionalism - overall goal: promote activities at European, national and international level to improving health and health care for marginalized population groups in low- and middle income countries - provide an organized link between the European Societies; European Congresses

Discussion future: should Congresses be the only, significant activity of the Federation? (Q1)

- **General consensus** among participants on the premise that the Federation should not restrict itself to organizing Congresses. It was also felt however, that the level of ambitions should go hand in hand with resources, and that “we need to be realistic, and not be overambitious”. On the same line there was a general consensus that a driving force is needed to get things done, one person must feel responsible. All participants agreed on the need for professional support. Also, the Federation should be selective and prioritize the activities it wants to carry out.
- **Regarding the Congresses:** it was suggested to enhance the ownership of the national societies in these events. They should get more involved, as members in the scientific programme, and in the general organization, for example in the pro-active in the pursuit of funds and sponsors for the conferences.
- **Regarding other activities:** it was discussed whether (and if yes, how) the Federation should become more active in lobbying. How do we see this, lobby on which issues? How to take a stance, or formulate an European vision, on international health? (PAT) It was concluded that we should not become a lobby or advocacy group, however we would act as advisory body or become an European voice on certain issues. (JMJ)
- **Commitment national societies:** it is important that we get a realistic picture what the societies expect from FESTMIH, but also we must increase the visibility of the Federation among national societies and other national institutions. Also new initiatives arise, but the general feeling is that the potential of the Federation hasn't been fully explored yet. (TJ)
- **General:** national societies in crisis (UK, Belgian), membership is going down. The Royal Society is currently conducting a study on the role of the Society and establishing its relevance in times of changes (SW). Global health and tropical medicine are rapidly changing, it is not exclusively ‘tropical’ any more; new initiatives and networks are mushrooming. The new scenario requires dealing with the private sector, find ways to liaise travel medicine and tropical medicine, and team up with international NGOs. (LL) Societies are (re)defining their role, only offering a subscription to TMIH is not enough to stay afloat.
- **Suggestions to increase visibility:** to improve the website, add a weblog and a discussion forum. (PAT)

- **Activities within reach:** maintain an active website with the aim to be visible between members and to others (and rotate the maintenance of the website among members); promote Federation among members and to a wider audience; establish TMIH as the official Journal of FESTMIH; increase scientific (and other) input congresses from national societies; investigate the Federation's role in education and enhance linkages with educational institutions and networks.
- **From here to Verona:** use Verona as a Platform. Have key speakers reflect on FESTMIH. As part of the programme, to place FESTMIH in the spotlight and to fuel the debate on the role of tropical medicine and international health in a fast changing global environment. All participants agreed to go back to their societies and encourage their involvement during the Verona Congress.
- **Decisions:** it was agreed to reserve 10.000 Euro from the budget for secretarial and technical support for the FESTMIH. Zeno Bisoffi will look at the possibility to combine this with the secretariat for the Verona Congress. All participants commit themselves to encourage their society to become involved (scientific programme, sponsoring, organization). 2008 should become the 'visibility year' for the Federation, among others through more intensified use of the website as a means of communication and exchange of information (among the members and to the general public).

7. Update TropMedEurope

In his introduction to the issue of education in Europe in the area of TMIH, Martin Boeree explained how the NVTG in the Netherlands acts as the responsible organ for the schooling in 'Tropical Medicine' in the country. The training includes 2 years of clinical practice (surgery and gynaecology) and a 3 months course in TM and IH. The Netherlands is unique in this field. Currently the NVTG is working towards recognition of the schooling, which would include more structural and financial support for internships and have the training fully certified. Many countries offer education in this area - fragmented and in specialized areas. We do not have a complete picture on the supply and demand in Europe. ZB and JMJ add this information could be received through TropEdEurop. It was briefly discussed whether the Federation could / should play a role in education in the area of TM & IH. For example, the FESTMIH could take up a role in getting involved in defining a common curriculum. (PAT) Part of the discussion was the question whether you need to organize practice training in Africa. EJ will follow up on this issue (requesting information, ZB will send contact details).

8. Election new Board members

The following Board members stepped down: Michel Pletschette (UK), Pascal Magnussen (Denmark). Their successors are: Josep Maria Jansa (Spain) and Christopher Whitty (UK). The Board also welcomes Gunnar Kvale (Norway) as an observer to the Board.

The new President of the FESTMIH is Zeno Bisoffi, who takes over from Martin Boeree. Martin Boeree offered to keep the position as the Vice President for one year, before passing over to Josep Maria Jansa for the second year. There was no objection. The position of Secretary to the Board is vacant: Thomas Junghanss was asked to consider the position as Secretary. In the weeks after the GA meeting he agreed to accept this position.

The President thanks the parting members for their commitment and input to FESTMIH and welcomes the new Board members.

9. Update 6th Congress TMIH, Verona (ZB)

The preparations for the Verona Congress are well underway. The first financial commitment came from the Mayor of Verona who offered a reduction to rental costs of the conference venue (25.000 Euro). The first meeting of the scientific committee will take place in Verona in May or June, for which the full Board is invited. In September the second announcement will be ready. Main concern is the possible overlap of the Congress with other events (Annual meeting of the Royal Society TMIH; Travel Medicine congress; the Congress of the American Society, 18-22 November 2009). The

International Federation has their Congress in 2008 (Korea) and in 2012 in Brazil (to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Brazilian Society). Pierre Ambroise-Thomas suggests to include a focus on Mediterranean countries.

10. Update 7th Congress TMIH, Barcelona (JMJ)

Josep Maria Jansa informs the meeting that he has had some informal meeting with colleagues on this issue. MB advises to have the first announcement ready for the Verona Congress.

11. ECDC report, Stockholm 2006 (MB)

Martin Boeree attended an ECDC meeting in Stockholm, last year, and was asked if the FESTMIH would be interested in considering taking seat in the advisory committee. This point was not discussed due to time constraints. All participants were asked to mail their comments to MB, before mid-January 2008.

12. European Council on Global Health

Gunnar Kvale is invited to attend a meeting to discuss the potential of a 'European Council on Global Health' (ECGH), on 28-29 January 2008 in Geneva. Excerpts from the letter of invitation: "The idea has emerged during the work on the policy glossary "European Perspectives on Global Health" supported by the European Foundation Center and has been further explored in several informal discussions. At this stage, the Global Forum for Health Research and the Global Health Diplomacy Program at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, have decided to host a meeting for discussions with a wider group of stakeholders. The European Foundation Center is also providing its support." The letter of invitation and list of participants was sent to all participants prior to the Board meeting.

Due to time constraints the issue was not discussed. It is important to monitor this initiative and avoid fragmentation and overlap. Louis Loutan and Gunnar Kvale will consider attending the meeting.

13. Any other business

- Thomas Junghanss and Patrick van der Stuyft will attend the meeting of the Editorial Board of TM&IH in January. They will address the issue of formalizing the link and will report back to the Board.
- Louis Loutan invites all participants to the second edition of the Geneva Forum 'Towards Global Access to Health', scheduled for May 25-28, 2008, in Geneva. Date for abstract submission is 15 January 2008.
- Gunnar Kvale suggests to discuss at the next Assembly the statutes, goal, aim and mission and from there formulate activities. We should not lose sight of making FESTMIH's work relevant to poor populations of the world.
- Pierre Ambroise-Thomas invites all to the upcoming event, the Centenary celebrations of the French 'Société Parasitologue', in Paris, June 20-21, 2008.