

# The Aims, Structure, and Activities of the European Confederation of Laboratory Medicine (ECLM)

Ziele, Struktur und Aktivitäten der European Confederation of Laboratory Medicine (ECLM)

R. Dybkaer<sup>1</sup>

**T**he creation of the ECLM followed the realization that the various branches of laboratory medicine - besides their individual scientific interests - increasingly have common problems of science and technology, education and management, disease-centered strategy, and professional status.

The *gestational period* of ECLM 1990-93 comprised initial informal meetings, followed by Steering Committee preparations and a Launch Conference ending with a Memorandum of Understanding signed by 41 representatives of professional associations [Lab med 1994;18:43-7].

The *birth* of the Confederation occurred at the First and Founding Council meeting at the WHO Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen 1994-06-10/12 with the approval of the Statutes and Rules. Their preamble lists the constituent disciplines of laboratory medicine as clinical chemistry, clinical hematology, clinical immunology, clinical microbiology, and pathological anatomy, also mentioning multi disciplinary organization and related specialities - all in the Europe defined by WHO.

The *infancy* of the ECLM naturally began when the Council of Full (voting), Associate, and Corporate member representatives elected the Managing Board. This body may have up to 18 members including six designated representatives for the European disciplinary associations. The Managing Board nominated (and the Council confirmed) the Board of Directors comprising President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. This First Council also discussed possible and immediate work projects, and especially guidelines for accreditation of medical laboratories elaborated with European accrediting bodies. Among the ensuing activities were the establishment of the ECLM legal domicile in Switzerland, a presentation text for association newsletters [e.g. D G Klin Chem Mitt 1995;26:76], the periodical ECLM Bulletin, and representation at various professional gatherings.

*Adolescence* has been characterized by the following multi disciplinary projects.

- Good medical laboratory service, headed by Professor R. Haeckel, Bremen;

- Quality assessment in diabetes mellitus, headed by Professor H. Reinauer, Düsseldorf;
- Quality specifications in laboratory medicine, headed by Dr C.G. Fraser, Dundee;
- Influence and control of preanalytical factors, headed by Professor W. Guder, Munich;
- Guidelines for clinical urinalysis, headed by Dr T. Kouri, Tampere;
- Biomedical staining, headed by Dr H. Lyon, Copenhagen;
- Standardizing work in CEN and ISO.

Also, the Second Council meeting in Tampere, Finland, 1995-07, and the Third Council meeting in Düsseldorf, Germany, 1996-11, with a workshop on Good medical laboratory services showed the growth of activities. The full and associate membership now comprises 41 members in all, classified as

- Clinical chemistry - 1 European (E), 11 national (N)
- Clinical immunology - 1 E, 3 N
- Clinical microbiology - 1 E, 4 N
- Hematology - 1 E, 4 N
- Multi disciplinary - 1 E, 8 N
- Pathology - 1 N
- Associate members - 5 N

Our *adulthood* was heralded by the voted approval of the first formal document 'Accreditation for medical laboratories', EAL-G 25/ECLM-1, 1997-01: 26 pp, jointly produced with the European cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation, and with Dr A. Kallner, Stockholm, as ECLM Convener. A second important sign is the present *First ECLM Congress* in Düsseldorf 1997-11-19/22. The Scientific Committee, under the chairmanship of Professor R. Haeckel, presents for discussion the ongoing projects of ECLM mentioned above and some new ideas. The detailed subjects appear from the abstracts in this issue.

The *future* may comprise such projects as

- Automated examining systems,
- Laboratory information systems,
- Uncertainty budgets, and
- Continuing active participation in ISO and CEN standardization work.

Finally, a word of *appreciation* to our collaborators, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Medizinische Laboratoriumsdiagnostik (AML), Professor J.D. Kruse-Jarres of MEDICA, and the sponsors without whom the congress would not have been possible.

<sup>1</sup>Dr. René Dybkaer, H:S Copenhagen Hospital Corporation, Kommunehospitalet, Department of Standardization in Laboratory Medicine, Øester Farimagsgade 5, DK-1399 Copenhagen K, Denmark. Fax: +45 33 38 37 89