

# Constitution of the European Rural and Isolated Practitioner's Association (EURIPA)

## 1 Mission Statement

EURIPA aims to address the health and wellbeing needs of rural and isolated populations and the professional needs of those serving them across Europe, irrespective of location, culture or resource.

## 2 Principles

EURIPA's Principles are:

- Partnership, sharing and understanding;
- Research and development;
- Education and information;
- Technology and innovation;
- Promotion of health and wellbeing;
- Addressing health inequalities and improving the social capital of communities;
- Development of cost effective, patient centred health care systems;
- Dissemination of good practice.

## 3 Objectives

EURIPA'S objectives are:

- To act as a voice for rural health issues;
- To consider and set standards for good rural practice, primary/family health and social care throughout Europe;
- To encourage and foster links with other professional organisations and provide a voice for rural practice;
- To liaise with policy makers and inform policy development to ensure that the rural dimension of health care is considered;
- To set up a mechanism for sharing information, skills and knowledge and encourage multidisciplinary activities and team work;
- To develop the recruitment, retention and training of health care personnel for rural practice throughout Europe;
- To facilitate and promote relevant and cost effective continuing professional development;
- To act as a forum to share, encourage and develop rural research;
- To build links with other non-health rural organisations in the realisation that rural services are an essential part of the rural community framework.

## **4 Legal Status**

EURIPA is a network of WONCA Europe but it is established in its own legal right through EURIPA France. Officers of EURIPA shall be represented on the Board of EURIPA France.

The constitution of EURIPA France is attached at Annex 1.

The relationship between EURIPA and EURIPA France will be reviewed annually by the Executive Committees of EURIPA and EURIPA France who will make a report to the Annual General Meeting. Processes and procedures to ensure the appropriate levels of governance will be set out and reviewed annually as part of this process.

## **5 Membership**

### **(a) Organisational membership**

Organisational membership shall be open to independent organisations representing rural health care practitioners in each of the countries of Europe and to organisations actively involved in rural health research, educational activity, rural policy and other work in rural health. Delegates of the member organisations should be rural health care practitioners and active in practice or rural health academics.

### **(b) Individual membership**

Individual membership shall be open to any rural health care practitioner who is actively working in rural health care and rural academics (for example, medical, rural health special interest). Individuals interested in rural health, rural health care issues and EURIPA are welcome to become members of EURIPA.

Applications for admission to membership of EURIPA shall be made to the Secretariat, together with the appropriate fee. A recommendation will be made to the Executive Committee. Admission to the Membership requires a majority vote of members present and eligible to vote.

## **6 Officers**

The official roles within EURIPA are the President, Immediate Past President and President-elect (as appropriate) and the Honorary Treasurer.

The President and President-elect shall be elected from membership of the Executive Committee by the Members of EURIPA at an Annual General Meeting.

- The President of EURIPA will be elected by the Membership at the Annual General Meeting for a 3-year term;
- The President shall be elected for only one term;
- In the final year of a Presidency, a President-elect will be elected by the membership at the relevant Annual General Meeting;
- After a three-year term the President will become the Immediate Past President for 1 year, to ensure continuity;

- The Presidency of EURIPA shall consist of the President, the President-elect and Immediate Past President, when appropriate;
- The Honorary Treasurer will be elected for a three year term from the Executive Committee by the Committee;
- Role descriptions will be established for the Presidency, Honorary Treasurer and the Executive Secretary;
- Except by special dispensation, all officers of EURIPA will be individual Members of EURIPA (health care practitioners active in clinical practice or rural health academics or with a special interest in rural health).
- If an officer fails to perform to the high level of conduct expected of him/her in the opinion of the Executive Committee then a letter will be written by two other officers to outline the concerns and to give a 4-month transition period to see if improvement takes place. If this fails, then he/she will be asked to step down. If the officer concerned is unhappy with the decision a vote of no confidence will be taken by the Executive Committee. A majority vote will be needed.

## **7 Executive Committee**

An Executive Committee shall be established to take the work programme forward between Annual General Meetings. The Executive Committee shall also undertake decision making when not to do so could prejudice EURIPA's interests.

- Membership will be a maximum of 13 members:
  - 3 officers: President, Immediate Past President, President-elect and Honorary Treasurer, as appropriate;
  - 1 member who is Chair of the International Advisory Board;
  - 1 member who is Chair of the Scientific Board;
  - 8 members.
- Executive Committee Members will be Members of EURIPA and will be elected at the Annual General Meeting for a 3 year term by the Membership. Members can stand for re-election for one additional 3-year term;
- Members of the Executive Committee, after a minimum of one year, are allowed to stand for election as President-elect (and subsequently President);
- Members of the Executive Committee may stand for election for president-elect up to and including the last year of their term on the Executive Committee. This means that the president-elect and subsequently President may have an extended term on the Executive Committee over and above two three-year terms.
- Members of the Executive Committee will take on additional roles, which will include but is not limited to, liaison with the other WONCA Europe networks.

The Executive Committee has the power to establish other sub-committees to help take forward EURIPA's agenda and work programme.

The Executive Committee shall have the power to co-opt EURIPA members on to the Executive Committee at any time during the year, if a vacancy becomes available, but the Co-opted member is required to stand for election at the next Annual General Meeting.

## **8 International Advisory Board**

An International Advisory Board (IAB) will be convened with the aim of informing and advising the Executive Committee. It will provide a wide and informed range of advice and input needed at national, regional and local levels across Europe.

Each European country will be entitled to have one representative on the International Advisory Board. Representatives shall be nominated by each country through its national medical association or the EURIPA Executive Committee. Membership details will be set out in the IAB's Codex of its working procedures and published on the EURIPA web site.

The EURIPA Executive Committee is also entitled to nominate national and internationally recognised rural experts as additional delegates of the IAB. The Executive Committee has the responsibility to ensure that membership of the IAB achieves a balance between national representatives and "experts".

IAB members shall be Members of EURIPA.

The Chair of the IAB will be nominated by the EURIPA Executive Committee.

The Chair of the IAB will be co-chair of International Committee of the annual Rural Health Forum, or the co-chair must be nominated with her/his approval.

The IAB will meet with the Executive Committee in their face to face meetings; IAB delegates at these meetings will be free to speak but not vote. The chair of the IAB will attend and have a vote at all Executive Committee meetings.

The IAB will decide its own working procedures, including membership, but these must be agreed by the Executive Committee. The Codex is attached at Annex 2.

## **9 Scientific Board**

A Scientific Board will be established to advise EURIPA on all aspects of scientific projects submitted and undertaken by EURIPA. The membership of the Scientific Board will be established by open competition and the final membership approved by a jury set up by the Executive Committee.

Scientific Board members shall be Members of EURIPA.

The Chair of the Scientific Board will be nominated by the EURIPA Executive Committee.

The chair of the Scientific Board will be co-chair of the scientific committee of the Annual Rural Health Forum, or the co-chair must be nominated with her/his approval.

Membership details are set out in the Scientific Board's working procedures and published on the EURIPA web site. The working procedures are attached at Annex 3.

## **10 Relationship with other rural networks**

EURIPA works with other rural networks at regional, national and international level, including the WONCA Working Party on Rural Practice.

The relationships will be set out clearly in supporting documents, when appropriate.

When national or regional branches of EURIPA are established, which use EURIPA in their name, they will be expected to share EURIPA's values and be an organisational member of EURIPA.

The requirements are set out in Annex 4.

## **11 The Secretariat**

EURIPA will recruit an Executive Secretary to support its work. The Executive Secretary will assist and support the President and other Officers of EURIPA, Executive Committee and other committees in carrying out their work. A Secretariat may be set up under the jurisdiction of the Executive Secretary.

The Executive Secretary and the Secretariat once appointed will remain at the same location to ensure continuity and work with the President and other Officers of EURIPA, regardless of their location.

## **12 Succession**

In the event of the President relinquishing his/her post in the course of his term of office, the Immediate Past President or President-elect shall take his/her place at the next Executive Committee meeting or Annual General Meeting (whichever comes first). If there is no Immediate Past President or President-elect in post the Chair of the IAB will assume the role of president, which will be approved by the Executive Committee, until a new president-elect can be elected at an Extraordinary General Meeting and confirmed as President at the next Annual General Meeting.

In case the chair of the IAB will be unable to assume the role of president, the chair of the Scientific Board will assume the role of president, which will be approved by the Executive Committee, until a new president-elect can be elected at an Extraordinary General Meeting and confirmed as President at the next Annual General Meeting.

In order to guarantee continuity, it is intended that the President-elect is confirmed at the next Annual General Meeting as the President.

In the event of the President-elect resigning, a new President-elect will be elected from the membership of the Executive Committee by the EURIPA Membership at an Extraordinary General Meeting to be ratified at the next Annual General Meeting as President.

## **13 Exclusion**

If, in the opinion of a majority of all Members of EURIPA, a national representative, Executive Committee member or Member has been in serious breach of his/her duties as a Member, especially if he/she has sought to act against EURIPA in a detrimental way or if he/she has failed to fulfil the qualifications governing representation such member will be excluded from EURIPA. Members who do not pay their membership fee in full, without good reason for two consecutive years will also be excluded from EURIPA.

A motion to exclude a Member from membership of EURIPA will be approved at an EURIPA Executive Committee meeting. The Executive Committee will make a recommendation to the Annual General Meeting for ratification. The decision to exclude a member will be taken by a 75% majority of all members of EURIPA present and eligible to vote (at the Annual General Meeting).

Membership at any of EURIPA's committees (Executive, International Advisory Board, Scientific Board and others that be established from time to time) will be cancelled if the member does not participate at three consecutive meetings of his respective committee unless the President intervenes due to extenuating circumstances.

## **14 Meetings**

EURIPA will normally meet in plenary once a year at the Annual General Meeting. The Annual General Meeting will be presided over by the President and organised by the EURIPA Secretariat.

The Annual General Meeting will take place at the most appropriate opportunity each year when as many members as possible are able to attend. The Executive Committee shall approve the venue and timing of future meetings.

All members of the Executive Committee, International Advisory Board and Members of EURIPA are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting. The Annual General Meeting will take place face-to-face unless exceptional circumstances prevail when it will be held virtually, or in a hybrid form, such as during a pandemic, severe weather etc. when people are unable to travel. All other requirements will be met.

- A quorum shall consist of a minimum of nine (9) members;
- Each Member participating in the Annual General Meeting has one vote. The President is not entitled to vote, except in the event of an equality of votes when he/she will in this case have a casting vote;
- Voting procedures at an Annual General Meeting may include the use of teleconferencing when appropriate (video and audio) and voting by proxy. These arrangements shall be adopted by the Annual General Meeting provided a majority of those present and eligible to vote shall be in favour;
- Meetings must be announced and the agenda issued at least two weeks in advance. The meeting is empowered to make decisions only on those questions included in agenda except under special circumstances under the discretion of the President;
- Notwithstanding the above, a matter not on the agenda will be dealt with by the meeting if such a matter is considered by at least 75% of those present and eligible to vote to be of such importance or urgency that it should be dealt with forthwith;
- The annual report and financial statement will be adopted by the Annual General Meeting each year; the forward work plan and associated budget will be approved by the Membership;
- The working language of EURIPA is English.

The Executive Committee will hold a minimum of 4 meetings per year: One meeting will be to face-to-face during the Annual Rural Health Forum and others by audio or video

conferencing. If exceptional circumstances prevail such as during a pandemic, severe weather etc. so that people are unable to travel, all meetings will take place virtually or in a hybrid format.

Executive Committee meetings will be:

- planned at least 2 months ahead, as much as possible;
- will be confirmed at least 2 weeks in advance and the agenda and papers circulated at least 1 week in advance;
- A quorum shall consist of a minimum of seven (7) members including a maximum of two (2) proxy votes;
- The President (or Immediate Past President or President Elect in his/her absence) will chair the meetings.

When members wish to vote by proxy vote at either the Annual General Meeting or an Executive Committee meeting one member may only represent a maximum of two other voting members.

An Extraordinary General Meeting may be held during the year. An Extraordinary General Meeting can be requested by the Executive Committee at any time during the year or by the Executive Committee at the request of at least a third of the members who have paid their fees. The Extraordinary General Meeting will be announced at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. The method of organisation of the Extraordinary General Meeting are the same as those for the statutory Annual General Meeting.

## **15 Decisions**

Decisions made at the Annual General Meeting which affect policy as a whole, will normally be by consensus. In the event of a vote, a decision will require a majority of those Members present and entitled to vote. In the event of an equality of votes the President will be entitled in this case to a casting vote.

Modification of the Statutes shall require a unanimous decision. Changes in the statutes shall be notified to Members at least one month prior to the Annual General Meeting at which they are to be adopted.

Unless a special power or attorney has been obtained, any legal document affecting EURIPA must be signed by the President and one other member of the Executive Committee. They are not obliged to prove their authority to a third party. It is recognised that under Article 4 there may be occasions when a signatory may be required from EURIPA France with or without that of the EURIPA President, but as far as possible another officer of EURIPA will act as a signatory.

Decisions made at the Executive Committee meetings are normally by majority and in the event of an equality of votes the President will be entitled in this case to a casting vote.

## **16 Dissolution**

In the case of such decision, the Annual General Meeting shall decide on the method of liquidating EURIPA and the manner in which its assets are to be disposed of. The Executive

Committee can make recommendations to the nearest Annual General Meeting or it can call an Extraordinary General Meeting of its Members.

Signed:

Dated:

Annex 1 EURIPA France Constitution

Annex 2 IAB Codex

Annex 3 Scientific Board Rural

Annex 4 Relationships with other rural networks