

EURACT Council Member - Job Description

At its meeting in Tartu in July 1996 the council of EURACT, the European Academy of Teachers in General Practice decided to clarify the role and responsibilities of council members, so that all had a clear idea of their functions within the organisation. It would also be helpful to newly elected council members to have this information available.

At its meeting in Prague in October 2006 the Council of EURACT specified some obligations more in detail.

Obligations of Euract Council members

- All Council members including new members must read and be familiar with EURACT Bylaws and the Euract guidelines when attending Council meetings.
- Outgoing council members should inform their successors before their first Council meeting about all matters concerning EURACT activities.
- Council members should regularly attend and participate in Council meetings
- Council members should represent the interests of their national members.

Council members should communicate with national members, keeping them informed of EURACT activities.

- Council members should maintain an accurate and up to date database of national members, and supply information to the secretariat at regular intervals.
- Council members will report to the secretariat the members who have paid and who have not paid by December 1st in a format provided by EURACT.
- Council members collect the membership fees for the current year and transfer the money to the Hon Treasurer before December 1st of that year either cash at the Council meeting in spring or autumn or by bank.
- Council members should promote the interests of EURACT in their own country and recruit members and teaching organisations.
- Council members should act as contact person for teaching resources in Europe developing and maintaining a network.
- Council members should act as treasurer for national members meaning that they have to collect the annual fees.
- Council members should have a personal involvement in learning and teaching.
- Council members should sign up for a standing committee for a three year period.
- Council members should participate in the work of Task Forces.
- Council members are prepared to act as host for council/general meetings.

Council members should be prepared to work for a minimum of 3 years, to carry out the tasks that they have agreed to undertake, to read documents and prepare themselves for meetings, and to answer correspondence promptly. Finally they should not abuse their council colleagues with trivial questionnaires!

In return for this long list of duties there are some benefits derived from being a council member. These include the opportunity to travel to other European countries, and the pleasures of meeting colleagues, and gaining motivation from sharing ideas formally and informally. There is status and recognition in one's own country from being a council member, which may facilitate the development of the discipline of general practice / family medicine. There is also the opportunity to participate in international research and debate, and to build up a personal network of European resources and contacts in general practice teaching.

In order to carry out the functions of Council member there are support needs. These are:

- access to office equipment, including fax, and E-mail
- support with office supplies, postage etc.
- secretarial assistance
- supportive colleagues
- financial support for travel and subsistence

These support needs are not inconsiderable - at present they are often met by national colleges, or associations, or by Universities. If EURACT is to develop further as the education satellite of the European Society, then these support needs must be safeguarded, or alternative sources of support identified if the organisation is to continue to flourish.

Relationship with national colleges/associations

The relationship between individual council members and their national college or association of family doctors needs strengthening and promoting. Council members need to foster and develop their relationships with their colleges/societies, but this has to be negotiated locally to be sensitive to different requirements in each country. This must in no way diminish or otherwise influence the democratic process of council members being elected by the national membership.

Council members should at national level:

1. Facilitate a link and seek support from their national college or association.
2. Facilitate the development of links with academic departments of family medicine in medical schools.
3. Facilitate and develop links with national representatives of other European bodies (eg UEMO, EQUIP, EGPRW, European Society, and other European organisations in family medicine).
4. At the time of election council members should inform their local WONCA organisation and seek their support for the successful candidate.

Person specification

These ideas can be drawn together as a person specification. To be a successful EURACT Council Member a person should have the following attributes:-

- 1) Is a nationally respected GP teacher / trainer
- 2) Enjoys academic recognition and / or qualification - this does not necessarily mean a formal higher qualification, nor an appointment as professor for example. It should mean that the individual commands the support and respect of academic general practitioners, and has sufficient status as a teacher to exert influence.
- 3) Has contributed to the national and / or international general practice literature.
- 4) Is able to inform and influence national colleges and associations of general practitioners.
- 5) Is able to command the support of national members.
- 6) Is self aware, understand the tasks and responsibilities being asked, and be able to be self supporting in this role.
- 7) Is reasonably fluent in spoken and written English.

The following disciplinary procedure was adopted by Council in April 2002:

1. If a Council member should be absent for more than two consecutive meetings, or fail to collect membership subscriptions, or pay them to the treasurer annually Council will be entitled to suspend their membership forthwith and arrange new elections.
2. If a Council member does not demonstrate the personal attributes noted above, or fails repeatedly to satisfactorily carry any other duties of the Council member described above, then Council should consider their continuing membership, and either recommend that it is terminated, set conditions on its continuation, or decide that it should be allowed to continue. Any such decision must be notified in writing to all members in the country concerned. If Council membership is terminated new elections will be arranged.