

# Report on Activities of ICOH National/ Area Secretaries

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## 1. Appointment of National/Area Secretaries (NS)

A meeting of the ICOH National/ Area Secretaries (NS) was held on 4 June 2015 in Seoul, and gathered a total of 54 participants, including 39 NSs, 6 observers and 9 officers and ICOH staff. The NSs actively participated in the Congress and the Business meeting for NS.

Two-thirds of the NSs (67.2%, 39 out of 58) participated in the Congress and the Business meeting, while less than 25% of general members participated in the Congress. At the NSs' meeting, the reports of the previous term were discussed, and priorities – communication of information, membership campaigns, and networking – for the forthcoming tenure were drafted.

So that the ICOH President could appoint the NSs after their election, the former Vice President (VP), Suvi Lehtinen sent an email before the end of the previous Triennium to the NSs of 2012–2015 tenure, asking for the results of the election or agreement made among the members in the country concerning the nomination of an NS.

The message also contained

- the Guidelines for ICOH NS,
- the Contact Information Form of the elected NS, and
- the Transparency Declaration Form of the elected NS.

The tasks of the ICOH NS are defined in the Guidelines as follows:

- To represent the activities of ICOH in the country or area for which they are designated,
- To promote co-operation and communication among the ICOH members of their country or area, and
- To promote links to other ICOH bodies.

After this Triennium began, the new VP, Seong-Kyu Kang, sent an email to the previous NSs again requesting the election results. It took a long time to collect the Contact Form and the Transparency Declaration Form,

although the former VP requested them before the 2015 Congress. Those who had already served one term also had to resubmit the Forms for official appointment by the President. During this Triennium, 56 NSs were officially appointed by the President: 31 new NSs and 25 who were continuously appointed in 2015–2016.

In line with the practice of previous Triennia, an ICOH NS has also been mobilized in the countries that have not previously had an ICOH NS due to low ICOH membership. A letter was sent to all active members in these countries in order to ask them to nominate a new NS. The feedback from the experts in countries with low ICOH membership has not been very active, although ICOH NSs have worked positively to connect their national OH professionals to ICOH, to deliver information about ICOH and to expand the ICOH Network also in these countries.

The current number of ICOH NSs appointed is 56; 39 were appointed in 2015, 15 in 2016, and two in 2017. Three candidates were not appointed because they were not in good standing, and one candidate was not appointed because he did not submit the declaration document even though he is a member in good standing.

The common problems of the appointment process are

- 1) Delayed submission of the Transparency Form document
- 2) Nomination of a candidate who is not eligible, which means not in good standing (even not an ICOH member).
- 3) No willingness to recommend a successor in some countries (a strong influential person wants to keep the position).
- 4) Some countries have few members, who do not know each other.

The NSs are distributed among the continents as follows:

Regions	2012–2015	2015–2017
	Appointed	Appointed
North and Central America	3	3 (1)
South America	10	9 (5)
Europe	23	21 (14)
Eastern Mediterranean	3	1
Africa	10	9 (5)
Asia	8	11 (6)
Oceania	1	2 (1)
Total	58	56 (31)

as of 31.12.2017; ( ) means a new NS

ICOH lost NS in Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Israel, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, FYROM, Slovakia, and Turkey; but recruited NS in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Sweden, the UK, and Venezuela. The total number of countries with ICOH members is close to 90.

## **2. Work Plan for ICOH NSs**

The tasks of all ICOH NSs are in principle the same as they were in previous Triennia, although there are differences in countries with more than 100 ICOH members compared to those countries with only one or a few members.

### ***2.1 Developing a work plan***

- Having ICOH Core Documents and ICOH Promotion tools available
- Selecting a few activity lines for the current tenure
- Setting a target for increasing membership in the country
- Utilizing ICOH administrative support (President, VP, Secretary-General, the Secretariat)
- Participating in the NSs' meeting in the region (to be informed by the VP)
- Generating and maintaining contacts with national occupational health associations.

Feedback from NSs was not very active compared to the previous Triennia. It also seems that many of the NSs did not use the ICOH website NS Virtual Office. All ICOH NSs must be reminded about the Virtual Office, as this makes it easier for them to carry out their tasks.

### ***2.2 Evaluation of activities***

- Report of activities during the Triennium to the VP.

The obligation of the NSs is to report back twice during the Triennium on their activities in the countries. The replies from NSs were very few compared to previous Triennia. This may be due to less contact with the new VP and not being frequently asked to submit the report.

NSs sent the activity report for 2015–2017. Some of its significant activities are summarized at the end of this report.

NSs have contributed to the ICOH membership campaigns. Special efforts were made by many NSs to introduce ICOH and to recruit new ICOH members, particularly at the annual conferences of the occupational health association/society of their country.

## **3. Increasing ICOH membership**

The role of the NSs in terms of membership campaigns is crucial.

### ***3.1 Setting a target for membership in 2015***

Some NSs expressed challenges and difficulties in recruiting new ICOH members. Some of these challenges can be facilitated by measures on the part of the VP or ICOH Secretariat, but others need to be tackled by the NSs themselves. ICOH officers have visited several countries to promote the membership campaign: the President visited Brazil and the General Secretary visited India and Nepal.

### **3.2 Information about SC events and symposia in the country**

The NSs would appreciate being informed of all ICOH scientific symposia and meetings organized in their respective countries. This would allow them to prepare an ICOH stand for relevant meetings to attract new members.

Information on most of the symposia organized by ICOH Scientific Committees (SCs) is available on the ICOH website or in the Newsletter. However, information via the website or Newsletter is always too late for the NSs to participate actively in conferences. Direct communication of information from SCs to the NS concerned can be strengthened.

NSs constantly request to have the Abstracts and Proceedings of ICOH symposia available on the ICOH website.

In all SC symposia and meetings, the organizers are encouraged to organize, in collaboration with relevant NS, a general session on ICOH activities for promoting ICOH and recruiting new members.

### **3.3 Annual Congresses of National OH Societies and Associations**

Every NS should try to introduce ICOH at one annual congress of the National Society of Occupational Medicine (or respective organ) within their three-year period. On the basis of NS reports, this seems to be the most common form of membership recruitment.

### **3.4 Collaboration with National OH Societies and Associations**

ICOH NSs should collaborate with the National Associations in their countries in order to attract new members from their memberships – thereby also acquiring new sustaining members. Some of the ICOH NSs are also presidents of national occupational health associations, which provides an excellent opportunity to attract new members to ICOH.

### **3.5 ICOH promotion materials**

The National Secretaries Virtual Office (<http://www.icohweb.org/site/member-corner-national-secretaries-virtual-office.asp>) and the ICOH website ([www.icohweb.org](http://www.icohweb.org)) are excellent sources of information on ICOH and tools for promoting ICOH activities. The ICOH Secretariat designs and edits the ICOH webpages with the Secretary General as Editor-in-Chief of the ICOH website.

ICOH NSs receive a brief flyer informing them of benefits for members of joining ICOH, including the membership application form on the other side of the leaflet. This one-page flyer is a handy tool, but needs a presentation of ICOH activities to support it.

The Virtual Office and ICOH website mainly contain information materials for NSs to use in connection with informing occupational

health and safety experts about ICOH activities, and thereby attracting them to join ICOH. These are:

1. The ICOH PowerPoint Presentation
2. The membership brochure
3. Guidelines for NSs
4. The ICOH Newsletter
5. The membership application form  
(English, French, Spanish, Portuguese).

The following documents are also available in the Virtual Office:

- NS obligations: Contact Information, Transparency Declaration Form and NS Report Model for 2018.
- List of NSs.

In addition to these, ICOH's Triennial Reports are also accessible on the web, but they are more comprehensive and difficult to print.

### ***3.6 Communication with ICOH Secretariat***

NSs very much emphasize the importance of quick, smooth communication with the ICOH Secretariat in cases in which experts wish to join ICOH, thus speeding the process from application to decision.

A complaint was made that NS are not invited to the Mid-term meeting. The possibility of inviting regional representatives of NS or NS of countries with a large group of members should be discussed.

## **4. Further development of multidirectional communication**

### ***4.1 VP Information Letters and NS Activity Reports***

The continuous flow of information between NSs and ICOH Officers was established already during the previous Triennia. The VP has sent a letter to keep NSs informed and updated.

### ***4.2 Information from NSs in ICOH Newsletter***

NSs were asked to report on their activities in the ICOH Newsletter in a similar manner as the SC Chairs and Secretaries. However, the first half of this Triennium did not see active participation on the part of NSs as during the previous Triennium. Most reports came in the latter half of the Triennium.

This has been implemented as follows:

Issue	Pages of ICOH Newsletter	News from NS	
2,3/2015	28	(1)	Korea
1/2016	24	1	Spain
2/2016	24	0	
3/2016	29	0	
1/2017	32	3	South Africa, Nigeria, Chile
2/2017	40	3	Finland, Nigeria, India

#### **4.3 ICOH brochures and website**

The website (Mobile and PC version) can help NSs introduce ICOH to professionals in their countries.

#### **4.4 Good communication with ICOH Officers and the Secretariat**

This is deemed important, as is the full utilization of the ICOH website. The NS Virtual Office has made the work of the NSs easier to conduct. It seems that some NSs are not familiar with using the Virtual Office.

#### **4.5 Developing communication with SCs**

It seems that NSs have not fully recognized the international conferences and meetings in their countries, organized by the SC, which are usually announced on the ICOH website and the Newsletter. How the NSs and Chairs and Secretaries of SCs communicate should be considered in the coming Triennium. Organizers of international conferences hosted by SCs are asked to contact the NS of the country in which they would like to host international conferences.

#### **4.6 Developing communication among NSs**

Developing communication among NSs in a region is important. Some continents have their own network, but others do not. The VP encourages NSs to form a close group in the region.

## 5. Joint meetings of NSs

During the Triennium, a minimum of one regional meeting of ICOH NSs in each continent is arranged in connection with an international conference organized by one of the countries in the region.

### ***Seoul, Republic of Korea***

A meeting with the ICOH NSs was held during the 2015 ICOH Congress in Seoul to discuss their activities during the previous term and to preliminarily plan activities for the 2015–2017 Triennium. The meeting gathered a total of 54 participants, including old and new NSs. All officers and the new VP in charge of NSs, Dr. Seong-Kyu Kang, joined the meeting. NSs were requested to join the membership campaign in their countries and to participate in the regional meeting to be held during the Triennium. The participants agreed to strengthen the membership campaign and actively promote ICOH and its activities in their countries. The meeting report is available at:

[http://www.icohweb.org/site/multimedia/reports/pdf/national\\_secretaries/NS%20Meeting%20Minutes.pdf](http://www.icohweb.org/site/multimedia/reports/pdf/national_secretaries/NS%20Meeting%20Minutes.pdf).

### ***2015–2017***

During the period 2015–2017, NSs were asked to join the meeting held in their region with regional occupational health meetings. The meetings were held in Johannesburg, South Africa; Kaohsiung, Taiwan, China; and Antigua, Guatemala. The VP asked the NSs about the international conferences or meetings that they planned to participate in, but it was difficult to indicate a meeting among those held in Europe. NSs attend the regional meeting at their own expense. Thus, unfortunately no regional meeting was held in Europe during this Triennium.

The regional meetings of the NSs were held as follows.

### ***28 April 2017, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, China, Asia***

- The Asian regional congress on occupational health, ACOH (Asian Congress on Occupational Health) organized by AAOH (Asian Association of Occupational Health), has been held triennially since its first meeting in Tokyo in 1956. The 22<sup>nd</sup> ACOH was held from 27 to 30 April 2017 in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, China. The next ACOH will be held in Daegu, in June 2020.
- The Asian Regional/Area meeting was held in Kaohsiung on 29 April 2017 during the 22<sup>nd</sup> ACOH Congress. The participants were five NSs, one Board member and two Officers: Muchtaruddin Mansyur (Indonesia), Jong-Wook Won (Korea, on behalf of Jaehoon Roh), Olivier Lo (Singapore), Leon Guo (Taiwan, China), Adul Bandhukul (Thailand), and Seichi Horie (Japan, on behalf of Toru Yoshikawa, Board), Kazutaka Kogi (Past President), and Seong-Kyu Kang (VP). Toru Yoshikawa (Japan) and Jaehoon Roh (Korea) asked to be excused for not attend-

ing the meeting and sent other representatives of their country. The absentees were Sunil Kumar (Nepal), R. Rajesh (India), Gilbert Gille (Philippines), and Tu Ha Nguyen (Vietnam).

- VP Seong-Kyu Kang moderated the meeting and presented information on the role and task of a NS, the membership campaign, the Dublin Congress, and the NS election process. Questions were raised about using the private site of the webpage and accessibility to the information of the members in their country.
- Pakistan had an NS during the two previous Triennia, but failed to recruit a new one.
- There was another chance to meet Asian Regional/Area Secretaries during the 22<sup>nd</sup> Japan-China-Korea Joint meeting, held on 1 June 2017 in Sapporo, Japan. These were Toru Yoshikawa (Japan), Junming Dai (China) and Jaehoon Roh (Korea).

### **9 June 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa, Africa**

- The African regional meeting, the ARAOH (African Regional Association on Occupational Health) conference was established in 2014 in Johannesburg, South Africa under the leadership of Claudina Nogueira (Board) and Adriaan Combrinck (NS for Africa). The second meeting was scheduled to be held in Zimbabwe in 2017. However, it was unfortunately cancelled by the host country.
- Claudina Nogueira, member of the Board, volunteered to host the regional meeting in Johannesburg in conjunction with the SASOM (South African Society of Occupational Medicine) annual meeting. SASOM provided free registration, meeting facilities and telecommunication services to the NSs of Africa. Akiba Okon (Nigeria) also expressed the possibility of hosting ARAOH in connection with the SOEHPON (Society of Occupational and Environmental Health Physicians of Nigeria) Conference, scheduled for 16–18 November 2017 in Lagos, Nigeria. Nigeria might be the candidate venue for the 3<sup>rd</sup> ARAOH Conference.
- The African Regional/Area meeting was held in Johannesburg on 9 June 2017. The participants were four NSs, two Board members and one Officer. These were Cheikh Cisse (Senegal), Adriaan Combrinck (South Africa), Blessing Garamumhango (Zimbabwe), Kibor Keitany (Kenya), Claudina Nogueira (Board), Dingani Moyo (Board), and Seong-Kyu Kang (VP). Kibor Keitany joined the meeting over the phone. Akiba Okon (Nigeria) Eva Katusabe (Uganda) and Fred Yaw Bio (Ghana) expressed their willingness to participate in the meeting, but did not attend because they could not raise the funds for travel expenses. Moussa Dicko (Mali) would have liked to join by skype, but could not do so due to a technical problem.
- VP Seong-Kyu Kang moderated the meeting and presented information on the role and task of an NS, the membership campaign, the Dublin Congress, and the NS election process.



- Tanzania and Benin proposed a New NS this Triennium, but as the Secretariat and VP failed to communicate with the candidates, they were not officially appointed. The NS for Morocco was appointed very late.
- Among the nine NSs for Africa, five were newly appointed.

### **10 October 2017, Antigua, Guatemala, Latin America**

- The Latin American regional meeting of NSs was held on 11 October 2017, in Antigua, Guatemala, in connection with the 15<sup>th</sup> Latin American Congress of Occupational Health (ALSO) (11–13 October), which was organized by the Latin American Association of Occupational Health. The conference was held jointly with the SC on Women Health and Work.
- ALSO is a biennial meeting. The 15<sup>th</sup> Guatemala Congress attracted approximately 400 participants. The next Congress will be held in Bogota, Colombia in 2019.
- ICOH President, Dr. Jukka Takala was invited as the keynote speaker. He delivered a presentation on the global burden of occupational cancer. The local Organizer, Luis Garcia (Guatemala) suggested that Officers introduce ICOH to the participants. The VP, Dr. Seong-Kyu Kang, presented ICOH, its activities, and benefits for members at the main session on 13 October. Some participants were interested in joining ICOH. They applied for membership on site using the mobile application with the help of Dr. Julietta Rodriguez (Chair of SC of Women Health and Work).
- The Latin American regional meeting brought together four NSs, three NS candidates for the coming Triennium and four Officers: Claudia De Hoyos (Argentina), Rosylane Rocha (Brazil), Marta Cabrera (Chile), and Orlando Pitti (Panama). The three NS candidates for the 2018–2020 Triennium were from Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala.
- VP Seong-Kyu Kang moderated the meeting and presented information on the role and task of an NS, the membership campaign, the Dublin Congress, and the NS selection process. Secretary General Prof. Sergio Iavicoli presented the activities of ICOH and membership status, and the benefits of ICOH membership.

### **Europe**

- Europe has the largest number of NSs. There are currently 21 NSs, 14 of whom are new. There are no specific regional occupational health conferences as in other continents, which would raise the attention of most of the NSs in Europe. However, there are many international conferences organized by SCs. The VP tried to find the most popular conferences which would be of interest to the NS, but was unable to find any. Consequently, no regional meeting of NSs in Europe was organized during this Triennium.
- Based on experience, a regional NS meeting in Europe may be arranged at more than two different locations along with larger SC Conferences, such as EPICOH.

### ***Lessons learned from Regional NS Meetings***

- Many NSs do not know about the activities of ICOH. The only opportunity to communicate is the Business meeting during the Congress and regional meetings. However, the NS of some countries were unable to attend the meeting due to budgetary problems. There is no support for NSs to travel to attend a meeting. For the Congress, NSs were given priority to be awarded the scholarship. Most eligible applicants among NSs have received a partial grant.
- Bilateral online communication between NSs and the VP may also be effective. However, this was not as successful during this Triennium as during the previous one. The appointing process takes a long time due to delayed election/recommendation and the submission of the necessary documents, especially in the case of newly appointed candidates. During this Triennium, 36 NSs out of 56 changed. It takes time for the VP to become familiar with newly appointed NSs. After appointment, the VP has lost contact with some NSs.
- The regional meeting is a good chance to communicate with other NSs in the same region and with ICOH Officers. The timing of the regional meeting is important. During this Triennium, the meetings were held in the latter half of the Triennium due to the timing of the regional Congresses. The regional meetings could be arranged during the first half of the Triennium. In order for this to succeed, the appointment process should be completed as early as possible.

### ***Dublin, Ireland, Meeting of NSs in ICOH2018***

The next meeting of all ICOH NSs will be held during the ICOH 2018 Congress. This is scheduled for 18:30–19:30 on 2 May (Wednesday) 2018. All current and new NSs are requested to participate in the Business meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to review the activities of the 2015–2017 Triennium, and to facilitate activities in the new Triennium.

The aim is to have a clear roadmap for the process of electing new NS. Approximately half of the ICOH NSs will have served two terms and a new NS needs to be elected. The NSs must be informed of the process of nominating an NS candidate to avoid a long delay in the formal appointment. In half of the countries, the current NS is eligible for a second term.

## 6. Activity Reports from NSs

Most NSs are active in introducing ICOH to their occupational health society. Here are some examples of the activities of the NSs.

### **UK, Dr. David Fishwick**

Dr. Fishwick has actively participated in the ICOH Congress. He is a respiratory physician/ researcher working for the UK Health and Safety regulator (HSE). He introduced ICOH to the Partnership for European Research into Occupational Safety and Health (PEROSH) as the chair of the Wellbeing and Work Committee, and as group head of the Occupational and Environmental Group of the European Respiratory Society. To facilitate ICOH-related activities among UK ICOH members, he plans to organize an informal UK ICOH forum during the Dublin Congress.

### **The Netherlands, Dr. Judith Sluiter**

Dr. Judith Sluiter promoted ICOH membership at the stand of the Coronal Institute of Occupational Health at the annual national scientific meeting of Dutch occupational health physicians, which approximately 1300 professionals attended in 2016 and 2017, and at the Dutch symposia of the Netherlands Center for Occupational Diseases in 2015, 2016, and 2017. She also arranged that three ICOH members endorsed the new applicants for membership on site. She has worked with Dutch SC chairs to jointly organize the sessions during the Dublin Congress. Dr. Sluiter is preparing the bid for ICOH2024 for the Netherlands with other Dutch ICOH members.

### **Romania, Prof. Carmen Busneag**

Prof. Carmen Busneag is the new NS for Romania, and occupational health physician of the National Television of Romania. Prof. Busneag promoted ICOH at the National Conference of Occupational Medicine. She appeared on prime-time TV to explain occupational cancer. ([http://stiri.tvr.ro/article.php?article\\_id=76821](http://stiri.tvr.ro/article.php?article_id=76821)). She also gave an ICOH presentation at the EU OSHA campaign, which was hosted by EU OSHA for healthy workplaces.

### **Russian Federation, Prof. Angelika Bashkireva**

Professor Bashkireva is the first-term NS for Russia. ICOH activities in Russia have been diminished for many years. She composed a booklet about ICOH activities and the benefits of ICOH membership in Russian. This booklet was posted in Russian on the website of the Scientific and Innovation Center ‘Professional Longevity’ ([www.prof-dolgoletie.ru](http://www.prof-dolgoletie.ru)). She also sent an invitation letter to potential members in Russia by email. Professor Bashkireva actively participated in the conference organized by the ICOH SC (SC on Ageing and Work) and promoted ICOH at the conference organized by the national gerontology society.

### **Peru, Dr. Renato Vargas**

Peru was the most active country in terms of recruiting new members in the last Triennium. As the NS for Peru, Dr. Renato Vargas was eager to introduce ICOH to the local occupational health association, the Peruvian Society of Occupational Health (SOPESO), the Latin-American Society of Occupational Health (ALSO), the Peruvian Medical Professional Association (Colegio Médico del Perú), and the Catholic University of Santa María (UCSM). Peruvian ICOH members played a major role in hosting the 14<sup>th</sup> ALSO Congress in 2015. Dr. Vargas participated in the international conference held in Lima in 2016 by the SC on Work and Vision. He also helped develop a local ICOH website in Spain

### **Venezuela, Prof. Maritza Rojas**

Venezuelan ICOH members arranged a special session on ICOH during the XVII Congress of the Medicine Academy and the IV Congress of Sanitary Administration and Public Health, in Maracaibo, Zulia State in 2015. This is the first time that an occupational health session was organized during the event of the Medical Academy. Professor Rojas presented ICOH at the international conference organized by the Chamber of Commerce of Valencia. The Venezuelan Society of Occupational Health (SOVESO) is mostly composed of ICOH members and has organized several meetings. During the meetings, a greeting video by Professor Sergio Iavicoli was shown to the participants to encourage them to join ICOH.

Professor Rojas recruited several young scientists as new members.

### **South Africa, Dr. Adriaan Combrinck**

Dr. Adriaan Combrinck, NS for South Africa, promoted ICOH at the annual conference of the South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) and the Mine Medical Officers (MMPA) meetings and distributed the membership application form. Dr. Combrinck also hosted the ICOH regional meeting of Africa in Johannesburg in 2017. SASOM and SA ICOH members plan to host two conferences led by the SCs (MEDICHEM in Johannesburg in 2019, SC on History of Occupational and Environmental Health in Durban in May 2020).

## **7. Questionnaire survey**

Mary Ross, Chair of the Working Group on Occupational Infectious Agents requested a survey from the NSs on the status of occupational infectious diseases in the countries. The result will be presented at the Dublin Congress or in the Newsletter.

## **Acknowledgements**

The VP would like to express his sincere thanks to all the NSs for their enthusiastic activities for ICOH.



