



International Commission on Occupational Health - ICOH
Commission Internationale de la Santé au Travail - CIST
Founded in 1906 as Permanent Commission



Minutes of the ICOH Board meeting (online)

Date: 29 April 2021

Time: 14.00 - 15.45 CET

Participants:

Dr. Jukka Takala - ICOH President
Prof. Sergio Iavicoli - ICOH Secretary General
Prof. Seong-Kyu Kang - ICOH Vice President
Ms. Claudina Nogueira - ICOH Vice President
Dr. Kazutaka Kogi - ICOH Past President
Prof. Maureen Dollard - ICOH Board member, ICOH 2022 National Organizing Committee
Prof. Frida Fischer - ICOH Board member
Prof. Mats Hagberg - ICOH Board member
Dr. Martin Hogan - ICOH Board member
Prof. Seichi Horie - ICOH Board member
Prof. Sunil Kumar Joshi - ICOH Board member
Prof. Eun-A Kim - ICOH Board member
Dr. Rosa Maria Orriols - ICOH Board member
Dr. Shyam Pingle - ICOH Board member
Prof. Kari Reijula - ICOH Board member
Ms. Maria Luisa Tupia Gonzales - ICOH Board member
Prof. Francesco Violante - ICOH Board member
Dr. Diana Gagliardi - ICOH Secretariat General
Ms. Valeria Boccuni - ICOH Secretariat General Staff
Ms. Erika Cannone – ICOH Secretariat General Staff
Mr. Pierluca Dionisi – ICOH Secretariat General Staff

Apologies:

Prof. Stavroula Leka - ICOH Board member
Prof. Olivier Lo - ICOH Board member
Prof. Christophe Paris - ICOH Board member
Dr. Paul Schulte - ICOH Board member

1. Opening by the President

Dr. Takala welcomed all the participants and briefly introduced the following item for discussion, namely the organization of the ICOH 2022 Congress in a virtual format.

2. ICOH 2022 organization update

Prof. Iavicoli began his speech referring that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the organization of the ICOH Congress, making it necessary to invoke the Emergency Powers (ICOH Constitution, Article 10), which state that “In the event of an International Congress not being held at the end of a fiscal period, the Officers and the Board shall be empowered to make such financial and other arrangements as may be necessary for the continuation of the ICOH. [...]”.

Prof. Iavicoli summarized the work done by the ICOH Officers and National Organizing Committee (NOC) for the organization of the ICOH 2022 Congress. After April 2020, when the ICOH Board approved the NOC request to postpone the ICOH Congress to February 2022, the persisting difficulties caused by the pandemic context also produced an impact on the organization of the ICOH Congress. The ICOH Officers and NOC have worked jointly for months to identify the best solution for the organization of the ICOH Congress in the new global scenario.

The NOC proposed to move to a virtual format. The ICOH Officers shared such proposal, also taking into account that the ICOH sister organizations and other scientific societies would organize their congresses in a virtual format. Within this context, ANZSOM, the entity taking financial responsibility for the former ICOH 2021 Congress, communicated their unavailability to continue as they could only commit to an in-presence event, which would no longer be feasible. Furthermore, the relationships between the NOC and the previously involved Professional Conference Organizer (PCO) were ceased. It thus became necessary to find another solution for an entity taking financial responsibility for the Congress and for a professional company providing a virtual congress platform.

The proposed solution was identified based on the ICOH Bye-Law 7, section 2, which establishes the following requirements for the organization of the ICOH Congress:

“[...]”

- (a) The entity that commits to take financial responsibility for the Congress is a public institution or a national scientific/professional association with solid economic capacity and proven experience in the organisation of large international congresses;
- (b) Identification of a professional conference company with documented experience in the organisation of large international congresses;

(c) Identification of a congress venue that is adequate in terms of size, services, security, accessibility, in line with the format of ICOH Congresses. [...]"

As indicated in the updated ICOH Guidelines on Congress Organization, such requirements must remain in place “at the execution and for the duration of the contract” (Annex 4).

In consideration of the above-mentioned requirements and of the ongoing exceptional circumstances, whereby the three binding criteria were not guaranteed by the NOC, it was thus proposed that:

1. ICOH would take financial responsibility for all costs and revenues from the ICOH Congress;
2. The ICOH Congress would be held in a virtual format;
3. A professional company will be in charge of the virtual congress platform;
4. The NOC will be responsible for the scientific program (in collaboration with Ms. Nogueira), the software for abstract collection, partial economic support to participants from developing countries (up to EUR 30,000).

The solution outlined above was discussed and agreed upon by the ICOH Officers and NOC as the result of a strong collaboration, including preliminary research, market analyses, joint activities and weekly online meetings. The main purposes were to guarantee that the ICOH Congress would take place, in line with the expectation of the ICOH members, and to preserve the ICOH finances. During this process, ICOH has always been supported by the legal advice of the legal firm Carabba and Partners to verify procedures and contractual matters.

Prof. Iavicoli remarked the importance of holding the ICOH Congress, which is the core event of the ICOH triennial activities. He also illustrated the economic sustainability of such a solution, showing the costs related to the virtual platform and providing details on funds availability in the ICOH budget. A proposal for the reshaping of the ICOH budget lines was also presented, leaving balances unchanged.

Prof. Iavicoli also presented the company that would provide the virtual platform, Triumph International, a multinational group with experience in organizing and hosting large events, including the World Congress on Public Health 2020, which was held virtually. The Triumph platform would make it possible to have an experience similar to an in-presence event, with possibility of interaction, meeting spaces, booths for bidders and sponsors, etc. The Opening and Closing Ceremonies, keynote sessions, Policy Forum and General Assemblies will be held with live streaming, with live recordings for back-up and to have these sessions uploaded on the platform and made available also beyond the live streaming. All other sessions will be pre-recorded and uploaded on the platform. To accommodate the different time zones around the world, it was proposed to

have two live stages, one at Central Europe Time, and the other one at Melbourne time. The congress will be organized in a shorter format (5 days).

It will be necessary to define registration fees and an option for the publication of the congress proceedings (negotiations are now underway for publication in the SH@W journal). Registration fees will be defined also taking into account the fees that ICOH's sister organizations have set up for their events. Furthermore, Prof. Iavicoli presented the registration fees for the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work, that are much higher than those of the IEA and IOHA Congresses. He suggested that ICOH should keep registration fees aligned with those of the IEA and IOHA Congresses.

To conclude, Prof. Iavicoli indicated the next steps: signing a new contract between ICOH and the NOC; signing a contract between ICOH and Triumph. Communications to ICOH members would also be sent out after the Board meeting.

Then, the ICOH President invited the Board members to comment on the proposal.

Prof. Dollard expressed her appreciation for the collaboration between ICOH and the NOC, remarking that travel restrictions would not allow to organize an in-presence Congress in Australia in 2022.

Dr. Hogan acknowledged the work done by the ICOH Officers and the NOC. He agreed on the decision to move to virtual format, also in consideration of the limitations on long-distance travels. He also underlined that such solution would allow for the saving of high costs that are generally part of the organization of an in-presence congress. In this regard, he also highlighted the importance of the financial support given by the Italian Institute INAIL, hosting the ICOH Secretariat, dating back from 2003. The commitment of INAIL, he remarked, is an enormous support for the ICOH budget. Furthermore, he added that special attention is to be paid to accessibility for developing countries, with differentiated fees. Prof. Iavicoli clarified that, as usual, registration fees will be shaped taking into account different categories, including lower fees for developing countries.

Prof. Kang communicated that, as done for previous congresses, the Korean Institute KOSHA will donate a substantial amount to support participation from developing countries.

Ms. Nogueira briefly explained how the scientific program is being readapted to the virtual format. For reasons related to costs and feasibility, oral presentations will be reduced to 400 approximately, while posters would be the preferred solution. The updated structure will be organized according to two time zones for the presentations, as explained by Prof. Iavicoli. She also clarified that business meetings of the Scientific Committees will need to be organized separately.

Dr. Kogi expressed his agreement with the proposal and thanked ICOH and the NOC for their good work. He also remarked the importance of learning from the experience of the ICOH's sister organizations with their virtual congresses.

Prof. Fischer reported on her experience with the IEA Congress and welcomed the idea of having two stages to accommodate different time zones.

Decisions:

The ICOH President asked the Board to vote on the following items:

1. Approval of ICOH 2022 Congress in a virtual format;
2. Approval of the role of ICOH as Congress Organizer taking financial responsibility for all costs and revenues related to the Congress, except for those costs managed by the Co-Organizers (in consideration of the exceptional situation, only for this specific congress);
3. Approval of the role of the NOC as Co-Organizers being responsible for: scientific program, software for abstract collection, partial economic support to participants from developing countries (up to EUR 30,000);
4. Approval of the Congress Co-Presidents: Dr. Jukka Takala, Prof. Sergio Iavicoli, and Prof. Malcolm Sim;
5. Approval of the Co-Chairs in charge of the scientific program: Ms. Claudina Nogueira (ICOH) and Dr. Deborah Glass (NOC);
6. Approval of the reshaping of the ICOH budget lines, leaving balances unchanged;
7. To give a mandate to the ICOH Officers to sign a new contract with the NOC;
8. To give a mandate to the ICOH Officers to negotiate and sign a contract with a professional company in charge of the virtual platform for the congress.

The items above were approved unanimously.

3. Amendment to ICOH Bye-Law 5

The ICOH President explained that this time the organization of the Congress entails a much higher burden for the Secretariat. To this end, a proposal was formulated by the ICOH President and Secretary-General to establish the role of Assistant Secretary-General, supporting the activities of the ICOH Secretariat.

Prof. Iavicoli added that this solution was also adopted in the past when necessary, for example for the organization of the ICOH 2000 Congress in Singapore. To formalize such a role, Prof. Iavicoli presented the proposed amendment to the ICOH Bye-Law 5, section 3, which defines the tasks of the Secretary-General.

The current text of the ICOH Bye-Law 5, section 3, is as follows:

“Section 3

The Secretary-General shall:

- (a) have charge of the general correspondence;
- (b) prepare for the election of the Officers and the Board;
- (c) prepare the agenda of the General Assembly;
- (d) prepare the minutes of the meetings of the Board and the General Assembly;
- (e) have charge of the liaison with National, Regional and Area Secretaries;
- (f) submit a report on the administration and financial position of ICOH together with the Auditor's report to the General Assembly;
- (g) scrutinise the proposals for new members;
- (h) issue to each active and retired member the statement of dues at the beginning of the fiscal period;
- (i) collect fees and other financial contributions;
- (j) deposit all monies in the name and to the credit of the ICOH;
- (k) regulate expenditure and make payments under the supervision of the President. Any expenditure exceeding CHF 50,000 at any one time requires the joint signatures of the President and the Secretary-General;
- (l) submit to the Auditor relevant financial documents of each fiscal triennium such that the Auditor's report is available for the consideration of the General Assembly held at the end of that triennium;
- (m) submit a budget for the next triennium to the Board before the end of the current triennium.”

To this text, the ICOH President and Secretary-General proposed to add the following sub-section:

“The President in conjunction with the Secretary-General may appoint an Assistant Secretary-General to support in the execution of tasks (a), (d), (e), (g), (h), and (k) limited to the expenditures not exceeding CHF 10,000. For operational and logistic purposes, the Assistant Secretary-General must be an ICOH member in good standing with an experience of at least one triennium as Board member, National Secretary or Scientific Committee officer, from the country where the Secretariat is located.”

The person identified for this role is Dr. Diana Gagliardi, Chair of the Scientific Committee on Occupational Health and Development (SCOHDev) since 2015.

Decisions:

The ICOH President asked the Board to vote on the proposed amendment to Bye-Law 5. The decision was approved unanimously. The Assistant Secretary-General will take office immediately. Dr. Gagliardi thanked the ICOH Officers and Board for their trust.

4. Electronic voting process

Prof. Iavicoli presented the proposed new deadlines for the election process. He remarked that the next elections of ICOH Officers and Board will be held in electronic format, for the first time and on experimental basis, as approved by the General Assembly. He explained that the electronic format greatly simplifies the election process, and this would allow to define deadlines that are closer to the congress.

The proposed new deadline for the election process will be:

- By September 1, 2021: Call for elections, published on the ICOH website, with indication of the criteria for the eligibility of candidates and electors;
- October 31, 2021: Deadline for the submission of the candidatures;
- November/December 2021: Publication of the curricula of the candidates on the ICOH website;
- January 2022: Electronic voting procedure;
- February 2022: Scrutiny meeting with Scrutineers Committee.

Decisions:

The ICOH President asked the Board to vote on the proposed deadlines. The proposal was approved unanimously.

5. Any other matter

Prof. Iavicoli reported on a financial proposal submitted by EPICOH for the allocation of funds to the Scientific Committees. He explained that such a proposal might be better discussed at a more appropriate time, as the current priority is the organization of the Congress.

Dr. Pingle asked about the deadlines for the bidding process for ICOH 2027. Prof. Iavicoli explained that, given the exceptional situation in the whole world, the deadlines indicated in the ICOH Guidelines for Congress Organization will be readapted. The deadline for bid submission will be three months before the beginning of the ICOH 2022 Congress (i.e., 6 November 2021). Except for the deadlines, the bid shall be prepared following the instructions and requirements indicated in the ICOH Guidelines for Congress Organization. Prof. Iavicoli also clarified that the bidders will have the possibility of promoting their congress inside the ICOH 2022 Congress virtual platform, which will also host the vote for the ICOH 2027 Congress venue. He reminded that only ICOH members registered for the congress can vote for the ICOH 2027 Congress venue.

Then, Dr. Takala reported on his participation as speaker in a session organized in Morocco by ILO and Moroccan Ministry of Labour. On that occasion, Dr. Takala was asked to explain what has been the impact of ICOH Congresses in the world. He mentioned some examples, starting from the 1906 Congress in Milan, resulting in the establishment of health and safety units; then, the Seoul

statement on occupational health services (OHS), leading to increased activities for OHS; and the Dublin statement on occupational cancer, stimulating the revitalization of related European regulation, particularly on asbestos-related diseases. Dr. Takala concluded remarking that the preparation of the ICOH 2024 Congress in Morocco will be another important issue in the years to come.

Prof. Iavicoli expressed his appreciation for the commitment that the Moroccan NOC is showing. However, he remarked that ICOH needs to be careful even for the ICOH 2024 Congress, to ensure that the congress is delivered successfully once again, with no financial damage for ICOH.

Dr. Takala closed the meeting thanking all the participants.