



TASK FORCE ON EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY NETWORK FOR H.F.A. 2000
(E.U.R.U.N.)

Second meeting

[REPORT]

The second meeting of the Task Force was held in the University of Ulm on 27th August 1986 at the invitation of the Rector, Professor Dr. T. Fliedner.

The participants in the meeting were:

Appointed members:

Prof. W. Lammers - University of Groningen, The Netherlands
(Chairman)

Prof. A.W. Macara - University of Bristol, U.K. (Rapporteur)

Prof. M. Manciaux - University of Nancy, France

Prof. L. Rakic - University of Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Apologies for absence were received from Professors Areskog and Vartanian

Ex officio members:

Prof. T. Fliedner (Chairman, E.A.C.H.R.)

Prof. A. Oriol-Bosch (AMDE)

Dr. H. Vuori (W.H.O. Euro)

Observer:

Prof. W.J.A. van den Heuvel (E.S.M.S.)

I Introduction

In opening the meeting, the Chairman thanked Professor Fliedner for acting as host and also thanked those participants who had

provided their own resources to enable them to attend. He welcomed Professor Van den Heuvel who had been invited to continue to assist the Task Force as an Observer after consultation with Dr. Vuori.

The report of the first meeting in Groningen was approved and the other background material and working documents which had been circulated were received, viz., Dr. Vuori's note on the scope and purpose of the meeting, the provisional agenda, Professor Lammers' Memo III dated May 1986, and Dr. Wojtczak's file note concerning the meeting held in the European Regional Office on 4th July 1986, in which Professor Lammers reported to the Regional Director and his colleagues upon the Groningen meeting.

The Chairman then reported upon the meeting of 4th July, and the Task Force noted with relief and satisfaction Dr. Asvall's assurance that "Euro would be in a position to help financially the organization of the meeting of the steering committee" and Dr. van Londen's suggestion, that the Dutch Ministry of Health in conjunction with other interested member States could support the activities of the steering committee (File note 3b and e).

Professor Lammers also reported upon the meeting of the European Society for Medical Sociology (E.S.M.S.) in June 1986, to which he contributed a paper (tabled) about the Task Force's work.

Dr. Vuori reported upon his discussions with potential research funding agencies, from which it was clear that, although they would consider supporting specific research projects, they were unable to provide "seed money" for the preparation of such proposals. The Task Force would therefore have to find its seed money elsewhere.

The Provisional agenda was approved with the addition of a discussion upon the documents of the E.R.A.P. (now re-named R.H.F.A. - Research for Health for All) on research action.

II Organisation, status and links of the network (agenda items 1 & 2)

It was noted (file note 3.a.) that the Regional Director had advised that "the network should be an independent organisation which, as an NGO, would be in working relations with Euro'. It was agreed that these links needed to be strong and that close links were also

required with such bodies as A.M.D.E., A.S.P.H.E.R., E.A.P.H.S.S. and E.S.M.S.. Dr. Vuori indicated that the Task Force, as a W.H.O. group, would complete its task when it reported to the Regional Committee in September 1987: it remained to be seen how the Task Force's proposals for E.U.R.U.N. itself might be put into effect. It was anticipated that there would be a need for members of the Task Force to constitute the nucleus - with appropriate augmentation - of the organisation of the network in order to ensure continuity.

The structure of the network was envisaged as two-tiered with a steering committee and project groups or "problem-oriented networks" to execute specific research projects. It was considered premature to take a view regarding the nature of the relationship between the steering committee and the project groups which could be more or less formal depending upon a judgement of the most effective means of securing the committed support of the universities. Professor Fliedner rehearsed the advantages of the working model provided by existing research networks, notably the European organisation for research on the treatment of cancer and the European Late Effects Project Group (E.U.L.A.P.), and tabled copies of a paper he delivered to the Economic and Social Council of the U.N. in 1974 on the organisation and management of co-operative international research in the health sciences. The Task Force felt that it would be wise to advocate a modest start with a steering committee setting up and loosely overseeing two or three projects initially, each of which could develop its own network.

It was agreed that it was important for a report on the existence of the Task Force and its work to date to be made to the Regional Committee in September 1986 in order to inform member States and to secure financial support. Professor Fliedner undertook to do this in the course of his reports on the E.A.C.H.R. and on the E.R.A.P./R.H.F.A.. It was noted that reference to the Task Force would also be made by the Regional Director (file note 3.a.).

III Activities of the network

During this discussion the Task Force had constantly in mind the particular functions of the network which had been defined in its first meeting as the development of relevant programmes of education and training; the provision of a forum for the exchange of information, plans and programmes; the standardisation of research methodology and health indicators; and the promotion of trans-disciplinary research. Participants were also influenced by the need to complete their task in time for a report to be made to the Regional committee in 1987. Support for the development of the network thereafter would depend upon the preparation of clear and specific projects which could be introduced during the next year and which would commend themselves as contributing to hitting the targets involved in the strategies for H.F.A. 2000. Any proposals which the Task Force made must take account of the resources of skill and interest which are available in universities whether or not they are already being tapped, and of work currently being done, notably by collaborating centres which already have their own networks, and in Euro programmes.

Educational activities

A participant's observation that the world consists of overlapping networks led to discussion of the case of an E.E.A.P., or European Education Action Plan (see Groningen report, page 2, para. III) to complement the E.R.A.P./R.H.F.A.. Participants were impressed by the range and scope of specific courses sponsored or supported by W.H.O. in pursuit of its targets which were highly relevant to the network's perceived tasks, but they were also struck by the poor use made of many available resource materials including those of W.H.O. itself. The Chairman reminded the Task Force of his study of the Robert Wood Johnson scholarship programme in the U.S.A. (see his memo II and III to the Groningen meeting) for the training of outstanding young people, and it was agreed that the idea was worthy of consideration in the European context. Reference was made to Dr. Mahler's initiative on leadership training for H.F.A., the annual

courses in Brioni, other W.H.O. seminars and the need to educate "non-committed big shots".

The Task Force was concerned about the need for both shorter term "fire fighting" educational programmes and longer term programmes designed to prepare health workers of all kinds for new roles and approaches in health care and research and particularly young scientists. It became clear that the Task Force should try as a priority-project to propose a strategy for educational development which could be carried forward by E.U.R.U.N. The Chairman agreed to prepare, in consultation with members, a position paper as a basis for discussion in the next meeting. Professor Lammers's paper would consider the content and form of an educational project and potential participants.

Research activities

The criteria for E.U.R.U.N. research projects were discussed. They should be closely related to the Euro H.F.A. strategy document and the E.R.A.P./R.H.F.A., and take account of international work already in progress such as the W.H.O. programmes on ageing and on accidents. However, the Task Force should attempt to identify "deficits" in existing plans and activities. Projects should involve people and institutions with an established research record including members of the Task Force who were doing work of high quality, together with individuals and universities with unrealised potential. Commitment and competence were the crucial considerations, but financial resources were also clearly vital and basic facilities must be available in participating institutions or under the aegis of participants' countries if support was to be attracted from major funding agencies. It was not necessary to choose only topics which were only "good bets". E.U.R.U.N. should be prepared to take risks and even to seek venture capital. In any event, it would be reasonable to expect W.H.O. to encourage member States to support appropriate network activities. Attractive and challenging proposals from the Task Force might stimulate a more favourable response than had previously been shown towards the idea of a European Regional H.F.A. research

fund. Dr. Vuori advised that it would not be necessary to prepare detailed study designs for the Regional Committee but that the objectives and potential participants in any proposed project should be set out. Professor Fliedner's experience showed that realistic cost estimates should also be given.

The Task Force was particularly attracted to the idea of developing a project on social support in chronic disease. This would study the role of both formal and informal systems and facilities for care and caring and the relationship between them. Such a project might also involve devising indicators of performance and of quality of care in the field. Professor Van den Heuvel agreed to prepare a working paper on these ideas, which would be circulated to members of the Task Force for their comments and suggestions about universities which might be able to contribute to such a project.

It was agreed that in addition to working up a major project on support in chronic disease, and in order to offer the Regional Committee a choice, other topics should be identified and listed as potential projects for E.U.R.U.N. to develop. Professor Fliedner tabled copies of Part II of the E.R.A.P. report whose summary listed a range of such topics. Participants undertook to examine this list, to consider topics, to which they could contribute and to identify potential participants in such work and to send the results to Prof. Fliedner.

Several members of the Task Force were proceeding after the meeting to the annual meeting of the A.M.D.E. where the opportunity would be taken to inform Deans about the work of the Task Force and to alert them to the challenges and opportunities which it presented.

IV Budgetary implications

The Chairman would report to Dr. Wojtczak during the A.M.D.E. meeting in Lisbon and to the Regional Director before the Regional Committee in Copenhagen in September. It would be noted that members of the Task Force who were not also members of the E.A.C.H.R. had to

fund their own travel and subsistence to enable them to contribute to the Ulm meeting. It was not reasonable to expect individuals to continue to contribute on this basis. Likewise, whilst it was reasonable to expect universities to support research activities, they should not be expected, especially at a time of severe financial stringency, to fund the organisational work involved in mounting such activities. The Task Force therefore felt strongly that resources must be provided to enable it to fulfil its task by September 1987. It looked to WHO and, it was hoped, to Member States, to respond as indicated in the Introduction of this report.

V E.R.A.P./R.H.F.A. - Research Action

Dr. Fliedner, assisted by his colleague Dr. K. Gerdes, introduced this document which would eventually appear in two volumes - research policy and research action respectively - and distributed copies of the volume on research action to the participants. Professor Fliedner sought the advice of the Task Force upon the best way of "triggering the response of the scientific community" to its description and analysis of research needs in relation to the Regional Target Document on H.F.A. 2000 and its proposals for meeting these needs. Discussion centred upon the need to identify and involve key individuals, e.g. Deans and Heads of Institutions and upon the use that might be made of networks for communication which exist in universities and professional organisations. The participants agreed to send to Prof. Fliedner a list of recipients in their countries, who might be expected to make a constructive response.

The next meeting would be held in the European Regional Office in Copenhagen on 23rd and 24th or 24th and 25th February 1987 before the E.A.C.H.R. meeting. Professor Manciaux offered to host a further meeting in Nancy in late April 1987.