

First Meeting of the UEMS-Occupational Medicine in 2024

Sección de Medicina del Trabajo de la Unión Europea de Médicos Especialistas (UEMS)

Mari Cruz Rodríguez-Jareño^{1,2,3}  0000-0003-4349-8382

¹Spanish Representative in the UEMS. Catalan Society of Occupational Health (SCSL) and Spanish Society of Occupational Medicine and Safety (SEMST).

²Prevention Service of Serveis de Salut Integrats Baix Empordà, Palamós (Girona). Spain.

³Department of Medical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Girona, Girona, Spain.

Información · Information

This document is the result of the activities of the Occupational Medicine Section of the UEMS (European Union of Medical Specialists: <http://www.uems-occupationalmedicine.org>)

Fechas · Dates

Received: 2024.06.30
Accepted: 2024.07.02
Published: 2024.07.15

Correspondencia · Corresponding Author

Mari Cruz Rodríguez-Jareño
maricruz.rodriguez@udg.edu

On April 6 and 7, 2024, the first annual meeting of the Occupational Medicine Section of the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS-OM)^(1,2) took place in Portoroz (Slovenia), with the attendance of the Spanish representative of the SEMST-SCSL.

Twenty participants from 17 countries attended the meeting. The countries represented were Italy (2), Hungary, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Slovenia, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Belgium, Norway (2), Poland, Luxembourg (2), Czech Republic, Denmark and Croatia. The president of the European Association of Schools of Occupational Medicine (EASOM) also attended within the usual collaboration with EASOM.

On this occasion, we were also accompanied by representatives of ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation)⁽³⁾, Business Europe (Federation of European Employers' Associations)⁽⁴⁾ and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)⁽⁵⁾ who joined the meeting virtually.

The meeting began with a presentation on the situation of Occupational Medicine in Slovenia by Boris Kopilovič, the president of the Slovenian Society of Occupa-

tional, Traffic and Sports Medicine. The presentation is available, along with the official minutes of the meeting, on the website of the Section.²

For years, the Section has had close collaboration with EU-OSHA. In addition to being an official partner of its campaigns⁽⁶⁾, various joint in-person and telematic meetings have been held with the Agency. The Section has also had a relationship with European social agents, with ETUI⁽⁷⁾ (European Trade Union Research Institute), as well as meetings with the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, and contacts within the framework of the European Strategy of Health and Safety at Work. But it is the first time that ETUC, Business Europe and EU-OSHA have jointly attended one of our meetings as guests. This attests to the fact that the Section is taking great steps to make our specialty visible and make ourselves heard at the European level, not only through central UEMS (which in turn communicates with the European Commission), but within the tripartite structure in the different European organizations, in order to reach all social agents.

The president of the UEMS Occupational Medicine Section, and then the three invited organizations, presented themselves and offered a perspective on the main current challenges in Occupational Health and on the potential for collaboration between all of them and their respective expectations.

The ETUC representative asked for collaboration to achieve the objective of its manifesto "Zero fatal accidents at work⁽⁸⁾" in 2030 and for the integration of gender diversity in all aspects of the world of work, one of its current priorities, and urges that Occupational Medicine ensures not only compliance with regulations, but also promotes a true preventive culture in companies.

The representative of Business Europe spoke about the importance of multidisciplinary work; the difficulty in processing information, its validity and difficulty in making comparisons; the aging of the population and sick leave; the importance of job design; as well as the need to approach Occupational health in a holistic form, from a single health perspective, including many different factors, social and economic, beyond merely health or technical aspects.

The representative of EU-OSHA emphasized, from his role of protecting the health of all workers, that in the current trend in which vulnerable groups of workers are talked about, the gender dimension is still the larger gap, therefore women's health must always be considered in policy implementation and development. Another of his objectives is to ensure workers' accessibility to prevention services, especially in small companies. It is important to supervise compliance with Occupational Health regulations (for example, through the Labour Inspection), but also the development of an authentic preventive culture in companies, valuing other approaches that can improve Occupational Health, not only legislation and sanctions. Collaboration between UEMS-OM and EU-OSHA is already underway on several projects, including ESENER⁽⁹⁾ (European Enterprise Survey on New and Emerging Risks) and the European Occupational Health and Safety Barometer⁽¹⁰⁾ (reliable public information system on OSH facts and figures in the EU). As well as the participation as official partners in the Agency's campaigns. In this sense, he tells us that the next

EU-OSHA campaign will be in relation to psychosocial risks and that they currently focus on the health and socio-health sector, which was highlighted during the COVID pandemic.

Next, an “ad-hoc” working group was established on **“Collaboration between the UEMS-OM Section, social partners, the European Commission and EU OSHA: shared challenges and proposals for collaboration of stakeholders interested in Occupational health policies in Europe.”** The main proposals made by the working group were:

- ETUC and Business Europe could consider the possibility of requesting the invitation of UEMS experts to the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work⁽¹¹⁾ that advises the European Commission, when a working group relevant to our specialty arises.

- ETUC will consider inviting UEMS experts to their seminars and workshops on relevant topics.

- The Business Europe Occupational Health and Safety group has biannual meetings and could consider sending invitations and documents to the UEMS Occupational Medicine Section to participate in relevant agenda items.

- The UEMS Occupational Medicine Section already has a formal partnership with EU-OSHA that could consider inviting UEMS experts to its seminars and workshops on relevant topics as advisors.

- EU-OSHA suggests that Occupational Medicine Associations contact the Reference Centres (“Focal points”) in their respective countries to share their experience and knowledge.

- In terms of academic research in Occupational Medicine, ETUC and Business Europe agree that they could consider participating jointly with the Section in projects funded at EU level.

- Both ETUC and Business Europe would appreciate continuing information exchange and engagement with the UEMS in the future, inviting them to our meetings on an annual or bi-annual basis, regardless of whether the dialogue between and with the social partners needs to continue as there are many common issues of interest that we could address together.

- The group also comments that the professional independence of doctors in Prevention Services is an important issue to consider, and perhaps is an area that the European Commission should examine. It could be an area of collaboration to create guidelines in the future.

At this meeting, and due to the presence of the invited organizations, priority was given to the “Increase the visibility of Occupational Medicine” working group, but the other working groups “Evidence based Health Surveillance”, “Update of the Eu-

ropean Training Requirements (ETRs)” and the “European Examination” continue with their on-line work between meetings.

European exam

In relation to the European exam, during the meeting, a partial renewal of the Examining Committee was adopted. The former president of the Section (Alenka Skerjanc from Slovenia) and the representative of Belgium (Simon Bulterys) left their position and were replaced by the German representative (Thomas Kraus) and the Spanish representative (Mari Cruz Rodríguez-Jareño), who join the current president of the Section (Fabrizio Maria Gobba) and the president of EASOM (Begoña Martínez Jarreta), thus leaving the Committee made up of these four people. In this same issue, a monograph on the exam is published to promote the participation of candidates. On the Section's website there is all the information related to the exam, as well as testimonials from the candidates themselves⁽¹²⁾. The next exam for the Specialty will take place on October 21st 2024 in Brussels.

Although there is currently no Junior doctors attending our meetings, links are also maintained with EJD (European Junior Doctors)⁽¹³⁾ and, most especially, with EA-SOM⁽¹⁴⁾ which are part of the European examinations Committee.

The minutes of the meetings of the UEMS Occupational Medicine Section are public, and together with the presentations used in the meetings, can be consulted on the Section's website: <http://www.uems-occupationalmedicine.org>

The autumn 2024 meeting is planned to take place in the Netherlands.

References

1. European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS). Brussels: Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes. European Union of Medical Specialists [Internet]. [Cited March 13 2021]. Available at: <https://www.uems.eu/>
2. UEMS Occupational Medicine Section. Brussels: UEMS Occupational Medicine Section [Internet]. [Cited March 13, 2021]. Available at: <http://www.uems-occupationalmedicine.org>
3. ETUC. European Trade Union Confederation [Internet]. [Cited June 13, 2024]. Available at: <https://etuc.org/en>
4. BusinessEurope [Internet]. [Cited June 13, 2024]. Available at: <https://www.bussinesseurope.eu>
5. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) [Internet]. [Cited June 13, 2024]. Available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/es>
6. Official campaign partners of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) [Internet]. [Cited 13 June 2024]. Available at: <https://healthy-workplaces.osha.europa.eu/es/campaign-partners/official-campaign-partners>

7. ETUI. European Trade Union Institute for Research [Internet]. [Cited 13 June 2024]. Available at: <https://www.etui.org>
8. ETUC Manifiesto "Zero accidents at work" [Internet]. [Cited June 13, 2024]. Available at: <https://www.etuc.org/en/publication/manifiesto-zero-death-work>
9. ESENER (European Enterprise Survey on New and Emerging Risks) [Internet]. [Cited June 13, 2024]. Available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/es/facts-and-figures/esener>
10. European OSH Barometer [Internet]. [Cited June 13, 2024]. Available at: <https://visualisation.osha.europa.eu/osh-barometer/>
11. Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee [Internet]. [Cited June 13, 2024]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/ES/legal-content/summary/advisory-committee-on-safety-and-health-at-work-acsh.html>
12. European Examination of the Occupational Medicine Specialty [Internet]. [Cited June 13, 2024]. Available at: <https://uems-occupationalmedicine.org/fifth-european-assessment-in-occupational-medicine-21-october-2024/>
13. European Junior Doctors [Internet]. [Cited June 13, 2024]. Available at: <https://www.juniordoctors.eu>
14. EASOM European Association of Schools of Occupational Medicine [Internet]. [Cited June 13, 2024]. Available at: <https://www.easom.eu>