

European Chiropractors Union Annual Convention 2014, Dublin, Ireland



ECU Executive

Recently in May, I attended the 2014 annual Convention of the European Chiropractors Union (ECU) in Dublin, Ireland. Myself and fellow student, Mario Olarte San Juan of Barcelona College of Chiropractic, accepted an invitation by the ECU's Vice President, Francine Denis, to attend and observe their annual general meeting on behalf of WCCS. Following in the footsteps of last year's WCCS representative Damiano Costa, this was a privileged opportunity to continue to foster the relationship between the two organisations.

The ECU has a long history and was first created in London in 1932 by Great Britain, Belgium, Sweden and Switzerland. Today, 22 National Chiropractors' Associations are members of the Union. Their mission is to promote the development of Chiropractic in Europe as well as to pursue the interests of Chiropractic as a science and a profession by research, teaching, publications and legal activities.

The Convention runs for a few days, but the AGM itself takes place on one single action-packed day at the start of the Convention. The format is similar to Congress at WCCS. Members sit around a horse-shoed arrangement of tables, with the Executive chairing at the head. After a brief welcome from the President, Øystein Ogre, the meeting was in full swing.

The morning session featured a number of presentations, covering a range of topics. The use of academic and professional titles in different countries was discussed, with suggestions about how pan-professional consistency might be achieved. The Secretary General, Richard Brown, presented forthcoming rebranding of the ECU, and Dr Bart Vandendries announced that Chiropractic is to receive Royal Charter status in Belgium.

There was some exciting news about plans to launch a new Chiropractic degree programme in Poland. It is anticipated that the programme will initially be offered as a postgraduate conversion course for qualified therapists, with a view to quickly transition into a full-time 5 year Masters degree programme as it gains popularity. The course will be taught in English and will run at one of Poland's top sports science universities.

Lunch provided a brief opportunity to explore the venue and to talk with delegates from various countries, before diving back into the afternoon session. We then continued with further updates from member countries. Of particular interest was the current status of Chiropractic in Spain. Growing hostility from physical therapists in Spain towards Chiropractors practising there has recently escalated. Unlike physical therapy, Chiropractic is not yet legislated in Spain and confrontations over professional infringements continue. A positive slant to the recent escalations is that the profession has been brought further into the public domain and potentially a step closer to gaining legal recognition. In other news from Spain, Barcelona College of Chiropractic will be celebrating the graduation of its first cohort of students in July.

An illuminating talk from guest speaker Laurie Tassell (President of the Chiropractors' Association of Australia) gave insight into the tough challenges the profession has faced in Australia over the last 18 months. This provided a useful opportunity to consider similar challenges and strategies for tackling them in a European context.

The European Council on Chiropractic Education (ECCE) President, Olivier Lanlo, gave an update about forthcoming accreditation visits to Barcelona and McTimoney Colleges of Chiropractic, who both currently hold candidate status with the ECU and ECCE. Both Colleges have been working hard to meet the accreditation standards that would see them become full members. A visit by the ECCE will be made to Barcelona College and McTimoney College in October and November this year.

Research is high on the agenda at the ECU and much of the afternoon was dedicated to reviewing research proposals submitted by various Chiropractic institutions, with a view to offering them support through funding. Martin Wangler gave an excellent overview of the European Academy of Chiropractic (EAC) and its role as a facilitator of post-graduate education and research.

This year's AGM visit was another great opportunity to see first hand how the ECU conducts their business. There are many operational similarities to how we do things at Congress and I was impressed by the professionalism and sheer productivity they displayed. Furthermore, we share many common goals, such as the unification and betterment of the profession, and it is with optimism that I hope we can continue to work together to develop the Chiropractic profession in Europe with unity.

Christo Wood

McTimoney College of Chiropractic