The future of the EANS Neurosurgeons of Europe, unite!

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Since *Acta Neurochirurgica* is the official journal of the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies, all European neurosurgeons can be addressed through this journal, since most of the European Neurosurgeries are members of their national society. Therefore, I have sent this appeal to all European neurosurgeons to the Editor in Chief.

The EANS has a relatively short history. Although founded in 1971, the idea of a European Association existed since 1957, the same time in which the Council of Europe was instituted. Apart from the obligation to organize a meeting once every fourth year, it aimed at facilitation and promotion of interaction between national societies and their members.

Meanwhile, the expectations of individuals, and therefore also of neurosurgeons, have evolved. Methods of communication and transportation have evolved fast. The orientation of the individual neurosurgeon is not restricted to the borders of the nation where he/she is living, but far beyond.

Communication with peers several thousand of miles away is as easy, if not easier, than with those within their own country. Writing letters is an art that only those of us understand who are 50 years or older. The accompanying patience needed to wait for the answer does not exist anymore. Within minutes, your e-mail message has been received in every part of the world, and an immediate answer is to be expected. The same holds true for communication by mobile phones. Knowledge is everywhere and at any time accessible.

Traveling has been evolved: in the past it was a though and expensive expedition whilst nowadays it is an affordable undertaking with minimal effort. Frequent and cheap flights to

every part of Europe are available. Public transportation is more or less adequate.

Amongst others, these factors contributed to more individualism and the desire for autonomy of the individual in the Western part of the world of which also neurosurgeons make a part.

From the perspective of individualism, the desire for personal autonomy, and the perspective of blurring of borders and boundaries, the organization of the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies representing their national members is rather old-fashioned.

The organization of its membership fits into observation. All European national societies financially contribute to the EANS. Therefore, every member of a national society within Europe will pay for the EANS indirectly through his/her annual contribution fee to the national society. The boards of the national societies have voting right within the open executive committee. So, most members of national societies are compulsory represented in the EANS. It resembles the European Union without its authorities. A small part of members gathered in an Individual Membership committee also have a vote.

Developments within the national health care only affect a strictly restricted number of neurosurgeons: only those who work in that nation. The influence of the EANS on national neurosurgical care is nihil. Within our national society, I have never seen or heard of any major development that was initiated by the EANS. The EANS is, however, actively involved in education and organizing an annual meeting. Considering the compilation of officers and chairmen, nearly every nation is represented. A major disadvantage of the current structure of the EANS seems to be that interests of national societies prevail, and not those of individual neurosurgeons.

The interests of all neurosurgeons considering their work are equal: good quality of neurosurgical care through excellent training and education, development of techniques, and

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interaction with other colleagues. This and the above-mentioned changes within the Western society warrant us to reconsider the structure of the EANS. Members should have direct influence and have a direct vote in the society for which they pay their membership fee. Appointments should only be made on quality or expertise of a candidate. The nationality should not be relevant. The intermediate layer of representatives of the national societies should vanish and the influence of the national societies eradicated. This will certainly contribute to an increase in the speed

of administrative dynamics, improve transparency, and also to a reduction of costs.

Currently, the primary obligation of the EANS should not be representation of the national societies, but of its individual members: all European neurosurgeons. Therefore, I strongly appeal to the Board of Officers of the EANS, but more to all European neurosurgeons, to support and initiate a restructuring of the Association and reconstruct it into a European Society of Neurosurgeons (ESN) directly representing the individual members.