



Taking action together: EAACI launches NAS Committee and ISC

As part of EAACI's drive to increase the recognition of our specialty and tackle the allergy crisis around the world, EAACI is taking action to drive change. On 4 September 2015, the Academy launched the National Allergy Societies (NAS) Committee (representing 40 member societies across Europe) and the International Societies Committee (ISC) at an interactive meeting in Zurich.

EAACI President Antonella Muraro kicked off the event by welcoming the 33 delegates (and four by Webex). "We need each other more than ever," she emphasized, and challenged delegates to consider examples of "what we can achieve together:"

- Changes in health policies for allergic diseases at the national, EU and international levels (increasing allergy services and specialists);
- Changes in legislation for allergy issues (schools, reimbursements);
- Harmonisation of practice (guidelines implementation);
- Outreach at the community level (education); and
- Opportunities for research on prevention and cures.

Thomas Werfel, EAACI NAS Committee Chairperson (see box), explained the goal of the committee: to increase interaction and collaboration between EAACI and the NAS. "If we want to be a high performing team, we need to understand and address the mutual challenges we face."

During the meeting, delegates shared their NAS' successes and challenges. "It was inspiring to hear what some of the small countries are accomplishing," said one delegate. "Size does not determine the impact you can make. We can learn so much from each other," she emphasised.

Newly-elected EAACI ISC Chair, Désirée Larenas Linnemann (Mexico) explained that the ISC contains a subset of the NAS who are EAACI members from countries outside of Europe. Their activities include: stimulating individual members of ISC countries to submit best research abstracts, take the EAACI knowledge exam, and participate in guideline formation. In return, the countries ask for EAACI support with Atlas and Guideline dissemination.

In another session, EAACI Junior Member Andrea Vereda noted the urgent need to combine forces to gain specialty recognition and change legislation. "I love the diversity and fulfilment involved in being an allergist," she said. However, Andrea's experience in practicing as specialist in Spain, France, the UK and Switzerland has required persistence, determination and flexibility.

The NASC will address these challenges by assigning country representatives to four EAACI working groups:

- 1. Specialty:** Ensuring allergy and clinical immunology becomes a full specialty/sub-specialty in all European countries (Each NAS assigns 1 representative)
- 2. Health economics:** Building a Taskforce to create a unified approach in collecting, analysing and disseminating health economics data to benefit all.



- 3. Guideline:** Helping to harmonise CPG for the diagnosis and management of allergic diseases across Europe;
- 4. EU lobbying for EU countries:** Increasing the visibility of allergic diseases for prioritisation in health policies at the EU and national levels. (Each NAS to encourage their country's Members of the European Parliament to join the "EU Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma".)

The Committee will also take actions as a Committee. They will:

- Establish Registers on European/International Guidelines, Allergy Care and Allergy Research
- Host the NAS Forum at the EAACI Congress (14 June 2016 in Vienna)
- Provide a constant flow of information (online, teleconferences and at least annual face-to-face meetings at EAACI Congresses)

During the final session, the NASC elected its Secretary, Nanna Fyhrquist, President of the Finnish Society of Allergology and Immunology. Nanna is currently Senior Investigator at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health on a project called 'Mapping of biomarkers to help discrimination between occupational allergic and irritant contact dermatitis.' (See box)

Key Facts - 46 delegates (representing 16,526 NAS members) attended this first meeting; 2 NAS joined since then. Feedback survey showed: 100% of delegates found the meeting valuable; 98% understand EAACI's strategic vision better; 89% believe we can raise allergy recognition if we work together.