

Welcome Speech by Professor Aristidis Tsatsakis, President of EUTOTOX

EUROTOX Strategic Meeting

51st Congress of the European Societies of Toxicology, Bridging Sciences for Safety

13th September 2015 Hotel Palacio do Freixo, Porto.

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to everyone, and thank you, for joining us, at the EUROTOX Strategic Member Society meeting. I would like to present my compliments to all academic colleagues participating in this strategic meeting and express to you my sincere pleasure for sharing this, I believe, significant moment for the advancement of the science of toxicology.

We have 52 participants from 34 countries gathered here today, making once again this strategic meeting after the one in Barcelona a truly Eurotox enterprise giving the opportunity to establish new scientific and professional bridges, in coherence to this years' theme of our Congress. Please allow me to introduce each one of you and welcome you in person.

I would like to present a special thanks to Felix Carvalho chairman of the organizing committee of EUROTOX 2015 and secretary general of EUROTOX. Please, allow me to stress that Felix is a valuable asset for EUROTOX, as he is working constantly hard and with great efficiency for EUROTOX'S interests and is also a charismatic personality. I am sure to say that all EC members enjoy to work with him and definitely, a great part of the success of this years' congress is due to his input and efforts as well as of his associates. I anticipate that this meeting will also be successful, as a result of the effective collaboration between all the committees involved.

The EUROTOX mission was and is to advance human, environmental and animal health by being the leading voice of toxicology in Europe. In order to achieve this purpose, EUROTOX must provide Europe with well-trained toxicologists and a system to recognize qualified toxicologists (ERT) to ensure the safety of society in general. One of the essential aim of EUROTOX is to facilitate and support the education process, and to harmonize and set training standards leading to ERT the EUROTOX Registered Toxicologist system. Therefore, it is required to promote the ERT system and set a solid basis for a specialization in toxicology.

We need to work and interact with European Authorities and international organizations with efforts to achieve worldwide recognition of toxicologists. In order to achieve these aims we seek the cooperation of national societies, as there are different regulations and laws involved in each state. EUROTOX organized 2 workshops this year in Basel and Vienna with the participation of the members of the ERT and Education Committees and invited experts fully dedicated to the development and improvement of the said issues.

The results of these workshops will be presented here and discussed further and they will be approved during our BCM and will be our roadmap for more recognition and harmonization of the ERT system and Excellency in Toxicology education, research and profession. I personally believed strongly to the success of this project and I was personally involved and dedicated to it, aiming to conclude the requirements before this strategic Meeting and BCM is written and well presented in a report which will be known in the history of EUROTOX as MartinMarieJohannaandallcommitteemembersandguests' report according to Martin, and shortly by me, as BM'JM'EDU'ERT'GT BaselVienna2015 report.

This report amongst others contains the material for Knowledge skills and competences for the core and specialized themes among other issues. It will be our coming Roadmap to foster toxicology education training and recognition for the professionals. I exceptionally want to thank Martin Wilks, chair, education subcommittee, and Bas Blaauboer chair, registration subcommittee, and especially Marie and Johanna for the excellent summaries of the two workshops which, I need to stress out, were of course the result of a great team effort of all the committee members and guests. In addition I must also underline the valuable contribution of Professor Heather Wallace not only for the editing abilities but also for excellent ideas and especially for her input in my conception for a two step registration ERT diploma and ERT expert in specialization, which in future will give the chance to the holders of these in future prestigious accreditations to gain more professionals rights and be able to be appointed to important professional positions in universities and the industry.

What the EUROTOX committees EDU/ERT and expert guests did was to update the ERT guidelines and conclude to a final list of topics identified as core themes and specialization themes for theoretical training. Knowledge, Skills, competences were also described for all these themes. That was a huge work and will be soon up in our website. Areas for additional revisions of the guidelines were also identified. There are needs of course for further harmonization of national processes with regard to the two routes for registration based on education and experience.

As regard to the said proposal for a two-part ERT system (basic ERT certification and ERT specialization) let me summarize the current situation and the proposed one. Currently, the ERT title is given to anyone who becomes a registered Toxicologist via their National Society Register. Each National Society has its own regulations and procedures for registration and re-registration of toxicologists. While the EUROTOX Guidelines for Registration 2012 have helped on the way to increase harmonization, it is evident that there are still substantial differences across National Registers in the way that the Guidelines are interpreted and applied. Furthermore, the ERT is only one of several ways to achieve professional recognition for toxicologists. The goal is to recognize the ERT as the preferred, the outstanding or otherwise the most regarded professional recognition for toxicologists in Europe. Basically, the proposed scheme is to set standards across Europe that can be achieved by all skilled as the basic ERT qualification and then allow for specialization at a later stage.

So the idea is to have a two-stage ERT process. Stage one – Basic ERT certification and stage two – ERT expert in specialization. Hence, let me present the suggested by Professor Wallace new model of ERT. Part one – is the Associate ERT. This will essentially be the basics of toxicology as outlined in the ERT guidelines - topics for theoretical training which can be achieved by training via courses or by learning while working in the area of toxicology, and part Part two – ERT or ERT (specialization) meaning that once the basic status is obtained candidates can apply for specialization and if granted they would become full ERT (i.e. not associate) or ERT (Immunotoxicology) or ERT (Biochemical Toxicology) in a specialization area where the candidate can show knowledge and skills.

Once the basic ERT certification is obtained, candidates can apply for specialization and if granted they may become an ERT expert or Specialist in a recognized area of toxicology, e.g. Immunotoxicology, Regulatory Toxicology, Ecotoxicology etc. Specialization will require the candidate to work in that area and to demonstrate knowledge and skills that actually relate to the specialty. As I mentioned before, the legal recognition of toxicology in Europe encompasses the issues for harmonization of recognition of the title of toxicology in Europe, as a specialty or as a specialization.

It is essential therefore to interact with the State authorities of a Member State (Ministry of Health or Environment) so as to formulate the basis for the recognition of toxicology either as a specialty or as a specialization in each Member State, in accordance to the process that each state follows for other professions.

Legal recognition of ERT by European Authority as DG Sanco, Directorate of Environment requires steps on harmonization of ERT requirements and standards

for submission of legal documentation to European Authority and can be adequately prepared by legal offices. With respect to the Recognition of the ERT qualification it is proposed to do further actions via the CEN standard on "Health risk assessment of chemicals .." as we feel that the CEN process will impact on ERT so it was agreed to aim to bring the contents of ERT to standardization as an aspirational goal.

I believe strongly that by ERT EUROTOX will succeed to accomplish a European "harmonisation" by creating common standards across the internal market by a consistency to what an ERT Toxicologist is, so that the same rules will apply to businesses that operate in more than one member State. This is an objective I feel for EUROTOX : To achieve uniformity in laws or regulations of member states regarding to ERT recognition so as to facilitate the professional toxicologists by setting and providing those high quality standards, ensuring thus the advancement of our science.

We will also discuss here the process for approval of courses by EUROTOX for the purposes of a) ERT registration and b) Continuing professional development and the EUROTOX EC will be asked to approve this process. Not to forget beside the Fellowship program which accepts applications for fellowships for recognized by EUROTOX courses. EUROTOX will continue to organize the so called Basic and Advanced EUROTOX Toxicology Courses. For the coming months one Basic course will be given in Zagreb, Croatia and one Specialized course will be given in Belgrade, Serbia organized both by the national societies in cooperation with EUROTOX education committee.

Much work lies ahead of us. Let us engage in this work in a collegial spirit, debating matters sometimes even from our opposing points of view but constructively, for the benefit of EUROTOX, for the benefit of safety and human and environmental health. I always look forward to work with all of you, to this effect.

With these words, I hope this strategic Meeting will encompass a forum to exchange scientific ideas, inspire new roadmap to promote the future of a promising development of the science of toxicology in Europe and all over the world. I also wish you a pleasant stay in the beautiful city of Porto.

I'm honored that I am in the position to open this Meeting.

Thank you very much