



EUROCARERS ANNUAL REPORT 2011

At the General Assembly of Eurocarers, held in Dublin on the 5th May 2011 two members, Åke Fagerberg (Sweden) and Hanneli Doehner (Germany) were elected to fill the vacancy created by completion of the terms of office of Henk Bakkerode and Sebastian Fischer.

1. Mr. Robert Anderson - President
2. Mr. Stanislav Trnovec – Vice-President
3. Mr. Giovanni Lamura – Vice-President
4. Mr. Frank Goodwin - Secretary
5. Ms. Hanneli Doehner – Member
6. Ms. Licia Boccaletti. - Member
7. Mr. Åke Fagerberg. – Member

At a subsequent meeting of the Executive Christine Marking and Marja Pijl were unanimously agreed as advisers.

Meetings of the Executive Board

Since the AGM in 2011 the Executive Committee met via teleconferences, every month with the exception of May '11 (AGM in Dublin, when there was an Exec. Meeting in person) and August and December (Holiday periods) which is a total of 10 meetings in the twelve month period. Many subjects were discussed and the workload of the Executive has increased due to the growing profile of informal care and Carers issues. The more Eurocarers presents Carers interests within the EU context the greater the demand to engage further with projects, make presentations and give considered opinions.

Information on some of these activities have been emailed to you during the year, as they occurred. Fuller details on all Executive activities will be circulated separately to all members, however, several acknowledgements need to be record in this section. Our special thanks to Christine Marking for all her work, which is well over and above her contract with Eurocarers. Our thanks to Marja Pijl for her continued contribution to our meetings and workload, which is both generous and substantial. Both Christine and Marja are advisers at the Executive meetings.

The secretarial workload continued to grow during 2011 and now needs to be addressed with extra support. With additional work being done on fundraising and project engagements there is positive indicators that this deficiency can be addressed in the latter part of 2012 or early 2013.

Our thanks to Liam O'Sullivan for his continued work on presenting our finances for each Exec. meeting and doing other day to day related transactions.

Communications with Members

Newsletter

Thanks to work of Giovanni Lamura, Vice President Research and our contributors of information and articles Eurocarers Newsletter was produced and circulated to all members and established as a regular source of news and updates. Giovanni has requested views and opinions of members about the content and what is most useful.

Website

The website is regarded as a priority link with members, in addition to the Newsletter and emails, however, the latter two have been more active during 2011 and the website needs more attention as we look to the coming year. New information including the Newsletter have been emailed directly to all members, however, we do need to develop a work-plan for the website to reach a wider audience of Carers and related agencies.

Emails

Emails are the most frequently used method of communications, both with the Executive Board members and our broad membership. They are both efficient and fast, though the workload in this area has increased dramatically in the last twelve months, especially in relation to the Exec. Board work, due to the growing awareness and interest in Carers issues.

The European Parliament Interest Group on Carers with a membership of MEPs, is under the chairperson of Marian Harkin MEP (Ireland).

During 2011 this continued to be an important means to influence European policy making and create higher visibility for carers/issues, and has therefore been given priority. This forum which is attended by a wide number of EU wide NGOs, in addition to the MEPs and Officials has played a strategic role in creating and increasing awareness about carers and carers contribution to family and society.

In addition during 2011 there were a number of submissions made and dialogue with key officials. These activities are reflected in the level of officials attending at the Interest Group meetings and the invitations Eurocarers received to (A) present carers opinions and perspectives at other meetings and (B) form partnerships in EU research projects.

Christine Marking continues to play a key role in this process and in addition produced regular overviews of developments in Europe, which were made available to member organisations. Members of the Exec. have been very active in all these areas and Henk Bakkerode has continued to directly support the work of the Exec. Board, which is much appreciated.

Bilateral contacts between members

One of the aims of Eurocarers is that the members will exchange information between themselves and learn from each other. The AGM provides an opportunity for this to happen. At the Dublin meeting there were presentations from several Eastern European countries, which were very informative and it is planned for a further exchange at the AGM in 2012 in Varberg. During 2011 contacts were developed with Poland and the Baltic states in particular and updates on progress made and the model utilised will be presented.

Membership

Over the past twelve months the membership has increased, thanks in particular to work of Henk Bakkerode. At the end of April 2012 Eurocarers had 62 members. The membership fees for 2012 (which overlap with the 2011 year, due to the date of the AGM) have been received from 37 organisations and a further 6 will pay their fees shortly. This leaves 19 members whose membership has to be verified and it is planned to have this completed by the end of May.

The General Assembly decided that for 2009 a reduced membership fee will be possible for organisations in East and Central European countries so that they pay 10% of the regular fee, to be increased with 10% every year. For organisations in other European countries the Executive is willing to consider a reduction of 50% if an organisation is unable to pay the full amount and puts its case before the Executive Committee. In the present difficult times some members required this facility to retain their membership. Some members are experiencing great difficulties financially and this decision on fees is supportive of these members.

Our thanks to Henk Bakkerode for all his work in increasing membership and also to Åke Fagerberg for his work particularly in relation to Poland and the Baltic States.

Finances

Eurocarers finances are always a priority for the Executive Board. We have received funds from the NGO and Private sector, which is vital to our work. Åke Fagerberg (Carers Sweden) as a member of the Executive Board has taken on the role of developing contacts with the private sector. A priority has been to consolidate existing contacts, especially in relation to the funding for our adviser's work and for the AGM and conference in 2012. In addition new contacts are being explored, to widen the net of contributors. Our particular thanks to SCA for their ongoing support during 2011 and into 2012, without which we could not fund our adviser work which is essential.

Other contributions have been received from member organisations and other NGOs agencies and, of course, our membership fees.

Secretariat

Without an income to finance a small secretariat it will be very difficult for the organisation to maintain its present level of activity, to expand its work and to build on the results so far achieved, therefore funds for this purpose is a priority for Eurocarers. Due to the activities of our policy advisor and several member organisations Eurocarers has achieved a high visibility in Brussels. Many MEPs recognise the enormous amount of work being done by Carers. In several documents published by the European Commission mention is made of the work of Carers and Carers are now named in the budget under 4 headings. This is a major achievement and a first step that must be developed by Eurocarers.

Policy work: A major challenge for Eurocarers is the active engagement of our member organisations, particularly with their MEPs and their responding to calls for action and support coming from the Executive Board or our Adviser. We realise that this is challenging for some member organisations, due to their structures, finances and level of local support, and these are matters that should be examined to find ways to make progress through partnerships and alliances.