

# The CEORL-HNS and its role in international collaboration

BY CEM MECO AND RICARD SIMO

‘Together we are strong’ just about sums up the nature of the CEORL-HNS, with international and interdisciplinary collaboration at the forefront of its mission. We hear more from two of the leading lights of the organisation.



Figure 1. The opening ceremony of the 4th European ORL-HNS Congress in October 2017 in Barcelona, reflecting the influence of the European congresses that function as an international melting pot to colleagues from almost 80 countries worldwide.

The Confederation of European Otorhinolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery (CEORL-HNS) or ‘the Confederation’ for short constitutes a robust platform in Europe for our specialty, demonstrating a perfect example for international collaborations. This article will reflect some of its important functions that enhance cross cultural links within and beyond Europe.

## Background and structure of the CEORL-HNS

To this date, the specialty of otorhinolaryngology, head and neck surgery (ORL-HNS) has achieved a high standard of international collaboration. Currently in Europe, our specialty is, without doubt, living its most unified period in its history despite the current political situations in many of its countries. The CEORL-HNS – founded nearly a decade ago - has achieved this undeniable success by uniting the forces of the former European Federation of Otorhinolaryngological Societies (EUFOS) and European Academy of ORL-HNS, embracing under its umbrella the membership of 42 different national societies and 15 European subspecialty societies. Additionally, the European

Union of Medical Specialties (UEMS) ORL-HNS Section and Association for European Board Examination (EBEORL-HNS) are all well-positioned within the constitution of the Confederation in a cross-matched network. The UEMS ORL-HNS promotes the harmonisation and quality improvement, assurance and certification of training among its members, and the EBEORL-HNS has been organising world-class examinations for the past 10 years. We should be proud of the fact that in the multinational, multicultural texture, different healthcare systems and training of the European countries we, as otorhinolaryngologists head and neck surgeons, managed to create such collaborative links and establish such a robust mother organisation as the CEORL-HNS.

The Confederation provides a natural European home and platform to all of its member national and subspecialty societies. Of course, every member society has their own agenda which may focus on different aims according to their own constitutions. Its ultimate aim, however, is to promote the scientific knowledge of the specialty, to develop the specialty in all its fields, to encourage continuous professional development and ultimately improve patient care. All member societies are certainly already competent in achieving their goals. Nevertheless, with the motto of ‘Together we are strong’, under the Confederation umbrella, individual aims and objectives can be merged to generate better, stronger intra-European solutions that could be spoken uniformly in Europe and beyond.

International collaboration has always been a priority for the Confederation. The level of international collaboration that has been reached by now clearly enhances the value of the specialty and subspecialties and raises worldwide interest. Two clear recent examples in 2018 have been the European

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Figure 2. The industry expo at the 4th European ORL-HNS Congress in October 2017 in Barcelona provided a large-scale interaction platform for thousands of colleagues from every corner of the world with the leading companies in our specialty.

Laryngological Society and the European Rhinological Society Congresses in London which have reached participants worldwide with a record number of international delegates and faculty from beyond Europe. The Confederation has already two co-opted intercontinental members, South Korea and Egypt, with whom regular interactions are being continuously undertaken. Not only with these countries but also with other worldwide intercontinental societies like the American Academy of ORL-HNS, further collaborations like contributing to each other's scientific meetings are regularly undertaken to improve relationships and enhance bonds worldwide.

### The Confederation biennial congress

In this regard, perhaps the most central activity of the Confederation up to now has been to organise European congresses biennially. After its 2017 congress in Barcelona (see Figure 1), its 5th Congress will be held in Brussels from 29 June to 3 July in 2019. Confederation meetings are the most important gatherings of our specialty in Europe and, as indicated, attract a large number of participants and collaborations worldwide. They not only unite us under one umbrella and harmonise all subspecialties in one platform but, more importantly, they boost the cross-cultural links among Europeans specialists and intercontinental guests. They also provide the largest scale interaction platform with the industry, supporting our specialty at its Expo zone (see Figure 2), so that the industry can reach not only every corner of our continent, but beyond to the rest of the world through the Confederation's cross-cultural links.

### Fellowship programmes

Another very important function of

the Confederation is the fellowship programmes awarded in all subspecialties. The chosen fellows, who have been already successful in the EBEORL-HNS exams, have the opportunity to participate in a clinical fellowship at a European host clinic for a year. Through this advanced educational programme, knowledge is being distributed at the highest level between the collaborating countries involved. To promote such cross-cultural links and distribution of knowledge in even larger numbers, the Confederation is further planning to establish educational programmes in the very near future all over Europe, but especially in regions in transition, where resources are scarce, in an effort to reach out and support their educational development. These international collaborations will be accomplished soon through organising seminars, courses and workshops, as well as short-term observational visitations in affiliated centres.

### The European Board Exam in Otorhinolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery (EBEORL-HNS)

Another true example of an intra-European international collaboration is the European Board Examinations. Both the written and oral parts of the EBEORL-HNS establish highest level cross-cultural interaction as it requires many faculty members for the successful implementation of the exam (see Figure 3). The questions are prepared according to the curriculum in the UEMS logbook, then reviewed and agreed upon by international examiners from all over Europe. In its effort to set a reliable threshold level of minimum knowledge as well as creating an extra qualification that harmonises and strengthens cross-cultural links among all parts of Europe, the board certification will surely play an

important role in our society. The European ORL-HNS community should support this already well-established intra-European collaboration that also attracts many non-Europeans due to its high quality.

Even though the political winds in the world and Europe are nowadays rough and focus solely on self-interests and protectionism that totally neglects others and disregards common welfare, the moral common sense, wisdom and the mutual benefits gained through international collaborations will surely turn this tide back. Achieving strong cross-cultural links through organisations like ours will devalue disaffection and distancing from others. At the end of the day, we are no different from each other and, if we proceed hand-in-hand, we can achieve more than we can alone. As a proof of this, in the highly diverse multinational, multicultural background of Europe, which has experienced numerous catastrophic wars and disasters in its past, the Confederation rises as a good functioning example for international collaboration focusing on stable and robust development and wellbeing of the ORL-HNS community.

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Figure 3. The board of examiners of the EBEORL-HNS at the last oral exam in Vienna in November 2018. They examined 134 registered candidates from all over the world, showing a perfect example of cross cultural international collaboration.

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