



Current Executive Committee (Trustees)

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Regional Vice President Northern Region:	Aila Rissanen (Finland)
Regional Vice President Middle Region:	Gabriela Roman (Romania)
Regional Vice President Southern Region:	Max Maislos (Israel)

Ex Officio

Childhood Obesity Task Force Chair:	Ram Weiss (Israel)
Obesity Management Task Force Chair:	Constantine Tsigos (Greece)
Prevention and Public Health Task Force Chairs:	Lauren Lissner (Sweden)
	Tommy Visscher (Netherlands)
Executive Director:	Euan Woodward (UK)

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1. A Message from the President

Welcome to the EASO's Strategic Plan 2010-2012

Following a period of steady development, EASO was registered as a UK charity in 2005 and this structured approach has resulted in a dramatic increase in the scope and reach of its activities. Because of this growth and also a desire to focus on complex European issues, the EASO Executive Committee reached the conclusion in 2009 that a flexible, consistent administration was required. Following detailed assessment and analysis, the EASO Executive Committee decided to establish its own administrative office which is now responsible for the administration of the Association, its committees, membership, Task Forces and congresses. This decision was endorsed and ratified by the EASO General Council in May 2009 and the EASO administrative office (EASO Secretariat) commenced operations on 1st September 2009. This administrative restructuring has allowed the Association to better serve its members and to adapt to new challenges, to new countries and to new and changing cultures.

Since the establishment of this new administrative structure, the EASO Executive Committee, in collaboration with our General Council, Task Forces and Scientific Advisory Board, has carried out a comprehensive analysis of obesity science in Europe (research, management and education) in relation to existing EASO activities. The results of this exercise have led to the development of this strategic plan (2010-2013).

The Scientific Advisory Board looked at a range of issues in all fields related to obesity, in effect conducting a SWOT analysis of obesity science in Europe. As part of the exercise, the EASO General Council, our governing body, was asked to address a number of issues specific to national associations and many members recommended strategic projects and activities which they felt EASO should carry out in order to meet our charitable objectives and to assist our National Association members. It is interesting to note that the recommendations of the scientific expert group match those of the General Council. The Executive Committee has taken all of this information into account and has developed a set of long term objectives, together with a clear action plan, which will help the Association to meet the needs of its membership and to address scientific and organisational challenges facing us as we enter a new decade.

EASO is a well organised, well managed association with a committed Executive Committee and membership. The development of a set of clear objectives, based on sound scientific analysis and most importantly, on the recommendations of our membership, will allow EASO to meet the challenges facing us in the coming years and to grow and develop in a professional but also flexible manner.

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2. EASO History and Structure

Established in 1986, EASO aims to promote research into obesity, facilitate contact between individuals and organisations, and promote action that tackles the epidemic of obesity.

The objects of EASO are:

- To promote the preservation and protection of health and relief of sickness for the public benefit in the field of obesity and its related disorders
- To promote research, the dissemination of the results of such research and exchange of scientific information in the field of obesity within Europe
- To develop a deeper understanding of how to achieve and maintain a healthy bodyweight, and to manage and prevent obesity and its related conditions by those engaged in the study of obesity - healthcare professionals, health related organisations, governments and the European community

EASO now has 31 member associations representing more than 4000 individuals in 32 countries. Through EASO, obesity is discussed in 28 languages!

Northern Region: Belgium; Denmark; Finland; Germany; Iceland; Ireland; Latvia; Netherlands; Norway; Russia; Sweden; United Kingdom.

Middle Region: Austria; Croatia; Czech Republic; France; Georgia; Hungary; Poland; Romania; Slovakia; Slovenia; Switzerland.

Southern Region: Bulgaria; Greece; Israel; Italy; Republic of Macedonia; Portugal; Serbia; Spain; Turkey.

Members come from a wide range of professions and include clinicians, scientists, allied health professionals working in the field of obesity research and education, opinion leaders and advocacy groups, health related organisations, governments, policy makers, representatives of UN Bodies and the international community.

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2.b) A Brief History of EASO

- 1986:** The European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO) was established as an individual membership association
- 1993:** EASO was registered as a non-profit organisation in Paris, France
- 1995:** EASO introduced awards for scientific excellence:
- the **Friedrich Wassermann Award** for senior scientists demonstrating a long standing contribution to the field
 - the **Young Investigator Awards** for Basic Science and For Clinical Research aimed at rising stars in Europe
- 1998:** The EASO General Council fundamentally amended the EASO bylaws, changing it from an individual member association to a country member association (similar to a federation).
- 2001:** EASO established three scientific Task Forces on
- Childhood Obesity
 - Obesity Management
 - Prevention and Public Health
- 2005:** EASO was registered, following General Council approval, as a charity in the UK (England & Wales). The General Council also agreed to divide EASO into three regions (North, Middle, South) and appointed three Regional Vice Presidents to the Executive Committee
- 2009:** EASO established its own Administrative Office
EASO established a Scientific Advisory Board

EASO is a 'Company Limited by Guarantee and not having a Share Capital' and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The association is managed by its Executive Committee which reports to its General Council. The Trustees of EASO are the officers of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee Members shall each hold office from the close of the Annual General Council meeting at which they are appointed to the close of the relevant Annual General Council Meeting at which their successor is appointed, unless they are reappointed by the General Council for a further non-renewable term.

The General Council (voting membership) of EASO comprises the Adhering Bodies - the principal national society, academy, national research council or other appropriate scientific group for the study of obesity whose aims meet the objectives of EASO and which is duly recognised and approved by the Executive Committee as the Adhering Body designated for any European country. No nation may have more than one Adhering Body, but an Adhering Body may represent multiple countries.

3. EASO Learned Activities (Current)

EASO is a leading biomedical association in Europe with networks in over 30 countries. It hosts the annual European Congress on Obesity (ECO), has dynamic and active Task Forces, organises educational activities throughout the region and plays a major role in EU/WHO projects.

3.a) The EASO Scientific Advisory Board (SAB)

Established in late 2009, the EASO SAB is a temporary 'Think Tank' which was created to carry out an independent consultation on key scientific and organisational issues with the aim of 'painting a landscape' of obesity research and management in Europe. Together with input from EASO's member National Associations and Task Forces, the findings and recommendations of the SAB form the basis of this strategic document - as the EASO Executive Committee wish to develop EASO's strategy based on sound scientific analysis.

The SAB has not only helped EASO to understand the current strengths and weaknesses of obesity prevention, management and research in Europe - it will also help the Association to promote excellence in science, to develop an exchange of scientific ideas and a transfer of knowledge to younger scientists in Europe.

3.b) The European Congress on Obesity (ECO)

The ECO is EASO's flagship annual event. It is the most important annual scientific event on obesity in Europe. The objectives of the ECO are:

- To provide an annual forum for the dissemination of information about research advances in the field of obesity
- To identify, debate and promote innovative preventive and treatment strategies to reduce the prevalence of obesity and its associated burden of diseases

The ECO is truly international, attracting more than 2500 participants from over 75 countries. Participants are nutritionists, clinicians, practitioners, researchers - all experts and key opinion leaders in the field of obesity and its related conditions. The interdisciplinary nature of Obesity research and education allows the programme to address key issues on Obesity and its many co-morbidities.

3.c) The EASO Björntorp Symposium

The Björntorp Symposium is EASO's highest level educational meeting. The inaugural EASO Björntorp Symposium took place in March 2009 and created an invaluable opportunity for intense in-depth scientific exchange between experienced internationally renowned scientists and younger research fellows from around Europe.

Chaired by Professor Thorkild Sørensen (Denmark), the Symposium was attended by 15 international speakers and 40 European delegates (5 local students). The scientific programme featured some of the world's leading experts in Obesity Research. In addition to frequently drawing the lines back in history to Professor Per Björntorp's impressive contributions to the research in the field of the differential roles of the various adipose compartments in obesity, it also unfolded the current state-of-the art in the field. Novel aspects of regulation of adipogenesis, body imaging technology, adipose transcriptomics, adipose tissue cellularity and dynamics, regulatory mechanisms of fat transport by adipocytes, brown-white adipocyte transdifferentiation, inflammatory reactions to death of adipocytes, the vasocrine hypothesis about the role of the peri-arterial adipose tissue, regional differences in fatty acid metabolism, gender differences in the regulatory role of the HPA axis and the sex hormones, the metabolic syndrome

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components and cardiovascular risk, differential roles of specific abdominal fat depots, obesity-related insulin resistance in childhood, and the public health implications were addressed.

The concept, the organisation and especially the extremely high scientific level were warmly received by all participants. All participants were asked to submit comments and suggestions and it is clear that a regular Björntorp Symposium of this nature would be popular. Many participants submitted very helpful suggestions which would allow us to improve the meeting, particularly by increasing the scientific involvement of the younger participants.

3.d) EASO Task Force Activities

EASO's Task Forces, covering **Childhood Obesity (COTF)**, **Obesity Management (OMTF)** and **Prevention and Public Health (PPHTF)**, are now very active.

The Task Forces reflect the goals of EASO:

- Enhancing understanding and treatment of obesity across Europe
- Improving the quality of obesity education in Europe
- Developing a coherent approach to obesity management throughout Europe
- Forging European and global links between individuals and organisations concerned with the study of obesity
- Connecting active researchers from diverse disciplines who contribute to the development of a European perspective on obesity
- Providing optimal input at the international level from this European perspective

In each of these areas, EASO Task Forces engage in important activities at a European level. This not only increases the standard of research, management and patient care in Europe, but raises awareness of obesity and its related disorders in Brussels and beyond.

EASO Task Force activities include:

- Educational Courses
- Symposia and Satellite Meetings
- EU/WHO Projects
- Management Guidelines (see www.easo.org/links)
- Centres of Excellence Accreditation Programmes
- Scientific Networking Programmes
- Research and Management Exchange Programmes

In addition to ongoing projects, the EASO Task Forces carried out a number of important initiatives in 2009.

- **The EASO Childhood Obesity Task Force (COTF)**

The COTF held a practical workshop during ECO2009 entitled 'Integrated prevention and management of childhood obesity'. The workshop was attended by approximately 100 participants and presentations were delivered by a mix of local and European experts.

The COTF has recently completed a set of 'Practical Tips for Primary Care'. The paper is not a full set of guidelines but a brief overview of practical tips and was published in *Obesity Facts* in January 2010. Thereafter it will be available via the EASO website and COTF will then embark on a project to translate the paper into as many European languages as possible.

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➤ The EASO Obesity Management Task Force (OMTF)

The OMTF held a very successful educational course in Kiev (as noted above).

The OMTF acts as the European Accreditation group for SCOPE and has been asked to respond to a questionnaire on SCOPE which addresses the issue of SCOPE's possible future management in Europe by EASO via the OMTF - results are currently being analysed.

The OMTF continues to address the issue of European Centres of Excellence (and specifically setting criteria for such centres). The project is ongoing and further information will be made available via the EASO website in due course.

➤ The EASO Prevention and Public Health Task Force (PPHTF)

The PPHTF organised a very successful pre congress meeting as part of ECO2009. Entitled 'cross-European community interventions and studies to prevent obesity', the meeting featured update presentations from major EU projects and incorporated informal networking and discussion sessions. The PPHTF represents EASO in a number of EU projects, including the EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

The next PPHTF prevention satellite will be Chaired by Lauren Lissner, Finn Rasmussen and Tommy Visscher and will be an official satellite of ICO2010. The meeting will cover issues specific to prevention in Europe and will be financially supported by EASO.

3.e) Obesity Facts



A key EASO development in 2008 was the launch of *Obesity Facts* as an official journal of EASO.

Obesity Facts, the European Journal of Obesity, provides EASO and its members with an important additional platform for disseminating new research achievements in our field and increases publication opportunities for the many researchers and clinicians who now work in this important field.

Obesity Facts publishes articles covering all aspects of obesity, in particular epidemiology, etiology and pathogenesis, treatment, and the prevention of adiposity. As obesity is related to many disease processes, the journal is also dedicated to all topics pertaining to comorbidity and covers psychological and sociocultural aspects as well as influences of nutrition and exercise on body weight. The editors carefully select papers to present only the most recent findings in clinical practice and research. All professionals concerned with obesity issues will find this journal a most valuable update to keep them abreast of the latest scientific developments.

Obesity Facts has now gained Medline indexation. Articles will be listed beginning with volume 1 of the journal. This means that all articles published thus far in the journal will be available via Medline. *Obesity Facts* is published by Karger and all EASO members are entitled to a heavily discounted EASO Member subscription rate.

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3.f) EASO Young Investigators United



EASO's Young Investigators United (YIU) was established in 2005 now attracts a growing number of young investigators to its annual scientific and social sessions.

The aims of the YIU are:

- To facilitate the networking of young European scientists
- To provide an arena for the exchange of ideas and best practices between experts and experts-to-come
- To facilitate and promote the application process for EASO's Young Investigator Awards, the EASO YIU Best Thesis Award and travel grants

EASO aims to integrate this initiative with those in related societies and all Young Investigators, whether in academia or industry are encouraged to register their profile and start networking!

4. EASO SWOT - An Analysis of EASO's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Purpose

The analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) enables the Executive Committee to identify the issues that affect short and long term planning. The SWOT analysis is one of a series of tools that the Executive Committee use to continuously review the position of the Association. For the purposes of this review, the Executive Committee sought advice from EASO's National Association members, from the Scientific Advisory Board and from the EASO Task Forces. The Executive Committee formulate policies that build on the strengths, seek to mitigate the weaknesses, seize the opportunities and avert the threats, turning them to opportunities where possible.

Strengths

- Strong Governance
- Financially Secure
- Regular Income Stream (ECO)
- Strong Annual Congress
- Scientific Reputation

Weaknesses

- Low brand awareness and limited media activity (profile)
- Relatively inactive membership
- No previously existing strategic plan/vision
- Sole Regular Income Stream (ECO)
- Minimal formal liaison with related societies and minimal formal collaboration with EU Projects

Opportunities

- Strategic plan development
- Galvanise membership/improve communication with members
- Scientific/educational activities (raising profile)
- Diversification of Task Force Activity
- Establishment of a Scientific Advisory Board
- EU Projects (raising profile)
- Liaison with other scientific/medical associations
- EASO coordinated scientific networking
- Industry engagement
- Marketing campaign (brand awareness)
- Website development

Threats

- Reduced pharmaceutical industry involvement in field
- Other societies entering Obesity field
- Economic crisis (in relation to the success of ECOs)
- Rival congresses

5. Structured Recommendations

What Should EASO Do? A synthesis of Scientific Advisory Board and National Association Recommendations

EASO's National Member Associations and its Scientific Advisory Board have been consulted on a number of issues that affect obesity science and the administration of that science across Europe. Following extensive analysis of responses to questionnaires and face-to-face meetings, recommendations can be categorised in three clear groups:

- 1) Education
- 2) Collaboration/Dissemination
- 3) Recognition

1) Education

1.a) EASO should raise the level of education across Europe by organising workshops and educational courses (via its Task Forces) in developing countries (developing in terms of obesity science). Stand alone EASO courses and workshops organised in a particular country - covering a range of issues relevant to obesity and specific to each country (management, basic, childhood, nutrition, global approaches etc.).

1.b) EASO should continue to develop (clinical) guidelines but these should be evidence and given fresh impetus by being developed by Young Investigators. EASO management guidelines on a range of issues relevant to the treatment of obesity. Where possible, guidelines should be translated. This would be augmented by the development of teaching materials such as slide kits from ECOs.

1.c) EASO should offer advanced level education - e.g. Björntorp Symposia.

1.d) EASO Executive Committee and Task Force members (i.e. the top European experts) should assist national Association educational activities by participating as speakers in National meetings.

1.e) EASO organised exchange programmes (secondments) across Europe - between collaborating centres and National Associations.

1.f) EASO Grants - travel grants and research grants which are widely advertised and available.

1.g) EASO Awards for Young Investigators - again, widely advertised and available. 5.a) Access to literature and translated materials

1.h) Opportunities to present work at ECOs - perhaps via a developing country/meet the expert session where practitioners in developing countries can present their work to European experts and receive feedback.

1.i) It was suggested that until obesity is a recognised specialty there is little role for training 'obesity specialists'. Training should be developed specifically for other specialties e.g. Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Hepatology, respiratory.

1.j) SCOPE is seen as too broad and ambitious. It is also felt that it is not EASO's role to accredit specialists in Europe - at least not until obesity (management) is legally (or officially) regarded as a sub specialty.

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2) Collaboration/Dissemination

2.a) EASO should be a driving force behind joint studies and networks. It should indeed facilitate collaborations - possibly via a system of EASO Collaborating Centres.

2.b) Exchange Programmes (secondments). EASO should facilitate scientific exchanges across Europe.

2.c) The development of EU project collaborations - i.e. facilitating National Association participation in EU projects.

2.d) EASO should be an automatic collaborating partner (work-package on dissemination) on all EU consortia. Also, EASO should invite existing projects to present data and hold project meetings at the ECO.

2.e) EASO should link with other medical specialties - e.g. hold specialist meetings at large congresses (respiratory, diabetes, pregnancy, sleep etc.). Develop joint guidelines and position statements.

2.f) EASO should facilitate collaboration between industry and basic science groups - thus involving industry at an early stage of study developments. whilst there is little (pharmaceutical) industry to interact with at present, EASO should interact carefully with industry. Industry collaborations (e.g. Corporate Advisory Board) should be as broad as possible and cover a variety of sectors. Surgical manufacturers seem the most likely to be investing over next few years.

2.g) EASO should have a systematic approach to dissemination via *Obesity Facts*.

2.h) EASO and the ECO should be a forum for presentation/discussion
e.g. increase the role of basic science in EASO via Task Forces and ECO programmes

2.i) the development of EASO clinical studies (on a number of issues) across Europe.

3) Recognition/Monitoring

3.a) Development of Collaborating Centres (of Excellence) across Europe.

3.b) Develop tools to monitor the best obesity science in Europe.

3.c) Systematic assessment of obesity research in Europe.

3.d) Recognition of the clinical management of obesity as a specialty (at EU and National levels). This should be a coordinated message from the EASO General Council to the EU Commission. Lobbying at EU Commission level to have obesity recognised as a chronic, treatable disease. In essence, lobbying to have obesity recognised as a sub specialty.

3.e) Communication to primary physicians (GPs) and importantly young clinicians that obesity is a sub specialty that can compete with other disciplines for prestige.

3.f) EASO should promote the general field of obesity in Europe.

6. Longer Term Strategic Objectives

The objectives of the association will reflect the recommendations of our member National Associations and our Scientific Advisory Board and will be implemented by the EASO Executive Committee and Task Forces. EASO will develop activities that promote research, management and education across Europe, in particular in developing areas. EASO activities will raise the profile of obesity, and of obesity projects in the region.

Objectives are split into the three 'recommendation' areas, as follows:

1) Education

1.a) EASO will organise the annual ECO, in collaboration each year with the relevant National Association. EASO will develop opportunities for members in developing countries to present their work at the ECO. This will be done via regional sessions and 'Meet the Expert' sessions, where work is presented and relevant feedback given by relevant Key Opinion Leaders. EASO and the ECO should be a forum for presentation/discussion - e.g. increase the role of basic science in EASO via Task Forces and ECO programmes

1.b) EASO will organise educational workshops and sessions around Europe on subjects that are proposed by National Associations. Each EASO Task Force will aim to organise one workshop per year, either as part of the annual ECO, as part of a National Association meeting or as a stand-alone meeting. Executive Committee members, where requested, will also participate in additional educational courses (see Kiev 2009) organised by National Associations.

1.c) EASO will develop clinical guidelines on relevant subjects, where possible in collaboration with sister societies. These guidelines will be evidence based and will be published in obesity Facts and/or any other relevant scientific journal. Where possible, guidelines will be developed by Young Investigators.

1.d) EASO will organise a biennial Björntorp Symposium, focussing on a very specific topic but translating from science to treatment.

1.e) EASO will present scientific awards at each ECO. EASO will award travel grants at each ECO.

2) Collaboration/Dissemination

2.a) EASO will act as a facilitator for European collaborations (scientific networks). This will be managed in the first instance via the OMTF Collaborating Centres scheme.

2.b) EASO will establish a European Exchange Programme (secondment programme). This will be managed in the first instance via the OMTF Collaborating Centres scheme.

2.c) EASO will act as a disseminating partner in all relevant EU Projects. EASO will, where relevant, submit proposals to EU calls. This will be done only if the proposal is communication based. If calls are scientific, they should be coordinated within the university system but EASO can act as a collaborating partner.

2.d) EASO will establish formal links with sister societies in Europe. These links will range from website links to joint sessions, guideline development, joint meetings and joint projects.

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2.e) EASO will facilitate collaboration between industry and basic science groups - thus involving industry at an early stage of study developments.

2.f) EASO will interact with industry via its Corporate Advisory Board.

2.g) EASO will have a systematic approach to dissemination via *Obesity Facts*. This will be done via meeting reports (Björntorp), guidelines, discussion papers and editorials.

3) Recognition/Monitoring

3.a) EASO will develop Collaborating Centres (of Excellence) across Europe, via its OMTF.

3.b) EASO will develop tools to monitor the best obesity science in Europe and will carry out a systematic assessment of this obesity research. Assessments will be disseminated via *Obesity Facts*.

3.c) EASO will work towards the recognition of the clinical management of obesity as a specialty (at EU and National levels). This should be a coordinated message from the EASO General Council to the EU Commission. EASO will engage in lobbying at EU Commission level to have obesity recognised as a chronic, treatable disease.

3.d) EASO will communicate with primary physicians (GPS) and importantly young clinicians to emphasise that obesity is a sub specialty that can compete with other disciplines for prestige. This will be done via collaborations with sister societies, involvement in EU projects, discussion papers and editorial in relevant scientific journals and via the EASO website.