

*European
Operating Room Nurses
Association*

(EORNA)

A Twenty Year History

1980-2000

FOREWORD:

In compiling this history I have taken direction from the records of meetings and from interim correspondence and reports in an effort to give an account which is as accurate as possible.

In attempting to present the history in as succinct a manner as possible only key pointers that made an impact at the time of their occurrence have been selected. Much more could have been included in a more detailed presentation. However that then becomes almost an arduous report rather than a readable story, as was the intention here. Further specific details can be found in the Association's archives within NATN in the UK. Language has also been kept simple to enable easy reading by colleagues less familiar with the English language.

In writing this piece of work it would have been very easy to have selected only the more favourable and happier events within the saga of EORNA's development. However that would not have reflected the true picture which is one of struggle and conflict as well as fun, excitement and progression- very much like our own lives.

We have experienced disappointment, surprise, delight, horror, puzzlement, sadness and even anger- but above all we have shared a great sense of achievement. We have learned from our mistakes and endeavoured to avoid further pitfalls. We have remained true to our principles and sought to retain a professional approach through both the good and the more difficult times. Not only have we survived – but also we have produced some excellent work and provided much help and guidance to our colleagues across Europe.

This account finishes with the achievement of the second European Congress in Bergen. I feel certain that in another twenty years there will be a need for a further volume covering the first twenty years of the new century.

In closing this foreword I pay tribute to those early nurses who saw the value in sharing their experiences, and who laid the foundations on which EORNA has been built. I also commend the commitment of the EORNA Board who over the last ten years have taken up the chalice and brought EORNA to its status as a flourishing professional organisation entering the year 2000.

I wish you all every success for the future.

Margaret S Brett
Past President/ Secretary EORNA

The European Operating Room Nurses Association - the first twenty years

In the Beginning:

During the latter half of the twentieth century operating room nurses around the world were gradually finding the benefits of mutual support from peer colleagues working within the same speciality. In several major countries national groups of nurses working within the speciality were appearing and more formal organisations were developing from these groups. As they grew in both numbers and activities Annual National Conferences became a feature of those Organisations

The early simultaneous growth in the travel industry led to opportunities for the more adventurous of nurses to consider exploring not only what was happening in various parts of their own country, but also what was developing in neighbouring and indeed overseas organisations. Thus it was that some theatre nurses at that time found themselves recognising familiar faces at various events to which they had travelled. They became aware that many of the issues being raised by both the conference host country and some of its visitors reflected some of the concerns and developments occurring within their own practice and their own organisations. As they discussed matters further in the more informal settings of the social aspects of the events an inevitable bond began to develop between members of the European countries. It was during their informal get together at the second World Conference of Operating Room Nurses in 1980 that they discussed the possibility of establishing regular meetings of representatives from European Countries.

So it was that at the National Association Theatre Nurses (NATN) 1981 conference in Brighton in the United Kingdom (UK) that the first recorded meeting of the new group was held. It was hosted by Nancy Cox and Phillip Clarke from the UK with representation from Germany by Margot Ende, Ireland by Eileen Malone, Norway by Berit Bathen and Denmark by Lena Noerkjaer. Other countries unable to attend on that date had expressed interest, and information of the meeting was forwarded to them after the event. Lena Noerkjaer recalled the enthusiasm of the early group during one of her presentations during her time as President of the later European Group.

In 1982 was the first seedling of a European conference as speakers from Denmark, Norway, Holland and Germany presented papers at a European day, which preceded the main National Conference in the UK. The event proved a great success and the group maintained its contacts with each other through meetings held to co-inside with Theatre Nurses Conferences throughout Europe. An interim newsletter kept everybody in touch. Issues in those early days related to the familiar topics of recruitment difficulties, staff education and non-trained work force.

Over the next few years this situation continued and France took over the co-ordinating role on an informal basis by common consent.

It was generally agreed that this role should be undertaken by each country in turn, although consideration had to be given to the limitations of both experience and resources available within some smaller organisations. No central funding was available therefore all individual expenses were covered by the national country of representation.

Elizabeth Marmet as lead co-ordinator for France was at that time herself undergoing University studies around the roles in different countries and encouraged exploration of many pertinent issues relating to Operating Room Nursing. Information was collected on tasks, roles and responsibilities in different countries. Sadly records were not retained of all such information. As the focus on different topics developed so more countries became interested in joining the discussions.

Expansion of the early group:

Simultaneously during this period there was much International and European debate around the developments in Trade and Industry across Europe leading to the promise of a new Open Europe encouraging Free Movement of people, goods, trade and chattels.

To date there had been no formal co-ordination of the group, and very little was recorded of the activities over those early years. However at the meeting in Paris in 1989 attention was turned to the implications of the proposed new Europe and what this might mean for Operating Department Nursing. It was felt the group should be considering how it might work towards some standardisation of practice across Europe. The French group were requesting to be relieved of the co-ordination, and so it was in March 1990 in Lyon that NATN were asked to take on the co-ordination again for a three-year period after which it was to move to another country.

Later that year in Mannheim, Germany, saw the foundations of an agreement for future working of the group. The following points were agreed;

- ❖ Only Two people should represent their Association at any meeting
- ❖ It should be the same two for as long as possible
- ❖ At least one of them should attend for a minimum of two years
- ❖ A summary of previous meetings be sent to all countries as soon as possible
- ❖ Topics for discussion at the next meeting would also be circulated.

These points were set down to resolve problems around number of attendees, knowledge of the business of the group, and awareness of previous discussions. Twelve countries had now joined the group, but lack of continuity and understanding amongst members meant much valuable time was lost going over old ground each time. Language was also a great problem at this stage.

The holding of the next meeting at the European Commission in Luxembourg with full simultaneous translation proved to be one of the greatest landmarks in the group's development. For the first time, all present could understand and participate fully in the discussions, and many in attendance expressed a feeling of real 'togetherness' and a great sense of progress. The group by now had grown to sixteen member countries and the issue of whether all European Countries or only European Community Countries should be entitled to join was raised. Finance and general organisation discussions decided that an annual subscription would be needed to fund the group and that an agreed Constitution was urgently needed.

In that same year a new European Newsletter was launched with contributions from individual member countries being co-ordinated by NATN.

Having decided that the group should become more formal, members realised there were a number of issues relating to potential membership, legal standing and overlap with other groups for which they needed further help and guidance.

October that year saw another successful European day preceding the Annual NATN Conference in Harrogate with speakers from many of the member countries.

Their next meeting followed the conference in Harrogate where Sue Russell from the Royal College of Nursing's European Office joined them. Maureen Bonner and Sue Vincent, as co-ordinators, had met earlier with Sue and with Dame Sheila Quinn- the President of the Standing Committee of European Nurses to raise many of the issues of concern to the group.

Following that meeting work commenced on laying the foundations of a more formal, professional European Organisation; membership of which would be through National Associations who represented Theatre Nurses in each country

Moving to a more formal Organisation:

The beginning of 1992 was even more important for the European group than it was for the rest of Europe- but for slightly different reasons. In April in Copenhagen the more formal European Operating Room Nurses Association (EORNA) was born.

The drafting of the early Constitution was not however so quickly resolved as the name of EORNA. Indeed it took two years before an initial Constitution was finally agreed having been scrutinised by each national Organisation and by the relevant Legal Advice Consultants. Curiously enough the wish to ensure the correct legal standing of such a document has provided an ongoing challenge as the group sought to gain international registration through their organisational member group VVOV In Brussels.

Prior to the Copenhagen meeting it had been decided that the group needed to consider introducing a European Curriculum as part of its standardisation of operating room nursing practice. Representation therefore changed to one clinical and one educational person at future meetings. As the UK co-ordinators Sue Vincent and Margaret Brett undertook the roles of Secretary & Treasurer, and as the educational adviser it was Margaret who led the curriculum development over the next few years.

Copenhagen proved a landmark meeting in that a number of strategic plans were agreed which included establishment of appropriate currency for group finances, application for European grants to support funding of activities, exploration of the possibility of a European Conference, voting system for election of Officers and an agreement to find a suitable Logo for the Association. The Newsletter was becoming a major issue due to its escalating costs and its future was heavily debated. Systems of working were established which ensured full consultation and/or participation by all members in every aspect of the organisation.



Membership by now included representatives from National Organisations in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, Austria, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom.

Ratification of first Officers and a Logo:

When the group met later that year in Portugal it was to ratify the appointment of Lena Noerkjaer from Denmark as its first President. Lena had been with the group from the beginning and was herself a practising operating room nurse in a clinic in Copenhagen. Unfortunately some countries had been nominated for the Vice Presidency without their agreement and having withdrawn from the voting it left no formal nominations. The group therefore agreed that as the unsuccessful contender for the President role Danielle Mora from France should become the first Vice President. These four officers would meet before the next meeting to draft out the election timetable, the roles of each officer, and the conduct of the meetings.

Membership remained a discussion topic as countries debated the issue as to whether direct membership of Permanent Committee Nursing (PCN) should be a criteria for membership of this group, and whether non nurses from organisations of mixed professionals should be allowed to represent nurses.

The PCN membership was felt not to be a relevant criteria- however the non-nurse representation issue bubbled up regularly over several meetings until it was solved by saying they could represent their organisation and join in the discussions, but they could not vote on pure nursing issues.

The ratification of the four Officers at this meeting was accompanied by the agreement to adopt the design tabled by AICO from Italy for the Association Logo. Thus further foundations of the organisation had been laid in November 1992 in Portugal.





The existing officers at a small special meeting in Paris drafted the schedule of appointment of Officers for the future. It was proposed officers serve for a three-year term, with each new post changing in rotation over the three years to enable continuity within those leading the organisation. It was recognised that NATN were coming to the end of their term as co-ordinators, and therefore a new country would be required to undertake the role of treasurer and secretary the following year. This set the precedence for the changeover of other Officers. It was therefore agreed that the first Vice President would serve for just two years thus changing to a new Vice President ahead of the change of President. This would mean that the co-ordinators would change in year one, the Vice President in year two and the President in year three. Following Officers would each then serve a three-year term in a rolling pattern of change, which ensured continuity within the top table at meetings. It was also agreed that in order to avoid a monopoly of the organisation by any one country Officers could only serve for a three-year term in representing their own Organisation. Because of potential costs of future meetings for Officers it was decided they should hold their own meetings prior to the main meeting to confirm details of the agenda items, and following the main meeting to allocate responsibilities in dealing with issues raised during the meeting. In this way only an extra night's accommodation would be required for the Officers at the main meeting without the expense of an additional meeting.

These proposals were tabled at the next full meeting of EORNA in Spain the following year (1993) and formally adopted by the group. At that same meeting the initial Constitution was agreed with a decision to review it in two years time once the Association had experienced its implications and had opportunity to decide its suitability for the future.

EORNA's emergence from the Chrysalis:

Even at this early stage of its development the importance of such an organisation was fast being recognised by authorities in individual countries. As each Association hosted a meeting there was a desire to demonstrate the hospitality and the special features of that country, and therefore a number of local and national civic receptions were offered. Although this brought a tremendous boost for the host organisation and to EORNA itself it was also bringing some problems in terms of meeting schedules.



Whilst all this was very pleasant and brought some respite from the concentration of the now two-day meetings, concern was growing that these were encroaching upon valuable work time. It was therefore agreed that social aspects of the meeting must be held the day before, the day after or in the evenings to enable business to be completed.

Members however were anxious to ensure that the name of EORNA was recognised in each country and therefore a letter of introduction of the Association was drafted to be sent to each member country's National Body.

Following discussions around a European Conference at earlier meetings Greece had offered to host the first such event in 1994. However during the meeting in Spain members expressed deep concern as to the readiness of the Association to undertake such an experience, and it was therefore agreed to decline Greece's offer at this time and to wait until the Association was a little stronger before embarking on such an event.

Having devoted time at each meeting to the curriculum this was now progressing well.

EORNA's style was to allow all member countries to participate fully in each aspect of its development. It was recognised that other European Curricula such as that produced

by the Cancer nurses had been produced by a small working group and then adopted by the larger Organisation.

EORNA saw value in the encouragement of ownership through participation and contribution by both those countries with a stronger educational base such as Finland, Sweden and United Kingdom and those who were new to the formal educational approach. An expression of impatience from some countries was tempered with a caution from others of the need to ensure all aspects were carefully considered thus producing a quality piece of work.

The news that EORNA's application for European funding had not been successful was a blow to the organisation who were again experiencing financial difficulties mainly because of the burden of the outgoings associated with the Newsletter. It was therefore unanimously agreed at the autumn meeting in Italy in 1993 to abandon the newsletter. Some consolation was felt from the knowledge that early approaches had been made by product companies who had expressed an interest in offering certain support to the organisation. However some members were reluctant to become involved in this way as they felt the organisation could be 'used' to benefit the company and that this was an inappropriate way forward. However after considerable discussion a list of areas were agreed as suitable for sponsorship and a document drafted for the benefit of any interested company, identifying specific aspects that could be considered for support.

Simultaneous translation at that meeting in Italy again allowed for greater understanding of participants and several important issues were clarified. Membership continued to be discussed, as did promotion of the Organisation. A flyer to this effect was tabled and agreed, and it was confirmed membership was only through National Associations - not individual applications. The news that Italy had registered the Logo on behalf of EORNA was a further step in the legalisation of the organisation.

Some members of the group reported their concerns at hearing that the American Association was seeking to start its own European Group. Sue Vincent, as one of the co-ordinators, undertook to write to them on behalf of the Association- and later was able to reassure EORNA members that no such group would be going ahead. Even at this stage in the organisation's development the co-ordinators were experiencing considerable difficulties in getting responses to their communications between meetings. Members were urged to reply to all such correspondence, and to contact the co-ordinators if they had not received papers in advance of meetings. It became apparent that packages sent to organisations were not always forwarded to the individual representatives, and this was leading to time wasted at meetings as members were unaware of what was expected of them and had not undertaken relevant preparations.

A form designed to confirm receipt of the package was to be enclosed with all future despatches to enable co-ordinators to confirm that papers had arrived safely. Whilst

this went some small way to easing some problems, the issue of communication in general persisted throughout the earlier years in spite of a number of strategies developed to overcome the difficulties.

As NATN were due to relinquish their role as co-ordinators VVOV – the Flemish speaking Belgium Association- were duly elected to work with NATN for the coming year before undertaking the role themselves in 1994.



Another new boundary was crossed when EORNA was invited to send a representative to speak at the Portuguese national conference in May 1994. Margaret Brett attended and presented the first of many papers on behalf of EORNA as over the next few years several requests and invitations were received for speakers to participate in both professional nursing conferences and those for industry.

Agreement for the First EORNA Conference:

As pending co-ordinators for the Association at the following meeting in Sweden VVOV presented an offer to host the first EORNA conference. As earlier several countries were hesitant about the prospect of such an activity- but the majority were in support of VVOV exploring the possibilities for a conference to be held in Belgium. It was thought the conference could be in 1996- giving time for preparation. With the World Congress due to take place in Hamburg in 1995 much discussion was given as to how EORNA's profile could be raised during that event.

The secretary reported an increasing number of letters from different countries enquiring about EORNA and seeking the Association's views on aspects of operating room practice. This clearly indicated EORNA's fame was growing.

The time had come for a registered address for the Association and a post-box address in Belgium was considered the most suitable, with Ivo Schoeters from VVOV agreeing to set this up and undertake collections on behalf of the organisation.

EORNA now had elected Officers, a registered name and logo, a permanent address, Terms of Reference, guidelines for the Conduct of Meetings and a Constitution. The Association was now truly established.

The group were also advised that they had been invited to attend the next PCN meeting and the President agreed to attend on their behalf.

Not only were they now well established as an organisation, but also they left the Sweden meeting having agreed both the content and format of the modules, which would comprise the European Curriculum. The next meeting was to consider aspects of its assessment.

When the group next met in Greece later that year several more markers in history were laid down. During that meeting approval was given for the Congress planning to go ahead and the title of Benefit of Teamwork was agreed to support the proposed theme of the event which would now be in 1997. The group agreed to accept the offer of the German members from DBFK to share their stand at the next World Congress in Hamburg in 1995, and work commenced on planning for that occasion.

Membership and voting rights:

Voting rights became an area of concern as countries continued to question whether non-nurses who were representing nurses should be entitled to vote, and also whether the two Association countries- Switzerland and Belgium- were entitled to individual rights.

It was agreed Belgium was politically and geographically two regions so should have separate votes whereas Switzerland would share their vote between the two organisations.

On the issue of non-nurses it was clarified they could vote on general issues but not on specific nursing issues. Although the President was strong in declaring this issue now be closed for all time, it has continued to rumble throughout EORNA's history.

NATN reported that although EORNA had overspent its budget due to expenses for the newsletter before it was abandoned, they would be covering the deficit to enable EORNA to start the new co-ordination with a zero balance in spring next year. Sincere appreciation was expressed from the group for this generous action.

Gifts provide an EORNA flag and a President's medal



Portugal produced the first EORNA flag, beautifully hand sewn with the EORNA logo on a white background. This was taken to every following meeting for display whilst the group were in residence, and similarly exhibited at many of the National Member Conferences around Europe. The second feature was the handover of the co-ordination from NATN to VVOV. This was marked at the end of the meeting by the presentation by NATN of a President's medal which replicated the EORNA logo in gold coloured metal suspended on a blue ribbon. This continues to be proudly worn by the President at all official events and EORNA meetings.

Sharing Common problems:

The effects of shortage of staff in operating departments coupled with the pressures of budgetary control was becoming an issue frequently discussed at meetings as individual countries reported the growth of proposals to introduce new grades of staff to the operating room. Much concern was expressed at the growing number of untrained staff being used, and inevitably the subject of Technicians replacing nurses was a common feature. Some countries remained rigid in their refusal to accept non-nurses whilst others found formal training programmes being produced for the preparation of those grades.

One of the first occasions when the EORNA group first united as one voice behind one of its members was when Portugal requested help in providing evidence as to why it would be unsafe to have two teams operating on separate patients in the same room at the same time. Marie Jose Dias Pinheiro- the President of the Portuguese Association (AESOP) collated a wealth of replies from the membership.

She was delighted to report to the group at a later meeting that using this material they had successfully argued against such action in Portugal. EORNA's voice and strength had been a major influence in that decision.

In line with earlier agreements that the first Vice President should only serve two years, the Spring 1995 meeting in Ireland heralded the appointment of Marie Wenger from Switzerland as the new Vice President for the next three years. However the first

challenge to the Constitution came in the form of a verbal statement from Lena Noerkjaer that due to ill health she would be stepping down early from the post of President. Her written resignation would be tabled at the next meeting. This led to some confusion as the outgoing Vice President thought this would mean she would continue as President.

However, following considerable discussion and reference to the agreed procedure laid down in the Constitution it was eventually recognised that Lena would not be officially resigning until later that year, and that the new Vice President would be the acting President until a new President was elected in the following Spring. The Constitution had proven its value in providing a firm guide for such situations.

Influencing Europe:

The meeting in Ireland received some very positive news in that EORNA had been invited to attend the consultation meeting at the European Commission regarding proposed amendments to the Directive on free movement of Specialist Nurses. Ivo Schoeters from Belgium and Margaret Brett from UK attended and reported back to the group. Members were also delighted to hear that Lena Noerkjaer had been successful in gaining some sponsorship for travel of EORNA officers for the promotion of the Association. It was noted that several EORNA Directors had now presented papers on behalf of EORNA at various conferences.

VVOV reported on developments around the proposed European Conference which would now be held in Spring 1997 in Brussels. A congress committee was formed with members from VVOV and AFISO (Belgium), LVO (Holland) and NATN (UK).

Kristiina Junttila from Finland (FORNA) was to lead the scientific committee who would be responsible for the programme and selection of speakers.

The Congress Organisers were also introduced to the group at this time.



The sub group met at intervals between main meetings with all participants travelling, often at their own expense, to Belgium as the central meeting place. The generous support of Kimberley Clarke in sponsoring the meeting room and refreshments was greatly appreciated in keeping costs to a minimum.

Financing of the event was still of great concern to the EORNA Board, however the Congress Committee reported that a new International Organisation was to be set up under the name of EORNAC for the purposes of running the Congresses. This organisation would protect EORNA member Associations from any liability following the outcome of the Conference financially. Expenses incurred by individual members attending conference planning would be re-imbursed through their Organisation after the Congress. This brought considerable re-assurance to all the membership, who later expressed their gratitude to VVOV who kindly financed the registration of the Constitution for the new organisation. All future Congress events would function under that International Organisation.

As EORNA was due to participate in the World Congress in 1995, their Autumn meeting was held in Hamburg preceding that event. The group were delighted to receive several items of publicity such as pins and posters which could be handed out during the conference. First announcements for EORNA's own Congress were also available for individual member countries and for use at the World Congress.

Much of the meeting was given over to EORNA's own Congress, to reviewing arrangements for sponsorship, and identifying various speakers to represent EORNA at meetings, congresses and events to which the Association was now being invited on an ever increasing number of occasions. Curriculum work was still being afforded a large chunk of meeting time as small groups worked on different aspects and then fed back to the larger group for approval and ratification.

This meeting was the last attended by the outgoing President Lena Noerkjaer who sadly left the organisation and was not able to be contacted later when EORNA wished to make a presentation of a Past Officers badge in recognition of her time served.





First Change of President:

When next the Board met in Helsinki in Finland in 1996 it was to ratify the appointment of the new incoming President Margaret Brett from the United Kingdom (NATN). As current Vice President, and acting President, Marie Wenger was to chair that meeting. The new President would undertake the task at the following meeting. However fate had different plans and due to Marie feeling unwell, Margaret found herself in the Chair somewhat quicker than anticipated.

Of growing concern now was the amount of money being lost from subscriptions due to extortionate bank charges and exchange rates being applied. A new bank account had been opened in Belgium, and it was agreed different countries would use either bank transfer or cash payments as appropriate to reduce costs.

The Constitution was now under review having served its interim temporary trial period. It had been proposed this should be registered in the same manner as the International Organisation. Although in principle this was a sound suggestion, unfortunately ongoing communication problems with Belgium colleagues and prolonged delays in achieving a final draft created a very unsuccessful activity which dragged on for several years.

As the Association was now to attend all Permanent Committee on Nursing (PCN) meetings it was agreed whoever was Vice President should attend plus one other member- ideally from the country where the meeting would be held so as to curtail expenses. Reports from those meetings were fed back at every EORNA meeting.

Interest from Eastern European Countries;

A growing number of enquiries were now being received from eastern European countries wishing to join EORNA, and so inevitably the issue of membership was again raised for discussion. What should be the borders of membership? Ivo Schoeters (VVOV) offered to explore all possibilities of potential membership to try and establish what might be the largest possible membership. This could then be considered from a feasibility point of both communication and meeting control.

When Ivo later reported back it was decided to continue receiving applications at the moment, and if necessary explore reducing meeting attendance to one person per country.



It was suggested all potential members be invited to attend one meeting as Observers to enable them to gain a better understanding of EORNA and to allow the EORNA Board to ascertain the suitability of the applicants for membership. Ireland (INO) offered to prepare guidelines for these observers.

It was around this time that EORNA also received letters requesting membership for second groups in some countries. The constitution allowed for the representative group for theatre nurses in each country- assuming there to be one main group in most situations.

It was decided that each country must itself decide on its own representation- but only one Association would normally be recognised unless it was agreed as with Switzerland to have joint representation.

The Congress and the Curriculum:

Being only one year away, the EORNA Congress was fully discussed, and Board members were invited to decide upon format and style of activity from a number of options tabled. The Congress Organisers attended this meeting and gave a projected view of the budget for the event, with an indication of what might be realised upon

completion of a successful congress. Main sponsors had been easily attracted to supporting this big new event, and indeed the meeting heard how Kimberley Clarke, Molnlycke, EDANA and J&J were interested in exploring support of the organisation outside of the Congress.

Although all focus was on this Congress it was recognised that a venue and committee needed to be identified for the next Congress if that was to be announced at the first event. Proposals were sent from two member countries Greece and Norway with the result that Norway by a narrow margin was identified as the venue for the 2000 conference of EORNA which would take place in the town of Bergen. This was therefore the second time Greece was to be disappointed in their offer to host the EORNA Congress. However, as with all good fairy tales, their third attempt resulted in them being identified as the host country for the 2003 event to be held on the island of Crete.

With a large amount of time in each meeting now being given over to the curriculum work and to Congress preparations it was found that meeting agenda were becoming increasingly full and often ran over the allocated time. There was also concern arising that the Association was not perhaps giving sufficient time to the pursuit of its specific aims and objectives. It was therefore agreed at its next meeting in Switzerland in the Autumn of 1996 that small work groups would be set up to function during the time currently allocated to the curriculum which by now was almost complete. These groups would each assume responsibility for an aspect of EORNA business. With the departure of Lena Noerkjaer from the group Sweden agreed to continue with developing a membership pack for potential new applicants, whilst Marie Wenger would set up and lead on the workgroups. Marie undertook to prepare an informal newsletter based on contributions from each country thus enabling everybody to be kept aware of developments and events occurring throughout European member countries and indeed the European Community.

It was also acknowledged that with the increasing amount of paperwork and meeting notes that EORNA should invest in a laptop computer which could be used at meetings for note-taking and for storing past records.

At that meeting the group learned that Ethicon would be assisting in the production of the curriculum documents which would be shipped to Brussels in time for the first EORNA conference. Cathy Delannoy from Belgium (AFISO) agreed to present the curriculum at its launch during the Congress.

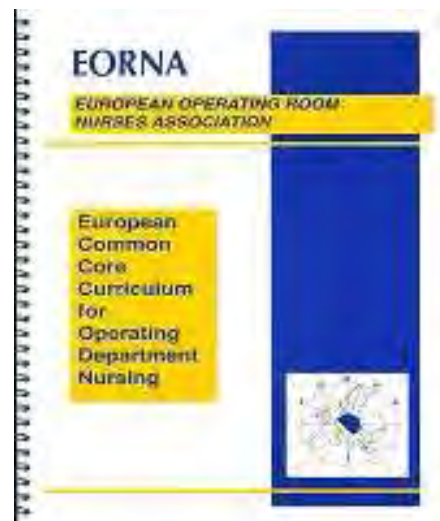
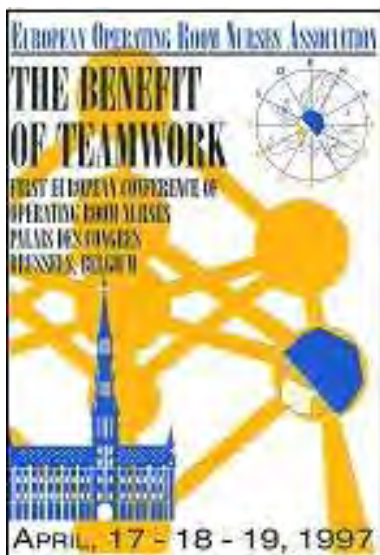
A new introduction to EORNA business was news of the European Commission Standard setting groups within the Central European Normalisation (CEN) sector. EORNA was to become a member of such organisation participating initially in meetings for one of the working groups (WG14) working on standardisation of operating room gowns and drapes. Upon attending the first meeting Margaret as President was somewhat surprised to find no other members of the groups were

actually end users of the products under discussion. Following considerable discussion with convenors EORNA became invited to participate in several other working groups either by attendance or by sending written comments regarding proposals made at meetings. It was quickly recognised by the group that although a valuable exercise this could generate a tremendous workload for one person and indeed a great expense for EORNA as all expenses had to be covered by participants themselves. This role was therefore eventually divided amongst participating members who agreed to consider one product and feed their comments back to both EORNA and the working groups. Thanks to later sponsorship by Kimberley Clarke an EORNA representative attended one working group meetings free of charge to the Association.

Apart from a very busy working two days for the participants at each meeting the tradition of evening entertainment had grown as each country sought to provide some relaxation and a taste of their own culture. In hosting the meetings they in turn provided very different modes of entertainment including boat trips, in house concerts, visits to art galleries and prestigious national buildings through to meals in select restaurants or even castles.

The meeting in Switzerland was timed to coincide with one of their many Carnival weeks, and so it was that members were treated to a special taste of Carnival Luzerne which made for a particularly exciting event.

This left all members in a very positive mood for their next meeting which was to be held in Brussels immediately prior to their own Congress in April 1997.



Pre-Congress Rush:

In the lead up to the Congress the organising committee found themselves under considerable pressure as the projected number of delegates likely to attend according to each country's estimate was found to be quadrupled as applications poured into Brussels.

Many of these were very late in arriving which overloaded the systems established for processing applications, and additional supplies of congress materials were hurriedly acquired. The Venue for the main social event was extended through use of a large marquis acting as an outer hall. In anticipation of large numbers for the opening ceremony video screens and voice relay were agreed to be set up in ancillary rooms near the main auditorium. As applications were turned away angry exchanges occurred between organisers and those trying to gain late tickets, and indeed some countries even complained through their own Embassies and even the Commission when they found themselves unable to book their place. Accommodation across Brussels was exhausted with some groups needing to stay in neighbouring towns. The response had truly surprised everybody. Thus it was the EORNA Board arrived in Brussels to prepare for its first major conference.

EORNA in Opposition:

With the main Congress work already completed and the curriculum finished the meeting was to be only one and a half days to enable time for last minute preparations for the congress. Routine business completed the group were very concerned to hear that following the world congress in Hamburg there had been yet another mention of the formation of a European group by the American Organisation. Once again this had not received favourable support, but what was of greater alarm was the news that there was a proposal for the formation of a new International group to be set up by just five countries- Canada, Australia, New Zealand, America and UK. EORNA had received a copy of the circulated proposal and following enquiries had been advised by NATN that this was notification only and did not warrant consultation from EORNA. The majority of the EORNA members expressed their disbelief that in setting up an International Organisation those undertaking the task had not wished EORNA to be included. To most it seemed logical that in establishing such an organisation it would seem only sensible to invite an Organisation which already represented twenty two members of the International Arena. Individual countries themselves decided to undertake their own response to the consultation, whilst EORNA members in general disagreed with the proposal in its tabled form. Unfortunately this was to be a situation which continued to see EORNA declining to be part of such an Organisation, and indeed needing to withdraw and defend the name of EORNA as it was repeatedly mentioned by the international group in seeking to establish their standing. At the time of writing this history EORNA has still maintained that position.

The second major issue for that meeting was the news that our Belgian colleagues had worked with Molnlycke to establish an EORNA Foundation which was to be launched at the Congress. The President had been briefed on this situation just a few days prior to the Congress, and upon discovering that leaflets had already been printed and promotional material provided had agreed to bring this to the meeting for EORNA approval, having informed those involved that such actions should always be agreed with the Board in the first instance. The reaction of EORNA members was even stronger than had been anticipated and although the project went ahead, it was in a very different format from that originally planned. Following the Congress the President met with the company to discuss the situation and fortunately managed to reach an amicable agreement which resulted in the establishment of the EORNA Foundation to be run for a trial period of three years. This materialised into a very successful activity which truly supported the aims of EORNA in promoting research based practice within the operating department.

However, because of the lack of appropriate communication in the early stages, the negotiations around contracts of agreement dragged on through several meetings until the realisation of the first winner from Ireland who was eventually announced at the Bergen Congress in 2000.

Congress Arrives:



By now the time for the first EORNA Congress had finally arrived, and what a superb event it was. A spectacular opening ceremony with member logos displayed in laser lights set the scene for a dynamic three days. The scientific committee had fulfilled their objectives in providing a full balanced programme of speakers which was enhanced by the very expensive provision of simultaneous translation.

Exhibitors proclaimed it to be one of their best experiences of a congress, and overall the delegates evaluations were excellent.

Behind the scenes there were the inevitable hiccups, often incurred as the result of the interpretation of different cultures regarding organisation, but from the outside all looked well. The event concluded with the rendering of the EORNA closing song which was also carried forward to end the next Congress formally announced as being in Norway in 2000.

A brief evaluation meeting was called for EORNA Board members to enable them to express concerns and suggestions regarding the experience before they left the Congress. Those thoughts were later discussed with regard to their implications for the next event.

Following the Congress an extremely large amount of complimentary correspondence was received by EORNA Officers re-enforcing the view that from delegates' and industry's perspectives this had indeed been a great success.

The organising committee themselves eagerly awaited the final congress meeting anticipating a very positive outcome from the event. It had always been agreed that as the first such Congress its success for the delegates was the prime concern, and that financial gains would be welcome, but with limited expectations. The EORNA Board had been fully involved in all the decision making around the conference and they therefore felt fairly confident that a good result had been achieved. Following a number of delays in the arrangement of that meeting it was therefore a very despondent committee who presented to the following EORNA Board meeting in Slovenia that there was no money at all to come from the Congress. Contracts with the Organisers had ensured that even if there was an overspend EORNA would achieve a nil balance- thus protecting them from any costs outstanding. However there was total disbelief in the report with a number of critical questions being raised. At one point in the procedure there appeared to be a challenge to the President of EORNA, but voting quickly denied any lack of confidence. Heated discussions from that event led to later action which involved securing the services of a Dutch accountant to audit the accounts from the Congress which again concluded that there were no monies to be returned from the Congress. Unfortunately dealings with that accountant also became protracted and difficult as the Board attempted to secure all relevant paperwork.

For EORNA the sweetness of the Congress success was sadly tinged by these events, whilst lessons learned were carried into the organising committee for the Congress in Norway.

It was at that Autumn meeting in Slovenia that Ireland (INO) took over the co-ordination from VVOV with Anne O'Callaghan and Eileen Malone becoming the third formal co-ordinators. Eileen herself resigned a year later but was successfully replaced by Maureen Flynn for the remainder of the three year period.



Links with Industry and the Medical World:

During the Congress in Brussels EORNA had been approached by the International Association for Endoscopic surgery inviting them to provide speakers for a nurses' seminar to precede the main surgeon's conference in Rome in 1998. Working with the Italian group AICO and through the Scientific Committee of EORNA speakers would be selected to represent EORNA at the event. At the Seminar the President of EORNA undertook considerable discussion and negotiations with the President of the Endoscopic Organisation before expenses incurred by speakers were finally reimbursed as had been promised. EORNA therefore declined further participation with such events.

However an invitation from the Ethicon European Surgical Institute in Germany to participate in their events proved to be a far more satisfactory activity. The President of EORNA chaired the event for two years running whilst several EORNA Board members presented papers during the programme.

Financial problems persist:

Finance was still a problem for the organisation, and they were delighted to accept the offer of NATN- the United Kingdom organisation, to sponsor the travel and three nights accommodation for Margaret during her time as President. Over the term of her office it was very clear that EORNA did not have sufficient monies to fully support all of the activities which were now required of the President, and during her first two years most of the expenses committed during the undertaking of the role were met by

the President herself. The Association covered a minimum number whilst companies approached by the President herself covered some with sponsorship. Money raised through the newly formed international organisation (EORNAC) was constrained to use for events such as conferences, and money raised could not be taken from the account for other purposes.

Thus it was that having paid for a new laptop, covered the ongoing administration costs together with the curriculum printing costs, the Association's finances were very weak when Ireland took over the co-ordination. However during their three year term of office the co-ordinators received tremendous support from their own organisation which enabled them to hand over a very different financial situation to Greece as the next co-ordinators.

One difficulty which did appear to occur on a regular basis was that of moving money between countries as one bank account was closed and a new one opened by the incoming co-ordinators. In some countries banking systems worked well, in others there seemed to be a profusion of paperwork and delays in getting things established. Whilst the pound sterling had originally been agreed as the currency of the organisation, as talk of the Euro progressed it was hoped this might eventually solve many of the problems encountered.

During her Presidency Margaret was able to seek financial support of EORNA through a number of companies and Trusts. Money secured from the Theatre Nursing Trust of Great Britain covered £12,000.00 printing, translation and publishing of the Curriculum plus funding of research into the role of the operating room nurse in Europe. A further grant from them in later years supported the work of introducing common standards of practice. Steris provided for the purchase of retired officer badges to be retained by outgoing Officers, whilst multiple negotiations with EDANA realised a surprise donation of a further £12,000.00 into the EORNA Account. Aside of this help was provided by Regent Medical to enable the President to represent EORNA at world events. Thus the development and expansion of EORNA activities was able to continue despite the lack of substantial funds.

Many would say the logical answer was to increase annual membership fees. However the intention of EORNA was to provide a forum of sharing of expertise and guidance across any European organisation wishing to join them. Amongst the membership there were several countries of limited means and to increase membership too high would ultimately mean their exclusion from a forum whose primary aim was to improve services to patients. Many of those poorer countries looked to the larger organisations for direction in establishing their own protocols and practice. Any decision to increase costs was therefore usually over-ruled until the Autumn of 1999 when it was agreed subscriptions should rise from £150.00 per year to an annual figure of £200.00.

As EORNAs reputation became firmly established the President was more and more in demand to attend meetings and conferences, and a very busy schedule even included

visiting three countries in one week on occasions. The main agreement underpinning such activity was that travel and accommodation expenses were to be met by the host country or organisation- thus reducing the demand upon the EORNA purse.

With Margaret as President herself covering most other expenses, and with the very generous support of the I.N.O. for the co-ordination the funds took on a very healthy glow for the first time.

However it was recognised that current arrangements could not be assumed for the future, and it would be necessary for the Association to fund the President's activities. Future co-ordinators would also be likely to require funding of expenses incurred in performing the role.

All change for the Constitution:

Work on the amendments to the Constitution took a new turn when in Amsterdam the group were informed that the current document was not acceptable to the Belgian Officials as it was too similar to the EORNAC Organisation currently registered.

This came as no surprise to the Board as EORNAC's constitution had been based upon EORNA's rules. The working group quickly amended terminology to retain the EORNA principles whilst reading in a different style. However this was not to be the simple answer as Board members were found to repeatedly enquire of the Belgian Organisation (VVOV) as to the progress of registration only to be informed it was still underway some four years later.

A further suggestion of change came when Margaret requested nominations for the next President of EORNA as her three year term was due to complete in 1999. Many members of the Board attempted to persuade her to continue in office, even proposing changes to the Constitution to allow such action. Margaret however stood firm in her belief that the strength of EORNA was that no one country could ever monopolise it by remaining at its head for more than three years. She also firmly believed that change and new approaches were crucial to its continued evolution as a dynamic organisation. Thus it was that Kristiina Junttila from Finland became nominated as the next President taking up her role in November 1999.

The Amsterdam meeting was also a time of change as Marie Wenger stepped down as Vice President to make way for Zorica Suligos from Slovenia.



Marie had proved a great asset to the group in bringing a very professional, open view of the organisation and of its individual members. Although a quiet unassuming person she had acted as an admirable ambassador for the group being truly committed to its principles of sharing knowledge and experience to further the benefits to patients throughout Europe.

Pursuing EORNA's Aims:

During her time in office Margaret had introduced the circulation of a President's report between meetings. This enabled delegates attending to keep abreast of what was happening between Board meetings, and also laid foundations for business to be discussed during the meetings.

Whereas the workgroups were now fairly well established and had replaced the half day curriculum activity, concern was now growing as to whether the focus of such groups truly fulfilled the original intentions. A review was therefore undertaken and some restructuring of both membership and topics was implemented.

To enable the membership to be clear about how the restructuring of the European Union was developing and what that might mean for nursing, the French Association (UNAIBODE) had invited a European adviser to speak at the next meeting which they hosted in Paris in 1998. Through that speaker the group were encouraged to make approaches to the Commission both as a united group and individually through their own countries. He stressed how critical it was that the voice of nursing was heard.

The Board had been fortunate in its early days in having Ivo Schoeters from the Belgian group VVOV who had pursued every opportunity to raise the name of EORNA within the European Commission. It was now the AFISO- also from Belgium- who were undertaking that stance. Their President Cathy Delanoy - a long term member of the EORNA Board- was working hard to ensure that the EORNA Curriculum was given consideration at meetings of the Advisory Boards on Nursing. Her report that they had agreed to have the curriculum document tabled at their next meeting was greatly

appreciated by Board members, and she was congratulated on her excellent achievement.

Although the responsibility of one of the sub groups was to monitor use and to update the curriculum, the main work on its production and translation was now completed. Considerable satisfaction was gained by the group when it was discovered in a feedback report from every country that nearly all the members now had some form of educational programme either already introduced, or currently being considered. Only two or three were still working towards achieving post registration education. What was particularly rewarding was the knowledge that from many of the smaller countries there was a unanimous agreement that the EORNA curriculum had proved invaluable as a framework for their own programmes or for bargaining for the introduction of post registration education.



Towards the next Congress:

The feedback from the Congress Organising Committee led to some lengthy discussions as several Board members became concerned that all decisions were being made about the Congress without their direct input. Members felt there should be more involvement of the Board such as had happened with the previous Conference. One particular issue which had plagued both the first Congress committee and now this one was that of simultaneous translation. Whilst everybody agreed with the principle of having several languages available, the cost of such activity was felt to be beyond the

limits of the Congress. Areas of overlapping responsibility including aspects such as the role of the Scientific committee were also clarified.

In presenting their annual finance report the Irish representatives requested approval from the group to instigate a process of annual auditing of accounts. Acting as the Treasurer Anne O'Callaghan (INO) stressed the importance of such an activity now that EORNA was accruing funds, and undertaking considerable expenditure. In agreeing the proposal the group also formally recognised the work of Anne and the INO in their tremendous support which had brought them to this healthy state.

The current balance, together with the proposed increase in subscriptions should find the Association in healthy balance ready for next year when it had been agreed the expenses of the incoming President would be paid for by the organisation during her three-year term of office. Board members were reminded to send in their nominations for the new President so that voting could take place at the Spring meeting.

It was only in later years as news of horrendous flooding in the Czech capital reached Board members that they truly valued the opportunity they had in visiting Prague for their first meeting of 1999. Their social programme had enabled them to visit many of the famous monuments and buildings later damaged in those floods.

The meeting itself reflected the normal agenda containing feedback and reports together with a progress report on the plans for the 2000 Congress.

Another successful activity had been undertaken with the European Surgical Institute in Norderstat- Germany in the previous October when both the outgoing and incoming Presidents had jointly shared the Chair. Several members of EORNA had also presented papers at the study days.

Work was continuing with the Research on the role of the Operating room nurses across European member countries. A Research Professor from a Spanish University had been recruited to assist with the selection of the appropriate sample and for the analysis of the final statistics. The workgroup expressed their disappointment at the lack of input from the main Board in finalising the questionnaire. This project was to prove a considerable challenge over future years, as delays in consultation and feedback, together with changes of Board members who were then unfamiliar with the research meant slow progress was achieved.

The Board also received an update on the development of the International Federation and were advised that EORNA was now invited to join. The Board however declined by an overwhelming majority. Many felt there was little to be gained by their becoming a member at this time, whilst others remained concerned regarding the proposed system of voting rights.

New to the Board was an offer from a company in the UK to undertake Fund raising on EORNA's behalf. Many members were hesitant to commit to such an agreement feeling

that EORNA members themselves should be able to undertake the same task. However, following considerable debate the group decided to explore the proposal further, and later consented to use the Agency – but unfortunately found no monies forthcoming.

The Norwegian Association (NNAORN) received agreement to open a website for EORNA and reported that Congress plans were well underway. Main sponsors had been found and second announcements would soon be despatched.

Second Change of President:



An official vote was undertaken at this meeting following which Kristiina Junttila of Finland (FORNA) was announced as the incoming President who would take over the role at the meeting in Greece later that year.

As this was Margaret's last full meeting in the chair she was given a number of gifts in recognition of the commitment and dedication she had given to the role during her term in office.

Over the next few months Margaret and Kristiina remained in close contact and attended events together undertaking the verbal handover whilst both were attending the next World Congress in Helsinki. The formal handover was undertaken at the opening of the meeting in Greece in November of that year (1999).

Following the conduct of introductory business once the meeting had commenced the EORNA Chain of Office was passed from Margaret to Kristiina who then chaired the remainder of the meeting. It was acknowledged that the six months process of handover had been a very successful one which enabled the incoming President to be reasonably confident that she had a good grasp of the business in hand.

Margaret's departing gift to the association was a poem about EORNA together with a gavel for use in future meetings. Her own dedication, commitment and hard work in bringing the Association to the healthy state in which it now stood was firmly acknowledged by all Board members.

Another new era was opening in the EORNA history.

Congress 2000:

Most of the November meeting was given to discussing aspects of the forthcoming Congress in 2000, and allied areas such as guidelines and funding of future conferences. The Officers were given authority to further explore an offer from a company to undertake fundraising on EORNA's behalf, when the outgoing President declined an invitation to become the Association's fundraiser.

Final arrangements were also confirmed for the first EORNA/Molnlycke Foundation Award which would take place during the Congress.

Yet again there was a need for organisers and hosts of the next Congress to be identified so that formal announcements of the venue could be made in Bergen. Whilst the Irish Nurses association had expressed a keen interest they were forced to withdraw as no premises of suitable size were currently available in Ireland. Both Greece and Israel voiced possible interest, and agreed to submit proposals so that the final decision could be made immediately prior to the Congress in Bergen. As mentioned earlier the final vote this time went in favour of Greece.

In the cycle of elections it was now time to vote for the new co-ordinators so that they could undertake a handover period with the outgoing Association. Greece was the unanimous decision, and so they took responsibility from Ireland in Autumn 2000. Nominations were also acknowledged for candidates for the Vice Presidency which would be decided at the EORNA business meeting in Bergen. That vote went in favour of Marie-Jose Dias Pinheiro from Portugal (AESOP) another long standing member with proven commitment to the Association.

EORNA had also received an invitation to have a regular column in a new European Hospital Newspaper. Seeing this as yet another opportunity for the EORNA name and Association to be publicised the group authorised the President to explore further and take such action as felt to be appropriate.

Portugal has next Vice President



Greece has next co-ordination



News of the sum of £12,000.00 pounds into the EORNAC account to help with funding of EORNA activities initially had brought some surprise as to its source, but was later revealed to have come from the European Group EDANA following the many discussions with the past President. This was greeted with delight by the current Congress organisers.

At the Close of the Century :

So as 1999 drew to a close the earlier informal group which had become the later formal European Organisation - now known as EORNA- found itself with a confirmed membership of twenty one National Associations, a further three unconfirmed members and several enquires for potential membership.

It was now a registered organisation with a sound infra-structure, a registered logo, guidelines for conduct of its meetings and a revised Constitution awaiting ratification through Belgian Law. To date three Presidents had been appointed, one serving two years, the second three years and the third newly appointed. Similarly three Vice Presidents had served their term with a fourth due to be appointed in Spring 2000. Co-ordination activities had been running since the less formal earlier group right up to the present day and had included Associations from UK, France, Belgium, Ireland and now Greece.

Their first full EORNAC conference had been held as had two earlier European days linked to national Conferences in UK. Their second major event was just over the Horizon and rapidly approaching as they entered the next Century- year 2000. The EORNA Board was ready for it thanks to the work of the organising committee and the Norwegian Association who had lead the preparations.

All was not to be that smooth running for the Association even at this stage, for the week prior to the Congress saw a major strike of workers in Norway affecting Hotels and airports. Not to be deterred the Congress went ahead, and fortunately all was resolved prior to the arrival of delegates.

In her opening speech at the Brussels Congress the then President Margaret Brett had used the simile- 'from little acorns- mighty oak trees grow'. EORNA had indeed become as established as any mighty oak. Its branches were spreading far and wide with its leaves offering support and protection for its members. As theatre nurses from across the World arrived in Bergen bubbling with expectations it was very obvious the reputation of EORNA was set for all time. When they left at the end of those three days we knew they would be back to join us in Greece in 2003. Another programme of carefully selected speakers had provided yet another display of the high standards which EORNA members sought in attempting to achieve their overall aim of best quality care for all patients undergoing surgery anywhere in Europe.

Where will that Organisation be in yet another twenty years in 2020?

