

President's Report 2015 – 2016

This report covers the period from the last ESCIF Congress and Assembly of Delegates –May 2015 to the present – and outlines what has been done and achieved since the last meeting of ESCIF delegates.

ESCIF Congress 2015 in Brno, the Czech Republic

Thanks to our hosts, ParaCENTRUM Fenix, the ESCIF congress in Brno was a success.

The theme of the congress was *Employment after spinal cord injury (SCI)* and was based on the provisional findings of the project *Overcome Challenges* – a multi-national project financed by the European Social Fund. The congress formed the final stage of the project and congress participants were asked to provide more input to the existing results. In addition, the organisers had invited a number of outside speakers and had arranged discussion and panel debates that looked into different angles of the issue of returning to work following SCI.

All presentations from the ESCIF Congress 2015 have been uploaded on www.escif.org

ESCIF would like to extend sincere thanks to the ParaCENTRUM Fenix team for all their efforts and hard work.

ESCIF Executive meetings

The Executive has held two meetings “in person” in the course of the year: the first in Nottwil at the beginning of September 2015 (in connection to the meeting for the Successful Integration Project), the second in Lobbach in February 2016. As usual, a meeting has been held as well in the days running up to the present Congress.

In addition, the Executive has held a number of telephone meetings throughout the year and is in regular contact via email.

Preparation for the ESCIF Congress 2016

Our current hosts, VQÖ, met with the ESCIF Executive in Nottwil in September last year to discuss the programme and practicalities of this year's Congress. ESCIF is very grateful to the Austrian organisation for stepping in to help at a rather late stage.

Communication with members: ESCIF website, Facebook and newsletter

Once again this year we have tried to post regular updates on the ESCIF website but we still lack input from member organisations. The Executive would like to encourage all member organisations to use the website to announce and report on events and initiatives in their country, to find collaborators for projects and activities, and to post updates on ongoing projects. Please send your information to secretary@escif.org or to president@escif.org.

The newsletter has also been circulated regularly. Again we would be very pleased to receive input from ESCIF members and other "colleagues". If you would like an item to be included in the newsletter, please send it to secretary@escif.org or to president@escif.org.

Successful (re) integration of people with SCI

The ESCIF Executive proposed this project at the congress in 2013 but it took some time to raise the necessary funding. This finally fell into place in June 2014 with Coloplast agreeing to provide the majority of the necessary funds. Invitations to join the various working groups and a detailed project description were mailed to all member organisations at the beginning of July.

The first meeting of the working groups took place in Nottwil at the beginning of December 2014. In all, 24 people from 16 different ESCIF member organisations participated in the weekend seminar.

The aim of the seminar was to identify and define the main issues involved in the five themes of the project: employment and education, social and leisure activities, family roles, quality of life, mobility aids and assistive devices. The next step was to chart the work process for each group leading to the first milestone – the production of a preliminary report to be presented at the current congress.

A second meeting of the working groups was planned for early September 2015. Since then the groups have been finishing their investigations and preparing the final report. The project work has provided the basis for the theme of the ESCIF Congress in Vienna in 2016.

An abstract of the project and planned activities was submitted to the ISCoS/ASIA meeting in Montreal (May 2015). This was accepted as an oral presentation. As Jane Horsewell, who had submitted the abstract, was unable to attend the meeting and no other members of the Executive could be there because of the ESCIF congress in Brno, it was decided that Niels Balle (leader of working group 1) should present on ESCIF's behalf.

Sponsored marathon with Verimatrix

ESCIF was contacted early in 2015 by the international company Verimatrix. One of the company's employees, a young man called Olivier Griguer, had sustained an SCI in a mountain bike accident. His colleagues wished to do something to mark his return to work and to contribute to the SCI cause, and Team Verimatrix was formed! The six-member team took part in the Nice Marathon in November 2015.

The event raised almost Euros 5,000 and it was decided to spend this money on the *Ageing Well* project.

Ageing well with SCI

The project group held a meeting in De Rijp in the autumn and is planning another meeting in connection with the congress in Vienna. Although this is not an ESCIF project as such, but is led by DON from the Netherlands and SIA from the UK, Nuutti from the Executive participates in the meetings and acts as a representative from the federation. Representatives from the Swiss Paraplegic Association and ParaCENTRUM Fenix have also participated. As with any project of this scope, the major hurdle is that of raising financing.

Fundraising and sponsorship

None of ESCIF's activities – past or planned – would be possible without the financial and/or practical support of our sponsors. You can read about our regular sponsors under *Special Thanks* on the ESCIF website.

Thanks

I would like to offer my personal thanks to all the members of the ESCIF executive for their support this year. Gunilla, in particular, took over many of my tasks while I was ill and proved to be a super-competent Vice-President.

I would also like to thank Gabi Bucher who has acted as ESCIF's secretary/administrative support for several years. Unfortunately for us, Gabi will be retiring this summer. We wish her all the very best for her retirement – we will all miss her!

Jane Horsewell, ESCIF President, Copenhagen, April 2016