

EPSO STATE OF AFFAIRS - AUGUST 2021



Dear EPSO Partner,

13-8-2021 The Hague, The Netherlands

It's been a year since we sent you our update on the Covid-19 situation related to the State of Affairs of our EPSO network. That was August last year. At that time the 29th EPSO Spring Conference in Malta was postponed to September 2020 and transformed into a - as we called it - 'hybrid conference'. Even this hybrid conference turned out to be too ambitious: the September conference 2020 had to be converted into a fully digital online conference from our 'home base' The Hague.

In Spring 2021 Covid was still around, so also our Spring Conference -which was originally planned in Riga in 2021 – had to be transformed again in a fully digital online Conference from the Hague. Now we know all advantages but also the disadvantages of digital conferences; it is easier to include participants from all over the world, but it is much more difficult to keep participants involved and committed while being online. Topics requiring transfer of information can be easily discussed online. Other topics are not so easy to discuss in an online setting because they require collaboration and a feeling of involvement. Joint thinking and working together are sub-optimal in an online setting.

Therefore, we really hope for a live conference soon, but we are not yet sure about the planned conferences. The Covid situation for September is not looking good yet. Our Riga conference is therefore likely to be replaced by some other form of live event later this year or next year.

On the initiative of our English colleagues (Care Quality Commission, CQC) we started from the first of April 2020 with our weekly EPSO Covid-19 Taskforce sessions. During the first 16 weeks this group has provided each other with practical tips, experiences and help during the Covid-19 outbreak and more long-term answers to questions about future developments.

After this dynamic start, the network has been established as a monthly Taskforce meeting network in which topics of interest for inspectorates and our other EPSO partners are discussed, and new information is shared. The topics are generally introduced for no longer than 10 minutes. This way of working provides an opportunity for discussion and possible bilateral follow-up; The meetings include -as much as possible - our partners of the EPSO network. The meetings are open to all interested colleagues, scheduled on the first Wednesday of the month and do not last longer than one hour.

This initiative has provided supervisory, monitoring, and regulatory bodies with a support platform in these difficult times and with some guidance for complex problems and decisions. Beside advice and examples on how to carry on regulatory tasks during the crisis, the network has provided also valued lessons for the future such as lessons regarding telemedicine and telehealth as well as shared experiences with using e-inspection and

remote inspection tools. As a follow up to this a new EPSO Working group on Telemedicine, and E-health, Artificial intelligence, and Cybersecurity (TAC group) will start Autumn 2021.

The Taskforce group has steadily expanded, not only with the supervisory partners from our Asia Pacific network, but also with other partners from various backgrounds. In addition to input from partners with a supervisory background, the group has also been working with partners with a scientific, management related or other more on specific fields or areas targeted orientation. Active participation came from a broader scope of countries and regions all over the world. Participating countries have been Australia, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, England, Estonia, France (OECD), Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy (OECD), Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Malta, New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden, Singapore, Scotland, South-Korea, Spain (IFIC), United Arab Emirates and Wales.

The support and co-ordination of these activities has been provided by the EPSO Joint Office. External assistance for reporting and organising was hired from Sira Consulting. For ICT and Technical support WCCS and nTERRA were contracted. For WEB and social network activities Sociallane was helping. This all was financially possible because of your contributions. However, the EPSO budget is far from unlimited and therefore we need your support again.

To be able to continue working with you to strengthen our EPSO network we ask you, in all modesty, to pay your annual EPSO contribution for 2021. Building a useful and efficient knowledge exchange network remains our number one priority in these difficult times.

We hope for your support again in 2021. Thank you in advance.

Looking forward to seeing you online again at our next Covid-19 Taskforce meeting Wednesday September the 1st 9-10 CET.

Jooske Vos

Chair of the EPSO Board.

