

EPSO STATE OF AFFAIRS – June 2024



Dear EPSO Partner,

June 2024, The Hague, The Netherlands

It is about a year since we sent you the EPSO State of Affairs 2023. That was June 2023, just after our successful and inspiring EPSO 'Spring' Conference in Malta.

After so many conferences with Covid complications, it was a relief that for our spring conference in Malta we did not have to constantly shift and adjust our plans and were finally able to present excellent speakers in person and virtually on important topics for the future of regulation, inspection and supervision without further restrictions due to Covid-19.

This 34th EPSO conference in Malta (19-21 April 2023), entitled **Innovative supervisory approaches and scientific findings in the context of integrated care, social care, and ageing** was organised in co-operation with the **SCSA Malta** and was a great success! The high-level and innovative content of the conference and the lively discussions were made possible by our host in an almost perfect environment.

In addition to the topics around social care and aging, we had **very innovative topics** such as new methods of regulation and inspection in the context of upcoming new developments in the field of AI, data-driven improvement of care, telehealth, and digital health. We had **good conversations** and interesting debates (in person and online) on the latest developments. In addition, the Mediterranean environment and the quality of Maltese food left nothing to be desired. This near-perfect setting in Malta ensured that the stakes were high for our autumn conference in 2023.

But this turned out to be no problem for the colleagues of Healthcare Inspectorate Wales. In the best Welsh tradition and in a winning mood **a fantastic conference was organized at the Principality (rugby) Stadium in Cardiff, Wales.** It turned out that regulators and regulators had a lot to gain by joining EPSO in Wales! The guiding theme of this conference was: **Make a difference!**

The 35th EPSO conference was scheduled from **18-20 October 2023 in Cardiff, Wales,** and started with a **pre-conference day on innovative health regulation and supervision** in which the EPSO-TAC working group discussed and learned about AI, Digital Health and the impact of digital transformation in Europe, Australia, China, Africa and the Middle East.

After this **the main conference started with a kick-off session around the Welsh Future Generations Act.** This act requires governments to consider the impact of their decisions on future generations, for example the impact on health and social care or the impact on climate change.

The conference continued with a **focus on effective methods of regulating health and social care and on cultures of improvement in health and social care.** This included different approaches to the topic of **Seamless Services and a more holistic view** of health and social well-being.

During the group discussions in Wales, it became clear that colleagues were extremely interested in the new developments in **genetic and genomic medicine in Estonia** and among other things

the possibilities it offers for preventive medicine and questions that arise in this field for the regulator/ inspectorate.

This eventually led to an invitation by **Terviseamet, the Estonian Health Board** to host our **36th EPSO conference in Estonia**. The idea was to go to the **historic university city of Tartu** in South Estonia, but the European Union was ahead of us and chose Tartu as the European City of Culture of 2024. That is why the Health Council advised us to **move to Tallinn**. With the help and extraordinary flexibility of our host, we managed to move the conference to Tallin last minute. The result was an excellent conference with exceptionally large and valued participation from various Estonian ministries and inspectorates.

Important new topics in Estonia were attention for **patient safety culture and soft skills**, the focus on the importance of **leadership in regulation**, the **new developments in e-health and digital health**.

An interesting new development in Tallinn was that **the conference expanded**. EPSO and EPSO partners used the opportunity to organise separate activities and sessions in various settings. In collaboration with **OECD** a separate session on **risk-oriented supervision** was organised. The EPSO working group on regulation of assisted dying used the opportunity to organise its third meeting in person in Tallinn. An exploratory meeting about the **differences and similarities between accreditation and regulation/inspection** and into possibilities for cooperation was organised in collaboration with **ISQua** prior to the ISQua conference in Türkiye. The usual 'conference walk' was this time an incredibly special guided tour by our host in the old medieval city of Tallinn with its rich and diverse history under different regimes in different eras.

And once again participants highly appreciated the special EPSO format of our conferences with a limited number of delegates per country (a maximum of fifty people at a long table). Many of our partners found this to be an effective way of exchanging information and experiences. This setting makes it possible to discuss good as well as less good or effective practices in a trusted setting.

For our next (Autumn 2024) conference, the dates and location of which will be confirmed as soon as possible, we are looking forward to the following topics:

1. **Leadership in a regulatory setting** with keynote speaker Prof. Mark O'Brien Associate Fellow and Program Director, Oxford Healthcare Leadership Programme, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford.
2. **Just Culture** with input from the Netherlands, Norway, England, and Latvia.
3. **Regulation of home care** (including regulation of domiciliary care and care by personal assistants) with input from the Netherlands, England, Australia, Ireland, Malta, and Jersey.
4. **Equity in a regulatory environment** with input from England, the Netherlands, and others.

This update would not be complete without mentioning our **EPSO Monthly Meetings** and our **EPSO working groups**. 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. After this dynamic start, the network continued as Monthly TF C19 network meetings 1 where topics of interest to EPSO partners are presented and discussed and

¹ N.B. The upcoming Monthly Network Meeting is planned for Wednesday the 4th of September 2024 , online in Teams, as usual with the same link at 9-10 CET [Click here to join the meeting](#)

the latest information relevant for our partners is shared. Topics are introduced for no longer than 10-15 minutes. This way of working offers room for discussion and possible bilateral follow-up. Meetings are scheduled on the first Wednesday of the month and last no longer than one hour. This initiative has provided a platform for supervisory and regulatory authorities to share information and learn from each other. The network has also provided valuable lessons for the future such as shared experiences with the use of digital health and experiences with e-inspections. Our partners can find the Agenda's and Notes etc. password protected at our website (use password epsoc19 or this link <https://epsoc-net.eu/covid-19-taskforce/agendas-and-notes/>)

From these monthly meetings the **EPSO Working group on Telemedicine, and E-health, Artificial intelligence, and Cybersecurity (TAC working group)** emerged. The TAC working group started in 2021 and continued in 2022 and 2023. In Malta 2023 the group agreed on its final working documents (Blueprint for cyber security; Blueprint for AI and Blueprint for Telehealth). It was decided to share the blueprints with the EPSO partners to raise their awareness of these topics and support them in improving the quality of their work.

The Assisted Dying working group for EPSO partners and invited guests and experts in this field started its activities in November 2023 at our 43rd EPSO Monthly Meeting (1-11-23) with a presentation by its chair Becky Sherrington Chief Executive of the Jersey Care Commission, The group met online on 31st of January 2024; 27th of March 2024 and in-person as well as online in Tallinn 29th of May 2024. Given the sensitive nature of assisted dying and the ethical, moral, legal, and cultural differences across nations, international consensus or regulation on this matter remains challenging to achieve. In this context the group has achieved to review how different countries have adopted their own unique approaches and legal frameworks; the purpose of the group was to understand the different approaches to regulation including the benefits and challenges of different methodologies. The group will share in 2024 its findings in a format available to all EPSO partners.

The EPSO network has been steadily expanding, not only with the supervisory partners from our Asia-Pacific network, but also with other partners from diverse backgrounds. In addition to input from partners with a regulatory background in health and social care, EPSO is now also **collaborating with partners with a scientific and management orientation**. Active participation also came from **a wider range of countries and regions around the world**.

In the past year, EPSO's collaboration once again extended to fruitful collaboration with **ISQua and our OECD partners**. **Other new partnerships** are on its way.

Furthermore, in 2023 and 2024 it became even clearer that the topics of our conferences are not only relevant to strictly health and social care-related regulators and inspectorates but **are also important for regulators from other sectors and that we also benefit from input from those other sectors**.

Examples of this can be found in a wide variety of topics, such as the Ministry of Défense's input on lessons learned from aviation and armed forces as presented at our conference in Malta, but also the broader impact of climate change on the health sector as presented at the Singapore conference; the need for social networks in the health and social care sectors, as reflected in many of the best practices in integrated care; the influence of technological developments such as AI in health and social care as an important development for all regulators and inspectorates; and last but not least Leadership which as topics is highly relevant to our healthcare sector, but not limited to the health and social care sector.

These developments lead to **reflections on the scope of EPSO** and may have future implications for the participation of relevant others in our network and may also lead to closer collaboration with organizations in a broader area of interest than just health and social care.

the **EPSO Joint Office** has supported and co-ordinated these activities together with EPSO advisory board members. External assistance for reporting was organised via the **Erasmus University Rotterdam**. For **ICT and Technical support** **WCCS** and **nTERRA** were contracted, and for website and **social network activities** **Carry-Maria Klein Gunnewiek** in cooperation with **Sociallane** has done a wonderful job with the updates on www.linkedin.com/company/epso-net/ as well as at **X/former twitter please follow: EPSO_net**

Our priority remains **organizing with an open view on new developments and in a pleasant manner, exchanging knowledge and experience together with all partners in our network** and building a useful and effective network between our partners.

This is all financially possible thanks to the annual EPSO contributions from our EPSO partners in our network in Europe and Asia Pacific. We are highly dependent on this support. As we intend to continue collaborating with you and further strengthening our EPSO network, we hope to receive this support again in 2024.

Jooske Vos



Chair of the EPSO Board.

