

ESPA General Assembly Meeting minutes

Saturday, March 3, 2025: 13.30 – 14.00

1. Opening (Michael Brackhahn)

- Invitation to the GA was published and sent out promptly following The Statutes (invitation to active members sent via email, including the documents; all documents for the review posted on the ESPA website in the General Assembly section).
- Documents include: Extract of the previous GA Meeting Minutes, The President's report, and Auditor's Report; By-Laws that had to be adjusted in order to specify the change to The Statutes completed in September 2023, and Environmental Policy.
- All the conditions being fulfilled, all that needs to be voted on can be voted on.

2. President's report (Michael Brackhahn)

- ESPA Congress 2023 and 2024 had more than 450 attendees from over 50 countries; both events have been successful, even financially. Peter (ESPA Treasurer) will present more details about that in the Financial statement.
- 2 Webinars were held in 2024 with a great attendance, showing that ESPA is quite an active society.
- Membership: Before COVID-19, ESPA reached 800 members, and that number was strongly affected by the pandemic. Thanks to the society activities, the membership base is now approaching pre-COVID numbers, reaching nearly 750 (2024). Being at the beginning of 2025, it is too early to state the numbers for now.
- The largest representation of members comes from Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, and Germany. Altogether, ESPA has members from 71 countries worldwide.
- Social Media and Website: ESPA maintains current channels such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (former Twitter). Also, recently added a newly developing platform, Blu Sky. The ESPA website has a satisfactory level of traffic, with 82,000 total views by 32,000 visitors, according to reports showing a 30% increase compared to 2023. The most visited sections include News, Ultrasound: Pros and Cons, and Webinars. Please note that the Congress is listed on a separate, independently hosted website.

3. Financial report (Peter Frykholm)

- Due to the change in the membership year from fiscal to calendar year, the date of the General Assembly was adjusted to align with the new statutes. As a result, this financial report covers a different time period and includes 18 months instead of the usual 12, and includes the 2nd half of 2023 and the whole of 2024.
- Over the past 10 years, the financial situation has remained stable, despite fluctuations caused by the pandemic and other political events. At present, the situation is more favourable, and we are back to total assets of €350,000. At the beginning of this reporting period, our securities and total assets (such as stocks and bonds) amounted to €234,000, increasing to €254,000 by the end of the period—reflecting a net gain, which is in line with our objectives. Our transactional account currently holds €92,000, used for daily operations and incoming/outgoing payments. The total operating result shows a net gain of €31,515. Approximately two-thirds of this came from a surplus in securities, with the remaining portion largely attributed to the positive financial outcomes of the Congresses held in Athens and Prague.
- The main expenses are related to the support from GUARANT, which manages ESPA's Secretariat and oversees the membership administration. Additional costs include meeting expenses, accounting fees, and similar operational items. The full financial statement has been published and is accessible on the ESPA website. Anyone who wishes to review specific details—now or in the future—has the opportunity to do so.
- The President informed the General Assembly that, in the absence of any questions or objections from those present in the room or participating online, the assembly would proceed with the vote to grant discharge of liability to the Executive Board for the past 18-month period. The vote covered the following three documents, which were made available online to all members in advance:
 - ❖ The Financial Audit
 - ❖ The Financial Report
 - ❖ The President's Report
- No objections or concerns were raised. As no votes against were recorded and no questions were posed, the discharge of liability for the Executive Board was considered approved by consensus.

4. ESPA By-Laws (Michael Brackhahn)

- Revised By-Laws presented, which had been made available online in advance of the meeting, allowing members sufficient time to review the proposed changes. They reflect adjustments made to align more precisely with The Statutes approved by the General Assembly in September 2023.

Notable updates include:

- ❖ A clearer definition of membership categories: Active, Associate, Affiliate, Trainee, Retired, and Honorary Members.
 - ❖ Clarification that only Active Members have voting rights and are eligible for appointment to positions within the Society.
 - ❖ More detailed information on membership fees, member privileges, and the composition and responsibilities of the Executive Board.
 - ❖ Descriptions of the roles of the President, Secretary, Treasurer, as well as Committee Chairs and the standing committees.
- The purpose of these revisions is to increase transparency regarding the Society's structure and operations and to provide greater clarity for members. Additionally, the new By-Laws are structured to allow for more flexibility in the future should further changes be required.
 - Revised By-Laws must be formally approved by the General Assembly. As no questions were raised from the voting was initiated. The revised By-Laws were approved unanimously.

5. ESPA Environmental Policy (Michael Brackhahn)

- Society's environmental policy 2024 introduced. It has already been established and published on the website; it has been adapted slightly over the past two years. Two previous versions of the document are available online. The updated policy is now accompanied by an annual audit document to ensure that the established policy is monitored and followed throughout the year. It was proposed to formally approve the current version of the environmental policy. Members were invited to raise any questions, comments, or suggestions. Unanimously approved.

6. Other Matters

- Board Elections – Laszlo Vutsikts raised the topic of upcoming elections. He inquired whether the elections for new Board members had been organized, noting that it is time to initiate the process. He also highlighted that, following the election of new Board members, it is the responsibility of the Board to select a President-Elect who would eventually succeed the current President. He encouraged progress on this matter.
- Board Elections and Nomination Procedure – Jurgen de Graaff confirmed that the election process can begin, noting that those interested in participating via the

ExBo can express their interest. A few individuals in mind who could be involved in both the ExBo and the upcoming elections. The goal is to hold the elections by the end of spring. Potential candidates for the Presidency are also being considered, and the Assembly reassured that steps are being taken to ensure a proper transition. The importance of the nomination procedure emphasized, recalling that in the past, former Presidents typically prepared a list of nominees and helped organize the elections.

- ExBo encouraged to propose and collect nominations from both within and outside its group. It was also confirmed that everyone is welcome to nominate themselves for consideration. Anyone interested in being nominated or in participating in the ExBo should contact Jurgen directly via email. A list of interested candidates will be compiled. The importance of clear communication was underlined. An official email should also be sent to Denisa (ESAP Secretary) for administrative purposes. In addition, an open invitation will be sent out to all members, encouraging them to express their interest in joining the ExBo or standing for election.
- Also clarified that only members with a European background—as defined broadly—are eligible to be part of the ExBo. Members from outside Europe are not eligible to join the Board.
- Nomination Process – Michael Brackhahn emphasized that any active member of the Society has the right to nominate themselves for the upcoming elections. Broad participation encouraged, stating that the more candidates there are, the better it is for the Society. While members of the ExBo may already have potential candidates in mind and can approach them directly, it remains open for anyone to submit their name for consideration. All self-nominations are welcome and should be included in the list for the election.
- Communication of Election Timeline – Michael Brackhahn confirmed that once the election process is prepared, information will be shared publicly on the Society's website and in one of the upcoming newsletters. This communication will include details about the timeline for nominations, the election itself, and the schedule for the next ExBo. The importance of keeping members informed at each stage of the process highlighted.
- Collaborations and Current Projects – Michael Brackhahn provided an update on ongoing collaborations with several societies, including the RA UK (the UK branch of the European Society for Regional Anesthesia), the APA from Great Britain and Ireland, the Canadian Paediatric Anesthesia Society, and the Australian and New Zealand Society for Paediatric Anesthesia. Together, these groups are working on a Regional Anesthesia Educational Platform, which is currently website-based. The collaboration aims to develop a portable and more user-friendly version of the educational content, making it easier to use in various clinical settings.

Additionally, a research-focused project being carried out with the research team. The goal is to consolidate existing research efforts in anesthesia, leveraging established networks and administrative systems developed over the past decades. Members assured that updates and news about these initiatives will be communicated through the Society's regular channels as progress is made.

7. Closing (Michael Brackhahn)