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Societies, associations and journals seem to have sprouted and taken root in the field of plastic surgery almost as vigorously during the past fifteen years as at anytime in the history of our speciality. This has been largely due to the development of new techniques such as craniofacial surgery, microsurgery, skin culture and of course, numerous flaps, incorporating a variety of tissues.

The surgical advances have been of immense value but new journals or societies have not always been so enthusiastically received. “Not another journal” is an understandable expostulation emanating from the lips of a surgeon opening his mail in the theatre coffee room.

Similar sentiments were most certainly voiced by some when the European Association of Plastic Surgeons (EURAPS) was conceived but from the earliest discussions to the first meeting and during the first five years of its existence, the champions of EURAPS have far outweighed the dissidents. The Association is firmly founded and each year has seen increasing interest and support.

The founding of EURAPS

At the beginning of February 1989, during the 16th Alpine Workshop for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Daniel Marchac from Paris proposed to a small group representing members of the various European countries participating in the workshop, that a European Association of Plastic Surgeons should be founded at the forthcoming European Congress in Instanbul. His idea met with general approval and it was agreed that initially the new Association should adopt within loose boundaries, the format of the American Association of Plastic Surgeons.

It was then decided that a number of colleagues, to whom the aims of the new association would appeal should be invited to a business meeting in Istanbul.

Those present at this initial discussion in Italy unanimously agreed that Daniel Marchac should continue to take the lead in this venture and he conceived and sent out the following letter which admirably summarised the origins and concept of EURAPS.

Dear Colleague,

A new plastic surgery association has been created – The European Association of Plastic Surgeons (EURAPS).

For 15 years, a group of European Plastic Surgeons has been meeting every year at the Alpine Plastic Surgery Workshop. This limited and informal group has proved to be very successful in developing ties between European Plastic Surgeons.

It has been felt that it is now time to create another European structure based on the same principles of excellence and coverage of all aspects of plastic surgery.

The European Association of Plastic Surgeons wishes to remain a highly selective small group of recognized plastic surgeons, comparable to the American Association of Plastic Surgeons (which counts in excess of 200 members in comparison with more than 3000 members of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery).

The format would be an annual short meeting at which would be presented very high quality papers. These papers would represent a selection of the best papers previously presented at the National Societies meetings, giving their authors a European audience. All aspects of Plastic Surgery would be illustrated, reconstructive as well as aesthetic, with special emphasis on controversial subjects.

The national societies should not be harmed by this new organization to which their eminent members will probably belong. The existing European section of the International Confederation of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, which is responsible for the organization of a large European meeting every four years should also not see any interference from this small, limited and selective European group.

With the upcoming of European organizations in various fields, we feel that it is time to stimulate competition between ourselves and show to the face of the world that Europe is still the innovative birth-place of Plastic Surgery. The first meeting of the EURAPS will be held in June 1990 in Strasbourg, probably on the 8th and 9th of June 1990. Participation will be on a personal invitation basis, and we would be pleased if you would accept to be among the founding members of the "EURAPS".

A business meeting will be held in Istanbul on the 5th of September, 1989, at luchtime, at the Etap Marmara Hotel, from 12.30 to 14.00, and those who are present at Istanbul are invited to come. Lunch will be provided at small cost.
We hope that you will join us in this new European Association. Can you please let us have your answer immediately in order to allow a smooth organization?

With our best regards,

Sincerely,


On the 5th of September 1989 the first business meeting duly convened and sat down to a light luncheon where the first officers of the Association were chosen. An informal and general discussion followed and the venue and framework of the first official meeting confirmed. Those present agreed to invite further colleagues to Strasbourg and to disseminate information on the new association. The first officers were:

President: Hans Anderl (Austria)
Vice President: Michael Hackett (United Kingdom)
Secretary General: Daniel Marchac (France)
Treasurer: Wolfgang Mühlbauer (Germany)
Historian: David Tolhurst (The Netherlands) (Fig. 1)

Eleven council members representing European countries were also chosen. Officers during the first 5 years are listed in Table 1.

Once the officers were appointed a priority was the formulating of by-laws which were duly published. Daniel Marchac who undertook this task had recourse to those of the American Association but they were no more than a guide. The aims and activities of EURAPS are not identical and the development of the by-laws, which were revised in 1992 reflect our differences. Mercifully the by-laws now occupy no more than nine small pages of an elegant booklet.

The Secretary General (Fig. 2)

The office of secretary general is by far the most onerous and demanding one of the council. Daniel Marchac was unanimously chosen as the first incumbent and this was only fitting considering that EURAPS was very much his brain child. The Association is still in its infancy but it has been guided surely and safely through its first five years by Daniel Marchac. His infectious enthusiasm and international stature have given the Association a warmth and solidity which his successor, Riccardo Mazzola, a nephew of Sanvenero Roselli, the renowned Italian pioneer in plastic surgery, is well qualified to carry forward.

Aims and activities

The principal purpose of the Association is to promote excellence in plastic surgery within Europe. This, it is hoped, will be partly achieved by affording the members and their guests the opportunity to present their clinical and laboratory work at the annual scientific meetings. Of great importance is the determination of the board to encourage young surgeons both to present their work and to join the Association.

Recently with the advent of the European Plastic Surgery Board Examination there has been increased interest, concern and discussion on the standard of training and the co-ordination of teaching within Europe. EURAPS has no power per se to influence these matters but is well represented both on the examination board and other committees throughout Europe, so is indirectly involved.

There has never been any question of the Association usurping the prerogatives of other bodies and this was