

STROKE ALLIANCE FOR EUROPE (SAFE)

General Assembly 2023

Minutes

Monday 19 June 2023 @ 11.00 CET

Virtual Meeting

AGENDA ITEMS and DECISIONS

1. Welcome and Apologies

The President Hariklia Proios (HP) welcomed the members to the General Assembly.

The number of member organisations present was 33 with one proxy vote, sufficient to be quorate.

Those present were:

Belgian Stroke Council	Belgium
Association for Stroke and Aphasia	Bulgaria
Fundacio Ictus	Catalonia
Federacio Ictus de Catalunya	Catalonia
Croatian Stroke Society	Croatia
Mozdani Val	Croatia
Cyprus Stroke Association	Cyprus
Cerebrum	Czech Republic
Hjernesagen	Denmark
Estonian Stroke Society	Estonia
Vaincre l'AVC	France
Stiftung Deutsche Schlaganfall-Hilfe	Germany
Hellenic Action / Alliance for Stroke	Greece
Nemzeti Stroke Liga	Hungary

Heilaheil	Iceland
Irish Heart Foundation	Ireland
Neeman Association for Stroke survivors	Israel
Associazione Lotta Ictus Cerebrale (ALICE)	Italy
BLETZ Asbl	Luxembourg
Hersenletsel.nl	Netherlands
Association for a fight against stroke, STROKE Ohrid	North Macedonia
Norsk forening for slagrammede	Norway
Stroke Foundation	Poland
Portugal AVC	Portugal
ALIA – The Association for a Fight Against Stroke	Romania
Serbian Stroke Association	Serbia
Združenje bolnikov s cerebrovaskularno boleznijo	Slovenia
Frenco al Ictus Fundacion	Spain
STROKE-Riksförbundet	Sweden
Turkish Cerebrovascular Society	Turkey
Chest Heart Stroke NI	United Kingdom
Stroke Association	United Kingdom
Different Strokes	United Kingdom

The following organisation passed proxy voting rights to other member organisations:

Aivoliitto ry	Finland
---------------	---------

Apologies for non-attendance were received from:

Sdruzeni CMP	Czech Republic
--------------	----------------

Not attending without apology

Porazka.sk	Slovakia
------------	----------

Medical Foundation “Mkurnali”	Georgia
-------------------------------	---------

For resolutions to be passed, the following rules apply per the SAFE Articles of Association:

1. Quorate is at least half the members attending or have submitted proxy votes. Resolutions are passed on a simple majority vote. For this General Assembly, 17 voting members were required with nine voting for the approval of the resolution.
2. For agenda items 4 (Amendment to Articles of Association) and 7 (Removal of a member), quorate is at least two-thirds of members attending or have submitted proxy votes. For the resolution to be passed a two-thirds majority is required. For this General Assembly, 24 voting members were required with 16 voting for approval of the resolution.

The votes were collected electronically and counted, with the votes being verified by the tech company (Open Audience) being an independent vote checker, in addition to the SAFE Secretariat.

2. Approval of previous minutes and matters arising

There were no matters arising from the June 2022 GA minutes.

***Resolution:** The minutes of the GA held in June 2022 were approved with 31 votes as a true and accurate representation of the General Assembly.*

3. Appointment of board members

Under Article 20 of our current constitution, the board members shall be elected for a term of three years and are eligible for re-election once. No person shall be eligible for more than six consecutive years. After six continuous years of service on the board, he/she may not again be nominated for re-election until at least one calendar year has elapsed.

At this General Assembly, Anita Arsovska, Pnina Rosenzweig and Ivan Milojevic retired from the board after serving two terms. Hrvoje Jurlina had served his first three-year term and was eligible to apply for a second term.

In addition, Jan Konig and Rubina Ahmed resigned their positions on the board as they are leaving their member organisations.

With our remaining five board members staying on in their roles on the board, there were six board positions available. We received nine applications from our members and a competitive election was held.

Board membership applications were received from:

- Hrvoje Jurlina Croatia
- Claudio Mari Italy
- Maja Bozinovska North Macedonia
- Mika Pyyko Finland
- Nenad Nikolic Serbia
- Dagmar Souckova Czech Republic
- Liliana Curea Romania
- Sarah Belson UK
- Yago Bundgaard Denmark

All applicants introduced themselves to the membership via a recorded video message, and a confidential vote took place

Resolution: After the votes were counted and verified, the following were approved as board members of SAFE:

- Hrvoje Jurlina Croatia
- Maja Bozinovska North Macedonia
- Nenad Nikolic Serbia
- Liliana Curea Romania
- Sarah Belson UK
- Yago Bundgaard Denmark

As a result of the election, this is the new Board:

- Hariklia Proios, Greece President
- Marina Charalambous Cyprus Secretary
- Chris Macey Ireland Treasurer
- Hrvoje Jurlina Croatia Member at large
- Dorina Dobрева Bulgaria Member at large
- Marianne Tangen Norway Member at large

- Maja Bozinovska North Macedonia Member at large
- Nenad Nikolic Serbia Member at large
- Liliana Curea Romania Member at large
- Sarah Belson UK Member at large
- Yago Bundgaard Denmark Member at large

4. Amendment to Articles of Association

An amendment to Article 20 of the SAFE Articles of Association was put to the General Assembly in order to clarify the appointment of the terms of office of the officers. With an amendment requested by Austin Willett from the UK, the amendment was accepted as:

Art. 20 The association is managed by a Board that is composed of at least 5 and no more than 11 members, elected by the General Assembly by a simple majority vote and chosen from among the delegates of ordinary members. Any country may be represented by no more than one Board member at any time. The association will seek representation on the Board from stroke survivors and care givers.

Only ordinary members can propose candidates for the Board and become members of the Board.

Twelve weeks prior to the General Assembly, the Secretary shall circulate a request to all ordinary members for nominations to the Board. Any ordinary member wishing to nominate a delegate for election as a Board member, shall submit such nomination in writing to the Secretary at least eight weeks prior to the General Assembly. In support of such nomination, a brief biography of the delegate shall be provided. Two weeks prior to the General Assembly, the Secretary shall circulate, to all ordinary members, copies of all valid nominations received, together with the accompanying biographies. In case no nomination is received in advance of the General Assembly, the Board will have discretion to propose candidates on the day of the General Assembly.

The Board members shall be elected for a term of three years and are eligible for re-election once. No person shall be eligible for more than six consecutive years.

However, the Officers constitute an exception to this rule. After six continuous years of service on the Board, the Board member may not again be nominated for re-election until at least one calendar year has elapsed, except when he is an Officer.

The General Assembly shall elect the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, called the Officers of SAFE, amongst the elected Board members by a simple majority vote. The President Elect (see article 27) is not an Officer. Twelve weeks prior to the General Assembly, the Secretary shall circulate a request to all ordinary members for nominations of the Officers. Any ordinary member wishing to nominate a delegate for election as an Officer, shall submit such nomination in writing to the Secretary at least eight weeks prior to the General Assembly. In support of such nomination, a brief biography of the delegate shall be provided. Two weeks prior to the General Assembly, the Secretary shall circulate, to all ordinary members, copies of all valid nominations received, together with the accompanying biographies. In case no nomination is received in advance of the General Assembly, the Board will have discretion to propose candidates on the day of the General Assembly.

Only individuals that have been elected as Board member can be elected as Officer.

The Officers shall be elected for a term of three years and are eligible for re-election once. The start of the mandate as an Officer implies the start of a new mandate as a Board member. In derogation from the rule above, the mandate as a Board member of an Officer can exceed six consecutive years. The mandate as a Board member of an Officer is only terminated when the mandate as an Officer is terminated, irrespective of the time the Officer has been a Board member before he or she became an Officer. No person shall be eligible as an Officer for more than six consecutive years. After six continuous years of service as an Officer, the concerned Officer may not again be nominated for re-election until at least one calendar year has elapsed.

If the President is absent, his/her functions shall be assumed by the Vice President or, by default, by the Secretary.

All acts concerning the election, the revocation and the cessation of the functions of Board members or of the persons entitled to represent the association, are submitted for publication in the Annexes to the Belgian State Gazette within 30 days.

Any Board member may be removed from office by a two-thirds majority vote of ordinary members at a General Assembly.

Those Board members who retire, shall remain in office until their successor(s) are put in place.

Resolution: *A vote was taken and the Amendment to the Articles of Association were received by 29 votes*

5. Review of our work

SAFE Director General, Arlene Wilkie, presented a review of SAFE's work during 2022.

She welcomed four new SAFE members: Hjernesagen (Denmark), Vaincre l'AVC (France) and Chest Heart & Stroke (Northern Ireland) and the Estonian Stroke Society

We held two face-to-face meetings for the first time since the pandemic. We met over 50 representatives from 30 countries in Thessaloniki and Barcelona where we joined Fundació Ictus in celebrating their 15-year anniversary. We look forward to seeing our members again in Rome in 2023.

We continued with the European Life After Stroke Forum (ELASF) webinar series we started in 2021. In total we ran five webinars for more than 1,100 attendees who gave very positive feedback. We hosted our first face-to-face Forum in Barcelona. We had an exciting line up of speakers, presentations, parallel sessions and poster exhibition, with 175 registrations and again we received very positive feedback. We are now planning our 2024 event which we will be holding in Dublin.

Our life after stroke 'Surviving Stroke' booklets will be published in 14 languages Bulgarian, Catalan, Croatian, Czech, Georgian, Greek (including for Cyprus), Macedonian, Polish, Romanian, Serbian, Slovakian and Turkish in 2023 and will be shared throughout the countries to stroke units and online.

Along with our members, we raised awareness of stroke through our work during:

- Brain Awareness Week where we promoted stroke research and the EU projects we are involved in. In addition, we became partners in four new research projects on 2022: CLASP (Co-designing Life After Stroke Support Pathways) and three which focus on Artificial Intelligence RES-Q+, TRUSTStroke and Validate, which we will promote in 2023.
- In 2022, European Stroke Awareness Day and on World Hypertension Day where we raised awareness of the link between high blood pressure and stroke. We updated our website strokeprevention.info/ which is available in six languages English, French, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.
- In 2023, we launched our new report 'A life saved is a life worth living' which we launched at the ELASF in Barcelona and was the focus of our European Stroke Awareness Day.

We continued with our advocacy work in Europe. A key success was the inclusion of stroke in the European Commission non-communicable disease (NCD) initiative, Healthier Together in partnership with the European Stroke Organisation (ESO). Priority was given to implementing the Stroke Action Plan for Europe (SAPE) across the EU, increasing public awareness, and improving screening, encompassing the entire chain of care from primary prevention to life after stroke. In addition, we were successful in seeing FAST Heroes selected as a best practice project recommended for implementation across Europe. In 2023, we will continue this work by drafting a stroke manifesto for the MEPs in the run up to the 2024.

We continued our involvement with the European Alliance for Cardiovascular Health (EACH), who are calling for a European Commission endorsed cardiovascular plan.

We also continued our work with the ESO on the SAPE. In 2022, a strong and growing network of over 90 National Coordinators was established; the SAP-E Stroke Service Tracker (SST) was launched which will measure the quality of stroke care and its outcome; and the Essentials of Stroke Care guidelines (both medical and advocacy versions) were published. In addition, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Slovakia and Spain signed the Declaration for action on stroke, committing to improving stroke services across the entire chain of care and taking a step towards the full implementation of the SAPE.

Finally, we discussed the new brand refresh and the commitment to publish the new SAFE strategy in 2023.

6. Approval of the 2022 Annual Accounts

SAFE Treasurer Chris Macey presented the final accounts to December 2022 for approval.

In 2022, income was €394,298 (€517,716 in 2021). This decrease was expected and budgeted for.

- Sponsorship of €316,760 (€398,800 in 2021) was received from BMS-Pfizer Alliance, Boehringer Ingelheim, Ipsen, Novartis and Merz Therapeutics.
- Membership income increased slightly to €50,617 (€47,024 in 2021) due to new organisations joining SAFE. There was no increase in membership fees in 2022.
- The €22,504 (€69,454 in 2021) received from partnerships with European research organisations shows SAFE's continuing importance to the consortium involved in these research projects. We received income from the new ANGIE project and continued involvement with the Tension project.
- €606 was received in delegate fees for ELASF 2023. (The majority of fees were received in 2023).

SAFE received donations of €3,811 (€2,438 in 2021):

- €500 from Cittadinanzattiva APS due to Arlene Wilkie's participation in the Cardiovascular Protection Active Citizenship Network
- €1,435 from Novartis Pharma due to Jon Barrick's continued participation in the International Cardiovascular Council.

- €1,350 from Ipsen for Jon Barrick's participation on their patient's advisory board
- Further donations of €515.72 have been received via the SAFE website

Our thanks go to all our supporters in 2022 for their continued support and recognition of the importance of the work SAFE does on behalf of its members and its partners, for stroke survivors in Europe.

In 2022, our expenditure was €580,757.15 (€258,611.80 in 2021). Our work is outlined in the 'Highlights of the year' section of the annual report and in summary we held two members meetings which we had been unable to do in previous years; we started our new work on the Surviving Stroke leaflets with the Angels Initiative; we continued our work on the 2022 ELASF webinars and started planning for the in person event in 2023, and we continued our work on the SAPE.

Our planned expenditure for 2023 from our funds is €429,921. This is funds we have raised already and will spend on projects such as the EU research projects, ELASF, the Surviving Stroke literature, SAPE and the Life saved report.

As a result, we had an overall surplus of €359,277, of which €250,000 is our reserves. (Note: the decision was taken by the board to increase the reserves from €200,000 to cover for 12 months of fixed costs and essential core costs).

This is described in the accounts which need to be submitted to the Belgian authorities

CM and the SAFE board endorsed the 2022 accounts presented on p14 of the financial report and present them to the General Assembly for approval

Resolution: *A vote was taken and the accounts for 2022 were received by 29 votes*

6. Approval of 2023 budget

Based on the outline description of the work SAFE is doing in 2023, Chris Macey presented our budget as follows:

Income

- Membership fees are €55,210 – an increase from 2022 as we have new members, and an increase of fees of 2%
- Industry funding at €405,000 – this is an increase from 2021 as we have new sponsors Nutricia and Medtronic supporting SAFE in 2023, plus a one-off support donation from Pfizer
- Donations at €2,000
- Research income is at €153,584, an increase on 2022 as we received pre-financing from two new projects – Validate and RESQ. We may also receive pre-financing from other new projects but we do not know when we will receive this.

Expenditure

- Projects – we plan to spend €561,742
- Core - €38,882 – this covers costs such as accountancy fees, web hosting, and strategy meetings etc. This has decreased from last year mainly because of the strategy meeting costs
- EU research projects - €12,018 – these are the costs for our members
- Salary costs – € 206,029. - for two full time and two part time. This is as 2022

This results in a surplus of €358,796 which is allocated as €250,000 for reserves and €109,273 unrestricted.

Overall, the Treasurer reported that he is happy with our financial progress this year, and congratulated Arlene and the team for all their hard work. However, it is essential that we expand our industry partner list to ensure that we remain in the situation in the coming years.

Resolution: A vote was taken and the budget for 2023 was received by 31 votes

7. Removal of a SAFE Member

During 2023 Porazka.sk, our member from Slovakia, did not respond to the membership renewal request. They were informed prior to the General Assembly about their membership status i.e. that they have to pay their fees to remain as members. However, the SAFE Secretariat did not receive a reply. The board recommended that SAFE remove Porazka.sk, our Slovakian SSO member, from our membership.

Resolution: *A vote was taken and removal of Porazka.sk as a member of SAFE was approved by 27 votes.*

8. Any other business

There being no further business the meeting was closed.

9. Date and venue of next General Assembly

June 2024, Virtual, date to be confirmed.

Signed and ratified by

Marina Charalambous
(Secretary)

Hariklia Proios
(President)