

# EASOM

European Association  
of Schools of Occupational Medicine

**EASOM BULLETIN**

**25<sup>TH</sup> EDITION**

**DECEMBER 2023**

More Information about EASOM: <https://www.easom.eu/>

# EASOM

European Association  
of Schools of Occupational Medicine

## BULLETIN

## 25<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

## DECEMBER 2023

### *In this Issue:*

Editorial of the EASOM President	3
In Memoriam Ralph Masschelein (1942-2023)	4
In Memoriam Michel Vanhoorne (1935-2023)	7
Report on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> EASOM Summer School – Catania, Italy	8
23 <sup>th</sup> EASOM Summer School in Amsterdam, 29 – 31 August 2024 – First Announcement	10
Renewal of the EASOM board. Florina Georgeta Popescu - new EASOM board member	12
Collaboration with other Societies. Report on the 2023 Edition of the European Postgraduate Assessment in Occupational Medicine	13
Greetings from the last Editor of the EASOM Bulletin	15

For comments and questions about this Bulletin, contributions and suggestions for the next Bulletin, please send an e-mail to: [gflorinag@yahoo.com](mailto:gflorinag@yahoo.com)

# Editorial of the President

## Begoña Martínez-Jarreta

Dear members of EASOM, colleagues and friends,

The end of 2023 is round the corner and we don't want to let it pass without sending a message of hope. We need it. Times remain difficult in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the recently erupted conflict in the Middle East and the war in Ukraine still raging.

From our association we will carry on working together to make EASOM's mission possible, and this means to strengthen training in Occupational Medicine and fight to increase the number of Occupational Doctors coming out of our training schools, to address a shortage that is setting in, among other objectives.

In this Newsletter, we look back on the events of 2023 and recent EASOM activities; on the news of the last Summer School in Catania, which was excellent and enjoyable; on the collaboration between UEMS-OM and EASOM, which was reinforced with the fourth edition of the European Occupational Medicine Examination; on the farewell of highly appreciated EASOM members due to their retirement; and, of course, on the announcement of the next EASOM Summer School, among other news.

Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that climate change is the greatest global threat to humanity in the 21st century. The climate crisis and the resulting human health crisis it may bring are now of great concern. Indeed, next year's 2024 Summer School will take place in Amsterdam and will address some of these timely and challenging issues from a training perspective.

You will find more information on this and other 2023 news in this Bulletin, as well as a preview of the 2024 Summer School, where we hope to celebrate 30 years of EASOM and pay tribute to its founders. In anticipation of this tribute, this Bulletin contains an *In Memoriam* dedicated to Prof. Raphael Masschelein, who sadly passed away in 2023.

What better way to honor him and other colleagues who are no longer with us than to continue the work they started with the same joy, passion, and dedication.

Together with the whole Board I would be glad if we meet soon this year and particularly if we get together at the next Summer School in Amsterdam.

We are looking forward to meeting you there!

Best wishes to all of you and your families!

# In Memoriam Ralph Masschelein

**(1942-2023)**

## An enthusiastic teacher, a tireless ambassador

**By André Weel**

After a few years of illness, Professor Raphael Masschelein passed away on February 3rd in his beloved city of Leuven. As a result, international occupational medicine has lost one of its most passionate teachers and ambassadors.



Born in Zonnebeke in West Flanders, Raf, as he was simply called, went on to study medicine at the Catholic University of Leuven. As a student he was active in protecting the Groot Begijnhof from demolition. This medieval part of the city was bought by KU Leuven in 1962. This prevented a project developer from building flats there. As a champion of the Dutch language, Raf has not left himself unaffected in the language battle that raged at and around KU Leuven between 1962 and 1968. In short, he was a real 'rebellious' student of the 1960s.

Ralph obtained his PhD at the University of Amsterdam under Professor Zielhuis. As a result, he was well acquainted with occupational health care in the Netherlands. He therefore constantly made comparisons between Belgium, where occupational

physicians did not check absenteeism, and the Netherlands, where they did, at the expense of confidence in the company doctor. Throughout his professional life, Raf remained closely associated with KU Leuven, one of the oldest and best in the world. He became full professor of Medicine, specializing in occupational medicine. He also held several administrative positions at KU Leuven, such as that of chairman of student affairs. This made him very popular with the students. But he is best known as a propagandist of occupational medicine in Belgium and far beyond, including outside Europe.

Raf chaired the ICOH Scientific Committee on Education and Training for several years in the 1990s. He was also involved at an early stage in the European Association of Schools of Occupational Medicine (EASOM), which was founded in 1993, an association of European occupational medicine training schools. I had the pleasure of working with Raf for many years in an EASOM context. He was Chairman of the Board from 1995 to 2003. During that period we organized the first EASOM Summer School in Dresden in 2001. This Summer School was part of a European program called Leonardo da Vinci. The working title was Communication of occupational physicians with workers on health and safety issues. The Summer School was a success and provided a model for subsequent Summer Schools that EASOM still organizes annually. The financial settlement gave me sleepless nights. Without Raf's help - even if we were delayed for a few months - a correct final financial report would never have been delivered.

The board of EASOM met in many European (capital) cities, but Leuven, and in particular the Groot Begijnhof, was certainly a preferred location. We always went for lunch at the nearby Faculty Club. Raf could never fail to point out the difference in lunch between Leuven and Amsterdam. The Burgundian lunch in Leuven was extensive and drizzled with wine. What a difference with the AMC in Amsterdam, where you had to queue for a cheese sandwich and a cup of buttermilk!

In 2003, Raf's son Wouter died in a traffic accident in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. This fateful incident has deeply affected Raf, his wife and three daughters. Raf paused for a moment, but soon returned to the international scene and resumed the thread.

Raf retired in May 2008. KU Leuven organized an international farewell symposium for him on 29 and 30 May of that year entitled: Education and Training in Occupational Health. There were speakers from all over Europe. The lectures of this symposium as well as an interview with Raf are bundled in an entirely English-language special issue of The Netherlands Journal of Occupational and Insurance Medicine (TBV) that was published in December 2008. In the interview, Raf turned against the monopoly position of English when it comes to publishing and expressed his concerns about the virtual disappearance of Dutch in scientific literature. He also expressed his disappointment about the disappearance of TBV's Flemish counterpart, the Magazine for Occupational Health Care and Ergonomics, in 2007.

Even after his retirement, Raf remained active as a teacher. He provided occupational medicine training and further training in Romania and in the Russian

city of Kazan for several years. When that also came to an end, he finally stayed at home more and developed into a passionate gardener and a sweet grandfather.

The last few years have been difficult. Chronic progressive illnesses increasingly hampered his daily functioning. Raf had to be admitted to a nursing home. But it remained possible to communicate with him and to reminisce about the 'good old days' of KU Leuven and especially of EASOM.

We miss a passionate person, a hard worker and at the same time a tireless bon vivant, verbose at times, but above all an extremely amiable and helpful colleague and friend.

# In Memoriam Michel Vanhoorne

**(1935-2023)**

**By Lutgart Braeckman**

Dear EASOM colleagues,

It is with sadness that I let you know that Prof. Dr. Michel Vanhoorne, senior lecturer of the former Department of Public Health at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ghent University Belgium passed away on March 16, 2023.

Professor Michel Vanhoorne was born in Ostend on October 4, 1935. He was a Doctor of Medicine, surgery and obstetrics since 1961 and has also been a doctor in Tropical Medicine. He obtained an additional license as a medical hygienist in Occupational Medicine.

In 1968 he started his career at Ghent University as an assistant and principal assistant at the Health and Social Medicine department. From 1981 he was work leader for the same service.

He was director and head of department for the Center for Healthy and Safe Working Conditions in the period 1990-1992.

With effect from 1993, Michel was appointed lecturer in the Department of Public Health and from 2000 he was appointed senior lecturer for the same department. He was responsible for the Occupational, Environmental and Insurance Medicine department.

Michel Vanhoorne was granted retirement on October 1, 2001. Until 2018, Michel remained associated with the Department of Social Health as a senior lecturer through unpaid continued activities and later as a volunteer employee.

He was also coordinator of the Left Ecological Forum and an enthusiastic collaborator with EASOM.

We will miss him.

# **Report on the 22<sup>nd</sup> EASOM Summer School – Catania, Italy, “Gender Differences and Risks in Work Environments: Scientific Communities Compare their Experience. Challenges on Teaching and Training OM Specialists and others.”**

**By Venerando Rapisarda**



The European Summer School works of the Occupational Medicine Specialization Schools (EASOM) held in Catania from August 31<sup>st</sup> till September 2<sup>nd</sup>, dealing with Gender differences and risks in work environments: scientific communities compare their experience, have recently ended, a really interesting issue both from a social and scientific standpoint.

Works were chaired by the EASOM President, Professor Begoña Martínez-Jarreta, aided by the local board run by Professor Venerando Rapisarda and took place in the enchanting setting of the 18<sup>th</sup> century University Botanic Garden in Catania (Sicily).

This event, sponsored by Catania’s Town hall and by the Clinical and Experimental Medicine Departments as well as BIOMETEC from Catania University, revealed itself as an opportunity for fruitful debate among experts coming from 12 European countries and several Italian Universities.

During the proceedings, participants discussed problems related to gender differences in the work world, and they further pointed out the importance of taking these differences into due account while assessing risks as well as the need to differently evaluate impacts and risks of work activities for men and women.

Several other risks were treated, which impact the work world, such as chemical, physical, biological and carcinogenic ones. Moreover, the importance of health dissemination and promotion in work places was highlighted and the ever-increasing gender-violence-related criticalities were also pointed out by a multi-disciplinary



debate among doctors and experts of various branches, psychologists, biologists and so on.

The first day of the EASOM Summer School 2023 was dedicated to the importance of gender differences in the assessment of risks in work milieus, with the interventions of EASOM General Secretary Nicole Majery, from Luxembourg, Prof. Petar Bulat (Vice President of EASOM), from Belgrade, Serbia and Prof. Begoña Martínez-Jarreta (Saragoza, Spain).

Among other interventions in the two following days, we highlight that of Prof. Marcello Campagna, on biomechanical risks and gender differences in work environments. The importance of Occupational Medicine Training was underscored in Prof. Ermanno Vitale's presentation (Enna, Italy). Besides, Prof. Caterina Ledda's slide presentation dealt with gender differences and the importance of dissemination to the new generations (Catania, Italy).

Professor Nicola Mucci, from the Specialization School in Florence (Italy), emphasized the crucial role of nutrition within Occupational Medicine.

Professor Massimo Bracci, from Marche's University, talked about differences and risk assessment in specific work activities, especially as far as contraindications of night-shift work are concerned.

The need to comply with all diversities was remarked by Professor Concettina Fenga and Professor Nicola Magnavita from Messina and Rome (Italy), respectively.

Several other professionals attended EASOM Summer School 2023, as proof of its highly multi-disciplinary characterization, among them Prof. Maria Angela Sortino, chairman of Catania's BIOMETEC Department, Prof. Pietro Castellino, President of Catania University Medicine School, Eng. Antonio Leonardi, Prevention Department Director of Catania Provincial Health System, who spoke about the promotion of health prevention in work environments, and Dr. Gaetano Sirna, University Hospital "G. Rodolico-San Marco" General Director, who focused his speech on the impact of Occupational Medicine for the safety and wellbeing in work environments.

From debates, the pressing need arose for greater law uniformity in the various EU Countries in the issues at play, with the intent of filling the still remarkable discrepancies existing in workers' protection practices, particularly considering gender differences: in the European Union there are still too many such discrepancies.

The [Summer School](#) works ended with all participants being satisfied for living three days of intense activity, accompanied by the Sicilian cuisine tradition and immersed in Catania's dark baroque, within a unique scenario between the Ionian Sea and Mount Etna.

All participants surely wish to meet again in 2024 at the Summer School in Amsterdam.

# 23<sup>th</sup> EASOM Summer School Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 29–31 August 2024 – First Announcement

By Marjolein Bastiaanssen

The **2024 EASOM Summer School** will be organized in Amsterdam, from **August 29 to August 31**.

The proposed topic is “**Planetary Health in Teaching Occupational Medicine**”



Planetary health (PH) has emerged as a new discipline to safeguard our planet in response to climate change, to limit our detrimental interaction with the surrounding ecosystem, and to protect the lives of all with an intergenerational responsibility. The role of education is central to this aim by developing not only the basic and contemporary understanding of PH, but also by advancing self-reflection towards the wider society and a recognition of the instrumental contributions of others. Therefore, incorporating PH in the education system for all disciplines is a crucial footstep to obtain the change. Experts strongly argue for a robust foundation for planetary health education addressing all healthcare disciplines involved to make it sustainable and widely acceptable [1]. Health professions education must equip undergraduates, and those already qualified, with the knowledge, skills, values, competence and confidence they need to sustainably promote the health, human rights and well-being of current and future generations, while protecting the health of the planet [2].

The 23<sup>rd</sup> EASOM Summer School 2024 explores the opportunities and challenges in teaching PH in Occupational Medicine.

Learning goals of the 23<sup>th</sup> EASOM Summer School 2024

By the end of this Summer School, you will be able to:

- A. Understand the principles of planetary health and recognizes its relevance to Occupational Medicine:
  - a. Identifying occupational risks and planetary health impacts (such as exposure to hazardous substances, resource-intensive production processes and waste management practices)
  - b. Understanding how the major environmental challenges (climate change, pollution) affect worker's health
  - c. Promoting sustainable work practices
- B. Implement the principles of planetary health into the existing education program of Occupational Medicine and design a teaching program on applying planetary health principles within Occupational Medicine.

1. IJERPH | Free Full-Text | Planetary Health Education and Capacity Building for Healthcare Professionals in a Global Context: Current Opportunities, Gaps and Future Directions ([mdpi.com](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph23050811))

2. Full article: AMEE Consensus Statement: Planetary health and education for sustainable healthcare ([tandfonline.com](https://doi.org/10.1080/10494850.2023.2244444))

## **Renewal of the EASOM Board. Welcome to Florina Georgeta Popescu, new EASOM Board Member**



In the last EASOM General Assembly celebrated in Catania, Dr. Florina Georgeta Popescu was proposed and approved as a new EASOM board member to replace Prof. Elena-Ana Pauncu. She was also nominated as Editor in Chief of the EASOM Bulletin. Welcome!

Dr Popescu is a Lecturer and resident physicians' coordinator at "Victor Babes" University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timisoara (UMFT). She graduated in Medicine from the same University, where she became an Occupational Health physician in 2003. The PhD in Internal Medicine was obtained in 2004 from UMFT. Since 2022 she has been teaching a Master's course in the Polytechnic University of Timisoara.

She worked as a specialist reviewer in the Timiș County Health Insurance House for one year and a half. Presently, she is Occupational physician in the Timisoara Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital (SCMUT) where she coordinates the Occupational Medicine Clinical Compartment. She is working as an Occupational physician in a private praxis, too.

Her main fields of research are Occupational Medicine, Occupational Health, work related diseases prevention, occupational risk management, work and nutrition. She participated in national and international projects as a team member: "NetWoRM - Net Teaching in Work-Related Medicine"; "NetWoRM3 - Sustainability; EMUTOM - project; AGROSH+ "OSH+ for the European Agriculture sector; EXIMIOUS - Mapping Exposure-Induced Immune Effects: Connecting the Exposome and the Immunome. Currently she is one of the principal investigators in the "Cancer Work Prevention" project. She is a board member of the Romanian Occupational Medicine Society, and of the Transylvanian Association of Occupational Medicine. She has been an ICOH and EASOM member since 2006.

# Collaboration with other Societies. Report on the 2023 Edition of the European Postgraduate Assessment in Occupational Medicine.

**By Alenka Škerjanc and Fabriziomaria Gobba**

Some weeks ago, on October 24<sup>th</sup>, was held in Brussels, at the Domus Medica Europaea, the 2023 edition of the European Postgraduate Assessment in Occupational Medicine, organized to release the European Diploma in Occupational Medicine. It was the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the exam that, organized according to the procedures provided by the Council for European Specialist Medical Assessments (CESMA), is aimed to assess the consistency of the Occupational Medicine (OM) specialist competence with an adequately high and updated European standard, established with the aim to advance and harmonize the competence of the OM specialists across Europe. Even if the European Diploma in Occupational Medicine, in principle, cannot be assumed as a license to practice in the EU countries, as only the National Competent Authorities have the role to provide such a license, for sure it is at least as an important quality curriculum mark, complementary to the national examinations.



The European Postgraduate Assessment in Occupational Medicine, organized yearly, consists in a questionnaire of 130 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) of different levels of difficulty (easy, moderate, difficult). The competences to be covered to take the exam are described in the Occupational Medicine European Training Requirements (OM-ETRs), a document detailing the aspects of training to be covered for an adequately high European standard of OM specialists. The organization of the European Postgraduate Assessment in Occupational Medicine was the result of the activity of a committee of experts composed of core group of medical specialists with clinical expertise as well as expertise in educational and assessment aspects, of the UEMS Occupational Medicine Section, with the

collaboration of European Association of Schools in Occupational Medicine (EASOM).

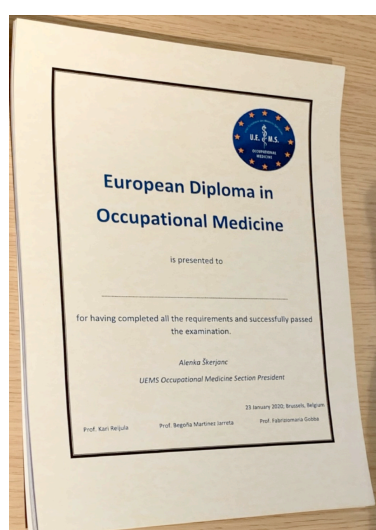
The Brussels UEMS Office gave the equipment needed for the Assessment, as well as an active support for the smooth running of the exam.

All the applicants to the 2023 edition, coming from different European Countries and from Turkey, average age around 33 y/o, passed the European Postgraduate Assessment in Occupational Medicine, proving a full qualification to obtain the European Diploma in Occupational Medicine.

The applicant's evaluation of the Postgraduate Assessment in Occupational Medicine by the applicants was highly positive: all expressed a high satisfaction regarding the organization of the exam, the information on useful training materials, the adequateness of the time for MCQs answering, the estimation of the weight of MCQs and the covering of the ETRs, as well as for the technical information and venue.

The 2023 European Postgraduate Assessment in Occupational Medicine was promoted on the websites of different organizations, including UEMS and EASOM, through section's member national activities, and by participation of the UEMS OM president to various meetings and webinar. Most of the participants to the exam got info by their national representatives.

According to the positive result of the 2023 edition of the European Postgraduate Assessment in Occupational Medicine, and to the high satisfaction of the applicants, the exam proved another milestone for the promotion of Occupational Medicine as a high-level Specialty in Europe. The organization of the 2024, edition, that will be held on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2024, is in progress.



# Farewell from the last Editor in Chief of the EASOM Bulletin (2015-2022)

**By Begoña Martínez-Jarreta**

This year, 2023, and during the Catania Summer School we celebrated a farewell because one of our most esteemed members got the retirement.

This is Prof. Elena-Ana Păuncu from the University of Timișoara, Romania.

She has been a very active member of EASOM, devoted to our association and always supportive with colleagues. As a member of the EASOM board she organised two Summer Schools in Timisoara and did a great job with our EASOM Newsletter for many years (among others tasks).

We will miss her and wish her all the best in this new stage!

## Greetings from Prof. Elena-Ana Pauncu



I was the editor of the EASOM Bulletin since 2015, and starting 2010, a member of the EASOM board. What can I say about me now?

I retired on 8 September 2023 from the position of university Professor at the "Victor Babes" University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timisoara.

In September I also said "goodbye" to EASOM, in Catania Summer School. It was an emotional moment for me and a surprise: the diploma I received and a scarf to remind me of you.

I taught Occupational Medicine to students, to young and senior doctors who studied in Romania (Romanians, and English or French speakers from many countries). I was part of the national management structures of Occupational Medicine specialists (Vice President of the Occupational Medicine Commission of the Romanian Ministry of Health, president of the Occupational Medicine Commission of the College of Romanian Physicians). Two family members became Occupational physicians and also some students of mine. I modernized my university curricula in Occupational Medicine and implemented "modern teaching methods". EASOM had an important role in my achievements. I learned a lot from you and I tried to pass on my expertise to others.

Year after year I participated in board activities and in Summer Schools. No less important is that I made friends, that we had fruitful collaborations, which materialized in joint projects and publications. Thanks to all EASOM members for being part of the EASOM team - EASOM family for so many years! I wish you success!

**A request from the Editor in Chief of EASOM:  
Members are requested to provide us with their  
teaching experiences or news.**

**The EASOM Bulletin is a good place to share  
these experiences.**

**Also, the EASOM website that is being renovated  
at present.**

**Please send your contributions to:**

**[gflorinag@yahoo.com](mailto:gflorinag@yahoo.com)**



