

Membership



“THE ERS VISION IN MOTION”

Attracting an increasing number of members

The ERS is a Society of individual members and depends on their contributions for the success of its activities. One measure of the strength of our Society is the size of the membership. This has been increasing steadily, and is now at nearly 7,500, not only a rise of 10% in the last year (2003–2004), but a significant increase compared with the 5,000 members in the year 2000. This is very encouraging, but the Executive Committee noted 2 years ago that there are approximately 30,000 respiratory physicians and similar doctors in Europe (World Health Organization (WHO) definition), and of course thousands more further afield. It seems legitimate therefore to consider that we have a huge opportunity to engage with and attract many more members from our constitute countries. New members will benefit from the greatly expanded scientific and educational opportunities the Society has developed in the last few years.

With this in mind, the Membership Committee decided to review the ERS membership structure in 2003. This has not been done for more than 8 years.

The proposals approved by the Executive Committee and adopted for the new structure are illustrated in table 2

(table 1, lists the benefits prior to the implementation of the new structure).

The main changes: how will ERS members benefit?

The most far reaching changes concern the members from Central and Eastern European countries of the former Soviet Union (USSR). To date, they have been offered a greatly discounted membership rate (Associate Membership) with almost full benefits for €10 per year. However, the ERS was heavily subsidising these memberships; in particular, the cost of producing and mailing the ERS publications. Hence, the Membership Committee decided that in order to provide a cost-effective service to our Associate Members, electronic access to all of the ERS publications would be preferable. Furthermore, it was agreed that basing the membership fees on the gross national product (GNP) per capita for different countries, as published by the World Bank, would be beneficial to members worldwide. For wealthier countries, members pay an unchanged full fee of €170, whereas for countries with a per capita GNP of less than \$10,000 it is €85. The Society has deliberately created cheaper (€10–30) memberships in order to cater for the needs of Associate Members. The fee for Senior and Junior members has also been significantly reduced.

Table 1 - Membership categories by country and benefits up until March 31, 2005

Membership Category	Benefits							Eligibility						
	Fee CHF	ERJ	ERR	ERM	Newsletter	Electronic Publications	Electronic Learning	Gen Assembly	Member	Assembly/Group Vote	Officer	National Delegate Voting Rights	Stand	Congress Discount
Full Membership														
Full Member	250	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ATS	213	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eastern European full member	125	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Junior, Senior	110	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Affiliate Membership														
Allied Health Professionals														
World	70				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Associate Membership														
Eastern Europe	10			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Postal charges of CHF 20 are required for members living outside of Europe
 Junior Member - Age 35 and under / Senior Member - Age 65 and over

Table 2 – Membership categories by country and benefits from April 1, 2005

Membership Category	Country GNP \$	Benefits							Eligibility						
		Fee Euro	ERJ	ERR	ERM	Newsletter	Electronic Publications	Electronic Learning	Gen Assembly	Member	Assembly/Group Vote	Officer	National Delegate Voting Rights	Stand	Congress Discount
Full Membership															
World	>10,000	170	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
ATS (joint)		145	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Europe	< 10,000	85	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Outside Europe	< 10,000	85				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Junior, Senior															
World	>10,000	85	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Europe	< 10,000	50	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Outside Europe	< 10,000	50				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Affiliate Membership															
Allied Health Professionals															
World		50				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Associate Membership															
World	3-10,000	30					X	X				X			
World	< 3,000	10					X	X	X			X			

A person from a country with a GNP of less than \$10,000 may receive printed publications if the membership fee of € 170, plus, for members outside Europe, the usual postal charge of € 10.
 Junior Member - Age 35 and under/ Senior Member - Age 65 and over

Fundamental reasons for modernising the membership structure:

1. To encourage as many professionals as possible to become full participating members of the ERS.
2. To encourage membership of junior (doctors in training) and members of the profession supplementary to medicine (e.g. respiratory nurse specialists, physiotherapists, technicians).
3. To enable colleagues from economically disadvantaged countries to benefit from reduced fees for ERS membership.
4. To recognise that the economic and political climate in Europe is changing.

We recognise that for some members from Eastern Europe, the new structure represents a small increase in fee but a change in benefits. We have reinstated voting rights for National Delegate elections, and we are considering the areas of Group and Assembly voting as

“The ERS is working hard to modernise the Membership structure and expand our Membership for the benefit of present and potential members worldwide”

well as the Congress discount. On the whole however, we feel that this is an attractive price structure, and hope that many Central and Eastern Europeans, and others from similar countries will continue to be full members and benefit from the services the ERS provides. When the financial consequences of the latter are clearer to the Society, after the ERS Copenhagen Annual Congress 2005, we will review the structures again in late 2005.

The introduction of these categories, and the phasing out of the old, coincided with the installation of new computer software at the ERS Headquarters (Lausanne, Switzerland). The new Membership database will enable our Membership department to remain efficient and responsive.

The new categories are being phased in gradually. Old

Associate Members are continuing their membership until 2005/6, and 3-year members are encouraged to wait until their membership expires before changing to the new system.

The ERS plans to assess its Membership profile in 2006 to ensure that the changes have achieved their intended effects, especially in terms of opening up membership to those countries that did not have the resources to previously benefit from the valuable information and resources available through the ERS.



Joint memberships

American Thoracic Society

For some time, ERS members paying the full fee have been eligible for a 15% discount if they are simultaneously members of the American Thoracic Society (ATS), and there has been great interest in applying this to members of European National Societies.

German Thoracic Society

With the assistance of the ERS Treasurer, Gerhard Sybrecht, the German Society is piloting a joint National Society/ERS membership, in which ERS membership will be offered to members of the German Thoracic Society for a 15% reduction in fee. It is hoped that this will result in an increase in ERS membership. If it does, we may be able to expand this scheme much further as we already have expressions of interest from other Societies such as the British Thoracic Society.



SEPAR/Hellenic Thoracic Society / EdiAipo

Although the ERS conducts its affairs using the English language, we are aware that not all of our potential members are fluent in English and they may experience some difficulties in reading and speaking it. To combat this problem, in the past 3 years, we have developed a number of joint memberships with national societies, where the members can access ERS educational material online and selected papers from the *ERJ* are published in their native language in four issues per year.

This was implemented in Italy (EdiAipo) and Spain (SEPAR) where it has been very successful with approximately 850 new members as a result of this initiative. A similar scheme linking the ERS with the Hellenic Thoracic Society is also underway. We are in negotiations with Turkey, and are very keen to expand this scheme further.

In addition, for the first time, a new fellowship jointly sponsored by the ERS and SEPAR was awarded to Hernán Abraham Manrique Chávez from Peru who will train in Spain.

Readdressing the balance

The number of women training to be physicians is rapidly increasing. Up until now, the ERS has been unable to assess the gender balance of its Membership, but, with our new Membership registration forms and database, we are able to record gender, which will allow us to conduct a detailed survey of a sample of women members. From this, we will be able to determine if we need to alter our activities or offer new facilities.

The future and beyond...

The ERS puts a lot of effort into attracting new members at the ERS Congress and at other societies' meetings around the world. Increasing Congress numbers mean that the opportunities to appeal to new members are

“The Society has seen a 10% increase in its membership over the past year and with the introduction of the new membership categories we hope to see a further rise”

greater than ever, and we hope to continue to provide excellent introductory packages, as we did in 2004 with the launch of the new journal *Breathe*. The ERS is working hard to modernise the Membership structure and expand our Membership for the benefit of present and potential members and patients everywhere.

> www.ersnet.org/membership

Membership Committee

Chair

Martin F. Muers

- Giovanni Viegi
- Gerhard W. Sybrecht
- Alvar G.N. Agusti
- Ineta Grislé
- Vesna Petrovic
- Mina Gaga



Martin F. Muers