

Membership



“WORKING WITH AND FOR OUR MEMBERS”

ERS membership: taking ownership of respiratory development

The ERS is a membership-based Society. As such, our goal to promote respiratory health in Europe is completely achieved through and for our members. It is therefore essential that we have a strong membership, both in number and activity, if we are to demonstrate leadership in the field of respiratory medicine in Europe.

Growth in Europe and beyond

Since 2001, our Society has seen a huge growth in membership. With the number of members standing at just 4,118 in 2001, over the last 5 years we have more

than doubled this figure. Moving into 2007, our Society is now maintaining a membership of over 8,000.

As a European society, it is expected that many of our members are located in Europe. Indeed, ERS members come from a total of 41 European countries. However, our reach also stretches beyond Europe, with the highest numbers of our international members coming from the USA, Japan and Brazil (figure 1); our overall international membership is 2,315, making up 26.5% of our total members, a figure we aim to improve on. By working to increase the breadth of membership, we hope to develop the already wide-ranging appreciation of the high-quality educational material and courses our Society

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“As Chair of the Membership Committee, I have been working with Committee members and staff to achieve greater membership growth and further develop the services we offer. ERS membership has remained stable in 2007, at over 8,000 members from countries across the world, and specific growth has been seen amongst Associate Members (those from lower-income countries). A membership survey addressed to active and non-renewing members explored both how we have met expectations and how we can improve in other areas. Focus groups were also set up so that we could better understand the needs of, for example, Junior Members. In these ways and through our ongoing Membership Strategy, it is my hope that we can successfully reach out to future ERS members from across the world.”

Sylvia Hartl, Membership Committee Chair

provides, as well as international recognition of our Annual Congress.

Membership benefits

The ERS offers a number of benefits to Full members, Dual members (applicable to those who are already members of specified societies, entitling them to a lower ERS membership fee), Junior (aged 35 years and younger) and Senior (aged 65 years and older) members. These benefits include:

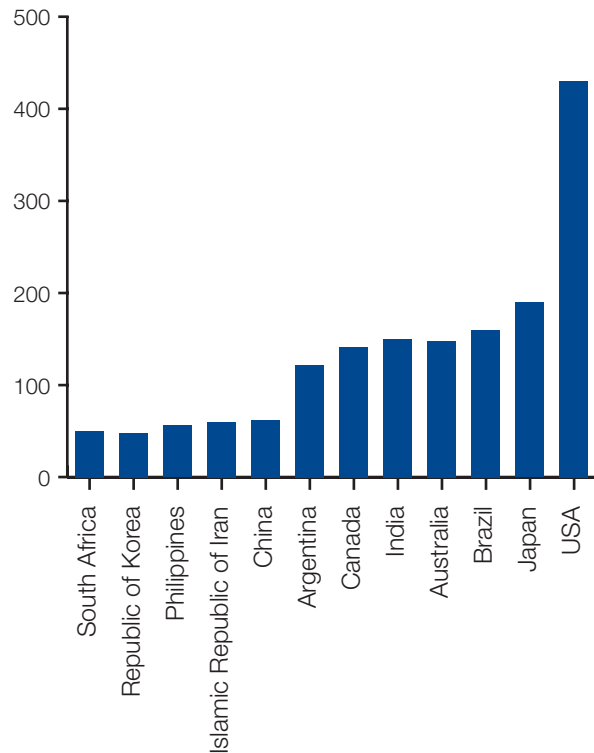
- receipt of printed copies of the *European Respiratory Journal (ERJ)*, the *European Respiratory Review (ERR)* and the *European Respiratory Monograph (ERM)*;
- electronic access to the *ERJ*, *ERR*, *ERM* and *Newsletter*;
- access to all of the educational material available on our website;
- the opportunity to join Groups and Assemblies specific to their specialty, to enjoy voting rights within one of these groups, and to participate within Society life (election/nomination in Groups and the General Assembly);
- preferential Congress registration fees.

As a Society with an international reach, we are acutely aware that the cost of membership may seem prohibitive to those from lower income countries. Through lower-priced Associate Membership, inhabitants of poorer countries (with a gross national product (GNP) per capita of US\$3,000–10,000 or a GNP of less than US\$3,000



Past-President William MacNee meets with National Delegates at the ERS Stockholm Congress

Figure 1 – International ERS membership



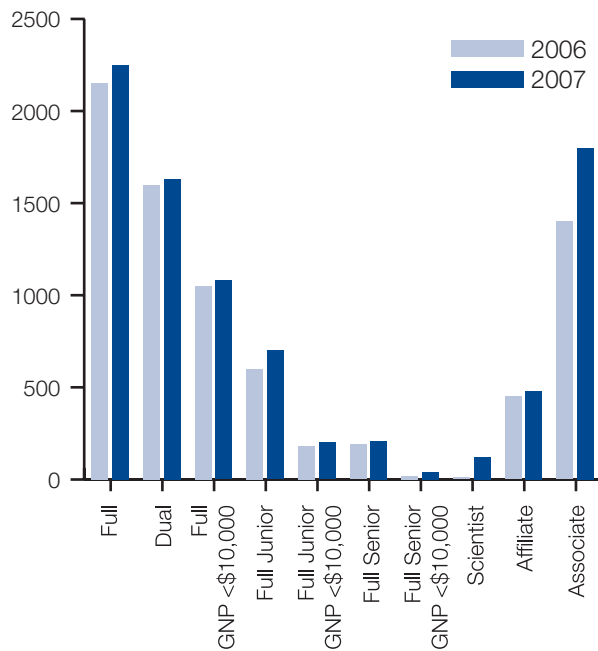
per year) can enjoy electronic access to our online publications and educational material, as well as National Delegate voting rights. Associate Membership has proved a great success and was our fastest-growing membership category in 2007 (figure 2).

Despite the many benefits ERS membership offers and the growth seen in the last 5 years, we are constantly striving to improve the service we offer, according to the needs of our members. In this way, we aim to broaden our reach further, thereby developing respiratory knowledge worldwide.

Learning from our members The membership survey

In 2007, the ERS conducted a survey of both active and non-renewing members. Our aim was to find out how satisfied current and past members were with the membership benefits available, which benefits they used and did not use, and what future improvements they would like to see.

Figure 2 – Membership growth in 2007 according to category



The survey found that overall, respondents were very satisfied with the access to science and education that membership to our Society provides. However, it was generally felt that improvement was required in members' involvement in Society life and in communication with fellow members.

Advancement in 2007

In addition to the increase in Associate Membership seen in 2007, the year brought other successes in ERS membership:

- A rise was seen in the uptake of Junior membership.
- First introduced in 2006, Scientist Membership has since proved a great success, with many more young post-doctoral scientists taking advantage of the reduced membership fee offered to them in recognition of their lower income.
- 80.4% of members are now affiliated to at least one Scientific Group – the highest number ever.
- Group members' participation in elections rose from 30% to 45%.

By surveying current and past membership in this way, our Society can work to improve the service it offers, ensuring that it is tailored to meet specified needs and with a view to increasing the number of future members.

Focusing on Junior Members

At the ERS, we recognise that young researchers, scientists and trainee medical practitioners are the future of respiratory knowledge and care. With this in mind, a Junior Focus Group was held in 2007 with the aim of hearing the ideas of our Society's younger members and thereby improving their interest in participating in Society life. Over the coming years, the ERS Membership Committee will consider and work to meet these needs.

Making an international connection At the ERS Congress

Our Society's Annual Congress provides the perfect opportunity to promote ERS membership to participants from across the world. At every Congress, the ERS has a large stand situated in a prominent position, which delegates can visit to find out more about membership. When visiting the stand, Congress attendees are offered the chance to take up 2-month trial membership, allowing them to discover the benefits of membership for free and in their own time. Our Membership Department works hard to ensure that as many as possible of these trials become full, long-lasting ERS members. The annual conversion rate from trial to full membership now stands at 25%.



2007 Congress attendees were given a free demonstration of e-Learning, which is just one of the benefits of membership

Beyond the Congress

In addition to membership promotion at our own Congress, the ERS provides a staff presence at the meetings of other European and international societies. Throughout 2007, William MacNee (ERS Past-President 2006–2007) also visited the leaderships of many national societies to discuss and promote the benefits of ERS membership. By connecting with a wider audience in this way and continuing our Dual Membership agreements with the American Thoracic Society, the European Society of Thoracic Surgeons, and other sister organisations, it is hoped that our Society will benefit in the long term from collaboration with colleagues from around the world.

Our Society’s National Delegates also play a significant role in membership attraction and connection. Since 2006, the National Delegates have been contacting non-renewing members and welcoming new members to the ERS. The aim of such personal contact is to ensure members feel better connected to and valued by our Society, resulting in an increase in renewal of membership.

Strategic future development

In 2006–2007, the ERS as a whole underwent a wide-reaching strategic review of its activities. This review allowed the Membership Committee the opportunity to assess its current situation and to look to the future, with a view to improving services and increasing membership uptake. In coming years, the Membership Committee will focus on:

- making subscription to 2-month trial membership available *via* the ERS website;
- advertising the benefits of membership, such as free access to all online publications and educational material, participation in ERS Live discussions *via* the website, election voting rights and the opportunity to propose candidates;
- working towards the translation of educational materials and the development of a model of distribution in collaboration with national societies;
- providing financial support to those with a lower income, such as allied health professionals, post-doctoral scientists and those from poorer countries;
- the development of Collegiate Membership for senior, long-term members who have a special loyalty to our Society.

Through such continued improvement and future growth of membership, we hope that the ERS can become *the* European respiratory society and a leader in the fight against lung disease.

Membership Committee

Chair: Sylvia Hartl.

Committee members: Jorrit Gerritsen, James Y. Paton, Charlotte Suppli Ulrik, Joanna Chorostowska-Wynimko, Florin Mihaltan, Vesna Petrovic.