

INTERNATIONAL BALINT FEDERATION

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Minutes of the meeting of the Council of the Federation held on Saturday 3rd May 2003 in the Jacob Antal Study Centre, Miercurea- Ciuc, Romania.

Present:

Dr Heide Otten (president)	GERMANY	heideotten@gmx.de
Dr Kornélia Bobay (vice-president)	HUNGARY	
Dr John Salinsky (general secretary)	UK	JVSalinsky@aol.com
Dr Michel Delbrouck (treasurer)	BELGIUM	michel.delbrouck@ifts.be
Dr Ante Gilić	CROATIA	ante.gilic@zd.tel.hr
Dr Helena Nielsen	DENMARK	galena@dadlnet.de
Prof Ernst Petzold	GERMANY	epetzold@ukaachen.de
Dr Steffen Häfner	GERMANY	
Dr Alberet Veress	ROMANIA	averess@nexta.ro
Dr Eva Veress	ROMANIA	
Dr Robert Zielinski	ROMANIA	
Dr Iuliu Ottean	ROMANIA	
Dr Attila Munzlinger	ROMANIA	
Dr Csilla Hegyi	ROMANIA	
Dr Tünde Baka	ROMANIA	
Dr Anita Häggmark	SWEDEN	anders.haggmark@swipnet.se
Dr Erica Jones	UK	erica-joy-jones@hotmail.com

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Dr Michèle Lachowsky (ex-president, France), Dr Marie-Anne Puel (vice-president, France), Drs Barbara Jugowar and Maria Skommer (Poland), Dr Marja Nick (Finland) Dr Henry Jablonski (Sweden), Dr Ben Maoz (Israel), Dr Vladimir Vinokour (Russia), Drs Heather Suckling, Lenka Speight and David Watt (UK).

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 22 September 2002 in Oxford, England were circulated and approved with one correction (the 15th International Congress will be in 2005 and not 1995).

3. REMEMBERING BORIS LUBAN-PLOZZA

Dr Ernst Petzold (Germany) expressed our sadness about the death of Boris which occurred on 24 December 2002. His last words had been: ‘ I have to go to a podium to give a lecture’. Ernst paid tribute to Boris’s work on behalf of the Balint movement over a long and distinguished career and passed round a copy of the obituary from the Balint-Journal. He urged us all to remember Boris’s motto: ‘Allegra!’ (‘be cheerful!’).

Dr Nellie Bobay (Vice-president, Hungary) told us that Boris's latest book about building bridges had been translated in to Hungarian: copies will be presented to members of the Hungarian and Romanian Balint Associations. **Dr Erica Jones (UK)** reminded us that Boris had introduced a whole generation of young doctors to Balint through the annual Ascona student meetings.

4. PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

The president (Dr Heide Otten, Germany) told us that Israel now had a Balint Society and Austria was in the process of forming one. We needed to discuss the Berlin Congress, the 14th Congress in 2005, the future of the Ascona prizes and how to manage our money. 'So let's go to work'.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

The treasurer (**Dr Michel Delbrouck, Belgium**) reported that the Federation had a healthy bank balance of € 18 000, an increase of 100% in 4 years. He had received an individual member's fee from Dr Rubens, in Brazil who had been a member 20 years ago. There was no news from the Flemish speaking Belgian Society but the French speaking Society had paid their fees twice. We would discuss later the best use of our surplus funds.

6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The president said that Dr Ben Maoz (Israel) would like to become an officer of the board. However, there were no vacant posts and the Israel Society had only recently become an affiliated member of the Federation. It was suggested that we might create a post of Ambassador to the Middle Eastern Countries but this would need to be proposed at the next meeting in Berlin. We then proceeded to the Election of Officers. **Dr John Salinsky (General Secretary, UK)** said that he would be retiring from his post after 10 years service.

The nominations were:

President: Dr Heide Otten (Germany)

Vice-presidents: Dr Kornelia Bobay (Hungary) and Dr Marie-Anne Puel (France)

Treasurer: Dr Michel Delbrouck (Belgium)

General Secretary: Dr Heather Suckling (UK)

In the absence of any other nominations, all the above were all elected to serve for two years with effect from 5 October 2003.

7. 13th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS IN BERLIN, OCTOBER 2003

Ernst Petzold opened a smart little green umbrella, which announced the Berlin Congress and also bore the message: 'Balint work protects you and brings you close together'. He produced more umbrellas and distributed them to members. Heide reported that 79 people from 18 countries had registered so far and 34 of them had paid the fee. She told us that there will be demonstrations of Imagination Balint, Balint sculpture, Balint psychodrama and prismatic Balint. Those who asked what all these were about were invited to come along and find out for themselves. The papers will all be printed in English in a green book, which will be edited by John Salinsky and given to the delegates to take home at the end of the conference. She produced what appeared to be a copy of the book but the secretary was disappointed to discover that all the pages were still blank. Rooms at the Albrechtshof Hotel can be obtained at the special

Balint rate of €120 for a double and €100 for a single. Cheaper accommodation has been reserved at other hotels and a youth hostel (for information, see the Congress website: www.internationalbalintcongress.de) The Conference fee for students will be €20 per day and it is hoped that about 20 students will come. There was a discussion about ways of funding travelling expenses for students: would pharmaceutical companies be willing to contribute to a conference for doctors who prefer to prescribe the drug “doctor”? Finally, Heide asked us to let her and Ernst know if we had any further ideas for the Congress.

8. 14th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS 2005

Where should the 2005 Congress be held?

Michel Delbrouck said that the Belgian and French Societies had discussed the possibility of putting on the next International Congress jointly but had decided against it because of financial concerns. **Dr Anita Häggmark (Sweden)** said that she and Henry Jablonski were very keen to have it in Stockholm and they will be discussing it with their colleagues. They were considering whether it would be better to have separate living and working accommodation (as in the 1989 Stockholm Congress) or to have everybody living and working under the same roof. Erica Jones thought that conferences where everyone lived, ate and slept together were more fruitful because of the many opportunities for interaction outside the academic programme. Nellie Bobay offered Budapest as a venue and **Dr Ante Gilić (Croatia)** again proposed holding it in Zadar. We decided to consider the question further at our next Council meeting in Berlin.

9. ASCONA PRIZES

Ernst Petzold said that Arthur Trenkel had now retired as president of the jury and Ernst had taken his place. The prizes would continue to be funded by the Ascona Foundation. This year there have been 16 entries, 11 in English (from Romania and Hungary) and the others in French or German. Since Ascona was a difficult place to get to, he suggested that the prize-giving should in future take place at the International Balint Congress during Congress years, and in Ascona in the intervening years. This recommendation was seconded by Erica Jones and Ernst agreed to propose it to the board of the Ascona Foundation. He recommended that we have a prize committee to judge the essays consisting of Michel Delbrouck, John Salinsky and himself. This was agreed. Nellie thought that the students should be expected to write something about their experience in Balint groups as well as their relationship with a patient. She also wondered what had happened to the Junior Balint Association? Heide said that the Juniors had become Seniors and we were waiting for a new generation of Juniors to show interest in forming an association. Nellie would like to write to the Ambassadors of the Arab countries to tell them about Balint; Albert and Eva Veress thought it would be good to invite some Japanese colleagues to Berlin.

10. REPORTS FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

SERBIA-MONTENEGRO. Ante Gilić said that Balint groups existed there 25 years ago. A few days earlier, he had given a lecture to 35 members of the Serbian Medical Society who had shown great interest in having Balint groups as part of their medical education curriculum. There were two group analysts present who might become leaders. He suggested that they should be invited to Berlin and this was agreed.

CROATIA. Ante said that Balint work was continuing to flourish and he invited members to come to the Balint School in Dubrovnik in June.

HUNGARY. Kornélia Bobay told us that the Hungarian Association would be holding its National Conference on May 10th. The GPs in Szeged were holding a meeting to discuss Thanatology in Balint groups. There are Junior (student) Balint groups in Budapest and several other centres and an accredited psychosomatic course will be starting in September.

SWEDEN. Anita described a new group for paediatricians to discuss their problem relationships (mainly to do with the parents of their patients). Henry Jablonski has started two groups for hospital doctors in Stockholm and a new Balint leader training course has started. This will take place on one day a month for two years. The participants are all women!

DENMARK. **Dr Helena Nielsen** said that the Danish Society is now two and a half years old and they have 22 trained leaders. They are hoping to develop a stronger connection with the Swedish Society, which may include a joint Congress. Carl Edvard Rudebeck will be coming from Sweden to give a talk on 'Bodily Empathy'. For the last two years they have had a Danish Balint website (www.balint.dk). The leaders group is working on a book about their 3-year leader education which will include all the cases brought to the group and articles about the group work.

GERMANY. Ernst Petzold offered us a look back and a look forward. Two weeks ago there had been a workshop for Balint leaders in which he had greatly enjoyed working with Heide. There were some problems about leaders who were not in the Society as no one could be prevented from leading a 'Balint group' legally. The next workshop will be on the theme of Psycho-traumatology. Then, in July, there will be a big conference in Innsbrück to present two new books on Balint research. The first is *Neurobiology in Psychiatry* by Günther Schiepek and the second is a new edition by Werner König of Werner Stücker's classic book on Balint leader training.

ROMANIA. Finally, we had news from our host country. **Dr Albert Veress** said that two young members had been elected to the board of the Romanian Balint Association. They are Attila Munzlinger and Csilla Hegyi. There are five active fortnightly Balint groups in Romania and many other people participate in national workshops and weekend meetings. The current membership stands at 188.

The president, speaking for us all, expressed her admiration for Albert's work and the achievements of the Romanian Balint Association in the last ten years.

11. SUBSIDIES FOR STUDENTS

The treasurer said that we could afford to make available the sum of €1000 each year to assist students. Ernst confirmed that the Ascona prizes would continue to be funded by the Ascona Foundation. Heide and Ernst suggested that we should pay for the winning students' travel and accommodation at our International Congresses so that they could come to receive their awards. At the same time, we could encourage their interest in Balint work and offer them membership of their national Balint Societies. This arrangement would not apply in years when there was no Congress and the prizes were awarded in Ascona. This plan received the blessing of the treasurer and was unanimously accepted.

12. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Federation Council will be at the 13th International Congress in Berlin, Germany. It will take place at 11 a.m. on Sunday 5 October 2003 in the Kaiserin-Friedrich-Stiftung, Berlin.

BALINT CONFERENCE IN MIERCUREA-CIUC

This council meeting was held during the 10th Anniversary National (and 2nd International) Conference of the Romanian Balint Society. The venue was the Salavator Hotel and Jacob Antal Study Centre, a pleasant modern building with excellent facilities which nestles beside the impressive Franciscan Church on the outskirts of the town of Miercurea-Ciuc. (For a fuller description, please see my account of the 1997 conference in the Journal of the Balint Society 1998, **26**:67-68). This year's conference was attended by 150 people, although some were only present for the first day. The enthusiastic Romanian delegates represented 21 Romanian counties and there were international guests from Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Moldavia, Sweden, the UK and the USA. There were papers on a variety of subjects including psychosomatic medicine, Balint psychodrama and Balint in medical education. We had three demonstration 'fish bowl' groups led by Heide Otten, Nellie Bobay and myself, and everyone was able to participate in two small group sessions. It's always interesting to co-lead a group with someone from a different country and I really enjoyed the experience of working with Anita Häggmark. Translation between English and Romanian was provided in a variety of ways, often by the Romanian Balint Society's official interpreter (the multi-talented Csaba Bodor) and in the small groups by other Romanian delegates. The whole conference had a great spirit of friendship and enthusiasm and willingness to learn from one another. The organisation by Albert and Eva Veress and their colleagues was excellent. And of course, it wasn't all work. We had music in the form of an organ and violin recital in the Church, and dancing provided by a talented local folk dance group. We were treated to a champagne reception in the impressive Gothic fortress and an enjoyable dinner and dance on Saturday night. After the conference, some of us went on a tour to the village of Bran, which has a beautiful Alpine setting and a fairytale gothic castle with some very fine period rooms. The castle also boasts an association with Dracula and, sure enough, when we arrived, there was the Count himself waiting to greet us. His appearance (black cloak, wolf mask and bloodcurdling groans) confirmed his authenticity and it was no surprise when he began pursuing the many beautiful women in the party and attempting to bite their necks. The maidens fled, shrieking in terror, but one was caught and the tell tale red marks appeared on her lovely throat. As the rest of us stood, transfixed in horror, the evil Count suddenly turned to dust and his place was taken by the maiden's rescuer: Dr Albert (Bertzi the Vampire Slayer) Veress.

Many thanks to our Romanian hosts for the Conference, the wonderful hospitality and the psychodrama.

John Salinsky
General Secretary

