

Does the Luxembourgish Society of Nuclear Medicine (SLMN) really exist?

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Luxembourg and the SLMN

Who knows where the dwarf of a country, called the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, is actually located in Europe? A one-point question.

When I was a child, I had to explain to French children during a holiday sojourn in France, that no, Luxembourg was not just a radio and television channel called 'Radio-Télé-Luxembourg', but that it was a fully existing, sovereign country located precisely between France, Belgium and Germany. I did not tell them at that time that the size of the Luxembourgish territory is only 2586 square km, i.e., about the size of a small French department. But we have a monarch, on top! The French children would have liked to have one too, but they did not, at least not by denomination.

By analogy, the existence of the Luxembourgish Society of Nuclear Medicine (SLMN) was, in a way, negated four years ago by the EANM, as the SLMN was simply not named (forgotten) on the annual listing of the national member societies in the congress issue of the EJNM. We herewith officially proclaim and repeat that yes, the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, as well as the SLMN, do exist. So, well said!

Integration in the EU and SLMN

Europe was our chance. In 1951, Luxembourg was a founding member of the 'Communauté Européenne du Charbon et de

'l'Acier' (CECA) and thus of the later European Union (EU). For the 10th and last time, Luxembourg has held the Presidency of the Council of the EU for a period of six months, from January 1st to June 30th, 2005. As our national population amounts to about 465,000 against 450 million inhabitants in the EU, the challenge for the tiny country is to maintain its own cultural individuality *simul et singularis*, or *similar and singular*, while intensively networking with the 24 other EU countries. Small countries can act as relevant intermediaries. The aim is to contribute in building an integrated Europe; a peacekeeping task of historically unprecedented effects.

The 'Schengen treaty' was signed twenty years ago, on June 2nd, 1985 - following popular sayings in humorous circumstances. The talks on free trans-frontier circulation of European citizens were held on board a ship cruising the Moselle river, a symbolic link between three countries, i.e. between Luxembourg, Germany and France. When the agreement was signed, the ship was passing a small wine village. "What is the name of the village?" — was the question; "Schengen" — was the answer.

By analogy, the SLMN is working towards integration and linking between departments of nuclear medicine. Due to legal regulations, the five departments of nuclear medicine in the country are all located within a hospital setting. As well as the hospitals are trying to work out synergies with a view to fulfilling recent political demands, the five departments of nuclear medicine are trying to work out cooperation and common guidelines. The greatest progress in this domain has been made in the field of PET.

One national PET/CT camera ('Centre National PET') is open to the nuclear medicine specialists of the five centres, who, since 2003, have been examining their own patients on a rotation basis five days a week (8–12 patients per day). Except for Monaco, the density of PET and of PET/CT systems in Luxembourg is the highest in the world! The PET files are electronically sent to the department of nuclear medicine of the specialist in charge; he is responsible for the medical report. The health insurance reimburses only oncological indications. Hence, no neurological or cardiac indications are being performed so far. The multicentric 'PET scientific committee' and the 'PET management committee' are in charge of supervision and accreditation.

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Multiculturalism in Luxembourg

Multiculturalism (Figure 1) is an every-day reality in Luxembourg, with up to 38% of resident non-nationals in the country. One hundred and fifty different nationalities are represented in the small country. In addition, as they work in Luxembourg, more than 100,000 people cross the Belgian, French and German borders every day. With a view to promoting the integration of foreigners, a special educational effort has been made by the government and by the communes to dispense language courses free or for a token fee. All EU-languages can be learned in Luxembourg; this opportunity is available to anybody who wishes to do so.

As a mirror of the multicultural Luxembourgish society, 47% of the SLMN members are Luxembourgish, the others are Belgian (33.3%), German (6.6%), South-African (6.6%) and Iranian (6.6%). As yet, we do not have any members from East-Middle-European countries! The languages spoken with patients in our nuclear medicine departments traditionally are Luxembourgish (about 2/3 of cases) and French (about 1/3 of cases); some patients speak Portuguese, Spanish, German, English or another language. If necessity, body language and pantomime, especially with the hands, are used.



Figure 1. The Luxembourgish 'Super-Jemp'. How we in Luxembourg schematically defined ourselves during our last presidency of the council of the EU in 1997. 'Jemp', a diminutive of 'Jean-Pierre', is the archetype of a Luxembourgish citizen with strong roots to his native soil. Super-Jemp is a kind of independent detective dedicated to the cause of good. Copyright: Roger Leiner, Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg (with kind permission of the author).

Multiculturalism is also an aspect of quality control within the five departments of nuclear medicine, the PET/CT unit as well as the radiology departments, as it is performed by physicists of three different nationalities: one French, one Greek and one Spanish, all women. All efforts go towards providing a standardized quality control.

SLMN creation in 1994

Due to intensive promotional efforts, the SLMN is happy to announce that within the last three years, membership has grown by 50%. From a numerical point of view, this means that we now have fifteen members, and that there were ten of us before. However, despite our tremendous growth, it is still possible for us to all sit together around a table when we have a meeting. The gender distribution shows a strong imbalance with < 7% women (female/male ratio = 1/14). Social and scientific activities take place irregularly. Consequently, we organized national PET congresses in 1997 and in 2001.

Technical power

Luxembourg has no nuclear power plant but there is one just across the border, in Cattenom, France. We import electricity from there for diversification. Some of the electricity generated by our own water power plant in the North is sold abroad.

By analogy, radiopharmaceuticals including F^{18} -FDG are all imported from abroad. Therapy by sealed radioactive sources, radiosynoviothrosis and mainly therapy by I^{131} , is performed on an outpatient basis up to an activity of 800 MBq. This represents about 90% of all clinical indications. Higher activities are administered in a two-bed hospital unit, which, in 2005, was adapted for regulations concerning radioprotection.

The nuclear medicine power is provided by 2.15 gamma cameras per 100,000 inhabitants; there are ten cameras in total. Each department has between one and three gamma cameras. We perform general nuclear medicine examinations and C^{13} breath tests. Ergometric stress testing is performed by specialists in nuclear medicine if they have training in internal medicine, or otherwise by cardiologists.

Memory of what we are

'Making predictions on a given topic is a very difficult task, as it concerns the future'. Any future is built on the events and thoughts that took place beforehand, in the past. As concerns the actual time period, which in the future will be the past, things are becoming easier, as the requirement is to document and archive the events and intellectual preoccupations of a given moment. Thus, there exist abundant literature concerning the history and the psychological whereabouts of the EU. The political and legal history of the EU and its institutions are distinctive fields of knowledge and of academic teaching, even in Luxembourg, which has no university, but has a faculty of European law.

By analogy, in order to document what, in the future, will be history, some departments of nuclear medicine have started to write annual reports about their activities. For instance, the 2004 annual report of one department contains as many as 95 pages.

The aim is to document the medical and technical work that was actually performed, the manpower of the department, the newly introduced techniques, the technical difficulties encountered, the external changes and events that influenced our work, the drawbacks and also the relations with, and the demography of, the referring physicians. However, we also document social events such as the guided visit to an industrial bakery. Our professional memory thus has material and well-organized support. We look forward to, and will be proud to reproduce, an analogous pattern

each year. Whenever necessary, which will be whenever our biological memory will be insufficient, we shall be pleased and eager to consult 'The' document.

Long, long ago, some well-known individual said "*Cogito, ergo sum*". Or "*I think, therefore I am*". Or "*As I am a thinking being, I do exist*". By analogy, as we reflect on, and thereby document, our professional existence in obedience to so-called modern management rules, it means that the SLMN really does exist. One point for the good.