



Council of Occupational Therapists  
for the European Countries

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## Welcome at the 10th European Occupational Therapy Congress!

Since 2013 COTEC has produced 4 newsletters each year, and this is the first special **Anniversary & Congress** edition.

This is the printed version, but of course you can find the newsletter online at [www.coteceurope.eu](http://www.coteceurope.eu)

So much has happened in 30 years and many things have changed. In this edition, you will find contributions of five out of six the former presidents. Read about their memories and reflections of their presidency and try to find friends and colleagues on the pictures.

- **Hanneke van Bruggen** writes about the expansion of Europe after the fall of the Berlin wall and the start of ENOTHE.
- **Maria McGuinn** describes the early days of COTEC and remembers the time without internet and emails.
- **Maeve Groom** gives us her memories of WFOT meetings and Santorini.
- **Maria Skouroliakos** writes about COTEC becoming a less abstract organisation and highlights the first presidency meeting in Athens.
- **Anu Söderström** refers to the important occasion when COTEC became an official legal entity and NGO and discussions about OT-EU.
- **Mette Kolsrud** describes her successful work for a change to more political awareness and memberships of European organisations and closer collaboration with ENOTHE.

And I will end this newsletter with some reflections and highlights about my still running term as president of COTEC.



On behalf of all the members of the Executive Committee:

Thank you all for contributing to the COTEC work

&

Enjoy this 10<sup>th</sup> European Congress!

*Stephanie Saenger*

*COTEC president*

### The first 9 COTEC Congresses:

|                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1986 London, UK        | 2000 Paris, France     |
| 1987 Edinburgh, UK     | 2004 Athens, Greece    |
| 1988 Estoril, Portugal | 2008 Hamburg, Germany  |
| 1992 Ostende, Belgium  | 2012 Stockholm, Sweden |
| 1996 Madrid, Spain     |                        |

## CHANGES IN EUROPE, COTEC & ENOTHE

**Hanneke van Bruggen, the Netherlands**  
**President 1991-1998**

When I became a COTEC delegate in 1989 a series of radical political changes occurred in Europe, associated with the liberalization of the Eastern Bloc's authoritarian systems and the erosion of political power in the pro-Soviet governments in nearby Poland and Hungary. After several weeks of civil unrest, the East German government announced on 9 November 1989 the fall of the Berlin Wall. The enlargement of Europe with the Eastern European Countries has since 1989 been an important topic in the COTEC meetings.

Freedom of movement for workers is one of the founding principles of the EU and is a fundamental right of workers. This has been the reason for establishing COTEC, in order to overcome the many barriers which occupational therapists were facing in Europe. The level of education differed considerably and the role and autonomy of the occupational therapist ranged from working under supervision of the doctor to working as an autonomous professional. The European context during the 1990s was complex and uncertain and not easily

navigated for a rather small profession. However, to choose for a European approach could put pressure on governments, universities, professional bodies, and other decision makers to equalize the status of occupational therapy. To do so, the profession needed to develop a strong body of knowledge that could earn its place in the European Higher Education Area, which could not easily be achieved without involving educational institutions. In 1994 COTEC applied successfully for a European grant to establish ENOTHE (European network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education) and 2 years later the network became an official academic Thematic Network with support of the European Socrates Erasmus funding programme. Strategically was chosen for a network rather than a formal association

because of the dynamics, flexibility, adaptability and possibility to extend and to allow for diversity. Slowly COTEC became a respected organisation and was in 1994 for the first time invited to participate in the WFOT council meeting in Edinburgh. 10 years later ENOTHE and COTEC started a big project following the TUNING methodology to create subject specific competences and cycle level descriptors in relation to mutual professional and academic recognition. Finally, in 2008 the project was accomplished with a publication called: Reference Points for the design and delivery of Degree Programmes in Occupational Therapy. This publication has had a big influence on the academic development of the profession.

The future for occupational therapy looks

very prosperous with a focus of health policies on empowering and engaging people and creating enabling environments, but it demands creativity in professional reasoning, a critical occupational science base and a social accountable profession.

*Congratulations with the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and much success for the future COTEC!!!*  
*Hanneke van Bruggen*

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## UNITING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS IN EUROPE – THE EARLY DAYS

It seems only a few years ago that I was packing my bag and off to a COTEC meeting. As I sit down now to put a few memories on paper of my time at COTEC, people and memories flood into my mind. I have vivid images of the group sitting around rectangular table arrangements, our national flags and names in front of us, papers being distributed for discussion or to be brought home for further work. There are far too many memories to describe of those early days when we met to try to create a vision for the profession on a Europe wide scale.

At that time I found it amazing to be sitting around a table with people from six, then eight, then twelve nationalities, all speaking one language, sharing experiences about occupational therapy and its challenges in what were often infant Associations. In the evenings, the occupational therapists in the host country organised delicious regional food and hospitality. These occasions were such fun, giving us an opportunity to meet with colleagues from the area and to hear of the interventions they used.

An essential function of COTEC was to communicate with the European Commission which was preparing to introduce a single horizontal Directive for “free movement” that would embrace all those professions that had

not already been provided for in the seven dedicated Directives already adopted. The information contained in the Summary of the Profession

was most helpful in our dealings with the representatives of the European Commission who had been most supportive of the work of COTEC.

In an age of few home computers and much less sophisticated communications,

ENOTHE arrived. As the EU and COTEC families expanded so too did the work of the COTEC.

I had the honour of representing the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI) between the years of 1986 and



**30th Council Meeting at Unfallkrenkenhaus, Lorenz Bohler, Vienna on the 7th May 1999, front row the COTEC board, Maria McGuinn 3rd from the right**

developing the COTEC Code of Ethics & Practice and then having five representatives translating it from English into their national languages was like having a baby. I spent many, many hours getting this baby born and finally hugging the compilations of Codes for distribution at a meeting, no emails then! A few years later another COTEC baby called

1999. In COTEC, I served as Secretary, Treasurer and subsequently President. In 1998, as President, I had the great honour of attending the 23rd Council Meeting of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) in Ottawa, at which COTEC was accepted as a Regional Member.

From these small and early beginnings 30 years ago, COTEC as an organisation evolved. Over those years the practice of occupational therapy in Europe has become recognised and expanded into the entire network of the health system and into emerging practice settings and services always striving to meet the needs of service-users, their carers and the general public.

So were to now? Do we dare to venture further beyond the comfortable boundaries of our traditional & expected roles? To influence the future we must consider what shapes occupational therapy practice in this century. How will advancing technology influence practitioners in the age of telemedicine and the internet? We need strong marketing and profile-raising to ensure the role of the occupational therapist is fully understood and recognised.

Apart from COTEC issues, it has been a great pleasure over the years to meet and liaise with so many friends and colleagues from various parts of Europe. I am privileged too to have represented AOTI. To all my friends, I say Hello and best wishes.

**Happy 30th birthday COTEC!**

**Maria McGuinn, Ireland,  
President 1998 - 2000**



## FROM COMMITTEE TO COUNCIL

**Maeve. H. Groom, The United Kingdom, President 2000-2003**



**37<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, Autumn 2002 Santorini, Greece, Maeve Groom sitting in the centre**

I first came into contact with COTEC during the W.F.O.T conference in London in 1994 and was afterwards selected by the British Association to be their mandated U.K Delegate. In the autumn of that year I was duly dispatched to Athens with sharpened pencils and a rubber having been told that it had been agreed at the start of COTEC that the U.K delegate was always the executive secretary! I am pleased to say that things have changed a lot since then. I served six years in this position on the executive and was honoured to be elected president at the spring meeting in Amsterdam 2000 at a time of great change for the then Committee.

I was privileged as one of my first tasks to represent COTEC at the WFOT council meeting in Japan. We were able to cement excellent working relationships and to understand that although the organisations were different, particularly with COTEC needing to respond to European legislation, that we could compliment each other and work in harmony.

The major event of the year and a wonderful success was ERGO 2000 which was held in Paris in September. It was attended by over 1000 delegates who commented positively on the high quality of the papers and excellent organisation. The Spring meeting held in Zurich celebrated the fine tuning that had been made to the constitution by adopting an “inclusive approach”

and opening up membership to European Countries signed up to the ‘Oporto Agreement’ or with national associations accepted by WFOT.

The autumn meeting held in Helsinki was particularly memorable because following consultation with all member associations it was agreed that the Committee had ‘come of age’ and should be constitutionally renamed Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries. The Ethos behind this change was to recognise the enlargement of Europe and the fact that the council had already increased to include 22 member countries.

The spring meeting took place in June to coincide with WFOT council meeting and Congress which was held in Stockholm further establishing our close cooperation and organisational links. The autumn meeting took place on the beautiful Greek island of Santorini. The meeting was hosted by the Greek Association as much work was to be done in preparation for the next European Congress which was to be held in Athens. During this meeting it was resolved to adopt the ‘Lisbon Strategy’ to form the next four year’s strategy for COTEC. It was felt that the language of the document was so congruent to the thinking and work of the Council and that the influences of this policy would clearly impact on all European citizens.

The year 2003 was designated the “European Year of people with Disabilities” and it was agreed as a European organisation to sign up to the “Madrid Declaration” with all its principles beliefs and content and to encourage our individual associations to do the same.

The final meeting of my term of office took place in Slovenia. It was devoted to reorganising the Council in line with the European enlargement and discussions for the necessary re-structuring which would need to take place to encompass over thirty member countries and ensuring the ongoing viability of the organisation.

I can’t possibly finish this Birthday report without praising the national delegates, their alternates and the executive committee who steer and formulate the ongoing work of the council. I was so fortunate to work alongside the most amazing group of European and international occupational therapists who all gave of their own time throughout the years producing Annual Summaries of the Profession, creating web sites, providing support to new member countries, working with ENOTHE, preparing and hosting conferences, creating responses to E.U consultations on legislation and Higher Directives and a myriad of other tasks. This ongoing work was and is to harmonise and improve our standards of education and practice across Europe so that European citizens should receive the same level of ‘state of the art’ intervention or treatment from an Occupational Therapist in which ever country they reside.

**HAPPY 30th BIRTHDAY and best wishes for all your future endeavours on behalf of the profession and for all the people we serve!**

**Maeve H Mallinson Groom F.C.O.T.**



## FROM ABSTRACT TO CONCRETE: ACTION PLAN & PRESIDENTIAL MEETING

**Maria Skouroliakos, Greece, President 2003-2010**

Being president of COTEC was one of my greatest challenges in my personal and professional life. I feel honored to have served such an organization. During my presidency COTEC transformed itself from an info gathering organization to a more concrete non-government organization to serve the rights of occupational therapists throughout Europe and support the academic, professional and practical development of occupational therapy in Europe.

It was a period of hard working, of great debates, of opening new doors and established new standards of orders. I would always be grateful to my European colleagues whom their vision and passion were the power behind this development. I feel humble to have met and worked with so many talented and passionate occupational therapists.

I can talk for hours about meetings, places, events, personal moments; these were the most fulfilling 6 years of my life. I need more than 6 years just to recollect my memories, my feelings, and my experiences. So since I don't have 6 years I would have to pick one moment, one glimpse of the history that have significance, for me, to the history of COTEC. For me this moment is in this photo: the first ever Presidential Welcome Reception which took place during the European Congress in Athens 2004.

"For the first time, COTEC is not an abstract idea but the host who brings all the occupational therapists together."

For the first time the Presidents of the National Associations had the opportunity to meet and socialize with the other Presidents and of course with the delegates of COTEC. It was a great meeting, I am sure many good opportunities for collaboration raised by this meeting and the image of COTEC and its work got a real meaning for many National Associations.

I am very proud of working for organizing this meeting and be there on this historical moment.

*(An inside joke, until today I won't remember why I am the only one carry a glass).*



**41<sup>st</sup> Council meeting 13<sup>th</sup> September 2004, Athens, on the far right Maria Skouroliakos with glass**

**"FOR THE FIRST TIME, COTEC IS NOT AN ABSTRACT IDEA BUT THE HOST WHO BRINGS ALL THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS TOGETHER."**

I would like to congratulate the COTEC Executive Committee for its hard work to bring together the two organizations COTEC and ENOTHE in this congress. It is an ongoing work and today more than ever the collaboration between academics and professionals is more than needed. The European social agenda is heavier with the demographic crisis, the financial crisis, the refugee crisis, the deterioration of the social services.

COTEC and ENOTHE need to address all these issues and support the National Organization to act on behalf of their members, of their students and of their patients.

*I wish you have a very stimulating and exciting congress!!!  
And don't forget to have fun, some music, some wine usually generates the best ideas!!*

*Sincerely yours,  
Maria Skouroliakos*

## COTEC A CREDIBLE ORGANISATION: LEGAL IDENTITY AND AN OFFICIAL NGO

**Anu Söderström, Finland, President 2010-2012**

I had been the COTEC Delegate of the Finnish association of Occupational Therapists since 2000 and a member of the COTEC Executive (Honorary Secretary) since October 2008, when elected COTEC President March 2010. Within the ten years I had been involved in COTEC work the organisation had grown and developed from a networking group to a stable and credible organisation with 27 members. The first COTEC Council meeting agendas I ever received were sent by post and COTEC News were compiled from hardcopies sent by the member associations. It had been an interesting journey to follow and partly lead as well – between 2004-2008 I was the (deputy) coordinator of the Organisational Issues Programme Area and, together with the Executive, in charge of the organisational changes that were started during those years.

COTEC first four-year Action Programme covered the period of 2004-2008. Implementing this document meant that many of the organisation's tasks formerly carried by national OT associations or individual delegates were now given to people holding specific positions in the organisation, project groups were appointed and the overall work became more focused and the annual action plans followed the long term vision. This year the fourth consecutive COTEC four-year plan – now called the Strategic Plan – is presented to the General Assembly for approval. Biannual Council meetings have changed to Annual General Assemblies; the organisational changes the Council started discussing in 2003 have been adopted and COTEC is a known stakeholder in the European health and social arena.

With many years of COTEC work behind it was a natural continuum to be nominated as COTEC President in 2010. I felt I had the experience and skills to carry on the work. Executive work is time consuming and numerous are the emails I have sent and replied, countless the draft documents I have read, written, commented and shared with colleagues – but always with an OT flame burning: To have visible and valued OTs in Europe. Despite my enthusiasm and commitment to COTEC I had to do ethical reasoning on personal level and put family before my profession. I resigned acutely from my post in August 2012.

There were two highlights during my 30-month period as COTEC President. On Europe day, May 9th, 2011 I sat at a lawyer's office in Bonn, approved and signed the revised COTEC Constitution which was needed for the formation of COTEC as a legal registered entity. Being a registered

non-governmental organisation gives COTEC better opportunities to liaise with other NGOs and become a member of e.g. European transparency register.

Another important milestone was the COTEC Presidential meeting during COTEC Congress in Stockholm, May 2012. At the meeting a draft organisational plan of Occupational Therapy Europe collaboration was introduced to the Presidents of COTEC Member associations. OT-EU is the collaboration of OT practitioners, educators and researchers and the draft was presented together with ENOTHE President Anne Lawson-Porter. One voice of European OT is starting to be heard. Collaboration with ENOTHE became closer during my

Presidential period and yet one milestone of this collaboration is being reached now, when the 1st Joint COTEC-ENOTHE Congress takes place in Galway, June 2016.

During these years I have learnt to know many OTs around Europe and feel privileged and lucky to have been able to make so many friends with the same OT flame. I have always enjoyed working with European colleagues and working with the Executive team has been a great pleasure. I was happy to be re-elected to the Executive Committee in 2013 as Vice President Administration and honoured to be part of the 2016 Congress organising Committee. To be able to provide such a great opportunity for OTs to gather and learn from each other every four years feels good.

**And equally good it feels to see COTEC turn 30 years, thank you to all who have made it happen!**

*Anu Söderström*



**Council meeting Zagreb, March 2010**



**Welcome speech at COTEC 2012 Congress**



**Council meeting September 2010, Helsinki**



**Council meeting May 2012, Stockholm**



## COTEC CAPABLE, STRATEGIC & POLITICAL: COTEC GOES EU!

**Mette Kolsrud, Norway, President 2012-2013**



**Mette Kolsrud with HE Dr George Abela**

My motivation to work in COTEC was to make COTEC a more capable and powerful tool to promote the OT profession in the European countries. In my view COTEC had to be able to make decisions and to work more strategically and political to reach that goal.

I was in COTEC from 2004 to 2014, and the two last years from August 2012 to October 2013 in the position as president. In my presidential period I think we started on a more political way and made some steps forward. During that period COTEC became a member of European Forum for Primary Care (EFPC) and European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) to be informed about and have influence on the European health and welfare policy.

In October 2013 the COTEC council meeting was replaced by the first General Assembly (GA), held in Malta. The aim of the GA is to discuss and decide on the future plans

such as adopt political program, action plans, statements and budget. Decisions the Executive Committee can act on between the GA meetings.

One of the political milestones was a meeting in EU in Brussels in March 2013 with Ms. Paula Duarte Gaspar, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner John Dalli and Mrs. Katja Neubauer, deputy Head of Unit of Healthcare systems. The one-hour meeting was on how Occupational Therapy can contribute to the Health and Social challenges that Europe is facing. The Executive Committee and members of the Malta Association of Occupational Therapists Executive also had a meeting with the Maltese president, HE Dr George Abela and met two Maltese politicians while we prepared the first General Assembly.

To make the member organisations able to follow the work in COTEC, we started to send out Newsletters in 2013, and COTEC have sent out four newsletters a year since. At that time, we also started to work on the 1st joint COTEC and ENOTHE congress in Galway in 2016.

**And I wish you a splendid congress and all the best for COTEC in the future!**

**Mette Kolsrud**



**First General Assembly, Malta**



**Mette Kolsrud, Anne Lawson-Porter, Stephanie Saenger, Brussels**



**Meeting with Maltese president HE Dr George Abela, Malta 2013,**

**Mette Kolsrud next to the president**

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY: VISIBLE & VALUED IN EUROPE!

**Stephanie Saenger , President from 2013 -**



**EPF Conference,  
Brussels, 2015**

**“... TOGETHER  
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Writing about my, still running, term I can only start with thanking the members of Executive Committee who, on top of their day jobs and despite stressful emotional personal circumstances are giving significant personal time and energy in supporting COTEC' s goals. We are all working hard and are pleased that, together with the members, we are making significant steps in making occupational therapy more visible & valued in Europe.

I have been actively involved in COTEC and ENOTHE since 2000 and had the privilege to work with all presidents that contributed to this newsletter and with many, many colleagues from all over Europe. In 2013 I was elected president at the first General assembly in Malta.



**Meeting of Staff groups active in mental health in the European Region.  
Copenhagen, Denmark (WHO Regional Office for Europe)**



**Final Consultation of the European Framework for Action on Integrated Health  
Services Delivery, 2-3 May 2016, Copenhagen, Denmark (WHO Regional Office  
for Europe)**

During my term we build on everything others started and developed, and focus on three aspects:

- Internal & memberships issues
- External issues, Networking & connecting with the outside world
- Collaboration with other OT networks and especially ENOTHE & establishing OT-EU

The start of the COTEC Register of Experts which enables us to react on a professional and timely way to questions from European institutions, consultations and research requests is a major step forward. It is very important to be able to use the vast experience of occupational therapists in Europe, connect all the expert OT's and strengthen the European OT community.

Networking in the outside world and being strategic in choosing partners has resulted in invitations and participation in high level meetings in Europe and making OT visible. Collaboration with other organisations and associations from both professional- as client groups enables us to show how occupational therapy can contribute to the challenges Europe is facing in health and social areas. The new visual identity, website and COTEC newsletters are strong tools in this work. Collaboration with ENOTHE has resulted, not only in more joint meetings and this congress but also in the birth of Occupational Therapy Europe.

I do hope you will continue to support us as member of your national OT association and make Occupational Therapy visible & valued, available & accessible in Europe!

*I wish you all a great congress and sincerely hope  
that you will get inspired and want to belong  
and actively participate in the  
European OT community!  
Stephanie Saenger*



**Meeting CPLOL, Florence Italy 2015**



**WHO Regional Committee for Europe 65<sup>th</sup> session in Vilnius,  
Lithuania on September 14- 17, 2015**





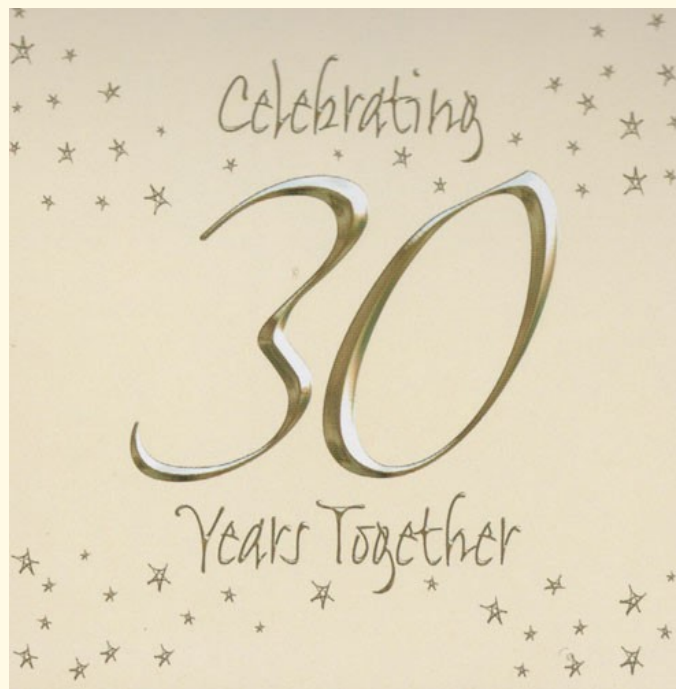
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# COTEC

Council of Occupational Therapists  
for the European Countries



***Thank you for supporting us for 30 years and***



***looking forward working with you the next 30 years!***