Concluding Remarks from the Advisory Board

RENEB Final Meeting, Lisbon December 2015

The Advisory Board was delighted with the final outcome of the RENEB project. Dr Kulka, the co-ordinator, together with the Work Package and Task leaders and all contributing staff have brought the EU funded programme to a very successful conclusion. All the milestones were reached, all deliverables thoroughly achieved and the whole project has been administered in an exemplary fashion. Everyone involved is to be congratulated.

This programme has considerably strengthened the ability of many Member States and of the EU as a whole to respond more effectively and rapidly to a major radiological event. It maximises the effort that can be deployed for early biological triage of individuals and for establishing casualties' exposure doses. It is of course to be hoped that the combined effort of the RENEB network will never be called upon to respond to a major disaster. Nevertheless, the technological advances made in RENEB have also advanced the abilities of individual laboratories to carry out biological dosimetry in the frequently encountered scenarios where only one or, at most, a few persons have been irradiated.

Now that the funded programme is over the EU is left with the strongest and most versatile regional network in the world. At the recent EPRBioDose congress in Hanover N.H. USA, which was the latest of the premier international gatherings in this field, it was quite apparent that RENEB partners made an impressive contribution and the Network was highly praised particularly by our US civilian and military colleagues.

The best measure of success in the eyes of the world-wide peer group is in the quality and number of presentations and publications that result from the programme. Already there have been numerous lectures and posters given at meetings, such as EPRBioDose, plus a commendable number of papers published during the course of the programme. This will now be topped by a complete issue of a leading scientific journal being devoted to RENEB; this is being prepared for publication in 2016 with, so far, 17 papers underway.

The future of RENEB now has to be considered. The Advisory Board was impressed by the obvious enthusiasm of the partners to continue and the immediate way forward has been to link up with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). To date, 17 of the partners have signed the MoU and we understand that this will increase slightly. In addition, towards the end of the programme a number of new participants were identified and it is gratifying to note that 7 new members have also signed the MoU thereby joining into an enlarged future network. In the longer term it is to be hoped that the MoU could be converted into something stronger. Various suggestions were made and the idea of a non-profit association registered under the law of one of the Member States looks most promising. This would give RENEB a firmer status, akin to EURADOS, and enable it to perform more effectively in the European radiation research arena. The Advisory Board strongly approves of the intention for a sub-committee to continue looking into the possibilities and means for achieving this.

RENEB, keeping the acronym but perhaps with a slightly altered full name, with a firm standing within Europe will perform many functions. Firstly, of course it will be available to respond rapidly to a major disaster. For maintaining readiness it will provide a vehicle for laboratory inter-comparisons which are essential for maintaining QA/QM and are a formal requirement of accreditation bodies

and the ISO standards. RENEB, as a highly regarded and legally recognised entity, could explore the possibility to issue certificates of competence to laboratories or even their individual staff members. These would provide recognition that a laboratory is performing according to the harmonised protocols of the network. Secondly, the Advisory Board was particularly pleased to note the partners' enthusiasm for joint research within the RENEB structure. There are a number of ideas for extending the range of assays, both biological and physical, which can be used for dosimetry. Some, particularly contributed by new partners, will require working-up to deployable techniques and there is also scope for improving the older more traditional assays. New developments in the field will inevitably arise and RENEB will be well placed and structured to take them up as appropriate.

Over the 4 years of funding RENEB has strengthened the communication and interaction between Europe and the biodosimetry community elsewhere in the world. In particular it has been important to integrate with the international organisations, IAEA and WHO and their networks, such as RANET, BioDoseNet and REMPAN which are dedicated to responding to radiological emergencies. The Advisory Board considers that the biodosimetric strength of Europe has much to offer to the rest of the world and sees RENEB as the natural point of reference for maintaining professional contact with the wider community of biodosimetry.

The Advisory Board considers that RENEB can bring a particular strength to a much wider field of radiation research in Europe. Many of the assays used have research applications that extend well beyond biodosimetry. These were discussed more fully by a break-away group at the recent Demonstration Workshop held in Brussels. The deliberations of this group have been written-up and will not be repeated in the present document. However in brief, the Advisory Board endorses the view that RENEB would be able to contribute effectively to many of the objectives of other EU platforms such as research undertaken by NERIS, MELODI, ALLIANCE and the soon to be created medical radiation research initiative. To this end we are pleased to note that RENEB has been recognised by CONCERT. In addition we consider that the continual updating of RENEB's Strategic Research Agenda is very important to demonstrate to other EU platforms what RENEB can offer.

In conclusion, the Advisory Board commends RENEB for what it has achieved over the 4 years of EU funding. A structure has been set up for which the way ahead is clear both as a resource for many applications in radiation research and as the pivotal body of excellence in biodosimetry.

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