

**The ECPHM Ltd.**  
82B High Str., Cambridge  
CB22 3HJ, UK  
Nicolas Rose, President

## ECPHM 5-years (2021-2025) strategic plan

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## Introduction

The ECPHM Board develops every five years a strategic plan, in order to direct and sustain the next phases of the College development. Sustainable and constant “growth” and “development” are the cornerstones of the continuing progress of the College. Therefore, a strategic prioritization of the activities of the College is needed.

This document aims at providing a presentation of the current situation and a description of the main strategic areas that have been recognized as key objectives for the next five years. The methodology identified to assure “sustainable and constant growth and development” are also described. The College reached the majority of the previous 5-year plan objectives, with considerable commitment and professionalism, despite some challenging events. These objectives are key points for the growth and development, as a consequence, the Board decided to keep them (at an overarching level), also in this new 5-year plan. Moreover, the ECPHM Board believes in the new EBVS Strategic Plan 2020-2025, sharing on and giving contributions to the four EBVS major objectives: a) Achieve Recognition, b) Stimulate growth/development of a credit system for specialist training, c) Promote the impact and influence of veterinary specialist, d) Assure Quality of Training and Support for Residents.

The key objectives and actions to be taken during the 2021-2025 period are strictly correlated to:

1. Re-organize ECPHM structure and achieve some formal challenges;
2. Enhance efficiency of procedures, and make them easier for Residents and Diplomates;
3. Assure quality of training and support for residents, developing new/modern strategies and strategically invest resources in learning opportunities for Residents and Diplomates;
4. Introduce new pathways to credentialing;
5. Increase the number of the Diplomates by exam;
6. Enhance communication inside the College and participation in College activities.

## Background

The ECPHM is one of the EBVS-recognized veterinary specialist Colleges, comprising more than 35 distinct specialities. It was founded in 2004 and provisionally recognized by the EBVS, awarded full recognition in 2013, and re-accredited in 2018. ECPHM counts a total of 145 Diplomates (updated 31 Dec 2021), of which 106 are actively working as EBVS(R) European Veterinary Specialists in Porcine Health Management either in one of the 19 European Countries. The mission of the ECPHM is “to advance health oriented porcine production management in the herd context in Europe and increase the competency of those who practice in this field, to produce high quality and safe pork products for the consumer in a sustainable animal production providing expert care and welfare”.

The objectives of the College are:

- Establishing guidelines and standards of training for postgraduate education and experience prerequisite to become a specialist in the speciality of porcine health management;
- Examining and certifying veterinarians as specialists in porcine herd health management to serve health and welfare of the animals, the economic outcome of the herd, the production of safe quality products for consumers in a sustainable animal production by providing expert care for pigs;
- Encouraging research and other contributions to the science and practice of porcine herd health management including husbandry, reproductive management at herd level, epidemiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, therapy, prevention, and control of diseases directly or indirectly affecting pigs and the maintenance of healthy and productive pig herds. Porcine health management also includes the impact on quality and safety of pork products, it gives special consideration to herd health, swine production systems and targets, and the management of pig populations;
- Promoting communication and dissemination of knowledge related to porcine health management, also in cooperation with field veterinarians through a Veterinary Practitioner Council.

### Current situation

ECPHM is growing, but the growth is not so fast to ensure a stable number of Diplomates.

- Every year several de-facto Diplomates lose their status of “European Veterinary Specialist in PHM” because they do not meet the credentials during their 5-years re-evaluation (main reason is inactivity in the specific field of practice, or retirement).
- The proportion of Diplomates by exam has increased from 16.6% to 24% from 2016 to 2020.
- Some Diplomates are not motivated to attend the Annual General Meeting and the concurrent Symposium. Because of COVID situation, the AGM in 2020 was totally online, the attendance was greater than previously attained on site.
- There are 14 ECPHM Residency Institutions, located in Western Europe only. Forty-six residents are under training (end 2020), but only one comes from Eastern Europe.
- The majority of the Residents do not sit the exam early after the completion of their training period (four years, including one year of internship and three years of residency). They usually need two or even more years extra.
- The pass rate of the exam is 61% (2017-2020).
- Based on external proctors’ reports, the exam is very well organized and fair both in terms of preparation and administration, i.e. delivering to the candidates.
- On a yearly basis a Resident Workshop is organized before the ESPHM. The Residents present and discuss clinical cases. The interaction between the Residents and the Education Committee members acting as opponents is encouraged.
- Every two years, a Summer School is organized. The program provides formal lessons on key subjects, exercises, practical dissections, open discussion
- A mock exam is organized every two years for residents.
- The website of the College, completely re-designed in 2020 in collaboration with EBVS, works very well and it has a great potential for improving efficiency of procedures and communication with Residents and Diplomates.
- The Porcine Health Management journal (PHM journal) ([Porcine Health Management](#)) edited by BioMedCentral (BMC) reached very important milestones with an Impact Factor of 3.048, and 1.05M downloads at the end of 2020. Article Processing Charges (APCs) for Residents and Diplomates publishing their research in the PHM journal are also covered by the College (for a total of two APC waiver per year, per Resident/Diplomate).
- The financial resources are adequate for the support of the current activities. The income from the organization of the annual ESPHM generates a surplus in the budget that increases year by year. Investments and implementation of the activities are possible.

**Vision**

The ECPHM is the leading and only College recognized by the European Board of Veterinary Specialization (EBVS) that gathers the European Veterinary Specialists in Porcine Health Management. The ECPHM provides and sustains appropriate and approved training programs for the Residents, organizes an examination to be passed for being awarded the title of Diplomate, evaluates the subsistence of the necessary credentials to be called European Veterinary Specialist in Porcine Health Management.

In the near future, ECPHM will aim at:

- Expand various College activities into Eastern Europe, for example, hosting ESPHM in Eastern Country (ESPHM 2022 scheduled in Budapest);
- Connect residency programs all over Europe with modern technology (distance learning, video conferences, etc.) and financially supported Resident exchanges between program providers;
- Continue to apply most recent teaching and learning strategies approved in andragogy, e.g. implementing portfolio tracking for residency programs, etc.;
- Standardize and optimize the quality of residency programs and the supervision by Advisors and Supervisors;
- Constantly substitute leaving and retiring Diplomates by such Diplomates that have been certified by examination;
- Coordinate our PHM activities and potentially link them with activities of other Colleges in the framework of EBVS (e.g. ECVP, ECVCN, etc.) in order to gain from synergy (e.g. common exam settings, shared exam questions, etc.).

**Strategic (key) objectives**

In order to assure “sustainable and constant growth and development” and to keep a leading position across Europe in the field of porcine health management, some weaknesses and/or criticisms must be clearly identified and corrective short-, medium- and long-term strategies and financial investments must be applied.

1. Re-organize ECPHM structure and achieve some formal challenges;
2. Enhance efficiency of procedures, and make them easier for Residents and Diplomates;
3. Assure quality of training and support for residents, developing new/modern strategies and strategically invest resources in learning opportunities for Residents and Diplomates;
4. Introduce new pathways to credentialing;
5. Increase the number of the Diplomates by exam;
6. Enhance communication inside the College and participation in College activities.

**1. Re-organize ECPHM structure and achieve some formal challenges**

In order to assure constant growth and development, the College needs to be professional, organized and updated, and for these aims some objectives need to be achieved:

- Use of Microsoft office 365 for all ECPHM officers activities and for data archiving: sharing documents among Board and Committee members will be easier; and it will be fundamental to organize the workspace for archiving data (medium-term action, 2021-2023);
- Increase ICT support and administrative secretariat tasks, in order to make the College more professional and efficient (short-term action, 2021-2022);
- Having a core PCO (short-term action, 2021-2022);
- Institution of the new Committees, as per EBVS request: Extenuating circumstancing committee and Resident Committee (long-term action, 2024-2025);
- Institution of a Veterinary Practitioner Council, to guarantee the involvement of the swine practitioners in organizing ESPHM, contributing to the building of the ESPHM scientific program and participating in the review process (short-term action, 2021);
- New bank account (medium-term action, 2023);
- Liability insurance for the Board members (long-term action, 2024-2025).

**2. Enhance efficiency of procedures, and make them easier for Residents and Diplomates**

In order to assure sustainable and constant growth and development, it is necessary to enhance the efficiency of the ECPHM procedures and communication:

- Develop a new website: procedure started in 2020, website was developed by CYIM in conjunction with EBVS, and ECPHM is one of the Pilot College in this project. The aim for these 5 years is to complete this process and to start using the new functionalities of the website;
- Describe and detail all the instructions/points of ECPHM processes in Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) (long-term action, 2025);

- Revise all procedures and forms, and make them available on the website, and for online filling-in (long-term action: starting immediately, to 2024);
- Enhance communication inside the College. In particular, more workshop/meeting, involving also committees, supervisor, etc. will be organized (short-term action, starting from 2021), for example:
  - Committee chairs meetings: with the aim to enhance coordination and rapid action/change,
  - Workshop dedicated to the Teaching and Assessment in the ECPHM,
  - Workshop on the flexible pathways for credentialing,
  - Supervisors /advisors meeting.

### **3. Assure quality of training and support for residents, developing new/modern strategies and strategically invest resources in learning opportunities for Residents and Diplomates**

#### *a) E-learning for Residents*

To implement and modernize the training of the Residents, in addition to the working activities already in place (workshops and summer school), a series of meetings via web/e-learning will be continued and developed. These new long distance learning tools do not need physical meetings and give the opportunity to standardize the Residents' training in the different Countries as well. Moreover, the recorded material remains available for the residents as long as necessary.

New strategies for e-learning (short-term action (by the end of 2021). E-learning will be organized in modules, instead of single lectures, in particular:

- module I- Epidemiology and Statistics,
- module II- Immunology and Vaccinology,
- module II- Pig nutrition.

#### *b) Grants*

The finances of the ECPHM are favourable. Every year a surplus is shelved from the annual budget as a reserve in a devoted bank account. This positive balance is mainly related to the income of the two-third parts of the surplus from the ESPHM organization. The ECPHM is a non-profit organization, so we need to reinvest in our main and characterizing activity: the education of our Residents to allow them to be excellently trained Diplomates by exam, to facilitate communication of latest findings in Porcine Health Management by subsidizing submissions to the PHM journal and to assure "growth and development" to the College. The EBVS recommends that a recognized College saves a fund of at least one year's budget. The ECPHM fulfils those criteria having an overabundance of at least 5 years. In that scenario, financial investments on training of the Residents and Diplomates can be programmed, always taking into account the scrupulosity and diligence of a prudent man.



The Board of the College, in order to invest in training, has approved the institution of grants for Residents:

- *Mobility grants* (20.000€ /year, maximum 1 mobility grant per resident per year), (already available, the aim is to increase the total budget devoted to these grants; this is a medium-term action for 2023). The institution of mobility grants is aimed at enhancing the opportunity for scientific and professional contacts between Residents of different training programs in different EU Countries, in order to also implement the network within the training Institutions of the College.
- *Research grants* (15.000€/grant/two grants per year) (already available). The research grant shall enable Residents to carry out a specific research project as outlined in their training program. Since this is a competitive funding scheme, successful applicants also must provide evidence for their capability of writing grant applications and acquiring external funding for research activities.
- *Clinical case grants* (to be instituted, short-term action, 2021-2022). The grant is dedicated to cover the costs of specific diagnostics in order to get to a complete case report that has to be submitted as part of the credentials to sit the exam.
- Invest money in supporting *accreditation of courses in PHM* throughout Europe in the context of the modular pathway (see below) (long-term action, 2023-2024).

c) *Resident involvement in the Quality Assurance process*  
Institution of a Resident committee (medium-term action, 2023).

#### **4. Introduction of new pathways to credentialing**

In order to increase the numbers of specialists interested in becoming Diplomates of the College, new pathways to credentialing will be introduced, in particular internationally recognized specialists, and specialists by modular pathway. Next steps will be:

- Organization of a workshop on Flexible pathway (short-term action, 2021), ECPHM members could attend and comment on the proposal,
- if accepted, change the Constitution and Bylaws of the College adding new pathways to credentialing (short-term action, 2022),
- setting up a working group on modular pathway to credentialing is necessary to organize the practical implementation (medium-term action, 2023),
- objectives work content (medium-term action, 2023),
- course accreditation process/Development of a credit system for specialist training: pilot study (medium-term action, 2023).

#### **5. Increase the number of the Diplomates by exam**

One of the most critical points not only for the growth and development of the ECPHM, but also for the survival is the number of the Diplomates. During the last years, after the discontinuation of the enrolment of the de-facto members, and the COVID crisis, the number of the Diplomates has decreased slightly. In the meantime, the number of the Residents completing their training period, sitting the exam and passing it has not covered

the loss of Diplomates. The strategy to be adopted is strictly correlated with the implementation of the training of the Residents, and with previous point (new pathways for credentialing specialists).

To facilitate the access to and the attendance of the exam, correct information and knowledge of how the exam is organized as well as how getting well prepared and supervised are both extremely important for Candidates.

A series of tools must be available for the Residents:

- a power point presentation clearly explaining how to approach the exam in terms of preparation and mentality is already available;
- objective and correct information about the real challenge of the exam excluding any exaggeration: introduction in the e-learnings a presentation done by one or more Residents who successfully passed the last exam, in order to help/advise future candidates to adequately prepare themselves for the examination. This is a short-term action (by the end of 2021);
- attendance of the mock exam: the aim is to organize it more frequently (one per year), giving to all Candidates the possibility to get confident with the question types, understand how to answer properly the different questions and being trained with the program (ExamSoft platform was introduced in 2020 due to the Covid situation). This is a short-term action (by the end of 2021);
- Summer school: the aim of the Education committee and of the Examination committee is to better focus the program of the summer schools on covering the disciplines needing more effort (based on the last exams results), thanks to the help of specific formal and practical lessons. This is a medium-term action (by the end of 2022);
- E-learning modules to cover all the exam topics: already available, the new aim is to continue improving (see poin3.a);
- Resident Supervisors/advisors should be more involved by the College, in order to achieve progresses in the training of the Residents, and determine time-based objectives of training. They have to critically evaluate the past exams results. The majority of the candidates who fail the exam have a poor performance in the clinical case presentation and mainly in the discussion that follows. A more accurate preparation of the clinical cases (ppt presentation), and particularly a better training in holding the subsequent discussion based on Q&A with the Examination Committee members, could significantly increase the success rate of that part of the examination. The Supervisors and the Advisors are strongly encouraged to carefully consider those actions in the Resident training. The Board proposes to organize at least once a year a Supervisors/Advisors meeting, in order to help Supervisor, and consequently their Residents, to be more efficient in education and training, more confident with the exam, and College rules. It could be important to focus on and discuss the main criticisms and the potential action points correlated with the exam. Examples of different actions taken by supervisors/advisors in terms of exam preparation will be shared during these meetings. This is a short-term action (2022).

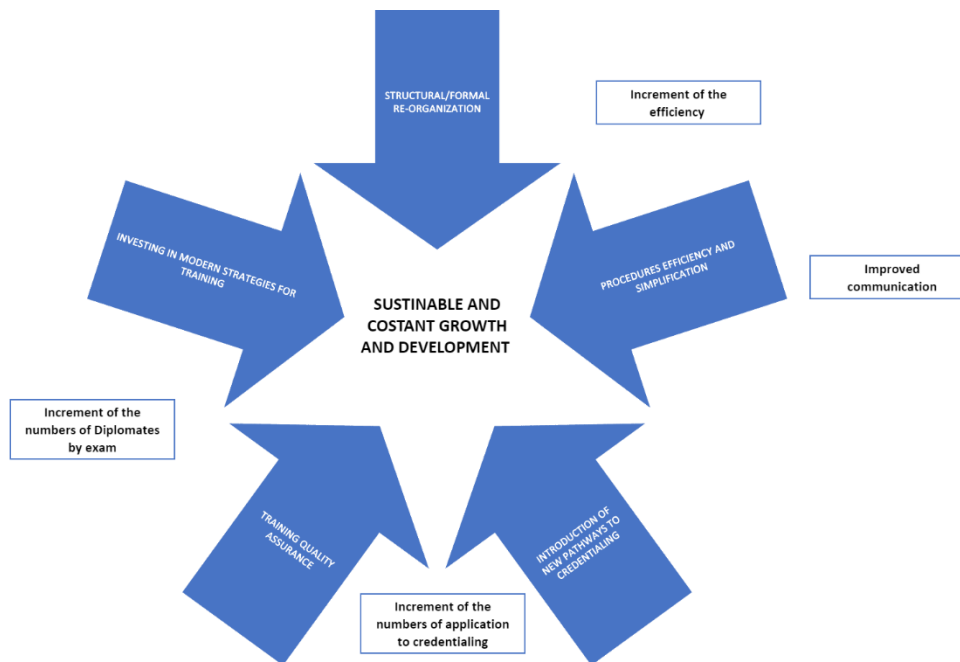
### ***6. Enhance communication and participation in College activities***

To fulfil its aims (sustainable and constant growth and development) the ECPHM has to continue to keep the Diplomates informed about the activities by means of newsletters, to invite them to visit the website, keeping their profile updated and to promote the attendance of the annual Symposium (ESPHM) and the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The AGM is the senior legislative body of the College, where the Diplomates participate in the general assembly for proposing, suggesting, discussing and adopting. The role of the Board is to listen to the suggestions of the delegates and feed the discussion on focal points.

To increase the participation in the AGM, the Board proposes to continuing with hybrid meeting (in presence and online), with the possibility of voting also for online participants. This is a short-term action (2022).

The activities of the Board will have visibility thanks to specific outcomes and to communication by newsletters, but also with a more useful and interactive website, where Diplomates and Residents can find forms, procedures and clear information. This is a medium-term action (end of 2023).

## Deliverables and metrics



### Metrics:

1. (Re-organize ECPHM structure and achieve some formal challenges): new contracts with suppliers;
2. (Enhance efficiency of procedures, and make them easier for Residents and Diplomates): number of accesses to the website, total number of credentials and fulfilled form, fees payments directly on the website;
3. (Assure quality of training and support for residents, developing new/modern strategies and strategically invest resources in learning opportunities for Residents and Diplomates): number of grants, total of financial resources annually devoted to the Residents Education;
4. (Introduce new pathways to credentialing): number of veterinarians applying for credentialing;
5. (Increase the number of the Diplomates by exam): number of Diplomates/years;
6. (Enhance communication inside the College and participation in College activities): number of Diplomates participating in the AGM and in the College activities.