

European Academy of Paediatric Dentistry
A brief History of the first steps in its founding
- Gavel and Chain of Office

It is usual practice for many organisations to have various official implements and/or regalia to be used at administrative meetings of the membership. These may just be symbols to emphasise the prestige of the organisation or to govern the conduct of committees or meetings. Examples originating from many countries of Europe have include a chain of office, to be worn by the President. In many organisations, dating back hundreds of years, business was kept in order by the President using a 'gavel'.

GAVEL

A gavel was originally a wooden or stone hammer, sometimes called a 'mallet' once struck on a board by the leader of a meeting to confirm any decisions or commitments as agreed. Because in ancient times a stone mason's hammer was readily available that was often used. Later specially made hammers were made of wood. Overtime they became called a gavel. In very early times the striking of a gavel was used to confirm a sale, today that still occurs at auctions. Gradually the use of a gavel became for managing discussions and meetings.

It was suggested that the EAPD could usefully have a gavel to be made, if possible, in time for the early board meetings and future Congresses. Martin Curzon was given the task of looking into acquiring or having a gavel made.

As a symbol of the wide membership of the EAPD it was suggested that proposed gavel might be made of different woods, where each wood was representing the first member countries of the founders of the EAPD. Accordingly, samples of wood, such as birch, oak, olive, pine etc. were collected and sent to Martin Curzon who arranged for a wood-turner to make us a gavel. The pieces of wood were prepared to accurate proportions and glued together to form a large block. That was cut in such a way that the resultant hammer was attractively banded.



Picture of the EAPD gavel showing the banding of the different woods.

(courtesy of Dominique De Clerk, President).

The handle of the gavel was made of a single piece of European Oak, to signify the pan European structure and support of the European Academy of Paediatric Dentistry. As there were some pieces of wood left over these were later used to make the lid of a box in which the gavel is kept, also shown above. The box was constructed of a suitable hard wood and finished by French polishing.

CHAIN OF OFFICE

The leading official of an organisation – Lord Mayor, Council leader, Mayor, Chairman, or President, for example, may have a chain of office. Over the centuries in Europe such chains were usually made of gold with decoration reflecting the interest of the organisation, but sometimes chains of office could be made of the less precious metal, silver.

It was agreed that the idea of an ‘EAPD Chain of Office’ should be pursued but considering costs as well as design. Martin Curzon suggested a silver coin from each of the founding nations would be a simple approach and, accordingly, each Councillor was asked to see what they could find. After several months some coins had been found but not from all countries. Further investigation identified a company in London who were both coin dealers as well as manufacturers of regalia and jewellery. They were approached and commissioned to proceed, initially to produce a design and costing.

It is customary that the most dependant part of a chain of office should have a ‘jewel’, often an enamel pendant at the bottom and centre of the chain when worn. The Stars of the European Community (as it was then) formed the basis of a proposed jewel together with the date of 1990, that of our founding. The jewel could comprise a silver frame with blue enamel depicting the EAPD Logo which had already been designed for use as letterhead for official EAPD correspondence.

The company in London, who are called ‘Spinks’, soon came up with a design using the silver coins mounted individually and all joined with a silver chain. The use of silver was suggested as ideal as it complemented the blue of the EAPD logo but was also economically affordable.



Picture of the EAPD Chain of Office in its jewellery box
(courtesy of Dominique De Clerk, President).

The countries represented by the silver coins, were (in alphabetical order):

Denmark, Belgium, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland,

The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Great Britain.

Fortunately, Spinks were able to add coins to those already collected and all approximately of similar sizes. The EAPD Chain of Office' is kept, when not in use, in a decorative box also in blue. In due course the official EAPD Chain of Office was made and has been ceremonially passed on from each out-going President to her or his successor.

Every two years, at the General Assembly closing Ceremony the outgoing President places the Chain of Office onto the incoming President. The ceremonial chair of office and the gavel are kept by each President on taking office. Both are insured as they are valuable by each President but reimbursed for the costs by the EAPD.

Martin Curzon, 2023.