

Annual report 2020 from the Chair of NFGP

“First in, last out”

2020, what a year - what a threat, offers, challenges and fighting spirit. Looking back, first of all I want to thank you all for your contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic, both as persons and leaders. I am so proud of our primary health care/General Practice, of our colleges and colleagues, and all of you, especially those of you who have been working in the front line both as leaders of your colleges and as clinicians.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-COV-2 has had a major impact on our lives, both personally and professionally. Thus, the pandemic has affected most of the activities within the umbrella of our Federation. The first reports from Wuhan, China in late 2019 of the COVID epidemic were in the beginning only a warning. But as our leader Donald Li, president of WONCA World is from Hong Kong, he was among the first who took the lead. He and co-workers described the experience of the Chinese GPs, fighting against the COVID epidemic. At a very early stage he advocated for the importance of primary health care in this epidemic, later pandemic and pointed out that family doctors have a ‘*first in, last out*’ role. This approach was generally accepted and acknowledged by WHO.

In Europe we were reluctant and leaned back in the beginning, but it soon had to change. In late February, the COVID-19 started to spread rapidly even in our Nordic countries and was at the same time defined as a pandemic by WHO. We all, especially the chairpersons of our colleges, swiftly changed our roles and tasks. The main challenge in the beginning of the pandemic was mainly to deal with the uncertainty on all levels. The figure below shows

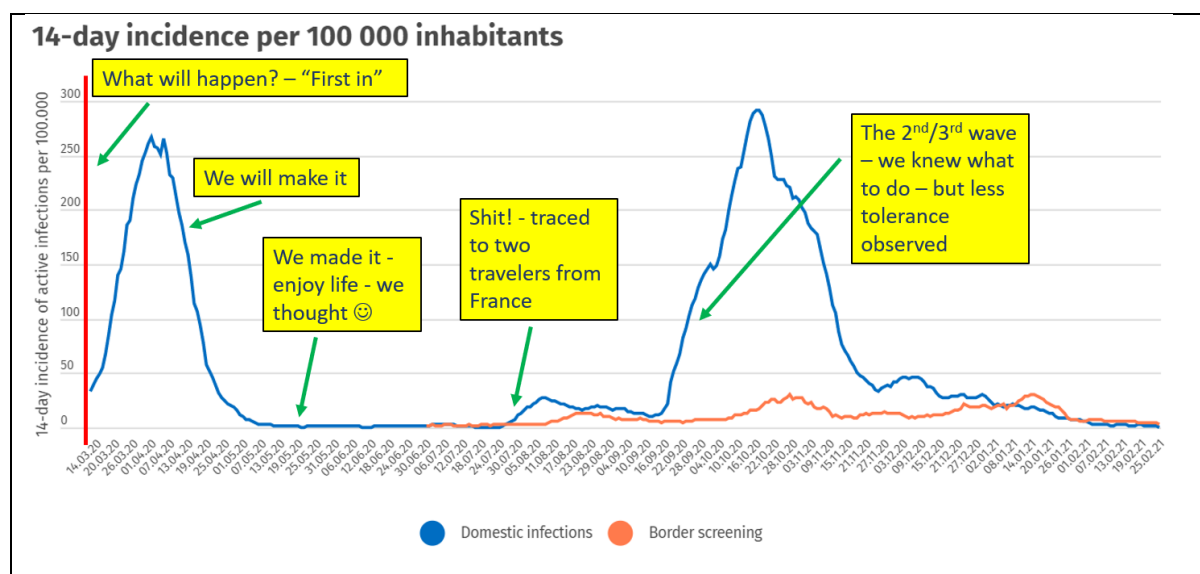
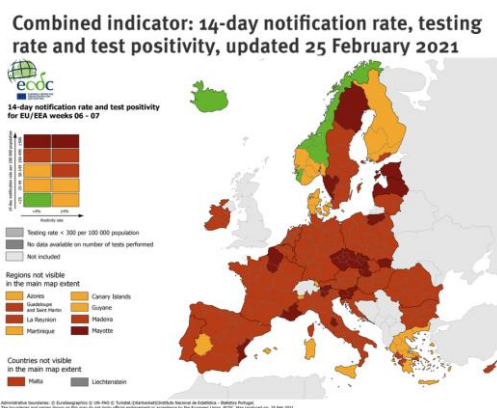


Fig 1. The infections rate at the COVID-19 pandemic in Iceland from March 14th 2020 to February 25th 2021.



the situation in Iceland during this pandemic. We have had 2 major waves, now reaching an infections rate at point zero (Mars 1st 2021). Hopefully, we will manage to keep it that way until most of the population will be vaccinated against COVID. The peak at the 2nd/3rd wave in fig. 1 is also of interest, as it took us 4 months with lockdown to come to that point, although Iceland has “only one gate” at the border. Looking at fig 2 we can estimate that it will take about half a year for many of our European countries to be declared as green.

Fig. 2. COVID rating, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

It is therefore obvious that the pandemic is not over, and we will have to adapt our NFGP activities accordingly, as we succeeded last year. We are however looking forward to better times.

Annual meeting March 27th 2020



To adapt our activities to the situation described above, our secretariat had to make all kind of arrangements and prepare our annual meeting to be held by digital techniques. The meeting was held March 27th 2020. The agenda and our tasks ahead were very much based on insecurity about the future development.

Fig. 3. From our digital annual meeting March 27th 2020.

[The agenda and minutes of the meeting can be found here.](#)

The tasks and decisions

Our main tasks this year have been:

- The COVID-19 pandemic
- Postponing activities
- Our Nordic Congresses of General Practice
- Nordic Leader seminars
- Professional development within WONCA
- The Scandinavian Journal of Primary Health Care

- Nordic Young General Practitioners
- Specialist education of general practice in the Nordic countries
- Core values of Nordic general practice
- Actions taken against overdiagnosis and overtreatment (The ReDD group)
- NFGP's secretariat, administration, and economy
- Other international activities (outside our Nordic countries)

The COVID pandemic

This situation has been described above. It was decided that NFGP secretary would add new topic on our homepage on the COVID matter, where we could share information on the COVID pandemic in each member country. This was arranged accordingly. [See more here.](#)

The postponing activities

I have chosen to give our postponed tasks a separate headline. These actions caused by the COVID pandemic are described further under each activity mentioned below. Here I just want to emphasize that each postponement does create a lot of work both for the organizers of the individual events, but also for NFGP's secretariat. This activity also affects our economy, some pre-paid bookings were lost, but in other cases have resulted in less expenditures. Details regarding the budget will be introduced at the annual meeting.

Our Nordic Congresses

According to earlier plans, the next Nordic Congress ought to be held in Stavanger Norway in June 2021. Already in March it became clear that it would be wise to postpone the Stavanger congress. The chair of NFA then asked our NFGP board to do so, which was accepted. Thus, our next NCGP will be held in Stavanger, Norway 21st – 23rd of June 2022. [More details about the congress are available here.](#)

The pandemic and this decision will probably have a domino effect. At the meeting, our Finnish colleagues announced that accordingly they also want to postpone the congress to be held in Finland after Stavanger, to year 2024. These decisions and a schedule for upcoming congresses in the next ten years must be revised and discussed at our next annual meeting year 2021.

Meeting for Nordic Leader Seminars

As described in more details in the chair's report 2019, the Nordic Leader seminars on General Practice are held biannually, usually the year between the NCGP. Now it is NFA/Norway's turn to arrange the next meeting. This was planned to be held in [Askeladdens hus](#), Soria Moria /Oslo in 2020, but because of the pandemic this arrangement has also been postponed to 26-28 August 2021 and at the same place. Tor Carlson, secretary at the Norwegian Medical Association is in charge.

WONCA Europe matters

- a) **WONCA Europe.** As mentioned in our last report, tension had escalated within the WONCA Europe Council before our annual meeting in Bratislava 2019. This tension still existed after that meeting, based on governance issues. Because of the COVID situation The WE Congress to be held in Berlin June 24th-27th, 2020 was postponed. Thereby, the WE EB decided to skip the annual council year 2020 and announced the next council meeting to be held in connection with the upcoming WE congress to be held in Amsterdam 6-10 July 2021. In a letter addressed to WE EB, dated July 28th NFGP raised some concerns regarding the election of next President Elect. Further, the NFGP EB was disappointed not to be contacted or asked about decisions on cancelling the upcoming WE council meeting year 2020. As the Federation did not get any response to that letter, further concerns were forwarded to Donald Li, president of WONCA World (letter dated October 22nd, 2020). Finally, we received a reply letter from WE EB in November. We were not pleased with the arguments put forward in that letter but did not try to argue any more. It was, however, decided that some of us, representing NFGP would raise these concerns at the next council meeting, possibly the one to be held in Amsterdam (or at a digital meeting?).

During this year the WE working group on Core Values, under the lead of Anna Stavdal, has had several Zoom meetings on this topic. This group includes representatives of all the WE networks, i.e. EURACT, EQuIP, EUROPREV, EGPRN, EURIPA and Vasco de Gama. The group aims to deliver their report to the WE EB at the next council meeting.

- b) **WONCA World.** Both the WW council meeting and the WW congress planned to be held in Abu Dhabi November 2020 were postponed. This inevitably resulted in postponing the take-over of Anna Stavdal as President-Elect to become WW President. The meetings of the Supporting Group around our upcoming WW president were thereby also postponed. At present the next WW congress will be held 25-28 November in Abu Dhabi 2021 As planned before, NFGP aim to have our representatives there to celebrate this occasion by a reception.

The end of the year 2020 also marked the end of the era for both Garth Manning the WONCA CEO, and Karen Flegg WONCA News editor, both of whom have been the mainstays of our WONCA organisation the last decade. NFGP thanked these two for their contribution and a pleasant collaboration. At the same time, the WONCA secretariat will be handed over from Bangkok to the Brussels secretariat, under the leadership of the new CEO, Dr Harris Lygidakis. Harris is well known among our Nordic leaders as earlier secretary of WE EB.

Scandinavian Journal of Primary Health Care, SJPHC

The current publishing contract with Taylor & Francis signed year 2014 expires at the end of 2021 if terminated by the end of March 2021. In late November 2020, Niall Rundle, the

Portfolio Manager at Taylor & Francis informed Helena Liira, our Editor-in-Chief that T&F were not willing to renew the contract as they considered it to leave T&F in a loss-making position. They claimed that some hundred percent increase in their fee would be necessary. This created a lot of digital meetings and correspondence with T&F as well as with other publishers. Helena Liira will describe these processes in more details in her report (to follow later) as Editor-in-Chief.

Nordic Young General Practitioners (NYGP)

Before COVID, it was planned that our new union, the Nordic Young General Practitioners ([NYGP](#)), would for the first time participate in the parallel meetings at the NFGP annual meeting in Copenhagen 2020. These plans had to be changed as everything else. Their representatives joined in our digital meeting instead. The annual report from NYGP will follow later. Of special interest is the brand new statement by NYGP on Specialist training in our Nordic countries – [read more here](#).

Specialist education of general practice in the Nordic countries

Our working group on the specialist training led by Roar Maagaard delivered [a report year 2020](#) endorsed and accepted at our annual meeting. The aim was and still is to distribute this statement among our institutions, associations and ministries of health and education – [see statement here](#). Because of the COVID situation, this important statement has not yet got the attention as it should have deserved. This process must be re-activated the upcoming years.

Core Values of Nordic general practice

[The Core Values statement](#) which we had been working on the last years was endorsed and accepted by the NFGP's EB year 2020. [The NFGP's statement](#), together with [an editorial](#) was published in the December issue of Scand Journal of Primary Health Care. [Here you can read article about Core Values in "Practicus" \(Denmark\)](#).

Actions taken against overdiagnosis and overtreatment (The ReDD group)

Planned meetings for the working group on reforming diagnostic threshold definitions (ReDD) in Oxford in September 2020 had to be postponed as well. Further decisions on the next meeting have not been made yet.

NFGP's secretariat, administration, and economy

As before, NFGP's headquarters, secretarial and administrative assistance (part time secretary and director) are partly financed by DSAM and located in Copenhagen. Communication and co-operation between NFGP's secretariat and the chair (located in Iceland and/or Norway), by e-mails, skype meetings, and physical meetings have been working in a pleasant and smooth way.

Thanks

Again, on behalf of NFGP, I thank our working parties for their valuable contributions and cooperation during the past year. Furthermore, we want to bring special thanks to our secretary Sanne Bernard and our director Louise Hørslev for their attendance to and caretaking of NFGP in its everyday life.

Reykjavik, March 1st, 2021.



Johann A. Sigurdsson, Chair NFGP