

Sweden Goes Europe: Focus on the Board Exam

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Kyriakos Orfanidis is one of the members of SSDV that last year applied for, and received, a contribution to the UEMS-EBDV examination from SSDV. Read below his experiences from taking this exam.

My name is Kyriakos. I come from Rhodes, a small island in Greece and I am 33 years old. Since I was little, I wanted to travel the world and experience different cultures. Between my early school years and work in Sweden, it has always been my books, from the very start, that made this voyage a long one, full of adventure, full of discovery. How privileged I feel to have grown up as a European citizen, in peace and progress!

The medical practice and science of Dermatology & Venereology unites us. It is so beautiful to be part of a diverse, vivid and evolving European dermatological society. We meet in conferences, we attend courses, we collaborate, work together and learn from each other. Setting quality controls to promote a good standard of care has been challenging, yet critical, step in a further integration of our discipline across the continent. The European board examination has taken essential part towards this direction. It does not aim to exclude but to set standards.

After 4 years of specialist training in Dermatology & Venereology, I decided to take the boards exam last August. I had 3 months at my disposal, since I applied, and unfortunately I did not know anyone who had taken the exam earlier. The website for the examination included general information for its structure and provided an 8-question example. It was recommended to read textbooks as Braun-Falco, Rook-Wilkinson, Fitzpatrick, Bologna, the EDF (European Dermatology Forum) and IUSTI (International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infections) guidelines, continuing medical education articles as well as major review articles in international dermatological and venereological journals.

It is a common practice that every resident in Sweden signs a contract at the start of their residency training for the regulation of various aspects. Already at that time, I considered the possibility of taking this exam and it was made possible by my own dermatology department in the University Hospital of Linköping, Sweden, from whom I received the flight and accommodation expenses as well as a whole month of study-leave paid. The application fee of 400 euros for the examination was paid by the Swedish Society for Dermatology and Venereology (SSDV). As a result, while I had to combine my job duties

with intensive studies during May and June 2016, I spent July focused on the exam in my parents' summerhouse in Rhodes.

The exam was held in Frankfurt on the 5th and 6th of August and I found the city friendly and easy to navigate. It was the first time that a computer-based online examination format was used, instead of the traditional paper format, which enabled the review of answered questions. The examination was composed of multiple choice questions divided into 3 parts for each day. Two parts included even short open questions. The schedule for the different topics of each part was provided before the examination.

In general, the questions were comprehensible but demanding. Most of them required careful reading of all the possible answers in order to find the one that would fit best, which made it tricky sometimes. Among the topics tested, history was a hard one. I also found questions on cosmetics hard to answer, as I had not worked before in the cosmetic field. In the discussions we had during the breaks, it seems that a slight diversity in the practice of our specialty exists across the continent with several countries having more infectious and others more oncological orientations than others. Besides, dermatopathology exists as a dermatological fellowship in many European countries, but not in Sweden, which contributes to a lower competency for dermatologists that have not had dermatopathology training already in the basic specialty curriculum.

My overall experience of the European board examination has been positive and met my expectations. Of course, optimization has to be carefully considered and implemented in order to attract more applicants and authorities. Personally, this exam helped me to obtain knowledge of the quality of education I have had. I consider that every dermato-venereologist should take this exam as it provides a standard for the education in our specialty across Europe. This has the potential to make impact on our specialty-training curriculum.

"As you set out for Ithaka hope the voyage is a long one, full of adventure, full of discovery."

(Ithaka, C.P. Cavafy)

May Ithaka give you the marvelous journey!