



EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR HEALTH ASSETS AND ARCHITECTURE

European Centre for Health Assets and Architecture (ECHAA)

Each year across Europe, billions of Euros are invested in new and refurbished healthcare facilities, averaging around 4% of total annual healthcare spending. In the coming decades, Europe is likely to see the need for even greater investment in capital assets and new technologies. In Western Europe, failure to invest adequately in healthcare infrastructure throughout the 80s and 90s has resulted in high levels of backlog maintenance and a range of facilities that are no longer fit for purpose in the 21st Century. In central and eastern Europe, many countries have not seen significant capital investment in the health sector over the last 20-30 years. More diverse capital funding models are becoming available, such as European Union Structural Funds and Public Private Partnerships, in addition to conventional government grants and commercial loans, to remedy this shortfall. However, the current credit crisis and recession-driven fiscal austerity are placing greater emphasis on delivering better value for money.

The scale of investment and sharper focus on investment value offer a remarkable opportunity to maximize health gain, reduce health inequalities, improve quality, and ensure that services are more responsive to the needs and expectations of users. Capital investment is also a significant catalyst and stimulus for much needed health reform and urban regeneration. Yet too often these opportunities are missed. Those making decisions about capital investment in the health sector are faced with a high level of uncertainty; so far there has been surprisingly little evidence to guide them. There is ever-increasing urgency for the capital domain to facilitate necessary changes in healthcare focus; for example, moving on from the current hospital-centric orientation of treatment and care, rethinking aged care, reacting to rapidly changing technologies and responding to new environmental challenges.

ECHAA has been created recently to tackle this problem. The Centre brings together leading academic and research institutes with a special interest in capital asset strategy in Europe. Its mission is to support and promote evidence-based policy decisions related to the contribution of the built environment to the health sector, by means of comprehensive and rigorous analysis of what works and what does not.

The Centre is committed to working for the public good, and largely for the public sector, and will provide a new forum for reviewing European and global experience, uniting academic and practical expertise, and providing a bridge to the private sector.



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ECHAA's strategic aims:

- Become the first place that European healthcare policy makers or their advisers, in ministries of health or healthcare agencies, turn to for applied, evidence-based knowledge relevant to capital asset strategy for healthcare;
- Develop a Europe-wide organisation that will provide a focal point for academic and research organisations, NGOs and other associated groups with an interest in, or working in the field of, health infrastructure;
- Undertake and also create collaborative opportunities for new knowledge generation and funded research projects;
- Provide a bridge between the public and private sectors relating to all dimensions of capital assets;
- Offer strategic advisory and peer review services, as a new resource for the European healthcare sector;
- Provide training and skills and competency development, principally in the form of masterclasses, workshops, seminars and policy briefings;
- Raise the profile of capital investment issues within the health sector and wider economic policy communities. Dissemination and diffusion of evidence-based knowledge will constitute a high-priority activity;
- A distinctive product is the bi-annual ECHAA series of top-level *Policy Seminars* on significant contemporary issues that will impact on health infrastructure policy, and consequently influence the delivery of healthcare services. These events bring together policymakers, practitioners, academics, researchers and commentators to discuss and debate key issues in healthcare.

The scope, and the client base

ECHAA's work will cover the following capital infrastructure related areas:

- Strategic capital planning for service needs
- Project (concept) development
- Life-cycle functionality and economics
- Economic, social and environmental sustainability
- Health architecture and design
- Quality and safety
- Technology including IT interface of healthcare capital assets
- Capital procurement and financing including Public Private Partnerships
- EU Structural Funds
- Project implementation
- Facilities management
- Wider economic and social impact of healthcare capital assets



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ECHAA provides a new resource for:

- The European Commission
- Member States
- Accession Countries
- Neighbour Countries
- Regions and Municipalities
- Hospital agencies
- International institutions
- Academia
- The private sector including finance, architecture & design and construction & equipment companies

Structure and Status

ECHAA is a charitable not-for-profit trust, registered in The Netherlands, for the purpose of undertaking research in the field of healthcare. ECHAA is a blend of core partners and associates from across Europe working within the overall field of health infrastructure. ECHAA also maintains close association with complementary organisations and NGOs. The following is illustrative of the mix of core partners and associates that together make up ECHAA's network.

ECHAA Partners and Networks

ECHAA provides a range of support and networking services, for example:

- Partnership and associated network links with relevant institutions across Europe. This incorporates core ECHAA partners:
 - **TNO/Dutch Centre for Health Assets (DuCHA), Netherlands.** *DuCHA carries forward the work previously undertaken by the Netherlands Board for Healthcare Facilities (Bouwcollege). It encompasses research and development in all dimensions of hospital and health infrastructure planning, design, financing and procurement and quality assurance. It now forms part of TNO, the Netherlands state scientific and technological research centre;*
 - **The Health and Care Infrastructure Research & Innovation Centre (HaCIRIC), UK.** *HaCIRIC is a collaboration between leading research centres at Imperial College London and the Universities of Loughborough, Reading and Salford. Additional partners from other UK and international universities, industry and the care system are involved in specific research projects. The Centre aims to improve people's health and wellbeing by supporting the development of better healthcare infrastructures. HaCIRIC is one of the UK's leading research organisations in the field of health infrastructure, related technologies and innovation in this field.*

- Associated network links with relevant institutions across Europe:
 - **Karlsruhe University Institute for Technology and Management in Construction, Germany** ECHAA's primary link is with the Institute's work on hospital facilities management;
 - **IFROSS, Lyon, France** IFROSS (Institute for Training and Research on Health and Social Organizations and networks) is an institute of the Faculty of Law, Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3, established in 1994, specialising in management, law and evaluation of systems, and health, social and medico-social networks;
 - **Semmelweis University, Department of Health Management, Hungary** ECHAA in collaboration with Semmelweis has established a (virtual) centre in Hungary for training and competency development in all dimensions of infrastructure strategy and serving new EU Member States;
 - **EuHPN** The European Health Property Network is a parallel EU wide organization to ECHAA focusing on the more technical principles and practice of planning, designing, procuring and managing health buildings. It provides a Europe wide network for practical experts in the field to pool and share knowledge and experience;
 - **SINTEF, Norway** SINTEF Technology and society is a multidisciplinary research institute within the main areas of health, transport, technology management, safety and applied economics. It forms part of the largest independent research organization in Scandinavia;
 - **Arup** Arup is an independent engineering consultancy, owned in trust for the benefit of its employees and their dependents, and specialising in design, planning and other technical services.
- **ECHAA** also maintains a close, interactive and cooperative working relationship with other complementary European organizations and NGOs. Typical are:
 - **EHMA**, the European Health Managers Association, a Europe wide organization with the aim of fostering improvement and development in the field of healthcare management; and
 - **MCI** (Management Centre Innsbruck) one of Europe's leading academic health management centres.
- ECHAA itself, and in collaboration with organizations such as those above, provides a significant range of training and development, policy briefing and peer review support. This is firmly evidence- and case study-based, and linked in part to the extended dissemination of the recent EU-wide "Capital Study". This was a three year project undertaken in partnership between ECHAA (and EuHPN) and the European Observatory on Health Policies and Systems. The study reports have recently been published (during 2009) in the form of two books:

- Rechel B, Wright S, Edwards N, Dowdeswell B, McKee M, editors. ***Investing in hospitals of the future***. Copenhagen: World Health Organization, on behalf of the European Observatory on Health Systems; 2009. Free download from http://www.euro.who.int/observatory/Publications/20090323_1;
- Rechel B, Erskine J, Wright S, Dowdeswell B, McKee M, editors. ***Capital investment for health: case studies from Europe***. Copenhagen: World Health Organization, on behalf of the European Observatory on Health Systems; 2009
http://www.euro.who.int/InformationSources/Publications/Catalogue/20090908_1.
- ECHAA and its partner organisation EuHPN have also published a significant range of capital related reports and studies, covering a wide range of topics including:
 - Public Private Partnerships and the Private Finance Initiative in the UK and Australia;
 - Integrated Care (Disease) Pathways and their use and importance in health infrastructure planning and investment;
 - Hospital design; single rooms and hospital acquired infection;
 - Principles of lifecycle planning and sustainability.
- **Examples of current and proposed areas of work:**
 - ***EU Structural Funds for health*** ECHAA is one of the lead partners in the *EUREGIO III* project (funded by the EU Commission). This is a three year research study of the effectiveness of the Structural Fund process as applied to the health sector. The programme is dominated by large scale capital infrastructure spending. ECHAA is undertaking a review and analysis of selected case studies, investment patterns and programme management. The findings will be used to help improve future SF processes and in collaboration with EUREGIO partners will be disseminated in the form of workshops, masterclasses and briefing papers throughout Europe;
 - ***Health and Safety*** Core ECHAA partners are undertaking a scoping study for further research into the links between the built environment and defined areas of patient safety. The aim is in part to assess how best to move the evidence based design agenda forward on a more inclusive and collaborative basis. This will include current ECHAA partner work on the links between infrastructure design and operation and hospital acquired infection. A workshop is planned in early 2010 to explore the issues and define the research agenda;
 - ***Service to capital translation, and capacity mapping*** The recent *Capital Study* identified the need for new thinking and new methodologies for the translation of service needs into capital infrastructure solutions, strategies and plans. This will be based on new principles of patient flow and will incorporate fresh perspectives on

capacity mapping and planning. It is proposed to hold a 'by invitation' workshop shortly to stimulate ideas, identify potential collaborators and plan the way ahead;

- **The ECHAA Bi-Annual Policy Seminars** ECHAA will organise bi-annual workshops on key 'topics of the moment' that will shape and influence future capital asset strategy.

The events held so far are:

- **Credit Crisis or Global Depression: the Impact on Capital Planning and the Health Sector**, 28 April 2009.
- **Comparative PPP models in a time of recession: the options for decision makers**, 26 November, 2009.

The outcome from the seminars will be made widely available in the form of a 'report of proceedings' and the publication of briefing notes, articles and abstracts. Future topics are likely to include 'Paying for Capital' (examining the diverse range of methodologies currently in use, and their impact on service delivery and the economic and functional appropriateness of health infrastructure) and the 'Carbon Agenda in healthcare' (review of healthcare sustainability issues, including those flowing from the built environment);

- **Public Private Partnerships** PPP strategy in Europe is facing difficulty (see the Berlin Seminar above). On one hand, it is promoted as a way of stimulating innovation and efficiency, sharing risk, and bringing new capital to reshape healthcare delivery (including infrastructure provision) and, on the other, its viability is being challenged by the current credit crisis and recessionary slow down in the economies of Europe. ECHAA will continue to review PPP strategy as part of its core activity and will use the Berlin event to scope future research and development needs;
- **The Capital Study Dissemination** The *Capital Study* and associated *Case Studies* (see above) have provided a comprehensive overview of the state of capital asset strategy in Europe. So far, over 15 presentations, workshops and seminars have been held, together with publication of a number of articles, as part of an extensive dissemination strategy. This will continue, including the production of policy briefs, further articles and abstracts. This resource can be made widely available to governments, agencies and other organisations with an interest in capital infrastructure;
- **Hospital Infrastructure Benchmarking** The case studies forming part of the capital study have established a useful base line against which to start to build a set of Europe wide benchmarks relating to health infrastructure. It is intended to expand this work through setting up a (comparative) benchmarking club which links relevant capital projects from across Europe.



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Conclusion

ECHAA is a public goods organization. Its purpose and rationale are to act as a catalyst in Europe to improve the quality, responsiveness, value, and sustainability of capital investment in healthcare. A core principle is promoting an evidence-based approach to policy and decision making relating to all aspects of the built environment and large scale technologies: clinical and ICT. A fundamental aim is to raise the profile of the capital asset dimension of healthcare, and in doing so to promote new knowledge and insight in the interests of better tackling the challenges facing today's healthcare systems.

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