

History of NES
Erling Asmussen

Ergonomics is a fairly new word in Danish - as in most other Western languages. It was developed by a group of British scientists in England shortly after the second world war. The scientists had been working in the English war industry where their aim had been to improve the worker/work relationship. After the war they decided to keep up the contact (1949-50).

There were biologists, psychologists and technicians who after a few meetings e.g. in Cardiff chose the word Ergonomics proposed by K.F.H.Murrell (Cardiff). The word was developed of the classical Greek words Ergon, work, and nome, name (?), rules. The new English Ergonomics Research Society hold annually meetings in various towns in Great Britain and also in the continent.

Here in Scandinavia Sweden was a predecessor in this field. Research in "Work Science" was done early and teams, which were interested in "biotechnology" were born. Important persons were Howii-Christensen, Nils Lundgren (died 1989) and Ulf Aberg (died 1988) among many others.

In Denmark the interest was spread out into different institutes and hospitals, where reserchers like Gerda Seidelin (died 1990) and Rigmor Thor worked. The scientists got a physiological meeting place, when the National Society against Polio started the Work Analysis Institute in Hellerup and underdesigned was appointed there as chief physiologist. Together with coworkers like Vibeke Leschly (died 1988), Svend Mollbach, Ellen Poulsen and various physicians and M.Sc we developed and started to use a goal oriented work demand analysis method for replacing the handicapped people. The program was called "Qualifications - Demands - Placing".

It was natural that the group at Polio Institute looked for and was allowed participation in the annual Ergonomics

meetings in England. At one such meeting - during the pause between two papers - a group of us, Scandinavian Scientists, started talking of our need (?mangel?) of contacts with others. Dutch, French and others had developed national Ergonomics Societies, so why not us also?!

We were too few to start separate societies, but a Scandinavian or Nordic Society could be the solution. We agreed on that and chose Ulf Aberg, who was an engineer doing work studies e.g. in Gothenburg, to prepare a constitutive meeting.

Such a meeting was started with a dinner party at Ulf Aberg's home a few months later. All the Nordic countries were represented.

(I don't remember the persons) Så synd!!!

In a two day meeting the name and rules of the society were worked out and agreed, NES was a reality. The aim was that NES would be a multidisciplinary community. The membership was allowed to persons who did scientific work in Ergonomics - non-active members were not accepted. Luthman, Aberg and Lundgren took the responsibility to edit and write a handbook in Ergonomics. It was published already in 1966: Handbook i ergonomi (Almqvist & Winkel, Stockholm 1966)

There was, however, great pressure on the society by the physio- and ergotherapeuts, who could not do much research, that education in Ergonomics should be arranged ???? Meetings were arranged regularly with exchange speakers from the national societies in England, Wales, Holland and France.???? These national societies had started the International Ergonomics Society, which as a bigger association could easier publish the journal Ergonomics.

We in the Nordic countries wanted to join IEA and as we seemed to be scientifically well qualified, I was appointed to apply for membership in a meeting of IEA in Strasbourg. It succeeded and from 1970 Nes has been a full member in IEA.

Copenhagen 19.3.1990

Erling Asmussen