
Osteopathy Crossing Borders: formalising osteopathic standards within Europe

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Status of osteopathic regulation in Europe

- Countries with regulation: France, Finland, Iceland, Malta, (Netherlands), Switzerland and UK
- Considering regulation: Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Spain
- Not recognised, with no current plans: Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece and Sweden
- Unclear: Central and Eastern Europe



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Barriers to development

- No clear identity for osteopathic profession within individual countries
- Inconsistency of training and qualifications
- Lack of critical mass of osteopaths
- Opposition to osteopathy as autonomous profession
- Lack of political will



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European cooperation to date

- Forum for Osteopathic Regulation in Europe (FORE)
- Initiated by GOsC in November 2005
- Mission:
‘Seeks to enhance the protection of patients in Europe by promoting wider recognition and regulation of osteopaths and high standards of osteopathic treatment’
- 25 organisations from 15 countries
- Two meetings a year linked, where possible, to EU Presidency
- www.forewards.eu



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Voluntary standards



EFCOP



EFSOP



EFSOET

- UK standards as a template
- No legal basis, but template for emerging national standards
- Ratified by European Federation of Osteopaths



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Voluntary standards in education and training

- EFSOET – European Framework for Standards of Osteopathic Education and Training
 - Background
 - Nature and context of osteopathic healthcare and education
 - Knowledge, understanding and skills
 - Teaching, learning and assessment
 - Academic and practitioner standards



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Development of formal standards

- Comité Européen de Normalisation (CEN) is a European standardisation organisation, made up of standards bodies from the EU and EFTA (31 countries in total)
- In the UK member body is the BSI
- CEN recognised by EC as the competent authority for development of standards
- CEN standards do not override national legislation, e.g. UK Osteopaths Act, but provide a standard in those countries where none exists, therefore a 'soft law'



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Advantages and disadvantages

- High level of support/buy-in from osteopaths and osteopathic organisations
- Support from European Commission
- Will become de facto standards across Europe once in place
- Improvement on the status quo

But...

- Best known in the product and process arena
- May close the door on more formal regulation
- Has to be funded by the profession
- Will take three or more years to achieve
- Concerns that standards could be set too low



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CEN and chiropractic

- Chiropractors are already seeking CEN route 'Health care provision by chiropractors'
- Currently consulting on draft standard with closing date at end of May (about 18 months into process)
- Standard covers:
 - Clinical practice and core competencies
 - Education (undergraduate – 300 credits – and graduate education leading to 'autonomous and independent practice')
 - Code of ethics
 - Organisation, i.e. clinic/facility requirements



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CEN process for osteopathy

- All EFO and FORE members are signed up to process
- Agreement to appoint Österreichisches Normungsinstitut (ON) as secretariat
- Expressions of interest sought from CEN members
- **Influence point 1: ensuring that all CEN members support standard development**
- CEN members form a Technical Committee assisted by an Expert Group
- CEN members can decide to nominate national osteopathic representatives to the Technical Committee
- **Influence point 2: ensuring that the TC and EG represent osteopathy**



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CEN process for osteopathy

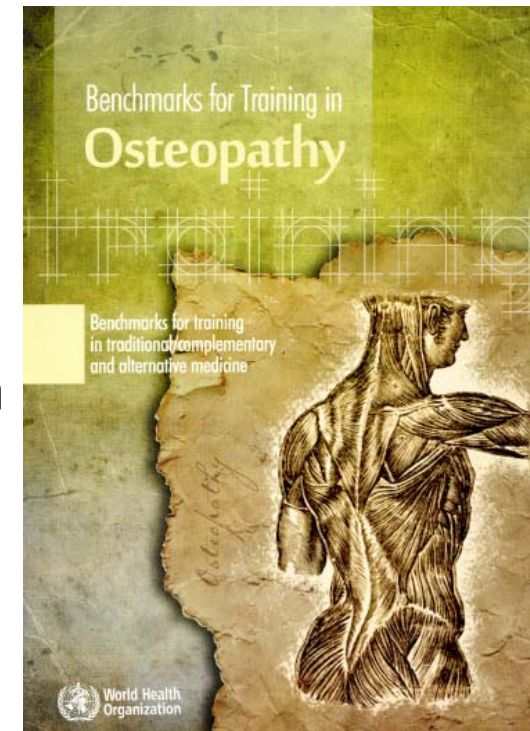
- Draft produced (TC could be up and running by November)
- Public consultation
- Influence point 3: ensuring widespread support for draft standards
- Vote in CEN to adopt standard
- Influence point 4: ensuring CEN members support standard
- National implementation



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Beyond Europe

- WHO benchmarks for Training in Osteopathy
- Originally intended to be 'guidelines' rather than a 'benchmark'
- Consensus conference (and document) in Milan, February 2007
- Final much simpler publication appeared in November 2010 as part of a suite of seven CAM 'benchmarks'
- Osteopathic physicians do not appear in final document



Next steps

- Development of a 'consensus paper' by the Osteopathic International Alliance, led by Clive Standen (NZ) and Boyd Buser (USA)
- Contents:
 - History and context
 - Osteopathic core competencies
 - Current statutory regulatory models
 - Educational models
 - Accreditation models
 - Risk of harm
- Consultation in summer 2011, agreement at OIA conference in Potsdam, September 2011
- A living, evolving, web-based document
- May lead to WHO Guidelines



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Conclusions

- Education and training standards must be the bedrock of professional recognition for osteopathy across Europe
- The CEN process could be an important step towards this recognition
- CEN standard needs to fit within the framework of the Bologna process and the European Qualifications Framework
- Need to resolve issue of hours v. outcomes and theoretical v. clinical
- Must have the active support of the profession across Europe if osteopathy is truly to 'cross borders'



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