



## A statement from the Forum for Osteopathic Regulation in Europe in response to the European Commission's consultation regarding health services

### About the Forum for Osteopathic Regulation in Europe

The Forum for Osteopathic Regulation in Europe (FORE)<sup>1</sup> brings together osteopathic organisations across Europe to facilitate discussion on standards of osteopathic practice and training to protect patients.

FORE recognises the importance of the free movement of professionals, but the impact of some EU proposals has highlighted the challenge of maintaining patient safety without consistent regulation. Currently, osteopathy is statutorily regulated in only four of the 30 countries that make up the European Economic Area (EEA).

For this reason, FORE came together in 2005 and has now met on three occasions in London, Vienna and Helsinki (in tandem with the EU Presidencies), to help ensure that patients receive the best possible protection and treatment, while osteopaths move freely in Europe to provide that care.

As a member of the Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders initiative, we see the European Commission's consultation as a valuable opportunity to protect patients and provide legal clarity to issues surrounding cross-border healthcare.

FORE believes that:

Cross-border healthcare should promote patient safety, not undermine it. In the development of EU policy and legislation, the implications for public and patient safety should be recognised alongside the principles of free movement.

With greater freedom of movement of professionals and patients, cross-border healthcare will certainly increase. For this reason, regulation of osteopathy as an autonomous healthcare profession is essential in the EEA and accession countries. Clarity and consistency over the role and scope of competent authorities is also essential for information exchange and mutual understanding. This is in the interests of all stakeholders – be they practitioners, regulators or patients.

A Europe-wide approach to communication and information sharing will increase the efficiency, validity and security of information sharing between competent authorities. This information is vital not just for the regulator to determine an osteopath's fitness to practise, but also for the patient to know what they can expect from an osteopath, and to be assured a means of redress, should this be required.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.forewards.eu](http://www.forewards.eu)

While FORE has identified national differences in what are regarded as the boundaries between a private and professional life, to ensure patient safety data protection restrictions should not prevent information exchange. FORE will therefore pilot the exchange of certificates of current professional status, initially between the four existing competent authorities for osteopathy (in Finland, Iceland, Malta and the UK) as well as any other national osteopathic organisations wishing to partake in this initiative.

Patients should be at the centre of all regulatory processes. FORE supports increasing public and patient input to the development of regulatory processes across Europe and welcomes increased dialogue with patient and public representative bodies.

A consensus on standards of osteopathic training and practice across Europe is necessary to protect patients. FORE supports continuing collaboration that encourages good practice but does not undermine national healthcare regulation. European Frameworks of understanding, e.g. on codes of practice and training standards, should be encouraged to develop common principles, but also allow the flexibility for national authorities to define their own methods of regulation to suit the particular health system and the needs of their patients. Currently FORE is finalising a European Framework for Codes of Osteopathic Practice (EFCOP), intended as a template to inform national systems on a voluntary basis.

### FORE signatories to this statement:

Associação de Profissionais de Osteopatia (P)	Association of Osteopaths in Ireland (IRL)
Consejo de los Ostéopatas de España (E)	Dansk Osteopat Forening (DK)
Federazione Sindicale Italian Osteopati (I)	General Osteopathic Council (UK)
Irish Osteopathic Association (IRL)	Nederlandse Vereniging voor Osteopathie (NL)
Norsk Osteopat Forbund (N)	Österreichische Gesellschaft für Osteopathie (A)
Registre des Ostéopathes de France (F)	Registro de Osteopatas de España (E)
Russian Register of Osteopaths (R)	Suomen Osteopaattiliitto (FIN)
Suomen Osteopaattiyhdistys (FIN)	Verband der Osteopathen Deutschland (D)

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