



**MEPs at the European Parliament declare their support for the right to work of practitioners of natural therapies in Europe.**

At the second meeting of the European Parliament Interest Group for CAM hosted by Ms Marian Harkin MEP for the Midlands Northwest Constituency of Ireland and organised by EFCAM (European Federation for Complementary and Alternative Medicine) MEP's declared their support for the right of professionals in CAM to work and to practice across European borders in the same way as other professionals.

In opening the meeting MEP Harkin (ALDE) highlighted the fact that whilst millions of Europeans were using CAM as a private healthcare treatment to many it remained inaccessible due to its lack of recognition by the public healthcare systems. Noting that many Member States have no regulation in natural therapies, she emphasised that "rather than viewing this as a problem, we need to take this as an opportunity".

According to EFCAM there are 360,000 professionals of CAM in Europe practising a range of natural therapies such as aromatherapy, acupuncture, kinesiology, osteopathy, shiatsu, reflexology and many more. The practitioners of these professions want these practices recognised and appropriately regulated across Europe.

In his presentation to the meeting Seamus Connolly, President of EFCAM, stated that Directive 2004/36 / EC gives CAM professionals the same right to work as all other professionals but that EU Member States either regulate too lightly or too tightly, or not at all so that this European Union right is not in fact available to CAM professionals.

"The right to work for practitioners of natural therapies is not just a good idea but a right that is based on the very essence of the EU, the free movement of workers". For his part, Secretary of EFCAM and APTN-COFENAT President, Roberto San Antonio Abad said that "we just lack the political will. Fortunately that political will is something you can change".

Associate Professor Dr. Torkel Falkenberg, one of the seven authors of the Strategy of the World Health Organisation on Traditional and Complementary Medicine 2014-2023, presented the WHO strategy to the meeting. He advised that the strategy aims to provide support to member states to benefit from the possible contribution of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (TCM) to people centered healthcare and to provide the safe and effective use of TCM by regulating products, practices and practitioners. He said he was "convinced" that this strategy WHO "will be a valuable tool for governments, system planners and health professionals."

Slovenian MEP Dr. Igor Soltes (Greens) stated that "it is not easy to harmonise the regulation of CAM in all member states each with different regulations, but that if we could regulate a free trade agreement with the US it was surely possible to do it". It is also a great opportunity for a creation of new jobs and an important source of significant synergistic effects"

Mr. Sean Kelly MEP (EPP) felt that a coalition of support could be built for this across the political groups in the Parliament.

Concluding his presentation Seamus Connolly, EFCAM President, said that "The key to unlocking the potential of the CAM for citizens and health is to grant the regulated right to work and practice on a common basis across Europe".

Mr. Sean Kelly MEP Ireland closed the meeting by encouraging the sector to bring its case to the Institutions as it was well deserving.

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