



## Regulation: A vision of trust

A core vision of the European Federation & Forum for Osteopathy (EFFO) is to support all 22 European member nations achieve the recognition osteopathy deserves. Sharing access to invaluable resources and providing community support, the EFFO equips their members with a community and an auxiliary service to tackle the regulation landscape.

Well on its way to this target, twelve countries<sup>1</sup> have now achieved statutory regulation, Italy have also now recognised the status of osteopaths as an independent healthcare profession, and are working towards regulation. Four of these including Denmark, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Norway, have reached this fantastic milestone in the last two and a half years.

When Evangelos Evangelou, President of the Cyprus Osteopathic Association (COA) and Tomas Collin, President of Norsk Osteopatforbund [Norwegian Association of Osteopaths (NOF)] helped pioneer osteopathy to be a regulated profession in their respective countries, it was the accumulation of years of work, legal negotiations, collaboration, building evidence and... time. In Cyprus's case, 24 years.



**Evangelos Evangelou**  
President of the Cyprus Osteopathic Association (COA)

## A moveable feast

The first osteopath arrived in Cyprus in 1976, On 3rd July 2020 Cyprus became a recognised profession. Regulation is not an overnight switch. Similar to the history of the osteopathic principles themselves<sup>2</sup>, it is characterized by group effort, continued lobbying and development, raising awareness and building a respected profile in and outside of the healthcare profession. It is a moveable feast. Evangelos and Tomas are not shy of the commitment and passion it takes.

"I wrote to the EFO (now EFFO) for assistance after having a meeting with the Cypriot Ministry of Health in 1996." Evangelos says. "I was thinking we would be regulated by the following Spring..."



**Tomas Collin**  
President of Norsk Osteopatforbund [Norwegian Association of Osteopaths (NOF)]

Osteopathy is less well known in Cyprus, despite the word osteopathy coming from the Greek word osteon. As a former colony of the UK, and Cypriot law being similar to the UK, this meant they could be under their own umbrella as a profession.

However, a drawn out process of drafting and redrafting a bill that the government would accept and recognise proved one of many hurdles. Not least including an administrative 'error' by the government where they lost the COA's paperwork. That and challenging the status quo of a legal requirement that only doctors can diagnose, treat and give advice. Three years ago, when a new Minister of Health wanted to implement a National Health Service, that's when they received their window. The Minister of Health was a UK graduate and knew about osteopathy and he wanted to help us regulate Osteopathy in Cyprus.

Evangelos credits being a member of the EFFE as gaining the necessary status needed to being a recognised profession in Cyprus:

"The EFFE has been very helpful in our regulatory process. They assisted us in promoting the profession and by being a member of the EFFE it raised our profile to gain insurance. Where necessary, they advised us on how to lobby and helped us against the pushback from other healthcare professions. Their social media tutorials are also an asset to us."

As a small community of eighteen osteopaths on the island (Cyprus), the impact of regulation will mean that they are part of a wider osteopathic community which they hope to expand. "After 24 years of hard work we are finally regulated and are now working towards osteopathy becoming part of the National Health System thereby making it affordable and accessible to everyone."

## Pillars of healthcare

Reflective of the diverse scope of osteopathic practice, and how place and culture impact the shape of a profession, Norway's story of regulation is a different tale to that of Cyprus. The CEN document, published in 2015<sup>3</sup>, sets out a standard that ensures a safe environment for patients and high quality treatment, and has been an asset to both countries.

Osteopathy was first brought to Norway in 1930. And it is now a well known and trusted profession with 90% of patients saying that they will return and/or recommend osteopathy to a friend. It took three applications, the first in the 1990s, the second just after the millennium in 2005 and once again in December 2018. On December 3, 2020 the Norwegian government announced that they will now recognise osteopaths as authorised and regulated health personnel.

The NOF collaborated with the Kristiania University College to put together the documentation and evidence to meet the necessary requirements. Tomas explains that they have a framework, a universal law for all healthcare professionals that they supplied evidence to:

"The framework in Norway sets out healthcare and health personnel standards and law. This is what lays the foundation of your profession, and how your application can be rejected. It includes a list of professions and we will now be added to this list."

"To be considered within this framework, there are five pillars that need to be covered including patient safety, education, international harmonisation, evidence and the role of the practitioner. With this last pillar, if you are working in primary care that means you have a lot of responsibilities, taking care of that patient regarding safety. It is a lot of documentation."

“In 2019 the Nordic Council issued a statement of support recommending that osteopathy should be regulated in both Norway and Sweden, to harmonise the Nordic Region. That gave us a bit of leverage from the political leadership in Norway.”

“The Norwegian health system is a combination of services delivered by the equivalent of the NHS, and the private sector. Parts of the private sector do get some reimbursement from the government, others form health insurances, in addition to patient fees. Any profession can work anywhere within both systems. The common osteopathic practice though, is within the private sector – as primary health care. Osteopaths do not get any government reimbursement, but are included by many health insurance providers, the major part is patient fees. With regulation in place, it will be easier for osteopaths to find their place also within the “NHS”. With time there might also be installed systems for reimbursement.”

“It was a historical event, achieving regulation in December 2020, but this was the starting point of a process that will take some time.”

## International harmonisation

Tomas notes that being a member of the EFFE provides a culture of support as well as another mark of international harmonisation.

“The main benefits of being part of the EFFE is that you are part of a community, you do share ideas, you keep each other up to speed about what’s going on, in regulatory matters, education, the role of osteopathy and the recognition of the profession in different areas.”

Tomas’ advice to countries continuing to strive for regulation: “Keep Calm and Carry On”

## Protecting trust

Regulation of osteopathy helps to build stronger relationships with other regulated healthcare professions, with the government, the public and other stakeholders. It is an important step towards the recognition of our profession, ensuring patient safety and contributes to establishing educational standards— thus, assisting the bond of trust between the patient and the practitioner.

Sharing a vision of regulation reflects what is at the heart of osteopathy: patient centred care.

1. Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland and the UK.
2. Stark, Jane Eliza. (2012). An historical perspective on principles of osteopathy. *International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine*. Vol 16:1. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijosm.2012.10.001>
3. <https://www.cen.eu/news/brief-news/Pages/News-2016-008.aspx>