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### **To Whom it may Concern**

The European Federation and Forum for Osteopathy (EFFO) is the umbrella organisation for the osteopath profession in Europe, consisting of the national associations from 22 European countries, with Brazil, Canada and Israel as associate members. The EFFO represents about 25.000 osteopaths and is itself a member of the global body, the Osteopathic International Alliance (OIA), which has been in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) since 2018.

The organisation's purpose is to improve patient care and patient safety by supporting professional and public recognition through statutory regulation, and by promoting high quality research and increased harmonisation of education standards and quality.

Osteopaths are first contact, independent healthcare practitioners and should not be considered as a subset of physiotherapy, as osteopaths practice not just with a toolkit of techniques but with a philosophy and set of principles which are coherent and developed over the course of time [1, 2].

Research shows high positive osteopathic patient reported outcomes [3], osteopathic care is considered to be safe [4] and "was found to be a 'dominant' (low back pain) and cost-effective strategy (neck pain) compared to usual care" [5]. The majority of osteopathic treatment is centred on the musculoskeletal system [4], we know that this is a leading cause of disability globally [6] and as the global population continues to increase and age, the demand for health care in this sector will continue to grow. The research shows that osteopaths are well placed to deliver beneficial, safe treatment and by doing so can increase the national health service provision and available patient choice.

Osteopathy is currently regulated in 12 European countries: Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Norway, Malta, Portugal, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The profession is also recognised as an independent primary healthcare profession in Italy, where they are working towards full regulation [7].

The EFFO, through its predecessor organisations EFO and FORE, worked to produce the *Comité Européen de Normalisation* (CEN), European Standard on Osteopathic Healthcare Provision (EN 16686) in 2015 [7], which has close links to the WHO Benchmarks of Osteopathic Training published in 2010 [2]. This CEN standard was published in 33 European countries, including Austria, and has proven to be a useful benchmark standard for European governments which subsequently brought osteopathy into statutory regulation[7].

The EFFO advocate the adoption of education standards consistent with this CEN standard as part of statutory regulation of osteopathy, to ensure that the equivalent level of patient safety and patient care is available to citizens throughout Europe. Regulation of osteopathy in all countries in Europe will not only improve patient safety but also promote the exchange of knowledge and labour, in line with the EU/EEA Professional Qualifications Directive.

The EFFO are in constant dialogue with Österreichische Gesellschaft für Osteopathie (OEGO), and we are available to support the Austrian health and social authorities with relevant information at any stage.

On behalf of the EFFO Board



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President

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