



Council
1 May 2014
International activities annual report

Classification	Public
Purpose	For noting
Issue	The attached paper gives an update on current GOsC European and international activity.
Recommendation	To note the content of this paper.
Financial and resourcing implications	None arising from this paper.
Equality and diversity implications	None arising from this paper.
Communications implications	None arising from this paper.
Annexes	Overview of the GOsC European and International Budget 2010-15
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Background

1. The GOsC has undertaken a wide range of international activity since it was established. This paper provides an update on the work we are undertaking with the various bodies and fora with which the GOsC is involved.

Discussion

Forum for Osteopathic Regulation in Europe (FORE)

2. The GOsC initiated FORE in November 2005 to bring together osteopathic organisations across Europe to develop a consensus on standards of osteopathic education, training and practice in order to protect patients and the reputation of UK standards. Nine years later FORE has 22 members from 17 countries.
3. Since its inception, the GOsC has provided the secretariat function, providing support for individual member organisations, coordinating bi-annual meetings, drafting FORE position statements and developing and maintaining a dedicated website (www.forewards.eu). FORE members continue to fund the Secretariat based on the size of their membership. The Chair of FORE is Gert Jan Goede from the Dutch Register of Osteopaths, and who is serving the first year of his second term of office.
4. Since the last update report, FORE meetings have been held in Dublin (11-12 May) in Malta (19-20 October), and included speakers from the European Chiropractic Union, the European Society of Quality in Healthcare and the Maltese Council for Professions Complementary to Medicine. The meeting in Malta was also formally opened by the Minister of Education, the Hon Evarist Bartolo MP. The next meeting of FORE is scheduled on 7 June in Austria, with a focus on the implementation of the draft European Standard on Osteopathic Healthcare Provision (the CEN Standard – see below), currently in development.
5. The FORE Secretariat is currently coordinating a joint European seminar with the European Federation of Osteopaths and Osteopathic European Academic Network as part of this year's OIA/BOA convention in October this year, which will explore the impact of the CEN Standard along with a wider discussion about the future of European osteopathy.
6. As well as supporting individual countries seeking legal recognition for osteopathy, FORE is a partner with the European Federation of Osteopaths (EFO) in the development of the CEN Standard. FORE also jointly hosted a CEN workshop with the EFO at the Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders conference in October last year, bringing together European government and competent authority representatives from across Europe.

CEN standard

7. We are now into the final year of a three-year project to formalise standards of osteopathic education, training and practice through the European Committee for Standardisation (www.cen.eu). CEN is the recognised authority within Europe for standardisation. The total cost of this work is around €36,000, split between members of FORE and the EFO. While a CEN Standard will not impact on the *Osteopaths Act 1993*, it will provide a benchmark of training standards and ultimately care that patients should expect from osteopaths in those countries currently without any regulatory mechanisms.
8. The Technical Committee, tasked with overseeing the development of the Standard, is due to meet for the fourth time on 5-6 June in Austria before a final vote later in the year. The UK delegation, appointed by the British Standards Institute includes the GOsC's Chief Executive, Charles Hunt as the representative of the Council of Osteopathic Educational Institutions and Marina Urquhart-Pullen from the British Osteopathic Association.
9. The GOsC also hosted a meeting of the CEN drafting group in May last year which is responsible for developing the content of the Standard. This group includes the GOsC's Chief Executive and Communications Manager.
10. A public inquiry on the draft Standard closed on 7 April 2014, seeking input from national standardisation bodies on the content and if they would vote in favour, or against the Standard, or abstain. 83% of the weighted votes cast were in favour of the Standard, which bodes well for the final vote scheduled for late 2014/early 2015, before formal publication.

Osteopathic International Alliance (OIA)

11. The Chief Executive spoke at the OIA's annual conference in Austin, Texas in early January on proposals regarding continuing fitness to practise and also facilitated a regulation workshop as part of the conference.
12. In January a major publication was launched at the OIA conference in Texas *Osteopathy and osteopathic medicine – a global view of practice, patients, education and the contribution to healthcare delivery*. This was produced partly at the request of the World Health Organization and supported the WHO's new strategy on traditional and complementary medicine. The Chief Executive was a member of the editorial working group and the Communications Manager also contributed content.

13. After the conference the Chief Executive stood down from OIA Board and the UK Board seat was taken by the British Osteopathic Association (BOA). The GOsC's membership has also changed from full to partner member status which reflects our changed status since we first joined the organisation (the GOsC no longer being a representative body). While the GOsC's involvement in the OIA is likely to lessen, it is still an important forum for dialogue with international colleagues including regulators.
14. The next OIA conference is being held in conjunction with the BOA on 3-5 October in Egham, Surrey.

Engagement with individuals and organisations internationally

15. We continue to have regular contact with our Australian and New Zealand regulatory counterparts through conference calls and face-to-face meetings where possible.
16. We are also approached regularly by officials and osteopathic communities outside the UK who are keen to establish recognition and regulation of osteopathy in their own country. Advice is also provided to registrants and students seeking guidance about practice outside the UK.

Recognition of Professional Qualifications in Europe

17. The GOsC's position has always been that professional mobility across Europe is very welcome, but only if this does not impact on the protection of patients and does not put UK-trained osteopaths at a disadvantage in terms of their registration requirements.
18. Our main focus this year has been on the development, and now the impact of the revised professional qualifications Directive (2013/55/EU) which will need to be implemented by 2016. This new legislation will replace the current Directive (2005/36/EC) which governs the way we process applications to the Register from elsewhere in Europe.
19. The introduction of a fitness to practise alert mechanism is a welcome development and should go some way to ensure that if an osteopath is removed or suspended from practice in one member state, this information is transmitted to other relevant competent authorities across Europe. The new Directive also provides clarification of the competent authority's role in ensuring health professionals seeking to practice in another member state have the necessary language skills.

20. It is important that patient safety is a key consideration for us. We have already had a preliminary discussion at SMT, held talks with fellow regulators (individually and also as part of the cross-regulatory Alliance of UK Health Regulators on Europe) and made representations to the Department of Health and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. To comply with the new Directive we are undertaking a further review of our registration processes for EEA-qualified applicants to ensure that we not only comply with the legislation, but also provide that applicants from Europe who are granted registration with the GOsC are appropriately qualified and fit to practise.

Gibraltar and the Isle of Man

21. The Governments of the Isle of Man and Gibraltar are both legislating to extend the remit of GOsC regulation to their territories. This means that any osteopath working in the Isle of Man and Gibraltar will need to be registered with the GOsC. At present both have small numbers of existing registrants and there may be others working who are not registered.
22. We have been in communication with both the Isle of Man and Gibraltar. The Chief Executive visited the Isle of Man in February to meet registrants and also to agree a memorandum of agreement between the GOsC and the government. An interim memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed with the Isle of Man Government on information sharing and fitness to practise matters. The MoU will come into force once the Parliament of the Isle of Man (Tynwald) passes draft legislation on extending GOsC regulation to the island.
23. The Gibraltar Medical Council is reviewing the Isle of Man document in the light of proposals that it should be the responsible body once GOsC registration becomes mandatory in Gibraltar.

Development agenda

24. The GOsC is coordinating the international collaboration workstream of the UK Development agenda to develop stronger international links and alliances to ensure that the UK profession shares good practice in promotional, clinical, educational and research activities with the osteopathic community around the world.
25. To date representatives from Osteopathic Development Group stakeholder organisations have been surveyed seeking information on their networks/alliances in order to help build a topography of UK osteopathic activity internationally. This information is helping to inform the structure of a possible online hub/resource on which wider feedback will be sought later in the year with a view to launching in early 2015.

Latest developments

26. Since the last annual report to Council:

- Portugal: a new Law (No.71/2013) was approved in September 2013 which will regulate osteopathy as an autonomous profession, providing for protection of title and more consistent standards of osteopathic education, training and practice in Portugal.
- Belgium: the expected announcement from the Minister of Education about the future regulation of osteopathy has been further delayed.

Budgetary information

27. In 2013-14 net expenditure on international activities (excluding staff time) was as follows:

GOsC contribution to FORE budget	€8,400
GOsC contribution to CEN project (Year 3)	€3,100
OIA membership	\$500

Recommendation: to note the contents of this paper.