

The untapped potential of TCIH in Europe

Traditional, complementary and integrative healthcare (TCIH) refers to the respectful collaboration between various healthcare systems and their health professionals to offer a person-centred and holistic approach to health. It focuses on the whole person, is participative, respects individual choices and cultural diversity and integrates clinical experience and patient values with the best available research information.

Following the 2023 Global Traditional Medicine Summit, the Gujarat Declaration and the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, EUROCAM calls on European Health Ministries to facilitate the integration of TCIH into national health systems as well as recognize the potential role of TCIH in strengthening the resilience of the population, promoting wellbeing, and contributing to tackle some of the challenges that affect health systems, such as non-communicable diseases, antimicrobial resistance and burn out.

At least 25% of the European population has demonstrated its preference for a healthcare system that

- has a whole person multidisciplinary approach
- integrates conventional medicine with traditional and complementary methods
- is principally concerned with making people healthy

In Europe there are positive examples of successful integration of TCIH into health care systems. However, Europe lags behind in the regulatory and political integration of TCIH compared to other regions. This results in reduced healthcare choices, and missed opportunities to use the potential of TCIH towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC), a key target of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

TCIH situation in Europe:

- In total, 25.9% of the European population had used some form of TCIH during the last 12 months. The use of CAM varied greatly by country, from 10% to almost 40% in Germany¹.
- According to the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries, Europe is the largest market for TCIH medicinal products with an estimated value of around US\$33 billion in 2021².
- According to the WHO Global Overview 2019, TCIH is used in 88% of Member States in the European Region which is comparable with all other regions. However, when it comes to national policies on TCIH, the European Region lags considerably behind other regions with only 20% of European countries having national health policies.
- In Europe, there are positive examples of meaningful integration of conventional medicine and TCIH. There are good research projects (e.g. on Antibiotic resistance and Integrative Oncology), good research centres (e.g. Charité University Berlin; University of Bern, University of Vienna, among several others) and good networks integrated with the national health system (like in Tuscany³ and in Baden-Württemberg⁴).
- However, in many countries, mainstream initiatives and policies misinform about TCIH; often the teaching, practice of and access to TCIH is actively discouraged by universities and health professional associations; additionally, the uneven availability of TCIH practitioners and medicinal products, as well as the uneven reimbursement policies, make it very challenging to fulfil the patients' right to choose the healthcare they desire.

¹Kemppainen L.M. Scand J Public Health.2018 Jun;46(4):448-455

²<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-health-products/what-demand>

³The Region of Tuscany (Italy) has pursued a progressive integration of TCIH in its public health care system over the past 25 years. A regional law was passed in 2007, which then became in 2013 the basis for the national Law that defines the terms and requirements for TCIH training and practice. Now in Tuscany there are 84 public clinics practising TCIH, 4 Centres of reference and 1 integrative medicine hospital in Pitigliano, Grosseto.

⁴The land/region of Baden-Württemberg (Germany) sponsors a Competence Network on Integrative Medicine, in which hospitals, outpatient networks and research institutes work together in the development, implementation and evaluation of effective, safe and of high-quality integrative treatments.



Recommendations:

In Europe, we need a radical acceleration of integration of TCIH alongside conventional medicine into the healthcare systems, and in particular:

- Recognition of TCIH practices in all European countries
- TCIH becoming available in public healthcare
- Risk-based approaches to medicinal products regulation
- Higher public investment into TCIH research
- Equitable reimbursement policies for the patients
- More focus within healthcare systems on nurturing health through health promotion and disease prevention

What should countries do?

- Recognize the essential contribution of TCIH to health and well-being by:
 - ◆ Ensuring individuals have the right to make choices in healthcare
 - ◆ Maximising the use of TCIH approaches for healthy societies, planetary health and disease management
 - ◆ Supporting an increase in research activity on TCIH
 - ◆ Promoting inclusive and multi-disciplinary research methods to capture evidence also on complex, holistic and individualised TCIH knowledges and lifestyle approaches
- Accelerate the integration into public health systems and services by supporting countries to:
 - ◆ Include TCIH in national health policies
 - ◆ Tackle the barriers that undermine access to and availability of TCIH services
 - ◆ Provide recognition and appropriate regulation of TCIH products, practices and practitioners to ensure quality, safety, effectiveness and access.

About EUROCAM:

EUROCAM is an independent non-profit and non-governmental European umbrella organisation of patients and practitioners from the Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Healthcare (TCIH) field. EUROCAM represents acupuncture, Ayurveda, anthroposophic medicine, herbal medicine, homoeopathic medicine, naturopathic or traditional European medicine, reiki therapy, and Traditional Chinese Medicine. The practice of TCIH modalities is based on clinical expertise, the best available clinical evidence from scientific research built over the last few decades, and centuries of traditional use.

EUROCAM is accredited as a non-state actor to the WHO Regional Office for Europe. It is the leading TCIH sector's representative in the EU, hosting the secretariat of the MEP Interest Group on Integrative Medicine and Health, engaging with the European Commission's Directorate-General on Health and Food Safety and other relevant EU Institutions and CSOs.

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