

The dangers of isolation.

There is a saying: “You cannot bless the fruits and curse the roots”. Understanding this is more important now than ever before! For the past 88 years the ECU has provided the basis on which a growing number of respected national chiropractic associations collaborated, communicated, exchanged information and ideas, and received and provided valuable support of all kinds to fellow chiropractors.

The well-established “ECU roots” have fed the achievement of political, educational and research milestones in European nations that are currently reaping the fruits of investment in a vigorous profession. And that is what we are still successfully doing nowadays when, for example, the ECU provided a European shield against a malicious attack on the profession in Spain recently, only for the Spanish association to go on the offense straight afterwards and secure a great win with the abolition of liability for VAT on chiropractic care, following on from the victorious campaign led by the Belgian Chiropractors’ Union .

The solidarity and stamina the ECU generates is more relevant to the needs of our profession than ever before. The Union has adopted a newly refreshed strategy designed by its own members, that provides answers and tackles the issues of today. It is a strategy to develop a profession that provides Accessible, Affordable, and Appropriate care for MSK health: ECU AAA.

It is an undeniable fact that the chiropractic profession is unevenly developed across Europe. Some countries (not necessarily the smallest) have scant or no chiropractic care. Others (not necessarily the largest countries) seem to have it all: a good supply of chiropractors operating in a well regulated environment, integration into public health systems , reimbursement of patient costs, indigenous chiropractic schools accredited to Europe-wide standards, rigorous continuing professional development, vibrant research and well established channels for knowledge

transfer . In short, all the components that bring public trust and acceptability. But most countries, unsurprisingly, are still somewhere along the path.

Wherever they are on a path of development – and there is more than one – the rewards of being a pioneer include being seen to break new ground and to chart a path that others can follow; being looked up to and emulated. But a well-known lesson is that staying at the top is hard, the peloton is trying to close the gap and it knows that doing so does not depend entirely on individual effort. Peloton riders mobilize the support of others until they can break from the pack. Meanwhile, the leading riders risk confusing the feeling of being ahead with that of invincibility as they don't experience the heat of the pursuit anymore. So it is with chiropractic.

If we make the mistake of cutting ourselves off from one another the profession will start losing battles, perhaps first in the countries where it is less developed, but that in turn will very soon reach the backyard of the next group of countries, by which time it will be too late to react. The good fight for the profession will have been lost.

This phenomenon known as the “illusion of isolation” has been repeated many times in the history of how humanity develops and, also, in the history of our profession. Mature, visionary, and generous leadership is required to avoid such mistakes. A respect for history is required as well, and a constant reminder that we all were at some point in the earlier stages of development. The better positioned accept a responsibility to help those less well positioned. Solidarity, comradeship, and mutual help is the way progress is made.

The godfathers of this profession, pioneers of the past, were visionaries that realized that a divided profession would fall. That is why they founded the ECU back in 1932. Visionaries on whose shoulders we stand like C. Bannister & E. Hancock from the UK, H.& J. Gillet from

Belgium, T. Gade from Denmark, A. Lundh from Norway, and C. Regli from Switzerland, only to name a few.

Dear Colleagues, we are a small profession in need of many things. The ECU, inspired by its past, with a plan based on today's needs and with a clear vision for the future will keep providing for the chiropractic profession. We have a moral obligation to provide for the future generations of chiropractors as our forebears provided for us. We are all accountable for our actions which will be recorded in history. Where would the profession be right now if those pioneers 88 years ago had chosen isolation instead of collaboration! In the immortal words of Dante: "The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who, in times of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality."

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