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# European Addiction Research Becomes the Official Journal of the European Federation of Addiction Societies

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Readers of European Addiction Research (EAR) need not be reminded of the relevance of addictions worldwide [1] and its impact in Europe. Treatment options are well developed in many countries and regions, but approaches are diverse throughout Europe with little or no harmonization, and with a relevant treatment gap, which implies that large numbers of European citizens in need of treatment for their addiction do not have access to it. Prevention approaches are somewhat better coordinated mainly through the work and responsibility of the European Union (EU) in this matter. At the same time, the wider European forum offers lobby groups a large field of action from the industry that has slowed down many evidence-based prevention initiatives, especially in the alcohol and tobacco arena. However, the field with the largest potential for improvement seems to be screening, early diagnosis and early intervention for developing problems with addictive substances or addiction-prone behaviors such as pathological gambling and compulsive gaming.

Addictions in Europe are a severe problem in terms of morbidity, mortality and social costs, including harm to others. The European institutions responded to this problem, creating institutions like the European Monitoring Center for Drug Abuse and Addictions [2] and setting regular working groups like the Committee on National

Alcohol Policy and Action [3] and Horizontal Working Party on Drugs [4] where member states' representatives meet to join their efforts. Simultaneously, the civil society has developed networks that try to coordinate at a European level the efforts of national advocacy groups in the addictions field, and unsuccessful experiences like the Alcohol and Health Forum [5] have shown the difficulties of integrating industry stakeholders in the policy harmonization process. Those must be seen as unavoidable aberrations within the frame of a still developing EU that is struggling for harmonization in many different areas, in order to build a European identity out of the tremendous diversity of its member states.

The European Federation of Addiction Societies (EUFAS) [6] is part of this identity building process and was created as a pragmatic answer to some of the problems mentioned above. It was founded in Paris in 2010 with the mission to promote education and the attainment of the highest level of knowledge and understanding in the field of addiction in all European countries. Three main goals or priorities are defined in the bylaws of EUFAS: (1) to enhance addiction research in Europe, (2) to improve and harmonize prevention and treatment of addictions across Europe and (3) to promote policies based on evidence. Those goals tackle fundamental areas

where Europe has clear room for improvement. First, investment in addiction research is scarce, especially when compared with the Burden of Disease figures. Second, there is a huge variability across European countries in terms of access to treatment and types of treatments offered (e.g., opioid substitution treatments), which leads to important inequalities among EU citizens, and the same holds true for preventive activities. And third, the implementation of evidence-based policies is still low in many EU countries, as shown by the recent work of Ysa et al. [7] on the governance of addictions.

There is much work to do, but there are many European professionals working in the field, and the role of EUFAS is to coordinate efforts in this huge task. EUFAS brings together an estimated number of about 15,000 specialists organized in 35 national addiction societies from 22 European countries; this includes all Western European states and most of the Central and Eastern ones. The Scientific Societies that are members of EUFAS have a relevant position in their countries, some of them with more than 1,000 professional affiliates and most of them with a scientific track record of more than 50 years. Those Scientific Societies have had an impact in the development of treatment infrastructures, as well as in the design of drug policies at a national level. Now the time has come to push this impact at a European level.

Addictive behaviors tend to homogenize across Europe, but treatment approaches and the national treatment structures are still very diverse. There are some key areas that could be easily improved by simple benchmarking processes. This may include the definition of the professional background of individuals working in the addictions field, the structure and organization of treatment facilities, ethical standards, guidelines for preventive and treatment activities, etc. An area of special relevance where EUFAS is placing its priorities is the development of Clinical Guidelines. There are many Clinical

Guidelines across Europe [8] in different languages and for different substances, and the development of European Addiction Guidelines should help both, in terms of harmonization and in terms of helping move forward those countries that still lack them.

To accomplish those goals, EUFAS and EAR are perfect partners to widespread science-based approaches in European addiction research and treatment to European institutions, healthcare professionals and citizens. Most of the EUFAS member societies cooperate with a national official journal, but it can be hardly disputed that – if you aim to go beyond regional visibility – there is no better option for EUFAS than partnering with EAR to establish it as the official journal of the Federation. EAR was founded in 1995 and established an interdisciplinary forum for the exchange of recent data and expert opinion, reflecting the importance of a comprehensive approach to resolve the problems of substance abuse and addiction in Europe over the last 20 years. Coverage ranges from clinical and research advances in the fields of psychiatry, biology, pharmacology and epidemiology to social and legal implications of policy decisions. With the goal of facilitating open discussion among those active in the scientific and clinical aspects of prevention, diagnosis and therapy as well as dealing with legal issues, we believe that the agreement between EAR and EUFAS will lead to relevant synergies in terms of increased visibility, higher European impact and development of interesting joint initiatives. One of the first initiatives is the launch of the EAR award [9]. We do hope that this new partnership will be much welcomed by both EAR readers and EUFAS members.

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