How to reinstall phytotherapy in the European health system?

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Phytotherapy in Europe, has transitioned from traditional folk practice to a regulated, well accepted branch of complementary medicine. Currently is a legally recognized, regulated medical discipline that integrates plant-based remedies with modern scientific standards following the quality control through European Pharmacopoeia and safety monitoring and standards as all conventional medicines. Moreover, all final herbal medicinal products are following obligatory, both good agricultural and collection practice (GACP) as well as good manufacturing practice (GMP), harmonized labelling and assessment across Member States. Regulatory and Scientific Landscape at the EU for herbal medicines is governed by the Committee on Herbal Medicinal Products (HMPC) in European Medicines Agency (EMA).

Herbal medicines are widely used as first-line or complementary/adjuvant treatments for mild-to-moderate conditions. Germany and France appear as market leaders accounting for the largest share of the European phytotherapy market, with widespread over-the-counter (OTCs) availability in pharmacies. Additionally, EU market offers plenty of herbal preparations with significant differences in classification, out of herbal medicinal products, under the categories of medical devices, cosmetics and/or food supplements.

Even though there is a high general acceptance for herbal medicines, formal training in phytotherapy is low among 27 countries in EU, while it varies significantly by country. So, there are countries with better (Germany and Austria) -established pharmaceutical and medical societies dedicated to naturopathy, while other member states treat phytotherapy almost informally and based only as part of self-care.

Due to this fact of unbalanced European teaching and training programs on herbal medicines for pharmacists and medical doctors, there is an urgent need to reinstall, harmonise, follow up and implement an interoperable system for PHYTOTHERAPY in general. Certain ideas, proposals/plans towards this direction will be presented and discussed