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European Coalition on Homeopathic and Anthroposophic Medicinal Products – **ECHAMP**  
European Forum of Complementary and Alternative Medicine – **EFCAM**  
European Public Health Alliance – **EPHA**

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## Press release

**“Natural medicine is a cultural heritage also useful to consumer protection!”**

### **3. European symposium “Natural medicine in Europe – quo vadis?” in Frankfurt.**

Schöneck/Frankfurt, November 2008. - “Consumer protection is essential, but the well informed patient must continue to be free to choose by himself the therapies; the drugs or whether he wishes to benefit from a natural medical treatment. The European consumers and patients should therefore take more political influence to shape public healthcare management” says Nora Laubstein, chairwoman and organizer of the 3rd European symposium of the Association of Natural Medicine in Europe (ANME e.V.). “Traditionally well-established drugs as well as traditional and further refined professional naturopathic treatments should remain available throughout Europe!”

The national health authorities have been working for quite some time together on an integrated health strategy in Europe, which is having an impact on complementary and alternative medicine (abbreviated CAM). The interest in complementary and alternative medicine is increasing in Germany as steadily shown in surveys. Yet different fields of the healthcare management have been practicing a systematic constraint strategy against CAM for a few years under the pretence of “consumer protection”. The naturopathy network “Association of Natural Medicine in Europe e.V.” organized on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2008 and for the third time in a row, the European symposium “natural medicine in Europe – quo vadis?” in Frankfurt-on-the-Main.

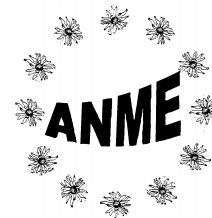
Responding to the current question “Is consumer protection only at the cost of tradition?” **Maria Walcher from the Austrian Commission for UNESCO** presented the National Agency for Intangible Cultural Heritage established in 2006 which is dealing amongst others

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#### **Association of Natural Medicine in Europe e.V.**

Waldstr. 14 D-61137 Schöneck Tel. 0049(0) 6187- 9928121 Fax: 0049(0) 6187-9928074  
e-mail: [info@anme.info](mailto:info@anme.info) home: [www.anme.info](http://www.anme.info)

Konto-Nr.: 4201780301 BLZ: 501 900 00 Frankfurter Volksbank e.V.  
IBAN: DE 52 501 900 00 420 1780 301 BIC:FFVBDEFF



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with the transmission and the safeguarding of traditional care methods. “Knowledge exchange is the basis for intangible cultural heritage. The knowledge and practices concerning nature and universe make traditional healthcare belong to intangible cultural heritage.” The safeguarding of cultural heritage is a consensus in a modern society. This has already been acknowledged 2003 by the UNESCO (convention on the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage) and 2004 by the World Health Organization (WHO) and ended in a concentration of the present forces in order to preserve traditional healthcare methods. Two research projects are currently in progress in Austria and enable on one side to give an overview of the actual natural healthcare available in the alpine republic and on the other hand to register the traditional herbal medicinal products according to EU-standards.

**Karl-Heinz Sekatsch-Winkelmann** from the **Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Patientenstellen (Federal Association for Patients)** pointed out the dramatic evolution to a two class medicine, where despite an increasing interest for natural medicine, more and more people cannot afford a naturopathic treatment. “The systematic and middle-term constraint strategy which has been observed for a few years is recognizable in the tightly defined standards for products set by the EU and the alleged consumer protection”. And Winkelmann reveals the disastrous trend of a healthcare system turning into a merely health care management.

**Nand de Herdt** from the **European Coalition on Homeopathic and Anthroposophic Medicinal Products (ECHAMP)** depicted the future of CAM-medicines using the example of the homeopathy and the anthroposophy in Europe. According to him and this is confirmed by the EU statistics, “Whenever consumers get the chance, they use natural medicine” and he pleaded for keeping on supporting the “well-informed patient”.

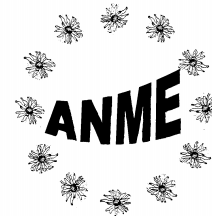
The same request has been presented by **Colette Pradelle, Chairwoman of the Association for Patients of Anthroposophic Medicine (APMA)** and member of the

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**European Federation of Patients' Associations for the Anthroposophic Medicine (EFPAM)**, who while dealing with the subject “responsible patients, committed consumers” described the current situation and work of a patients' association in France. According to her, the modern patient does not accept anymore to be merely “treated” by the allopathic medicine. People don't want to be merely considered as “physiological mechanisms”. Too little attention has been paid to individual and human aspects, because although the allopathic medicine has got closer to the human body it drifted ever further apart from the human being” This is particularly obvious/This can be best seen by young peoples' growing interest for complementary and alternative medicine

**Frans Copers** from the **European Shiatsu Federation** described the current situation in Netherlands and Belgium that to his opinion could not be more different. The Dutch are more creative and open to CAM than the Belgians who are more conservative as far as medicine is concerned. According to Copers, “surveys have shown that the use of complementary and alternative medicine is more widespread in Belgium than in Netherlands, although in both countries, a limited number of such treatments are only covered and reimbursed by private health insurances.”

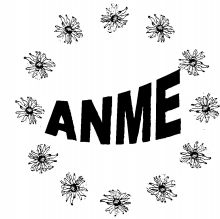
**Igors Kudrjavcevs** from the **Université de Riga** presented the current researches and the status of CAM in the East-European countries like Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Rumania and Slovenia. To his opinion, “field researches” are more necessary than “literature researches”. Scientific based researches and public awareness training could contribute to improve the problematic relation between CAM users and the authorities and governments in the countries concerned. A consensus is necessary and Kudrjavcecs quoted the exemplary evolution in Italy, where different CAM providers signed a consensus in 2003.

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**Summary:**

The success of this conference series “Natural medicine in Europe – quo vadis?”, which is taking place every two years in the metropolis on the Main, is due to its interdisciplinary focusing that conveys a cross-boarder value. Once again, the ANME symposium stood as a forum for the European natural medicine and showed the current position of CAM in the European and national crossfire between Health politic and Health care. The participants were representatives of the national and European politics, as well as patients’ associations and professional medical organizations from different European countries.

The Association of Natural Medicine in Europe e.V. ANME is a NGO (non-governmental organization) that sees itself as a European network defending natural and complementary medicine (CAM) throughout Europe. ANME is composed of associations and professional organizations oriented at the naturopathy as well as biopharmaceutical producers, therapist working according to naturopathy and committed individuals. All are working together to reinforce the naturopathy’s position in Europe and to shape and consolidate its future. For more information please see [www.anme.info](http://www.anme.info)

Contact: Nora Laubstein

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