

Regulation of Complementary and Alternative (Non-Conventional) Veterinary Therapies in Europe – a preliminary survey



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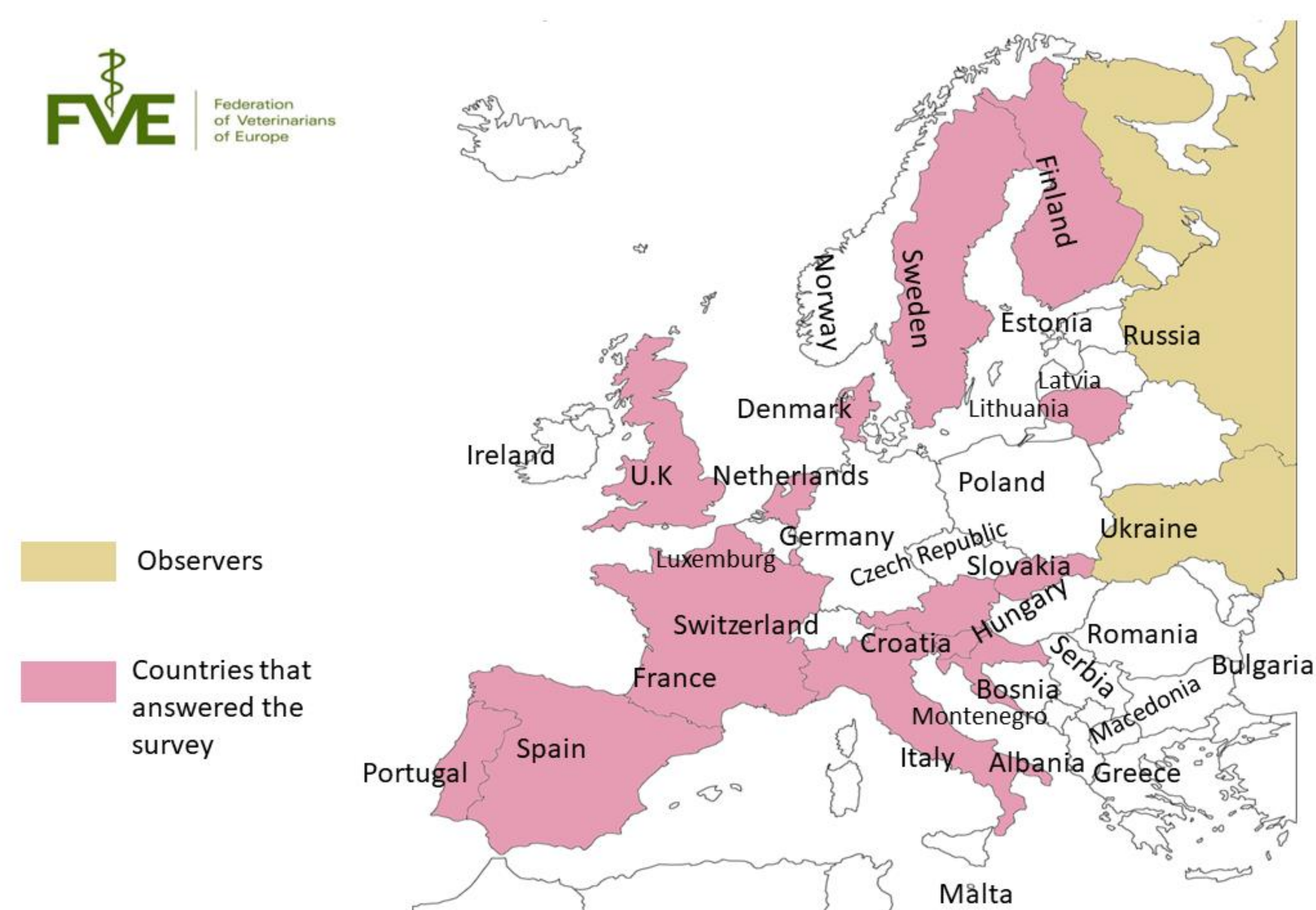
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Introduction

Complementary and Alternative Medicines, also known as Non-Conventional Therapies (NCTs) have been used in veterinary practice for decades, and have also been increasingly sought after (Stanossek & Wehrend, 2022), despite their lack of scientific validity or evidence of clinical effectiveness (Domingues et al., 2022). This raises both ethical and regulatory concerns that warrant scrutiny (Ernst et al., 2004). There has been no attempt to examine how veterinary NCTs are regulated in Europe and how such regulation contrasts with the principles of evidence-based medicine. We aimed to fill this gap, through a survey to member associations of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE).



Methods & Results

- A survey was sent to **36** European members of the FVE.
- 18 European regulatory bodies responded (Response rate: **50%**)
- The **Statutes (Bylaws)** of 78% respondent organisations (n=14) fail to address the issue of NCTs
- 31% of **Codes of Ethics** regulate NCTs, whereas 50% do not (one respondent did not know, and Austria does not have a Code of Ethics).
- Only four Veterinary Acts (22.2%) were said to include provisions on NCTs (Austria, Croatia, Italy, and Sweden).
- No respondent stated that veterinarians required a special permit to practice CAVM.
- Non-veterinarians are allowed to practice CAVM in seven countries, namely Lithuania, Luxemburg, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Slovak Republic and the UK.
- In France if a CAVM is considered as being under the veterinary act definition, only veterinarians are allowed to practice it.
- In most countries we found provisions to ensure science-based medicine is being observed alongside, contrastingly, regulations for the use of – and training in – un-scientific therapies.

Discussion

- No common understanding among European countries of what constitutes a NCT.
- Lack of an harmonized regulation for its use in veterinary medicine across Europe.
- A broader European-wide perspective would safeguard against over-or-under regulation, at the local level.
- An in-depth documental investigation of regulatory files is under way to further elaborate on these issues.

References: Domingues, K., Franco, N., Rodrigues, I., Stilwell, G., & Magalhães-Sant'Ana, M. (2022). Bibliometric trend analysis of non-conventional (alternative) therapies in veterinary research. *Veterinary Quarterly*, *accepted*.
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Stanossek, I., & Wehrend, A. (2022). Application of veterinary naturopathy and complementary medicine in small animal medicine—A survey among German veterinary practitioners. *PLOS ONE*, *17*(2), e0264022. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0264022>

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