

## Belgian Chiropractors Petition for Official Recognition

Michel Fosse, DC, President of the Belgian Chiropractors' Union

Kingdom of Belgium: Royaume de Belgique -- Koninkrijk van België.

Government: Parliamentary (bicameral legislature) democracy under a constitutional monarch.

Political leaders: King Albert II; Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene.

Geography: Lies on NE border of France. Forty miles of its western border is on the North Sea; northern border is with the Netherlands, and its eastern boarder with Germany and Luxembourg. About the size of Maryland.

Capital & largest city: Brussels (960,324); other cities: Antwerp, Ghent, Charleroi, Liege, Bruges.

Monetary unit: Belgian franc.

Languages: Flemish (Dutch) 56%; French, 32%; German 11%.

Religion: Roman Catholic, 75%.

Everybody knows by now that for many years our Union fought hard to obtain a legal status as independent practitioners for chiropractors in Belgium.

To support our political action, we decided to launch a petition in favor of recognizing the chiropractic profession within the healing arts. The petition was signed by more than 210,000 people.

Given the success of this petition, we set up a press conference on February 14, 1995. This event was covered by all the major television networks, also by radio and print media. The reactions were very positive, and the television and radio programs had an enormous impact on the public. We had more than 50 articles in favor of chiropractic published in the different newspapers of the country.

This, of course, was a boost for the chiropractic profession, not only in the political sphere, but also in the public domain. It came at a time to help support our action at the parliamentary level.

Indeed, after a vote of the members of the Belgian Parliament, we were formally invited by the president of the Health and Environment Commission to present the case of the chiropractic profession before their group.

This official presentation was a success. They showed interest in our presentation, and we then answered the pertinent questions from the members of the commission. This event was historical, as for the first time in Belgium, officials were recognizing the existence of our profession.

Several meetings took place with the members of the Health Commission, and at the bureau of Health Minister Jacques Santkin. As a result, during the session of March 7, 1995, an official declaration in favor of chiropractic was made during the Health Commission's session. This declaration reads as follows:

"... the Belgian legislation should give chiropractic the status it has been granted in Europe, i.e., that of an independent medical discipline ...

It has to be given a status different from those of medical doctor and physiotherapist. Therefore practice of chiropractic cannot be classified in the application field of the proposal of law No 1520/1, which intends to regulate physiotherapy, but must be the object of a specific derogation within the exercise of healing art to be inserted in Royal decree No. 78 of November 10, 1967."

We were very proud to have finally obtained the Belgian government's commitment in the person of the health minister to enact legislation for chiropractic in the near future in our country. These formal statements were officially published in the report of the Health and Environment Commission of the Belgian Parliament on March 10, 1995.

After having received the green light from the Health Minister to get chiropractic legislation, we must now start with the most important step, which is to finalize the project of law. All of this, of course, has to be qualified a great success and a reward for all the work done by the Union over the last 30 years.

We are convinced that this represents an enormous step forward for chiropractic in Belgium, and that this will also help the development of an official status for the profession in other countries in Europe.

*Michel Fosse, DC*  
*President, Belgian Chiropractors' Union*

*Union Belge des Chiropractors*  
*Ave. Ferdaucilaan 30*  
*1020 Bruxelles, Belgique*  
*T/Fax: 32 (0) 9 221 76 58*

NOVEMBER 1995