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CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS IN EUROPEAN PSYCHIATRY GUIDANCE

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Europe can hardly be considered as homogeneous. There are gross historical, climatological, cultural, developmental, religious, political and economic differences that render generalizations inappropriate and European "globalization" a mission impossible (and, by and large, undesirable).

Psychiatry is no exception to the above and in the historical evolution of our discipline, psychiatric practice has varied. Because this evolution has followed a different course and has occurred at a different pace in the various parts of Europe, the present situation reflects all these developmental stages, thus rendering homogeneity questionable.

In spite of these differences, however, there is a degree of consensus regarding the basic requirements for the practice of our discipline and the desired competencies of its practitioners. The development of a common language through the modern classification systems, the organizations of specialist psychiatrists (e.g. the UEMS) the WPA and the European Psychiatric Associations have played a useful role in the harmonization of psychiatric practices and are expected to play a more useful role in the future.

In conclusion, what is required (and what can be realistically achieved) is consensus on some basic clinical, research, administrative and teaching requirements, in association with agreement on the basic ethical principles of our profession and, basically, the beneficence and non maleficence principles. European Psychiatry Guidance should involve these basic requirements that can be achieved by all European countries.