

Letter to European Health Committee

The Board of the European Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (EASAPS) represents 16 out of 18 national European Societies of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery and another 12 societies focusing on Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. During the last presidential retreat meetings, in 2022 and 2023 many plastic surgeons expressed deep worries on the multitude of commercial activities advertising teaching courses of widely varying quality in aesthetic plastic surgery procedures. These courses, workshops and weekend events are open not only to board certified plastic surgeons, but to every physician (and even to non-doctors sometimes). Organizations behind many of these events are often not even medical doctors and rarely plastic surgeons but in advertisements they offer diplomas and certificates of expert knowledge in the field of aesthetic plastic surgery.

This is misleading for European patients and the public seeking expert help. A standardized, established education in aesthetic plastic surgery training does not exist in the European community and expert knowledge will never be obtained in weekend seminars without having adequate baseline education, training, and experience in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery is a technical specialty with at least 5 years of training in university centers and recognized centers for teaching by national health care ministries. Young colleagues learn the core principles of plastic surgery techniques and tissues physiology and healing, safe methods on how to minimize risks for patients with right indications, to understand patients' expectations, to handle different tissues of the human body as well as to treat potential complications with advanced plastic surgical methods. Aesthetic Plastic Surgery is an **integrated part** of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and cannot be seen as a separate surgical branch able to be performed by those without specialist training. Residents in Plastic Surgery receive a variable amount of teaching in Aesthetic Plastic Surgery during their training, but **NO** other surgical specialty includes the full curriculum and scope of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery in their training program.

Plastic Surgeons are in our opinion best qualified to perform and teach Aesthetic Plastic Surgery Procedures and we are working on a coherent training program specifically for this field.

The Board of EASAPS invites the European Health Committee to critically consider the drawbacks and risks for European patients when physicians without adequate education in reconstructive or aesthetic plastic surgery undertake aesthetic procedures after weekend courses. We strongly put forward our worries and concerns for patient safety in the field of aesthetic plastic surgery within the European community.

The Board recommends reviewing the education in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and to formulate a new European Standard for being accredited as Aesthetic Plastic Surgeon. This specific training should be offered to young plastic surgeons as a supplement to their residency in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. Whilst some other specialties may have expertise in specific areas within their core specialization*, only plastic surgery intrinsically trains and educates comprehensively in aesthetics.

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*Specialties that offer specific anatomically based training within their scope include facial aesthetic surgery within otolaryngology and maxillofacial surgery, oculoplastic surgery within ophthalmology, skin-based aesthetics within dermatology, breast surgery within general surgery

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