



European Biotechnology

ISSN 2364-2351 | A 60711 | BIOCOM.

Life Sciences and
Industry **Magazine**

Autumn Edition 2020 | Volume 19 | 20 €

Interview

Rainer Krüger, European Cannabis Association, explains how to establish product and process standards for medicinal cannabis.



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“The COVID-19 impact was not all bad”

MEDICAL CANNABIS Last year, the European Cannabis Association was launched as industry interest group, but then the novel coronavirus pandemic changed everything. European Biotechnology spoke with Rainer Krüger, one of the ECA founders, how the virus changed the schedule and strategy to establish a science-based regulation for medicinal cannabis.

EuroBiotech Why is there a period of ten months between the announcement of the European Cannabis Association and the active start?

Krüger The ECA and its founding team were also slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic after the founding phase last December. We felt that it would now be more reasonable to wait and see what happens. As a result, the envisaged timetable has not been met.

That is why we are now starting with this time lag.

EuroBiotech How do you see the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ECA?

Krüger Apart from the time lag, I see more positive than negative influences. More concretely, we detected suboptimal processes in the pandemic due to missing data, lack of know-how and er-

rors within the communication. We have understood worldwide that we need scientific results. We need more data and experts who can derive important information and processes from the data. These are exactly the aspects that led us, among others, to found the European Cannabis Association last year and with the ECA we would like to proactively tackle these aspects and clearly improve them.

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EuroBiotech_How do you see the influence on the medical cannabis industry?

Krüger_The medicinal cannabis industry is also affected compared to other industries, but only in some sub-sectors. The big change caused by the pandemic was the market adjustment that was already expected. This has now happened much earlier.

EuroBiotech_Do you also see opportunities to positively influence the economic situation through the ECA?

Krüger_Yes absolutely! In the area of standardisation of compliance and business processes, we believe that we will be able to work out clear optimisation proposals that could facilitate various economic processes.

EuroBiotech_How extensively would you like to support state institutions as an independent association in the harmonisation of legal requirements?

Krüger_We see ourselves first and foremost as a trade association that places a high focus on scientific findings and compliance. Wherever we believe that we have developed real solutions for the harmonisation of requirements and procedures, we would also make these available to government institutions as an independent organisation, or we would be pleased if we could develop these together in a cooperation yet to be defined.

EuroBiotech_What changes do you want to actively tackle with the association and its members?



RAINER KRÜGER, (42) co-founder of the European Cannabis Association, founded his first consulting firm in 2009. Josteit & Krüger Consulting GmbH (J&K Consulting) emerged from the former JHP Consulting GmbH, in which he held various positions since 2005. Since 2013, Krüger has been the sole managing partner of J&K Consulting GmbH, and in the following years, he founded Krüger Verwaltungsgesellschaft mbH & Co KG and J&K Technology GmbH, which he runs as a managing partner.

Krüger_First and foremost, we want to work with experts from the following areas: science, technology and compliance to define concrete product and process standards and to transfer these to the economy as best practice guidelines.

EuroBiotech_Where do you see the greatest potential for change in the medicinal cannabis market in Europe and the rest of the world?

Krüger_I see a clear shift in the production of prescription drugs up to the development and later production of finished drugs. I see a clear change with the acceptance of GMP compliance requirements and their implementation. I see more qualitative oriented projects than quantitative ones.

EuroBiotech_What developments are already apparent today?

Krüger_It was understood that the development of new dosage forms and new therapeutic approaches with cannabinoid drugs from highly automated plants can only ensure economic success in the long term. The tons of biomass produced by "First Mover" projects and now uselessly stored are a clear reason for this, in my opinion, very positive development.

EuroBiotech_How do you ensure that the work of the ECA is perceived as a real advisor for business and politics?

Krüger_By trying to transfer our findings, which were developed by real experts, into projects and thus prove their effectiveness. We will then publish the results.

EuroBiotech_How do you as a founder and as a management consultant see the possible potentials?

Krüger_I see great and also pioneering potential in the field of pharmaceutical research and in the bio-economy. Germany can play a central role in Europe and the world here.

EuroBiotech_And what changes will result?

Krüger_I think we will see fewer large projects/large-scale plants, but rather small, modular, scalable plants with a high level of product and process understanding. We will tend to see fully automated plants with a high degree of digitalisation rather than approaches to implementing projects where labour costs are low.

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