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## Foreword: VAS Short Presentation

*VAS–European Independent Foundation in Angiology/Vascular Medicine* is a scientific non-profit organization that has been active for over 30 years. It was the first to promote and strengthen European education in angiology/vascular medicine (used synonymously in Europe) and to advocate for its formal recognition as a medical specialty. This initiative was driven by the need to ensure qualified care for all patients and to enable effective and sustainable prevention strategies at all levels.

VAS operates independently of economic interests, upholding independent research and education as fundamental ethical principles.

As education is the cornerstone of its mission, VAS integrates high-quality training, research, clinical practice, and public awareness, while emphasizing the social responsibility of science to help improve the lives of patients and the broader population, both in Europe and globally.

VAS has also worked intensively to raise awareness of vascular diseases and their prevention, formulating proposals to improve public health policy in this field through international collaboration, with equity as a guiding value.

Over the years, VAS has launched ambitious projects and established stable international networks on major vascular diseases. It has initiated European and international joint campaigns that unite diverse scientific and clinical expertise in loyal and lasting collaboration. Its consistent activity and collaborations for awareness of vascular diseases is highlighted by the European Vascular Month (March).

VAS also supports patient engagement and health literacy, strengthening the efforts of its patient network.

Recognized by the *World Health Organization* as an *Accredited Non-State Actor (NSA) Partner*, VAS aligns closely with WHO's goals and programs.

Founded in 1991 in Milan, Italy, as a *European Working Group* on Medical Angiology (EWMA), VAS later became *VAS-Vascular-Independent Research and Education-European Organization* (an association), and more recently evolved into the scientific foundation *VAS-European Independent Foundation in Angiology/Vascular Medicine* ([www.vas-int.net](http://www.vas-int.net)). International stable collaborations and partnerships with Universities and Societies are defined in the International Consortium.

After years of advocacy, in 2007 VAS succeeded in securing recognition of angiology/vascular medicine as a specialist area by the UEMS and subsequently supported the establishment and development of the *UEMS Division of Angiology/Vascular Medicine*. It has also promoted the creation of a

*CESMA-UEMS specialty examination*, contributing to the foundation of and becoming member of the *European Board of Examination in Angiology/Vascular Medicine (EBEAVM)*.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UEMS and VAS was signed in 2018, highlighting their ongoing collaboration in education and accreditation.

VAS's educational activities, coordinated by the *VAS Education Committee*, are implemented through the *VAS International Academy of Vascular Medicine*, which ensures the high quality of its European education and training programs. The Academy brings together an international Faculty of university professors, clinicians and researchers, along with *Reference Center of Excellence* for hands-on training, hosted in leading institutions specializing in angiology/vascular medicine or specific subfields.

Key educational activities include the modular VAS European Master in *Angiology/Vascular Medicine*, shorter courses in different fields, the *VAS Book*, now in its thoroughly revised second edition, the *International Atlas of Clinical Cases*, innovative series of webinars, collaborative Summer schools, and more. The educational offer is continuously evolving and expanding—also through collaborations—to address the majority of training and educational needs in vascular medicine.

VAS confers personal recognition of professional quality through the *European Fellowship of Excellence in Angiology/Vascular Medicine (EFE-VAS)* for those who meet specific criteria. Postgraduate students engaged in research and/or clinical practice may receive the *VAS European In-Training Fellowship (ETF-VAS)*.

In addition, VAS honors outstanding contributions with prestigious Honorary Awards, such as: the *Prof. Gustav Born VAS International Honorary Award for Research in Vascular Medicine* (endorsed by the William Harvey Institute of London and the William Harvey Foundation), and the *Prof. Klaus Breddin VAS International Honorary Award for Education in Vascular Medicine*, which recognize lifelong excellence.

More recently, honorary *International Young Joint Awards* have been created to support young investigators and clinicians in the field of vascular medicine, involving ten leading European and international organizations with the VAS coordination.

VAS also organizes two annual academic events:

- The Winter Web Live *European Angiology Days—International Vascular Medicine Yearly Academic Conference*
- The Spring In-Person *VAS Laboratory for Vascular Medicine—Annual Update on European and International Projects*

These events connect the latest scientific and clinical updates with concrete initiatives aimed at improving healthcare effectiveness and benefits, while addressing the existing gaps between the needs and realities faced by patients, populations, researchers, clinicians, and healthcare workers in the field of vascular medicine.

VAS cooperates with a wide range of scientific organizations at the European, global, and national levels, through stable partnerships aimed at achieving meaningful and impactful results by bringing together diverse energies and ideas.

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