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**TATTOOING IN TATTOO PARLORS AND BY BACK STAGE OPERATORS, PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES, THE PROFESSIONAL TATTOOIST'S VIEW, FRANCE****Tin-Tin<sup>1</sup>**

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Tattoo artist since 1984, Tin-Tin is the president of the SNAT (Syndicat National des Artistes Tatoueurs – Union of French Tattoo Artists), which he founded in 2003. In the mid 1980s there were about twenty tattoo artists in France, but the numbers have risen considerably since then. In *Tatouage Magazine's* first issue in 1997, they counted over 300 shops in the country. Today, over 3000 people work as full time tattoo artists, and there may even be 10 000 working illegally. In 2008, health regulations were established to regulate the profession, finally recognized by the State. A 21 hour hygiene training course is now required, as well as establishing ones business in accordance with the law, and a verification of the customer's health history prior to the tattoo is mandatory. Learning the profession of tattooing is traditionally either self-taught or done during an apprenticeship with a tattoo « master » and even sometimes both. Self-proclaimed 'schools' or 'learning centers' do exist, but the SNAT choses to not endorse such courses, which are rare and poorly supervised (often by crooks). The main goal of the SNAT is to bring tattoo professionals together for the defense and recognition of tattoo art in France, as well as the recognition of tattooists as professionals artists by the state and tax services. The SNAT has also established a Health Charter, which served as a model for the public health services until the 2008 regulations were established. Since 2010, the members of the SNAT are committed to respect the Charter, requiring them to not only comply with the law, but also to the artistic and creative approach to their work. Today, the SNAT has more than 1 100 members, with over 1 000 tattoo artists and other professionals (convention organizers, equipment suppliers and manufacturers), doctors and other health professionals, tattoo journalists and other benefactors (tattooed or not). Despite our previous work and collaboration with public authorities, the French Health Ministry issued regulations banning a list of substances in tattoo inks in March 2013 with no apparent grounds, as the population of tattooed people have not presented harmful symptoms in any considerable numbers. This ban goes against certain European regulations and may put the French tattooists in a difficult situation. A working group of doctors and providers are trying to negotiate with the Health Ministry to define new rules on the basis of studies and updated data.