

The History of the European Regional Organisation of the Fédération Dentaire Internationale (ERO-FDI)

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ERO Vision Statement

ERO is a Federation of Dental Organisations representing all European countries.

ERO Mission Statements

- **To promote the concept of Dentistry as an independent profession based on freedom in choice between patients and dentists,**
- **To support the member organisations in providing the best possible oral and general health to the patients,**
- **To promote and support European/national health policies on an ethical and professional basis,**
- **To work under the visions and missions of FDI trying to influence the work of FDI.**

Objectives

1. To develop policies, reports and resolutions for submission to the FDI.
2. To co-operate with the various FDI agencies in Europe with regard to the promotion of ERO-objectives.
3. To appoint amongst the members of the Board a regional candidate to the Council of the FDI.
4. To communicate and co-operate with other dental organisations in Europe.
5. To encourage cooperation amongst the national dental associations and national committees of the region in the fields of research, education, practice, and public health (both dental and general) for improving national policies relating to health issues.
6. To represent and promote the interests of dentists in professional, political and health issues.
7. To promote activities in member associations based on scientific advancements.
8. To promote the concept of dentistry as an independent profession based on freedom of choice in the relationship between dentist and patient.
9. To support and promote national health policies by formulating common principles and proposals to be adopted in each country.
10. To exchange information on developments in the field of professional and health politics in the member countries.
11. To underline in particular the concern of the profession about dental health, policy and professional issues in member countries.

The beginnings

The beginnings of ERO date back to the fifties, to 1955 when **A Special Commission for European Cooperation** was established as response to the request of some European member associations of the Fédération Dentaire Internationale (FDI) to have a common body to defend their interests and views and to foster their cooperation and links. This Commission took up its activities in 1956 and started its work in particular in matters of Social Security and illegal Dental Practice.

In 1958, this Commission was renamed in **Regional Commission for Europe** and its activities were orientated primarily towards the development of the necessary conditions of a common health policy of the member countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the coordination of the dental curricula of the six member countries of this time. However, difficulties concerning dental studies in Italy led to the establishment of a Dental Liaison Committee (DLC) charged in particular with the negotiations with the EEC authorities in Brussels in this respect and the development of the Dental Directives of the EEC.

In 1962, a permanent Secretariat of this Regional Commission was established in Germany (Cologne), at the headquarters of the most important member association of the region at that time, the „Bundesverband der Deutschen Zahnärzte“(German Dental Association). Its successor association, the „Bundeszahnärztekammer e.V.“ (the English denomination ‚German Dental Association’ was kept) still runs and finances this Secretariat in a very large extent which is now the headquarters of ERO and called nowadays ERO-General Secretariat.

Thanks to this permanent Secretariat the activities of the Commission could be intensified and the cooperation between the member associations could be deepened by stressing mutual information about new national developments. The DLC also continued its efforts in this respect at EEC level. In both bodies mostly the same delegations were active.

In 1964, the General Assembly of FDI adopted a resolution to found a Regional Organisation within FDI. Thus, on 30/31 January, 1965, the **Regional Organisation for Europe of the FDI**, later renamed in **European Regional Organisation of the FDI (ERO)** was established. It was the first regional organisation of the FDI and thus served as model for the other

regional organisation to be created later in Latin-America, the Asian-Pacific Region and more recently in Africa and North-America.

In 1965 – thus in its first official year -, ERO had 12 member associations. This number continually increased; as first and unique non-European country Israel was admitted in 1966 and with the opening of Europe towards the East in 1989 most of the former Communist countries also joined ERO.

Development and recent past

The political change in Europe and the fall of the Iron Curtain had also a great impact on ERO. Dental associations of Central Europe and of the Baltic states applied for membership in ERO and the European dental family grew quickly. These new member associations asked for help in establishing their own dental care systems, their new organisational structures within their national medical associations or as independent chambers/associations. They also asked for help in adjusting and modifying their curricula, training and examinations in the national dental schools.

Thus, ERO created an **expert pool** for those countries, i.e. experts for specific professional topics could be asked to visit these countries to give there their special advice. Furthermore, some ERO associations of the “old Europe” gave their direct assistance within a mutual partnership or within the framework of specific cooperation agreements.

ERO sticks to its mission of being a forum for information and experience exchange and a means for distributing papers on these topics as well as of giving support to the new countries in their negotiations with public authorities.

As sign of the importance of the new members within ERO and the growing together of the West and the former East, a delegate from a Central European country, from the Czech Republic, was elected Secretary General in 1997. Furthermore, the main meetings were held now also in cities of Central Europe.

In the first years after their confirmation of membership and due to their specific difficult economic situation, the new member associations paid a special fixed fee. Gradually and

according to their financial solidness, they were then assessed similar to the other member associations.

A drastic and far-reaching **reform** was completed in **1998** which had been prepared by a working group on the ERO-Constitution and which led to the adoption of a **new Constitution** which was closer to the FDI-Statutes than the former one. The most significant constitutional innovation was the establishment of a **Board of five members: President, President-elect** (identical to the FDI), **Secretary General and two Board members** (in particular responsible for the working groups). Secretary General and Board members were re-eligible in their functions. This new enlarged Board was elected in 1998.

The next elections took place in 2001. The President-elect took over the presidency and all other Board members were new in their functions. This Board saw its mission in a team work in all aspects concerning ERO. A **first modification of the Constitution** was made, in particular with reference to the representation and the voting in the ERO-plenary session, and a **vision statement** was adopted.

Gouvernance, policies and activities

Before 1998, the stakeholders of ERO formed its **Executive**, which was composed by 3 officers – **President, Vice-president and Secretary General** -. It developed a Constitution following the FDI-Statutes and a Standing Order for the routine work and the running of meetings. This Constitution was modified and adjusted several times according to general constitutional developments until the adoption of a complete new Constitution in 1998 when also the Standing Order was replaced by Rules of Procedure.

Before 1998, ERO had a **regular membership** for associations being members of FDI or national committees. In 1998, further memberships were admitted, the **associate membership**, also following the FDI Statutes, for FDI members with small financial resources and the **affiliate membership** for organisations with a field of activities related to dental and health matters - both latter membership categories without voting right and a fixed fee.

According to its Constitution, ERO holds at least one plenary session per year in one of the member countries, a second plenary session or an open forum is organised in connection with

the FDI World Dental Congress. A plenary session has two parts: 1. the routine business meeting and a part with a topic of professional or scientific interest. Until 1998, this last part was called 'Technical Discussion' and focussed on a theme of general dental or scientific interest with different papers submitted by well-known lecturers. Then, this technical discussion became the 'Open Forum' which concentrates on topical professional, organisational or political issues.

ERO is financed only by fees of the member associations. A budget is prepared annually and the effective expenses are assessed to the member associations on the basis of the number of their members plus a fixed basis fee. A new calculation key will soon be introduced also in accordance with the FDI-Statutes.

ERO publishes presidential letters (former circular letters) per year in the three official languages: **English, French, German**. ERO has also a individual **website** within the FDI internet site.

The Executive of ERO made always endeavours to fulfil the objectives of this European Organisation, i.e. to serve as forum for the member associations for the exchange of information and experience in the field of professional politics and national health politics, to defend the interests of the profession European-wide and also at the international level, to spread the FDI policies within its member countries and to foster the relations to other health organisations. Within these efforts ERO represented the FDI at the social and health committees of the Council of Europe and also had an observer at the sessions of the European Parliament. At present, however FDI delegates its own representatives.

Since 1982 and at the request of many member countries, ERO and in particular its working groups developed **resolutions and principles on topical issues** of national and European interest and concern. These statements are meant to serve as background and supportive papers for member associations and countries in potential controversies and negotiations with national health and governmental authorities, in particular they are of help for Central and Eastern European countries in their endeavours to reform their dental care systems.

Due to the manifold and great variety of topics of general interest, it was considered necessary to establish **working groups** to study in detail specific matters and to report to the plenum at

the meetings. Some of these working groups were joint ones together with DLC for topics of imminent concern of both European organisations and most of them submitted statements as result of their inquiries and endeavours. These working groups are dissolved after the completion of their mission. For certain specific items special councillors are nominated instead of a working group.

In the early Ninetieth the dental company 'Reckitt & Colman' submitted the offer to ERO to establish a **“European Prize of Dental Research”** and to act as its sponsor. Thus, an agreement was signed to create this award for a not yet published scientific paper on a specific dental topic. The amount for the prizewinner was DM 10.000. A jury of dental scientists evaluated the papers received. In 1994 and then in 1996 this Reckitt & Colman-Prize was awarded at the relevant main meetings.

Present situation

In **2004**, ERO counts **37 member countries** . ERO experiences at the moment a difficult period. This is due to the existence of the two European dental organisations: ERO and DLC. In the past, ERO had more and other members than DLC, at present and due to the extension of the EU to the East there are not many members in Europe which do not belong to the DLC. The representatives continue to be mostly the same in both bodies and often there is some double work.

DLC is the priority body for professional European dental politics with its impacts on national policy and its cross-border perspectives. For ERO it is now imperative to find a new enlarged field of activity different from the one covered by DLC. As ERO can be a creative body, there are indeed subjects which can be dealt with in depth by ERO. Primarily, ERO should continue to strive to be the **essential link and means of information for the new states and to give support to those which need assistance.**

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