

Report of the ERO working group „Relations between dental practitioners and universities“

During the report period 2021-2022 our working group has had 6 on-line meetings to summarize the last project (Interprofessional education and collaborative practice) and to initiate a new Project:

„The transition from a dental student to a practitioner - is there anything missing?“

The rationale for the current Project is that currently, the migration of dentists between countries, both EU and Non-EU, is more and more common. In these countries, there are differences in dental education among higher educational institutions, e.g., different duration of dental curriculum and amount of clinical undergraduate training with patients. Many different dental curricula have been introduced in recent years and graduates from different universities do not have an equal starting point, which might lead to different preparedness of dental graduates to become self-reliant dental practitioners.

This questionnaire's aim was to understand the National Dental Associations' perception about the need for immediate vocational training of dental graduates i.e., internship in dentistry, to enable them to start a self-reliant dental practice. Questionnaire was distributed by ERO office to member associations in March, 2022. By now we have received 25 full answers from 23 countries.

Initial results of the study.

Length of the dental curriculum varies from 300 to 360 ECTS, 60 ECTS per year during 5 years - 48%; 5,5 years; 6 years - 36%; other - 16% with 5000-9500 hours total. Clinical practical training with patients in dentistry starts for the students during 3rd study year - 56%; 4th study year - 32%. In Italy students start with patients during the 5th study year. 1-year vocational training has been introduced in Belgium, Poland and Portugal. Students are allowed to be employed by dental offices and treat patients, during their undergraduate university enrolment in 4 countries. In 20 countries it is not legal. Minimum requirements for obtaining practical skills are established in 88% of countries. Average perception of practical skills of dental graduates has been evaluated 3,72 by 5-point Likert scale. In 56% countries the graduating dentist can start at once self-reliant practice. 68 % of NDA-s find that the professional skills of dental graduates should be improved before starting practicing. Internship has been introduced in three countries and obligation to work under supervision in 5 countries. In the majority of countries neither national or private health care sectors are ready to provide the necessary framework to introduce immediate vocational training for dental graduates.

Mare Saag
Head of the working group