

## Summary of national reports – Prague 2012

*Dear Colleagues,*

once again I have a pleasure to provide you with a short summary of the national reports submitted by the ERO Member Organizations prior to this Plenary Session.

As I have so often underlined in the past, national reports are an important source of information about the situation of our profession in Europe.

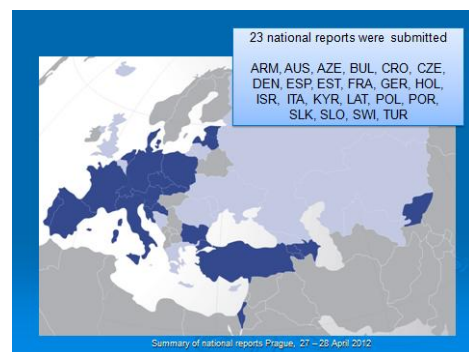
The information from the reports can really be of help - not only for the ERO as a whole, but also for particular national associations which often face similar problems and could benefit from learning how others deal with the given matter.

Therefore I am once again encouraging and asking all of the Member Organizations to submit their national reports on regular basis – even a short document indicating the most important developments or concerns.

The ERO Secretariat received 23 national reports from 22 countries which served as the basis for this presentation.

As in the past, all the submitted reports may be found on the ERO website.

In my presentation I will indicate only the selected information that drew my attention or related to matters raised by more countries.



As regards the changes in the organisation of ERO Member associations, firstly I would like congratulate and wish successful terms of office to **the newly elected or re-elected** Presidents and Members of the Boards of the organizations in: Armenia, Austria, Denmark, France, Israel and Slovakia.

As regards other interesting **developments within the member associations:**

- the Croatian Dental Chamber registers not only dental practitioners, but since 2010 also dental technicians, and since this year dental assistants;
- Bulgarian Dental Association operates a Fund for Support of Members with Health Problems – this is an important field of activity for our organizations – although sometimes we do not pay enough attention to it, but I know that many associations have a well developed social assistance programmes for their members who are in need in terms of financial or health situation.



Similarly as last year, **many organizations indicate the problem related to the actions that are aimed at increasing the scope of professional rights of the dental auxiliary professions.** Dental technicians and dental hygienists in some countries, often supported by authorities, are trying to obtain the right of independent practice, including treatment of the patients, without supervision by the dentist.

Dental associations are commonly against it and take various actions, arguing that only fully qualified dental practitioners are in a position to provide safe treatment and indicating that shifting more tasks to auxiliary professions is based on purely financial grounds and does pose a threat to patient safety.

This issue was especially raised in the Austrian and Spanish reports.

On the other hand, our professions obviously also have to cooperate for mutual benefits.

In Poland we recently started to cooperate with organizations of dental technicians in order to gain some certainty about the interpretation of the new law on medical devices. This law became a source of many misunderstandings in the part regarding custom-made devices manufactured by dental laboratories.

The issue of too many dentists was often indicated. It seems to be a big problem in Armenia and Spain, where there are **too many dental schools** and too many students are admitted each year. This in turn leads to unemployment.

Our Armenian colleagues ask us for help in determining the number of dentists in other European countries which could help them in their discussions with the authorities.

The large number of dentists in the country is also indicated in the Estonian and Swiss reports. In Estonia the number of dentists has doubled in the last 20 years, in Switzerland a massive increase of practicing dentists has been noted following adoption by Switzerland the EU laws on free movement of persons.

### **Legislation**

In Poland, new laws that affect the organization of the Polish healthcare system and the exercise of the dental profession entered into force.

There were particular problems with the new law on reimbursement of medicines and medical devices. The law set a number of administrative and financial responsibilities on medical professionals who issue prescriptions for products subject to reimbursement within the frame of the general health insurance in Poland.

From the very beginning of the legislative procedure the medical doctors were strongly against this kind of regulation, indicating that these kind of responsibilities are on the one hand going far beyond the scope of medical activities and on the other hand impose liabilities based on issues that are out of their control. In fact, the new law shifted on doctors a large part of administrative tasks related to the provision of reimbursed products. Dental practitioners, who are also covered by these



regulations (even though to a lesser degree) in their majority supported physicians and joined their actions.

Support and solidarity for our actions expressed by numerous Colleagues from other countries, including a letter to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland sent by the ERO President, was very important and contributed to the development of the situation.

In Turkey there is a new law which prohibits dentists who are employed in public dental facilities to also exercise the profession in the private sector, e.g. to have an individual practice where they work after the employment hours.

Investments of third parties (non dental professionals) in dental sector continue to be a concern. Last year we had it indicated in the Italian report of AIO. Now the Israeli colleagues report their struggle against third parties setting up dental facilities, that are likely to provide treatment without observing the dental profession's ethical standards.

Coming back to the already signalled issue regarding the actions that are aimed at increasing the scope of professional rights of the dental auxiliary professions we can note that in France there was a complaint filed by the National Union of prostheses manufacturers against dental profession. The Competition Authority rejected this complaint.

Similar case is indicated in the Spanish report.

Another issue that was brought before the French Competition Authority regarded alleged anti competitive practice of dental organizations in the field of tooth whitening. The complaint however was withdrawn.

The problem of tooth whitening offered by unqualified service providers was also an issue in Portugal.

Fortunately, at least within the European Union, the problem of **tooth whitening procedures** carried out by non-qualified persons should soon be overcome, as in a few EU Member States are obliged to transpose the amendments to the cosmetics directive. We should of course monitor a proper transposition of the EU regulations. And this can be also a good example how to proceed in this field for colleagues from the countries that are not in the EU.

Another important legal development may be found in the Italian report, namely a decision recently rendered by the European Court of Justice regarding **fees for organizations representing artists and phonographic producers** for background music played in dental practices. I must stress that this judgement was well received by our profession in other EU countries.



The Czech colleagues report that a series of changes were introduced that relate to the licence to provide healthcare services, changes in terminology and new duties for dentists.

As regards the **dental education**:

We can note the extension of dental studies in the Netherland to **6 years**.

In Germany new dental licence regulation are expected. There is an intention to update the dental curriculum, to adapt it **more closely to the medical curriculum**. Also it is planned to reduce the number of the intake of students.

In Poland the 1-year postgraduate internship is cancelled for those students who will commence their dental studies in 2012 (that means that the last internship will be organized in 2017). The profession, including dental students, was against this proposal, as it regards the internship as a very important and useful vocational training for graduates that enables them to get valuable experience before commencing independent practice. It is clear that the reason of the proposed cancellation of internship was of a financial nature – it was intended to bring savings for the state budget (the interns are paid their salaries from the state budget).

Our opinion about the advantages of the postgraduate internship seem to be shared by the Spanish colleagues who are trying to introduce vocational training as a requirement before the award of the right to independent dental practice.

The French Dental Association informs of the increase of the number of dental specialties in France.

Similar plans are in Spain.

On the other hand, in Germany majority of dentists is not in favour of additional dental specialties.

The Italian colleagues report success in preventing the opening in Italy of a branch of a private university from Portugal.

This information is in line with the issue of excessive number of dental schools reported in the Armenian and Spanish reports. Of course this is also linked with a proper supervision over the quality of training delivered by these institutions.

The national reports confirm growing involvement of dental professional organizations in organizing continuing dental education and in encouraging dentists to take part in this training even if – in some countries - it is not yet a legal obligation.



As regards **the insurance systems** not much has been reported – it seems that most of us are still facing the same problems related to limited funds on dentistry, limited scope of services covered by the social and health insurances, and unsatisfying procedures of contracting services by public payers.

### Anniversaries:

Congratulations to the Czech Dental Chamber (20th Anniversary), Estonian Dental Association (90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary) and Swiss Dental Association (125th Anniversary) which celebrated their anniversaries last year – we wish you success in the coming years and we are happy that you are with us.

### Conferences, events

In Poland the Dental Practitioners' Committee of the Supreme Chamber has organized a conference "Stomatology 2011" devoted to the current state of dental healthcare in Poland, which is often in the shadow of other fields of the healthcare system. The aim of the conference was to underline the importance of oral health and its connection with the general health. The speakers were not only dental professors but also physicians (cardiologist and diabetologist). The conference had a good attendance by representatives of mass media and health administration and was followed by many press publications.

The Danish Dental Association in cooperation with the Danish Diabetes Association launched a major, nationwide campaign to identify and track undiagnosed diabetics.

The Portuguese Dental Association defined the official scientific nomenclature for the dental profession in order to harmonize the clinical and professional language among dental professionals and other stakeholders.

As the map shows currently ERO gathers dental organizations from a large part of the world, going far beyond the geographical Europe. This makes ERO an important organization and allows us to learn from each other.



*Anna Lella*  
[annalella@poczta.fm](mailto:annalella@poczta.fm)

[www.erodental.org](http://www.erodental.org)