

Regional European Organisation of the FDI

National Report

Country: Netherlands

Association: NMT

Venue: Nieuwegein

Year: 2012

Please classify your national report by the following subjects:

I. *Changes in the association and its organisation.*
Not applicable.

II. *Trends and developments:*
- *in professional politics;* none

- *in health politics;*

Healthcare costs continue to rise in the Netherlands. The government's policy focuses on cost control. It has opted for more competition, market mechanisms and less regulation in healthcare, with the aim of lowering costs by improving efficiency.

A free-pricing experiment in dental healthcare started on 1 January 2012, when the market was deregulated. The objective of the experiment is to improve choices and transparency for patients, in addition to innovation and cost control. The initial experiment period is three years, with a possible two-year extension. A number of conditions have been imposed to ensure the experiment's success:

- i. Dentists must provide insight into the quality of the care they offer. Indicators and patient surveys have been developed to that end;
- ii. Price transparency and information about the dental healthcare practice are mandatory, enabling patients to make an informed choice among dental healthcare providers.

The NMT organised information meetings to prepare dentists for these changes; it also developed practical tools for 1) determining prices, and 2) informing patients. The NMT is also organising publicity campaigns.

The NMT has also introduced the 'dental healthcare monitor', which offers support for dentists should they encounter difficulties. Dentists themselves play a monitoring role in this respect. The objective is high-quality dental healthcare.

Two reports issued by the public health council are important for both the NMT and dentists:

- One of the reports discusses coordinating healthcare objectives: the Minister wants care to be more object oriented
- The other concerns local care: the Minister wants accessible care available close to home

Lastly, the NMT is emphatically targeting the preventative role played by dentists and their teams. Calling broad attention to prevention is an important challenge for the entire team.

- *in educational politics;*

Students are entering their sixth year of dentistry studies for the first time in 2012. This sixth year has been added to the academic curriculum. New dentistry components include student apprenticeships in dental practices and/or dental institutions. The Minister of Health has decided not to expand the dentistry study capacity in 2012. The NMT is exploring the options for establishing a guidelines institute, one of which options is joining in with existing international initiatives.

- *in the insurance system (including public health insurance and private insurance schemes);*

Within the context of the free-pricing experiment, dentists are free to determine their own prices. This has resulted in discussions with private insurers regarding the level of coverage in the various types of insurance.

III. *Further information (activities, concerns).*

Much attention is being devoted by the media to the free-pricing experiment in dental care. Sentiments are similar to those seen in Scandinavian countries when similar legislation took effect there. The NMT intends to exchange information and experiences with its sibling organisations in other countries.

In light of the ageing expected in the occupational group and the recent reconfirmation of the dentistry capacity at Dutch universities, the NMT is studying the options for informing foreign dentists about the possibility of a career in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands is also struggling with the consequences of the global financial crisis. Concerns to consider include further interventions in public healthcare insurance, including in the area of dental care.