



# **Is liberal independent dental practice in danger?**

## **Assessing forms of dental practice in the European Regional Organization (ERO) zone of the FDI World Dental Federation**

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# Introduction

1. Trend towards increasingly **new forms of dental practice** in Europe

**Basic elements: free choice of therapy and dentist**

2. Some new forms pose the risk of undermining **principles of liberal independent self-responsible exercise** of the profession

# Dentists can choose to work...(e.g.)

- Practice sharing comprising two or more partners with equal rights
- Practice clinics consisting of an office in which a reduced percentage of the professionals are partners and the others are employees
- Dental public limited companies in which the owners are professionals
- Practices based on franchise models
- Practices in cooperation with external companies in which both practice modalities the investor is not a dentist
- Practice networks consisting of two or more dental offices in which the owners are dentist and investor (ambulatory healthcare centers)

# Reasons

- **Shift in internal markets within the EU due to legal changes** (Terpan 2015; Peracek et al. 2016; Ostwald & Klingenberger 2016)
- **Policy frameworks in the national member states** (Cowles 2002)
- **Increased financial and economic challenges in establishing a practice** (Klingenberger & Kohler 2016)
- **New generation of dentists with different perceptions of professional practice** (Dhima et al. 2012, Shin et al. 2015)
- **Social life and compatibility of family and career** (Buykx 2010, Campbell 2012, Kinouani et al. 2016)

## Aim or purpose

General Framework of **organization, training and professional form of dentists** in the ERO-zone considering current trends and changes in oral health care in Europe

# Materials and Methods

- ERO-Working Group Liberal Dental Practice
- Questionnaire to analyze the different parameters of the ERO member states considering modern forms of dental profession

# Results

- A total of 33 ERO countries/member national dental associations (33/37; 89.19%)
- Different types of dental practice
- Most common form of dental practice:  
**independent self-reliant dental practice (>50%)**
- Organization of dentists and regulations for dental practice
- Number of dental schools and graduates, course duration and gender ratio among dental students



# Results

1. 353 universities of the ERO countries surveyed, 16619 dentists per year
2. Study time in ~2/3 of the countries is 5 years with 5000 hours, in ~1/3 of the countries 6 years with 5500 hours
3. Female – male student relationship in the ERO is 63%-37%
4. Rules about ambulatory healthcare centers do not exist in almost all ERO countries
5. ERO zone: mean of 1570 inhabitants per dentist



# Conclusions

- The Charter of the Liberal Professions (CED et al., 2013) must be respected
- Dentists are required to exercise the profession with special regard based on ethical principles
- Optimal oral health care must be carried out without influence of interests of third parties

☛ This is a crucial aspect to counteract commercialims of the liberal dental profession.

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