



## Discussion Paper on Ageing Population

The European Regional Organization of the FDI, which represents more than 540.000 dentists Europe wide, aims to promote high standards of oral healthcare, dentistry and effective patient-safety centered professional practice.

As a result of the fact that throughout the European Region life expectancy and the percentage of the total population aged over 65 increases the dental profession faces new challenges. Compared with past decades a higher percentage of the elderly patients still have their natural tooth/dentition. However, due to the fact that the elderly are more vulnerable and more dependent on care, a higher risk occurs of periodontal diseases and periapical infections. Such diseases and infections may have a severe impact on the general and mental health of the elderly patients.

ERO recognizes that in some of the ERO-member countries good initiatives and programs are in place to meet this challenge. In other countries however such initiatives and programs lack. At least there are differences in how to approach Ageing Population as is shown in the results of a survey from the ERO working group 'ageing population' amongst 27 ERO- member countries.

The European Regional Organization of the FDI wishes to emphasize that an appropriate oral health policy towards the phenomenon of Ageing Population should be based on acknowledging that oral health is an integral part of general health. Based on this perspective three areas of responsibility can be recognized: State or government, training and clinical.

- Governments should stimulate oral health as an integral part of general health. From a perspective of prevention governments should make elderly people aware of the importance of a healthy mouth as part of their general well-being, inform them about prevention, improve accessibility of dental care and remove any existing financial barriers.
- Gerodontology should become a structural and an unequivocal part of the dental curriculum at universities. Also, gerodontology training for nursing staff or auxiliaries and tools should be developed.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration structures between doctors, dentists and pharmacists should be developed aimed at exchange of knowledge, experiences and exchange of - and accessibility to information on elderly patients.