

## **European Trade Press Conference for IDS 2017**

**6 December 2016, Cologne**

### **Speaking notes**

#### **1. Introduction**

Thank you very much for the invitation. I am the President of the Council of European Dentists (CED). I was elected in November last year by the CED General Meeting for a term of three years. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you the current issues of concern for the European dentists.

#### **2. Presentation of the CED**

The CED represents over 340.000 practising dentists from 30 European countries; our members are dental associations and dental chambers with regulatory competences, meaning that our positions are informed both by interests of the dentists (many of whom work as small businesses) and of the regulators acting in the public interest.

The CED was established more than 50 years ago, in 1961, to provide expert advice to the European Commission on matters related to dentistry, and this relationship remains central to our work. For this reason we are partners and members in different Joint Actions and Groups led by the Commission.

Our key objectives are to safeguard public health, to promote high standards of oral healthcare and dentistry and effective patient-safety centred professional practice. The CED's core activities are financed exclusively from membership fees. We are registered in the Joint Transparency Register.

Currently there are a lot of topics on the agenda of the CED. I would like to share with you the topics we are working on and which vary from the future of the dental profession to the debate triggered off by the European Commission on the future of regulated professions, concerns about initiatives in European standardization of healthcare services, new EU Regulation on Mercury laying down the future of dental amalgam and the new Regulation on Medical Devices which has been adopted recently.

#### **3. Future of dental profession**

Dental profession is facing some serious challenges. Driven by financial interests other players are trying to enter the booming market of healthcare services. The European Commission has the deregulation of professional rules at the top of its agenda. These developments can change the face of dentistry radically. We need to come up with our vision of dentistry in the future,

defending independence and patients' interests. The CED is dedicating more resources to look into this issue and is preparing a risk assessment on the current challenges that dentistry faces today from the point of view of the professionals.

#### **4. Evaluation of regulated professions/deregulation by the European Commission**

The CED continues to see the initiatives from the European Commission on this file with great concern. We see a shift in the way the Commission is working and on how economic instruments will now have an impact on national health systems.

- 4.1. First, the **Single Market Strategy** saying that the Commission will issue periodic guidance identifying concrete reform needs to individual Member States to improve access to and the exercise of regulated professions at national level and across the EU. These reforms are being addressed in the context of the **European Semester process and country specific recommendation**. Our impression is that the recommendations related to health mainly address the need to ensure cost-effectiveness and sustainability of health systems (fiscal dimension), whereas issues of access to, effectiveness and high quality services do not receive deserved attention.
- 4.2. Second, the Commission published a roadmap on **Guidance on reforms needs for Member States in regulation of professions** and an inception impact assessment for a **future proposal for a Directive on proportionality test**.

Professional regulation is regarded by the European Commission as an obstacle to the internal market.

In addition, there are several infringement procedures regarding tariffs and fees of liberal professions – in Germany Architects and Engineers. A recent ruling of the European Court of Justice considers that fixed prices set in Germany for prescription-only medicinal products are contrary to the EU law. The Court did not acknowledge that overriding reasons of public health justify such fixed prices.

The CED believes that a merely economic approach is not appropriate. Professional regulation guarantees a certain level of quality of services for the benefit of the patients.

#### **5. Dental hygienists**

There is a discussion on future of dental hygienists at European level. Member States were asked to review the qualification requirements imposed on regulated professions and the scope of reserved activities (process from 2014 - 2016). The objective is to remove unjustified regulatory barriers and to simplify access to regulated professions. In some countries these reforms are already in place (Spain, Portugal, Poland and Slovenia). Healthcare professions were in the second cluster of sectors and the profession of dental hygienists was selected to be

discussed in further detail at EU level. The same for Opticians, Psychologists and related professions and Physiotherapists. **In the Commission's report Member States were invited to reflect on whether they should:**

- 5.1. Offer more autonomy to dental hygienists (abolish the requirement for dentist referral to see a dental hygienists when applicable or allow dental hygienists direct access to patients);
- 5.2. Enlarge the scope of activities reserved to dental hygienists if proved to be cost-effective and safe for the patient.
- 5.3. Reduce or increase training requirements – this should be seen in conjunction with the level of autonomy of dental hygienists and to guarantee the quality of the service provided.
- 5.4. Ease potential barriers to mobility by: i) improving clarity and transparency of regulatory measures to professionals, ii) aligning training requirements with the scope of reserved activities and the level of responsibilities of dental hygienists, and iii) granting dental hygienists partial access, especially for dental hygienists moving to a country which does not regulate the profession of dental hygienist or the activities in dental hygiene belong to the remit of another dental profession.**

The Evaluation meeting last year showed great differences between EU-Member States.

## **6. Standardisation of healthcare services**

We see that the **political environment is to develop more standards**, since they are seen as key elements for innovation and progress in the Single Market, for European competitiveness, jobs and growth. These initiatives come from the European Standardisation Committee (CEN).

CEN continues to push for further standards in healthcare delivery (besides the standard on aesthetic surgery services). They have created a **Healthcare Services Focus Group** and developed a **European strategy on standardisation of healthcare services** to find a common framework for any new proposals in this field. The CED looks with great concern at the developments in this area and cooperates closely with its partners to make sure that European standardization initiatives do not harm the delivery of healthcare, quality of healthcare services and high level of patient safety.

## **7. Amalgam**

In February the European Commission published a proposal for the implementation of UN-convention of Minamata to reduce the use of mercury including dental amalgam – mandatory separators and encapsulate amalgam.

During the legislative process the European Parliament favored a phase-out of dental amalgam by the end of 2022, which goes beyond the requirements of Minamata convention.

Currently, the EU institutions are in negotiation discussions and the CED hopes for a positive outcome. The CED believes that amalgam should be kept in the toolbox given that the alternative filling materials present also some problems and concerns.

## **8. Medical devices**

The CED considers that a high level of health and patient safety protection is required when it comes to medical devices. This can be guaranteed with a strong, safe and effective regulatory framework.

In May this year, the European Parliament and the EU Council agreed on a final text of the new Medical Devices Regulation.

One issue remains of concern to the CED : **classification of nanomaterials**. The current provision on nanomaterials is quite ambiguous and the text of the Regulation does not provide any explanation for further interpretation.

As you can see there are many development at European level which CED is following closely and taking all possible efforts to make the voice of the European dentists heard.

Thank you for your attention.

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