

THE CED POSITION ON DENTAL PROFESSIONS IN ESCO

The CED raises concern about the classification of dental occupations in the European Classification of Skills/Competences, Occupations and Qualifications (ESCO). Reviewing the first full version of ESCO, the CED noted that some definitions are not the same than those preliminary consulted with the stakeholders, particularly the occupation of “Dental assistants and therapists” and “Medical and Dental Prosthetic Technicians”.

The CED resolution about “The Dental Team relationship with patients” lists the dental professions that must be considered for the classification of dental occupations at the European level. The professions and definitions that were proposed by CED to ESCO are the ones that are in line with the CED resolution. These professions are well-known throughout Europe and can be clearly identified.

The CED believes it can cause a confusion as to the objective and status of the individual activities to have “Dental assistants and therapists” and “Medical and Dental Prosthetic Technicians” occupations listed in ESCO.

Dental assistants are a part of the dental team. Dental therapists, even if they exist in a very few countries could be considered within this group of professionals. These members of the dental team can undertake work in accordance with each team member’s defined level of competence, but for reasons of patient safety should only do so after a dentist has provided a diagnosis and treatment plan and delegated the work to team members as appropriate. Therefore, this is in line with what is the definition of “Dental Chair Assistant”.

Dental Prosthetic Technicians manufacture dental custom-made devices like bridges, crowns, dentures and appliances under the supervision of dental practitioners following their directions and specifications. Therefore, this is in line with what is the definition of “Dental Technicians”.

The ESCO classification was structured similarly to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) managed by the International Labour Organization (ILO). However, in the ISCO classification the inclusion of some tasks assigned for ‘Dental assistants and therapist’ and ‘Dental Prosthetic Technicians’ is applicable in an international context where lack of health professionals is a reality, but should not be replicated at EU level without taking into account regional dimension.

It should be stressed that members of the dental team can perform their task only in cooperation with a dentist. It is imperative to ensure the adequate delivery of oral healthcare and appropriate relationship with patients.

By introducing skills and competencies for these professions, the European Commission (EC) does not adequately reflect the need to respect the Members States' competencies to determine regulation of healthcare professionals.

At the EU level, the Directive 2005/36/EC amended by Directive 2013/55/EU serves as the sole reference for dentists' qualification and practice. It is important that any initiative at the EU level ensures compliance with the Directive. The CED believes that multitude of initiatives can contribute to incoherence and misinterpretation of legal facts.

If the purpose is to follow the classification of ISCO, we would propose to maintain our definition and change the following occupations in ESCO:

- Dentists to Dentists and Dental Practitioners
- Dental Technicians to Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetic Technicians
- Dental Chair Assistant to Dental Chair Assistants and Therapists

This would allow removing from ESCO the profession of "Dental assistants and therapists". In addition, it would be possible to change "Medical and Dental Prosthetic Technicians" to "Medical Prosthetic Technicians" and "Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetic Technicians".

The CED calls on the EU institutions, to revise the dental occupations in ESCO, taking into account the potential consequences the current version can have on patient safety and quality of care.