UK ranks low in dentist per capita

New Eurostat figures add to concerns over shortages after Brexit

By DTI

LUXEMBOURG: Despite some growth in the overall dental workforce within the last five years, the UK still has one of the lowest ratios of dentists per capita in Europe, only ahead of four other countries, latest figures released by Eurostat in Luxembourg indicate. Fewer dentists per 100,000 inhabitants were only found in the Netherlands, Slovakia, Malta and Poland, according to the EU statistical office.

The ratio of dentists per capita in the UK falls significantly short compared with Germany, Sweden and Portugal, which have almost 60 per cent more dentists per 100,000 people. Leading the list of the 28 EU member states with over 256 dentists per 100,000 in 2014 was Greece, followed by Bulgaria and Lithuania, which also saw the highest increase of all countries surveyed, with 21 more dentists compared with the number in 2009.

With almost 35,000 active dentists, the UK currently has the fourth-largest dental workforce in the EU after Italy, France and Germany.

The figures have been made available at a time when there is increased concern of shortages in UK dental care owing to the large number of EU professionals feared to leave the UK after the Brexit. In a statement released in February, Dr Steve Williams, the Clinical Services Director of mydentist, one of Britain’s largest dental chains, warned that the withdrawal of EU dental professionals from the UK would be devastating and could add to an already understaffed workforce, particularly in rural areas. Currently, almost one-fifth of dentists registered with the General Dental Council are from the EU.

“Dentistry is one of the areas where the withdrawal of EU professionals will have the biggest impact and it is vital for the NHS to ensure its ability to provide high-quality, value-for-money dental services that are convenient and easy-to-use,” Bupa UK Managing Director David Hynam added. “Bupa and Oasis have a shared commitment to putting patients first, and we look forward to welcoming the Oasis team into the Bupa family.”

Prior to the acquisition, Bupa operated 40 clinics in Britain. Worldwide, the company employs over 84,000 people in its health care operations.

Established in 1996, Oasis currently serves over two million patients.