Dental leaders in the United Kingdom cautious in Brexit vote aftermath

By DTI

LONDON, UK: Dental stakeholders throughout the UK have reacted cautiously to the results of the referendum that saw the majority of people in Britain last week decide the country should leave the European Union. In a statement on the vote, the British Dental Association (BDA) declared that it would offer support and advice to its members about the full implications of the withdrawal process once its terms had been decided on.

“At this early stage we do not know what shape Brexit will take, but it could certainly mean significant changes for both dental regulation and the dental workforce,” BDA chair Mick Armstrong commented.

The BDA did not take a position in the referendum. While no official statistics are available for the number of dentists in the UK who voted to remain or leave, a poll conducted by Dental Tribune online in March indicated that a slight majority of dental professionals would have preferred the country to stay in the EU.

UK dentistry is directly affected by EU legislation in a number of areas, including movement of labour. Last year alone saw more than 7,000 dentists from EU member countries seeking registration with the General Dental Council (GDC). Their future status remains uncertain after the decision—though unaffected in the interim—as does that of British dentists currently working in another EU member country.

Other areas that could be affected by the vote are health and safety legislation, as well as the import of dental equipment and materials.

In a statement on its website, the GDC said: “The Prime Minister made clear that the formal process for implementing the referendum result would be taken forward under a new leader, and that won’t happen immediately. We will communicate any changes as and when the position develops.”

“It’s far too soon to predict the long-term impact on our business, if any, from the vote in the UK,” a representative of Henry Schein, the UK’s and the world’s largest dental industry competitor, such as Henry Schein and Dentsply Sirona.

As a consequence of the outcome of the referendum, David Cameron announced that he would step down as Prime Minister. Former home secretary Theresa May has been meanwhile appointed as his successor.

Negotiations about a new agreement with the EU are expected to begin once a new government has put in place. Under Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon, Britain will then have two years to negotiate a new agreement with the EU.