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 on 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 of leaving the EU is postponed until the end of 2019, so that will be two years to negotiate a new agreement with the EU.

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For any, from the vote in the UK, a representative of Henry Schein, the UK’s and the world’s largest provider of dental products and services, told Dental Tribune: “Our focus remains serving as the trusted adviser to our customers, and no geopolitical event will change that.”

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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.

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.

EDITORIAL NOTE: As a global company with deep roots in Europe, we at Dental Tribune International have always been supportive of the European idea. Despite the uncertainty surrounding Friday’s decision by the British people, the UK market will remain a vital part of our worldwide portfolio. We will, however, continue to investigate and report on the leaving process and provide dental professionals with sound advice and information on how to cope successfully with any changes to come.

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