



EUROPEAN
FEDERATION OF
THE ASSOCIATIONS
OF DIETITIANS

Executive Summary

Registration, Regulation, Professional Practice and Life Long Learning

National Dietetic Association status in 2014

Professional Practice & Education Committees of EFAD

July 2015

In the first half of 2014 the Professional Practice Committee (PPC) and Education and Life Long Learning Committee (ELLLC) developed a survey with the objective to establish a data base of the current status of Registration, Regulation and Life Long Learning in EFAD members countries. Delegates from the National Dietetic Association (NDA) members of EFAD were contacted for an interview.¹ This executive summary contains the most important results and recommendations drawn from the full report of this survey.²

1. Introduction: importance of survey

People face a problem that many self-proclaimed 'professionals' who have no recognised qualification in 'nutrition and dietetics', provide advice on nutrition. The public does not usually have the ability to know who to believe for safe and trustworthy information.

For the strength and credibility of the dietetic profession, it is important that dietitians are competent and practice safely and responsibly. This needs to be visible for the public, patients, health insurance and other healthcare professionals. A professional register and a regulation of the profession provides assurance of reliable dietitians.

The dietitian is an up-to-date specialist in nutrition and behaviour in relation to (the prevention of) disease and health and capable of taking the unique situation and needs of patients, consumers or organisations into account. What can National Dietetic

¹ The report is based on interviews of delegates from the following 17 countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Latvia, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. This represents a response rate of about 50%.

² Douglas P, Trostler N, Bolleers C, Köpcke U, Van Ael K and de Looy A (2015) Registration, Regulation, Professional Practice and Life Long Learning - National Dietetic Association status in 2014. Professional Practice Committee & Education and Life Long Learning Committee, European Federation of Associations of Dietitians (EFAD).

In this full report more in-depth information, including tables and full set of recommendations can be found.

Associations do to make sure dietitian are perceived as reliable and responsible professionals?

A few key components of safe and competent dietetic practitioners are:

- ✚ to have a recognised qualification in dietetics and
- ✚ to continue to develop as a professional (Life Long Learning (LLL)/Continuous Professional Development (CPD)).

This can be made visible through:

- ✚ Title protection
- ✚ A register, searchable by the public, which shows a dietitian:
 - has a recognised dietetic education qualification
 - continuously works on professional development (LLL/CPD)

To ensure that dietitians are seen as trustworthy recognised professionals EFAD has developed [Dietetic Competences and their Performance Indicators](#), a [LLL strategy](#) and a [LLL guide and toolkit](#). Knowing the current status on registration, regulation and LLL/CPD is essential in developing further policy in the goal of EFAD to ensure that dietitians are seen as trustworthy recognised professionals. To get to know the current status this survey was carried out.

2. Results

2.1 Title

In 12 of the 17 countries (71%) the professional title “dietitian” is protected by legislative, regulatory or administrative providers. To gain this title 7 countries (41%) require only graduation from a recognised higher education institution, while 6 countries (35%) require graduation from an HEI, an approved professional practice and a national exam.

2.2 Register

Ten countries (59%) have a register for dietitians. The register is maintained by a variety of agencies. In 9 out of 13 countries (69%) anyone in the country can search the register.

2.3 Competence

Five countries require a demonstration of competence to stay on the register of which 2 request a submission of undertaken courses and 2 a submission of a portfolio. Eight countries do not re-evaluate competence to remain on the register. In 3 countries members’ LLL/CPD is evaluated periodically.

It seems that EFAD’s standards and competencies are used by 9 (69%) countries.

2.4 Remedial or disciplinary measurements

In 90 % of the countries it is regulated to discipline dietitians who do not maintain their credentials, act unethically and unlawfully. In 4 out of 13 countries a dietitian that fails to show competence, which is tested by either the NDA or a regulatory body, will lose her license.

3. Conclusion

The survey revealed a wide range of responses to several key issues concerning the protection of title, registration and regulation. Since responses were received from only about 50% of EFAD members no hard conclusions can be drawn. The data however suggests that across Europe the establishment of robust National Registration and Regulation systems for dietitians is still far off.

Much must be done by NDAs and their individual members, in collaboration with the relevant national authority, to establish a registry, registry maintenance, regulations and lifelong learning.

Based on the results from this survey the committees have drawn recommendations for EFAD and the NDAs. Since there is a wide variety in the current status of NDAs, these recommendations depend on the current NDA status.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Recommendations for NDAs to ensure safe and competent dietitians

For NDAs to establish and develop registration

- ✚ Familiarize with the laws and regulations that control paramedical professions
- ✚ Identify the process required to obtain registration and develop an action strategy to accomplish it

For NDAs to maintain registration

- ✚ Identify the process required to maintain registration and the corresponding regulation.
- ✚ Develop the minimum set of requirements to maintain registration.
- ✚ Develop and strengthen a LLL strategy.
- ✚ Identify the process by which a dietitian on the registry can provide proof of LLL/CPD and current competence.
- ✚ Develop a searchable data base of registered dietitians.

If NDAs do not have a legal protection of the title dietitian, NDAs can decide to work towards title protection, provided that a good registration and regulation system is established.

4.2 Recommendations for EFAD to support the NDAs

- ✚ Develop a toolkit that would provide a road-map and examples of good practice.
- ✚ Develop a minimum set of requirements/competencies for maintaining registration at entry and advanced level practice.

5. Definitions

The following terms are mentioned in the executive summary and have been used in the interview.

<i>Lifelong learning</i>	<p>According to the European Commission lifelong learning (LLL) is defined as ‘all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.’</p> <p>LLL is also called Continuous Professional Development (CPD)</p>
<i>Portfolio</i>	A portfolio is a collection of all material important to your continuing professional development.
<i>Registration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Meet standards of proficiency (education + practical training + competence) <input type="checkbox"/> Unique registration number (indicating safe and qualified practitioner) <input type="checkbox"/> Terms of registration can be breached resulting in loss of registration status. <input type="checkbox"/> Protected title of dietitian <input type="checkbox"/> Searchable data base for registered dietitian
<i>Title protected</i>	The title is protected by legal body, regulatory body etc. so that no one else who does not have the recognised training can use this title