

## **ENT specialists within EU member states and associated countries**

**Hans-Werner Mollenhauer**

Europe has an overall figure of approximately 27,000 ENT specialists. A slightly decreasing tendency can be detected here, which is due to the more precise nature of current documenting techniques and to the fact that persons over 65 years of age are no longer included and only the practising “workforce” is recorded. However, this figure does take account of the 3,772 ENT specialists in associated countries such as Norway, Switzerland, Croatia, Serbia etc.

### **The United Kingdom has the lowest ratio of ENT specialists**

The highest ratio of ENT specialists to inhabitants is to be found in Greece (1:10,000), the lowest in the UK (1:103,000) and Ireland (1:84,000). Up to now it has not been possible to give a satisfactory answer to the questions of whether these countries have a lower incidence of ENT disorders and whether any deficits in diagnostics and treatment arise. However, with a population of 60 million the UK has a total of only 585 ENT specialists and an additional 261 SAS doctors (staff associate specialists). The latter are doctors coming from Commonwealth countries such as Pakistan and India who have never completed specialist training. Their number is not inconsiderable when seen against the overall figure of ENT specialists. It should be noted that the SAS doctors work in a specialist capacity and thus increase the number of doctors providing specialist medical care. However, this situation also indicates gaps in the nationwide coverage supplied by ENT specialists as the SAS doctors would otherwise have no sphere of work. Admittedly the British themselves are not satisfied with this state of affairs.

In this context it is interesting to look at the small country of Eritrea in the Horn of Africa. It has only two meanwhile elderly ENT specialists for 5 million inhabitants.

### **Considerable differences in the EU**

In the other European countries the proportion of ENT specialists to the population is quite evenly balanced, albeit with a high number of inhabitants per ENT specialist in Malta (1:67,000), in the Netherlands (1:38,000) and in Rumania (1:31,000). The average value throughout the EU (all 27 member states) was 1:18,000. The range is considerable. For example Malta has a population of 400,000 and 6 ENT specialists (plus 3 audiologists) whereas Luxembourg, with the same number of inhabitants, has 30 ENT specialists.

### **Reliable figures sometimes difficult to obtain**

In the last few years there has been no real increase in the number of ENT specialists within the EU. The figures are based on the stipulation that only doctors below 65 years of age should be counted as it is this group which makes up the “workforce”. It is not assured that the figures submitted by the delegates comply with this stipulation and therefore there are still some uncertainties. Indeed it can be extremely difficult for some country delegates to obtain precise figures, either because institutions such as a central office for national statistics or national medical councils do not exist or because the so-called “authorities” are not willing to

provide valid data. Many EU member states, especially those joining in 2004, have difficulties in this regard.

### **Figures from Germany**

Although the number of foreign doctors working in Germany is documented, there are no records concerning how many of them are ENT specialists, for example in their own practice. And although the overall number of German doctors who have emigrated is a matter of record (3,065 in 2008) it is not known how many of these are ENT specialists. The reason for these gaps in the database is that the regional medical councils do not report the specialities practised by the foreign doctors or by the German doctors emigrating. There is also good reason to suspect that doctors who emigrate are counted both here and abroad because they are usually registered with the medical councils of both countries. 200 doctors were awarded a certificate of completion of training and therefore approved as ENT medical specialists in Germany in 2006 and 188 doctors in 2008.

The attached chart shows the current statistics for the EU, associated countries in Europe and selected non-European countries.

Dr. med. H.-W. Mollenhauer  
Union européenne des médecins spécialistes (UEMS)  
Chairman Manpower and Trainees Exchange Programme  
Am Kirchberg 12  
76889 Birkenhördt

## ENT specialists in the EU

Chart: Ratio of ENT specialists to population within the EU member states and some selected non-EU countries

	Inhabitants (in millions)	ENT specialists	ENT specialists / inhabitants	Training officers
<b>EU member states (from before 2004)</b>				
Austria	8.1	587	1:14 000	38
Belgium	10.6	637	1:17 000	
Denmark	5.5	320	1:17 000	24
Finland	5.3	320	1:17 000	
France	62.0	2300	1:27 000	
Germany	82.0	5170	1:16 000	
Greece	11.0	1130	1:10 000	
Italy	60.0	2606	1:23 000	
Ireland	4.2	50	1:84 000	
Luxembourg	0.48	30	1:16 000	
Netherlands	16.5	435	1:38 000	
Portugal	10.7	548	1:20 000	
Spain	47.0	2740	1:17 000	
Sweden	9.0	597	1:15 000	70
United Kingdom	60.0	585 +261 SAS*=846	1:103 000 1:71 000	
<b>Countries joining the EU in 2004</b>				
Cyprus	0.7	52	1:13 000	
Czech Republic	10.5	860	1:12 000	
Estonia	1.3	96	1:14 000	
Hungary	10.0	381	1:26 000	
Latvia**	2.3	183	1:13 000	
Lithuania	3.4	292	1:12 000	16
Malta	0.4	6	1:67 000	
Poland	38.5	1540	1:25 000	
Slovakia	5.4	465	1:12 000	
Slovenia	2.0	85	1:24 000	
<b>Countries joining the EU in 2007</b>				
Bulgaria**	7.7	535	1:14 000	
Rumania	22.0	700	1:31000	

Non-EU countries			
Croatia	4.4	160	1:28 000
Norway	4.8	294	1:16 000
Russia	142.4	5000	1:28 000
Switzerland	7.7	368	1:21 000
Turkey	70.7	2500	1:28 000
Serbian	8.0	450	1:18 000
Eritrea	4.5	2 (1)	1:2 250 000

\* SAS = Staff associate specialists, doctors predominantly from Pakistan and India who have not completed specialist training but who work as ENT doctors in the UK

\*\* The data for Bulgaria and Latvia are from 2007/2008