Advancing periodontal health together

A presidency focused on collaboration, innovation, and care

Prof. Mia Rakić has been appointed president of the European Federation of Periodontology (EFP), succeeding Prof. Spyros Vassilopoulos, with a focus on strengthening research collaboration and building stronger evidence base for periodontal health policy in Europe. As she begins her term as president, she reflects on the priorities shaping the federation's work in a rapidly changing world.



As you take on the role of EFP president, what will be your top priorities for the coming year?
We are living in an unpredictable world, which makes the responsibility of a large organisation like the EFP even greater. As a federation uniting national societies and professionals across Europe and beyond, we know that global events inevitably affect healthcare, education, and professional life.

The EFP has an ambitious strategic plan, and today's uncertainty requires flexibility. A clear example was Perio Master Clinic in Baku, where difficult circumstances just days before the congress created major challenges for the organising committee and the EFP board. Thanks to dedication, coordination, and responsible decision-making, the event was held successfully. This showed the EFP's strength, driven by excellence, determination, and solidarity. As EFP president, I sincerely thank the team and all attendees for their trust.

This experience highlighted the resilience of our community. Going forward, we will continue to monitor developments, adapt where needed, and support colleagues and healthcare professionals, especially in affected regions. The EFP does not take political positions; our role is to support the periodontal and wider healthcare community.

Recent developments in Spain have brought renewed attention to the recognition of periodontology as a specialty. How can the EFP support national societies where recognition is still evolving?
Recognition of periodontology as a specialty has long been a key priority for the EFP because it ultimately serves patients, colleagues, and healthcare systems.

However, the regulatory landscape in Europe is complex. Each country has its own legal and professional framework, alongside European regulations. While the EFP provides guidance, advocacy, and statements at the European level, much of the work must happen nationally.

Some countries already recognise periodontology as a specialty, and their experience can provide valuable support for others working toward recognition. Spain is currently seeing significant progress after many years of effort. The Spanish Society of Periodontology (SEPA) and other dental organisations have played a major role in advancing this process, and their experience may inspire similar efforts elsewhere.

Periodontal diseases remain highly prevalent yet under-recognised in health policy. How can the EFP elevate gum health on European and global health agendas?
Raising awareness of periodontal health has always been a core priority of the EFP. It is a complex task because it requires collaboration across many levels: within dentistry, with other healthcare professions, and with policymakers and public health authorities.

The federation addresses this through education, public awareness initiatives such as Gum Health Day, and collaboration with the medical community. Work-

shops with other medical societies help strengthen the links between dentistry and medicine.

Another key contribution is the development of scientific recommendations, guidelines, and consensus reports. These help organise the available evidence and make it easier for clinicians and policymakers to understand and apply it.

Ultimately, the message is simple but powerful: oral health has a direct impact on overall health. Preventing periodontal disease and ensuring appropriate treatment benefits patients, healthcare systems, and society. The key now is perseverance.

Collaboration is central to the EFP's work. How do you plan to deepen partnerships within the periodontal community and beyond?
My overall approach is to harness the full potential of our community.

When I first became involved in EFP leadership, one of my responsibilities was Gum Health Day, which included engaging younger generations. I strongly believe that young professionals will play a crucial role in the future of periodontology.

During my presidency, I would like to explore ways to involve them more directly in collaborations with medical societies. Younger professionals are often particularly effective at communicating complex information to diverse audiences, including healthcare professionals, policymakers, and patients.

They can also play an important role in prevention initiatives and public health outreach. This may not yet become a fully structured programme during my term, but it is an area I care deeply about.

In a rapidly evolving environment shaped by digital innovation and AI, how should the federation approach new technologies while safeguarding scientific rigour?
Digital technologies and artificial intelligence have enormous potential to improve many aspects of healthcare. However, the role of the EFP is to carefully assess both their opportunities and limitations.

Artificial intelligence can analyse large datasets and detect patterns with remarkable speed, which may be particularly useful in areas such as diagnostics, where multiple variables interact.

These technologies may also support diagnostic workflow, surgical planning and other clinical stages. But it is essential to understand the core principles of this approach and to recognise their limits. They should assist clinicians, scientists, and educators, not replace critical reasoning.

The final judgement must always remain with the clinician, researcher, or teacher. Educational initiatives, such as webinars and explanatory materials to help periodontal professionals understand how these technologies work and how to use them responsibly will be released by EFP in the coming months.

Environmental sustainability is becoming a priority in healthcare. What role can periodontology play in sustainable dentistry?
For me, the most sustainable approach in dentistry is very simple: preserving healthy natural teeth. Periodontology is, by definition, the most sustainable branch of dentistry as periodontists investing their knowledge and skills to preserving teeth over the long term. We should not forget this core principle of periodontology.

"During my presidency, I aim to strengthen the involvement of younger professionals in collaboration with medical societies. [...]"

Sustainable periodontology focuses on two main priorities: promoting good oral hygiene across the population and reinforcing the importance of preserving natural teeth within the dental community, exhausting every possible option before considering their replacement.

At the same time, good oral health contributes to better overall health, indirectly reducing the burden on healthcare systems.

As a young woman leading the EFP, what does leadership mean to you today?
I am proud to lead a federation that has long been committed to diversity and inclusion. The EFP actively promotes gender balance and encourages the involvement of younger generations across its activities, from workshops to major congresses such as EuroPerio and the Perio Master Clinic.

Personally, it is a great honour to serve as president. I am also the youngest president in the federation's history, which reflects the EFP's commitment to equal opportunities.

Thank you for your time!

Source: EFP

Background: © Sahara – stock.adobe.com