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Status of Fluoridation in
European Countries

Opponents of fluoridation continue to report the "banning" of fluoridation in foreign countries where no such action has been taken. The following paragraph appeared in an ad in a Boston paper and contains incorrect information.

In European countries, the High Court of Holland, and the Supreme Administrative Court of Sweden, have ruled that fluoridation in these countries is illegal. Fluoridation has also been officially banned in 12 other European countries; Austria, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, West Germany, and Yugoslavia.

Information refuting the allegation contained in the above-mentioned ad has been received from a number of these countries (Austria, Denmark, Italy, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, and West Germany) in response to a specific inquiry from the Boston regional office of the Environmental Protection Agency.

It may be of interest to note also that opponents of fluoridation are circulating statements both in the U.S. and foreign countries claiming fluoridation is being phased out in the U.S. This allegation is contrary to the facts. There are now more than 105,000,000 Americans receiving the protection of fluoridation.

As previously pointed out (Division of Dental Health Memo # PPB 52, February 1973) inaction of a foreign government should not be interpreted as "banning." Nor should political actions contrary to recommendations of health authorities be interpreted as confirmation of allegations of health hazards.

The World Health Organization adopted a resolution in support of fluoridation in 1969 and strengthened its endorsement in 1975. Among the nations frequently cited as banning fluoridation, the following supported the 1969 resolution: Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia. The 1975 resolution, recommending that the World Health Organization undertake a program which included the promotion of community water fluoridation, included Denmark, Finland, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and Yugoslavia among its sponsors.

The status of fluoridation in many of the countries cited in the Boston newspaper ad is summarized below.

AUSTRIA

Austria has never implemented fluoridation. Fluoride tablets are distributed to pregnant women, babies, young children, and school children. A few small groups are in opposition to the program. All the accusations have been tested and found invalid by the Ministry. One province has stopped the practice of fluoride tablet application. "However, this Ministry places value on the established implementation of fluoride tablets used in all other eight federal provinces."

Source: Letter from the Representative of
Austria Federal Ministry for Health
and Environment 1-19-77

In 1974, the Austrian Medical Association issued a statement indicating that the Austrian Federal Ministry for Health and the Environment was following the recommendations of the World Health Organization and that the Austrian Medical Association was of the opinion that the measures being taken by the Ministry merited the support of the medical professions of Austria. The statement went on to say:

"The Board of the Austrian Medical Association regards it as dangerous to arouse doubts in the population by means of scientifically unsound arguments and to oppose the fluoridation methods supported by the Chief Medical Officer as this will reduce the effectiveness of the proven preventive measures and thus prevent the next generation from growing up with healthy teeth."

Source: Statement by the Board of the
Austrian Medical Association in
Connection with Caries Prevention
Through Fluorides - 1974

The Government and the Austrian Dental Association are in favor of fluoridation.

Source: Federation Dentaire Internationale
(FDI) 1969

DENMARK

The National Health Board of Denmark is convinced that fluoridation is a good health measure. People living in areas which are naturally fluoridated, such as a region approximately 50 miles south of Copenhagen, have been found to have less cavities compared to the rest of the

population. No decision to add fluoride to water has been made yet. The sale of toothpaste containing fluoride has been approved since 1964.

Source: Letter from Danish Information
Office for the Consulate
General of Denmark 9-30-76

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY (WEST GERMANY)

"The statement 'Fluoridation is officially forbidden in West Germany' is without foundation....it is, on the contrary, only in exceptional cases that fluoridation is not allowed based on the law."

Source: Letter from the Federal
Minister for Youth, Family,
and Health, West Germany
November 1976

Effective 1 January 1975 a new law permits the "addition of fluorides to drinking water as a caries preventive measure." The law authorizes state governments to implement fluoridation providing certain conditions are met.

Source: FDI Newsletter
April 1975

FINLAND

Government is strongly in favor. One community in Finland serving 70,000 people is fluoridated. Two other communities approved fluoridation in 1974.

Source: Personal Communication with an
Assistant Prof. of the Dept. of
Dentistry, Univ. of Kuopio,
Finland 3-5-75

GREECE

In January 1974, Greece passed a law mandating fluoridation in all communities having a population over 10,000.

Source: Letter from President
Panhellenic Dental Association
to the World Health Organization
5-20-74

ITALY

No official fluoridation programs are being implemented in Italy. In November 1974, the Italian Senate passed a bill providing for the

prevention of tooth decay through compulsory administration of sodium fluoride tablets to all children from the ages of five to fourteen. The use of fluoride toothpaste is also being urged by more and more Italian specialists.

Source: Letter from Vice Director
Institute Italiano Di Cultura
New York, New York 10-25-76

THE NETHERLANDS

Fluoridation in the Netherlands was proceeding under a 1961 Water Supply Act. Opponents of fluoridation challenged the right of the Minister to authorize fluoridation under the Act, and in 1973 the High Court ruled that fluoridation was not covered by this specific Act.

Subsequently, the Public Health Minister prepared a national fluoridation bill to be presented to Parliament. The Minister was unsuccessful in his attempt to secure the passage of the bill in 1976.

Source: Personal communication with
Assistant Scientific Attache
Royal Netherlands Embassy
11-26-76

NORWAY

Up to the present time no legislation has been presented to, or voted on by the Norwegian National Assembly, and water fluoridation has so far not been practiced in this country.

A governmental committee report (1968) recommended fluoridation of the drinking water unanimously.

* * * *

The Directorate of Health in Norway recommends water fluoridation.

Source: Letter from The Health Services
of Norway 11-25-76

"...no political decision has been made to abandon fluoridation in Norway, and the Norwegian Dental Association supports fluoridation as a safe, effective, and efficient public health measure."

* * * *

Following is a chronology of events in Norway:

- 1959 - court decision that legislation would be needed to permit fluoridation
- 1968 - fluoridation unanimously recommended by a Government Committee with scientific competence relevant to fluoridation
- 1974 - Parliamentary Committee on Health and Social Services expressed the opinion that a more comprehensive review was needed before making a decision
- 1975 - Minister of Social Affairs told Parliament that effects of water fluoridation were adequately documented to permit fluoridation

Source: New Scientist 7-24-76, page 252,
Letter to the Editor from the
Health Services of Norway

SPAIN

"...I would like to state that fluoridation has not been banned in Spain but neither has it been started..." This letter went on to comment that the allegation appearing in an ad placed by opponents of fluoridation in a Boston newspaper claiming fluoridation was "officially banned" in Spain is false.

Source: Letter from Ministerio de la
Gobernacion, Spain 11-2-76

SWEDEN

"The Riksdag /Parliament/ resolution to repeal the Fluoridation Act, consequently is not based on any proposals presented by the Swedish Government or the National Board of Health and Welfare, but is entirely based on bills introduced by private members of the Riksdag. Nor do the bills rest on petitions or statements made by odontological or medical institutions or organizations. The resolution to repeal the Fluoridation Act is therefore to be regarded strictly as the result of general political considerations."

Source: Statement by The National
Board of Health and Welfare,
Sweden 2-9-72

In 1971, Swedish Parliament by a 137 to 126 vote, taken when 22 percent of the Parliament was absent, repealed its 1962 enabling law which allowed "fluorination for dental health purposes." The decision went against the majority report issued by Parliament's Social Insurance Committee.

Source: "Abolition of the Right of Local Swedish Authorities to Fluoridate Drinking Water," Elof D. Petterson, Journal of Public Health Dentistry, Fall 1972, pages 243-247.

"Parliament's decision was an unexpected victory for the anti-fluoridation lobby, because apart from the experiments in Norrköping fluorination has not been practiced in Sweden. A number of towns have shown interest, but none of them--as well as Norrköping-- have been able to fulfill the conditions laid down by the Government, such as rules relating the fluorine content and the application of medical and odontological surveys."

Source: Announcement of the Royal Ministry
for Foreign Affairs of Sweden
December 1971

SWITZERLAND

The statement about Switzerland having officially banned fluoridation is incorrect. The Swiss Food Law on the contrary says in its article 9: "The addition to foodstuffs of substances mentioned in al. 3b, prescribed by an authority for reasons of general hygiene or medico-prophylaxy such as the adjunction of iodine to salt, vitamins or trace-elements to certain foodstuffs etc. is within the competence of the cantonal health authorities who inform the Federal Office of Public Health about the measures taken."

Source: Letter from Deputy Director,
Federal Office of Public Health,
Switzerland 11-30-76

There is no prohibition of fluoridation. The cantonal authorities have the authority to order fluoridation. Currently, the Canton of Basel Town is fluoridating at 1.0 ppm.

Source: Letter from The Consul General
of Switzerland 10-1-76

YUGOSLAVIA

Water fluoridation is "statutory" in Serbia.

Source: European Organization for
the Promotion of Water
Fluoridation 1974