

Regional European Organisation of the FDI

National Report 2023 Germany

German Dental Association (Bundeszahnärztekammer e.V.) Berlin / Brussels

Changes in the association and its organization

No changes in the association or its organization occurred in 2023.

Trends and developments

- **Professional Politics:** There was no change in the area of professional law in 2023.
- There were two developments relevant to the dental profession in **national health policy** in 2023. First, the German Dental Association advised the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Germany on the future nutrition strategy. The German Dental Association was member of the working group on prevention. Second, the development of an "Expert Standard for Promoting Oral Health in Care" was successfully completed in 2023. Initiated by the German Network for Quality Development in Nursing, care experts developed in cooperation with the German Dental Association and other professional societies the expert standard for care professionals. The standard for "promoting oral health in care" covers the entire nursing area. It combines nursing and dental knowledge and makes it accessible for daily care practice. The aim is to improve the oral health of those in need of care.
- In **education policy** there were was one relevant development for the dental team. In October 2023, the BZÄK board decided to change the professional training for dental assistants to the advanced training qualification "Bachelor Professional in Dental Hygiene". With the additional offer of a Bachelor Professional DH, vocational training is strengthened compared to the offers of academic DH qualifications and the chamber qualification is adapted to the modern training landscape.
- In 2023, there were no changes in the **health insurance system** relevant to the dental profession.

Corporate dentistry

Investor-driven chains of dental practices are continued to be seen very critical by the German Dental Association and other dental organisations. The BZÄK observes persistent trend with concern; as companies and investors are currently not subject to the regulations of professional law that protects patients.

The German Dental Association considers it particularly problematic that capital investors hope for a high return from dental medical care centres, and the following worrying developments, already observable in other European countries, may therefore occur:

- A negative influence on the dentist's freedom of therapy
- Losses in the quality of the treatment
- Higher billing volume for patient treatments; more services are billed as in comparison groups.
- While at the same time dentists are paid a lower wage.

Possible solutions to the problems described above could be a change to the provisions of the Social Code V and/or a change in the Dentistry Act, which the German Dental Association intends to introduce. The amendment is intended to ensure that all forms of professional practice must be based on the dentist's own responsibility, independence and non-commercial activity. In addition, conditions must be created for legal persons under private law whose business purpose is the practice of dentistry, which guarantee the independence of the members of the profession also for this form of professional practice. This could be ensured, for example, by means of regulations on profit sharing, majorities of company shares and voting rights or chamber supervision.

Remuneration of dental services / Changes in fees

There were no changes in the remuneration of dental services or fees in 2023.

Information regarding promotion of the World Oral Health Day

The World Oral Health Day, as promoted by the FDI and its regional organizations, is not celebrated by the German Dental Association. The German national day on oral health has been established for nearly over 30 years and is celebrated on the 25th September each year. It is not possible to adapt the German Day of Dental Health to the 20th March, since the national day is planned and prepared well in advance with many actors (health insurance companies, municipalities, schools, regional dental associations...). Since the events in Germany are planned with a lead time of up to 24 months, the planning is already complete for 2025 and 2026.

Further information on activities

In 2023, the "European Day" (*Europatag*) was organized in Berlin. The prospects and challenges of the European Health Data Space (EHDS), as proposed by the European Commission, were debated at the event. In September 2023, the Managing Board of the BZÄK travelled to Strasbourg/France to discuss the phase-out of dental amalgam, digitalization in the healthcare system and other relevant topics for the dental profession with members of the European Parliament. Another example was the yearly general assembly of the Bundeszahnärztekammer. It took place in Berlin in November 2023.

Major concerns for the German Dental Association

- The adjustment of the **remuneration scheme** for dentists to Germany's current economic development continues to be of great importance for the German dentists.

- **Investor-driven dentistry** and the resulting dangers for the liberal profession as well as the hitherto inadequate supervision of investor-driven dental practices by the regional dental chambers is a major challenge for the German Dental Association.
- The **digitalization** of patient files and dental practices as well as the exchange of medical information continues to pose challenges for the dental profession, as many questions of data protection and liability have not yet been conclusively clarified on political level.

Discussion points for the ERO general assembly

- Reduction of consumption of free sugars (public health approach)
- Digitalization of dentistry, protection of sensitive (medical) data
- Better cooperation between different medical disciplines