

Bulgarian National Report for ERO FDI

Association: Bulgarian Dental Association (BgDA)

Year: 2010

I. The Association and its organisation

Bulgarian Dental Association (BgDA) was among the first dental professional organisations in Europe: it was founded on December 20th 1905, and for more than 40 years has been a powerful and authoritative representative of the interests of the profession.

However, the communist regime banned the medical and dental associations in 1947, and replaced them with what are now described as “obedient and toothless trade-unions”, uniting artificially the alleged interests of the so-called “health workers” – doctors and auxiliary staff together. The new centralised healthcare system transformed the doctors from independent specialists to salaried state employees, with no real responsibility and stimulus. Private practice was prohibited from 1971.

All this lasted until 1989, when the government regime crashed. The Bulgarian Dental Association was “resurrected” on March 11th 1990 in the city of Plovdiv, by a widely drawn national conference of Bulgarian dentists, which actually turned out to be the constituent assembly of the renewed organisation. The Association quickly gained popularity and new members, although membership was voluntary. Highly intensive activities were immediately undertaken in several directions: *reestablishment of private practice, cost evaluation of dental procedures, professional ethical standards, a defence of the profession, information and qualification of the members.*

This initial period is characterised by the co-existence of the old, discredited public system and the renewed private dental care, which was quickly gaining power and overtaking the modern standards. This co-existence raised some specific problems: *disloyal competition, price dumping, dual standards* etc.

In 1999 the *Law of the Professional Organisations of Physicians and Stomatologists* (Later: *Physicians in Dental Medicine*) established the new professional organisation: The Association of Stomatologists in Bulgaria (ASB). After the accession of Bulgaria in the EU, the Association regained the title ***Bulgarian Dental Association (BgDA)***.

The law entrusts to the Association functions, typical of the similar professional organisations in the democratic world:

- To negotiate and contract with the National Health Insurance Fund.
- To keep and update the register of the profession. Registering with the Association is a compulsory prerequisite for practising dental medicine in Bulgaria.
- To enforce the ethic principles of the profession and penalize their infringement.
- To inform and qualify its members.
- To defend its members, etc.

II. Trends and developments

1. *Professional politic*

The Constituent Congress adopted the Constitution of BgDA, which develops further the stipulations of the law in the spirit of the professional self-government.

The Constitution introduced the “functional field” principle in the central management of the Association, via the establishment of 7 Standing Working Committees (SWC), intended to perform its basic functions. Each Chairman of a SWC is being elected by the Congress, and is holding also the office of a Vice-President of the Association, which determines their high statute and responsibility.

The Constitution stipulates a territorial representation in the Managing Board by including in the Board representatives of all the 28 Regional Colleges of BgDA.

The Law of the Professional Organisations and the Constitution of BgDA constitute also the control bodies of the Association as independent commissions:

- The *Commission of Professional Ethics* is supervising the moral, ethical and deontological issues in practicing the dental profession.
- The *Control Commission* controls of the decisions of the Managing Board, as well as their implementation, in terms of their adherence to the law and the Constitution of BgDA.

Ethics

Ethical Code

Bulgarian dental practitioners are subject to the “*Code of professional ethics of the physicians in dental medicine in the Republic of Bulgaria*”, adopted by the Congress of BgDA, signed by the Minister of Health and published in the State Gazette.

The Code contains the duties of the physicians in dental medicine ensuing from the practicing of the dental profession. It reflects the moral principles and criteria of professional conduct of the members of the dental profession.

The Code contains regulations on:

- The duties of the members of the dental profession during practice;
- Promotion of the dental services;
- Relationships with the patients
- Patients’ referral
- Medical documentation and professional secrecy
- Payment of the dental services
- Qualification
- Infringements and penalties

The Code can be found on BgDA website – www.bzs.bg

Registration

The prerequisite for registration in Bulgaria is a primary degree in dental medicine. The registration of *dental practitioners* is administered by the Bulgarian Dental Association by means of its Regional Colleges. The annual fee for registration (2009) - € 77.

The registration of the *dental practices* as medical institutions is administered by the Ministry of Health by means of its regional bodies – the Regional Centres of Healthcare.

Data Protection

In 2002, two laws came into force: the *Law on Protection of Personal Data*, and the *Law on Protection of Classified Information*.

In 2006, the *Law on Consumer's Protection* was been adopted. These laws stipulate the use of personal and classified data.

Advertising

According to Bulgarian law, no commercial advertising is permitted in healthcare activities. Dental practitioners are permitted to promote their services in accordance to the law and the Ethical Code.

Insurance and professional indemnity

Professional indemnity insurance is mandatory according to the *Law of Health*, and the Regional Colleges of BgDA cover the insurance of their members.

Number of dentists in Bulgaria

Most dentists practice in general practice – although some also work in hospitals and dental faculties.

Number of BgDA members (2005): 7859.

Number of members BgDA (2008, preliminary data): approx. 8000.

In active practice – 7859.

Dentist to population ratio – 932.

Female dentist – 66%.

2. Health and social politics

Bulgarian Dental Association won a grant from World Bank for a project "Smile!" – an oral health prevention project for orphans in the towns in Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna.

BgDA organized two times a Month for Oral Health Prevention in Bulgaria with more than 1500 physicians in dental medicine volunteers.

In April 2009 the proposed by the Bulgarian Dental Association (BgDA) and Dr. Nikolai Sharkov a National Programme for Prevention of Oral Diseases in Children 0-18 in Republic of Bulgaria (NPPODC) was adopted by the Bulgarian Council of Ministers. The Programme comprises a national epidemiological survey of oral health which has not been conducted since the 1980s. Some other substantial parts of the NPPODC are: educational and motivating programmes and issuing educating materials for oral health, correct oral hygiene, diet etc.; control of the oral hygiene; pit and fissure sealants on the first permanent molars of 6-7 years old children; contemporary research of the levels of fluoride of in the drinking and mineral waters etc. The NPPODC is in progress. The Minister of Health appointed a National Consulting Council for the Programme with a chairman - Dr. N. Sharkov, a National

Coordinator of the Programme – Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maria Kukleva, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Dental Medicine, Plovdiv. Twenty eight (28) Regional Coordinators were elected from more than 60 candidates after a competition was announced. The minister of health purchased all the necessary instruments and materials for the epidemiological investigation, putting the pit and fissure sealants etc. The national epidemiological survey has to be done until November 2010 and putting the pit and fissure sealants has to start after the mid year 2010.

3. Educational politics

To enter a faculty of dental medicine of the university, a student has to have completed secondary school (usually at the age of 18). There is an entrance examination, which is similar to that of medical students. The undergraduate course lasts for 5.5 years. The three faculties of dental medicine are state.

The following shows the official number of students ordered by the Ministry of Education and Science:

Number of schools – 3
Student intake – 170
Number of graduates per year – 150
Percentage female students – 50%

Primary dental qualification

The primary degree in Bulgaria is Physician of Dental Medicine with a Master Degree.

Vocational Training

Dental graduates in Bulgaria are entitled to registration immediately upon graduation. There is no postgraduate vocational training. There is a 6 months mandatory pre-graduate practical training in the faculties of dental medicine.

Diplomas from other EU countries are recognised without the need for vocational training.

Quality assurance for the dental schools is provided by the Ministry of Education.

Language requirements

According to the *Law of Health*, the Ministry of Health shall assist EU citizens in acquiring the necessary knowledge of Bulgarian language and professional terminology.

Non-EU foreign citizens are required to have a command of Bulgarian language and professional terminology.

Continuing education

Continuing education is mandatory. A credit system has been introduced and administered by BgDA. A minimum of 30 points is to be covered in 3 years. The CE is delivered by BgDA, or by other institutions, accredited by BgDA.

The 14th Congress of BaSS, joined with the 9th Scientific Congress of BgDA was a part of FDI Continuing Education Programme 2009, because the Scientific Congress of BgDA is a part of the FDI CEP from its very beginning. Over seven hundred dentists from all over the Balkans participated in the Congresses. The Scientific Programme explored most creative and innovative themes of dental public health, clinical dentistry, education and science. Scientific sessions covered variability of lectures, oral and poster presentations. Ten distinguished lectures from the Balkans presented their lectures. One hundred and twenty seven (127) oral presentations and 352 poster presentations were presented as well. The Programme proposed the last achievements in the medical and dental science and contemporary treatment methods for everyday practice.

The Congresses were the most important international scientific event this year on the Balkan peninsular.

The Congresses passed under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria – Mr. George Parvanov.

Official guests of the Congresses were Dr. Roberto Vianna – President of FDI World Dental Federation, Dr. Norberto Francisco Lubiana –Brazilian Dental Association (ABO) and an advisor of the President of FDI, Dr. Orlando Monteiro Da Silva, President Elect of FDI World Dental Federation and President of Portuguese Dental Association and Dr. Gerhard Seeberger - President Elect of the European section of FDI (ERO FDI).

Such a highly presence at the Congresses of the World and Europe key persons in dentistry shows that the dental science and the dental services on the Balkans play significant role for the oral health of people not only in that part of the Old Continent but in the dentistry all over the world.

Specialist Training

Specialists train in the faculties of dental medicine, and in accredited medical institutions. Specialisation is administered by the Ministry of Health, with the support of BgDA.

Training lasts for 3 years and concludes with a State examination.

The types of specialist are:

- General dental medicine
- Orthodontics
- Oral Surgery
- Paediatric dental medicine
- Operative dental medicine and endodontics
- Periodontology and oral mucosa diseases
- Prosthetic dental medicine
- Dental image diagnostics

- Social medicine and dental health organization
- Dental clinical allergology

III. The insurance system

Healthcare in Bulgaria is based on mandatory health insurance, governed by the Health Insurance Act (1998, State Gazette # 70), also encompassing the voluntary health insurance which is at its initial stage. It creates legislative framework for the organization of the mandatory health insurance.

The mandatory health insurance system is designed as a state monopoly. It has the exclusive right to grant mandatory health insurance and to guarantee the observance of the insurance rights in respect of all nationals, following a public contract model. A National Framework Contract is to be signed every year between the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) on one side, and the Bulgarian Medical and Dental Associations – on the other. The Contract comes into force upon sanction of the Minister of Health. The contracted annual package of activities in dental medicine varies according to the age.

The NHIF is monitoring the quality of dental care in the system of mandatory insurance, according to criteria negotiated with the BgDA and included in the National Framework Contract.

About 98% of dentists in Bulgaria work in general (liberal) practices. Thus, the dental services are delivered on this base, either through the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) or privately. Among all Bulgarian dentists, over 5500 have contracts with the NHIF.

IV. Changes in fees

In 2007 BgDA approved its Method of Price-formation of Dental Fees.

The dental fees are in accordance with the inflation.

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