

Regional European Organisation of the FDI

National Report 2019 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 2019.

Trends and developments

- **Professional Politics:** There were no changes in the area of professional law in 2019.
- There were no developments relevant to the dental profession in **national health policy** in 2019.
- In **education policy**, there were two decisive developments for the dental profession in 2019. On the one hand, an *Act to Modernise and Strengthen Vocational Education and Training* was passed, which represents an amendment to the already existing *Vocational Training Act*. The amendments come into force on 1 January 2020. In the new law, a minimum remuneration for trainees was fixed, new final titles were introduced and the training periods were made more flexible. This law concerns dental assistants as well as various advanced training courses and additional training in this field.

Secondly, the new Dental Licensing Regulation (*Zahnärztliche Approbationsordnung; ZApprO*) was passed by the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*) in June 2019. This is to be effective from 1 October 2020. The criticism is that neither a financing plan for the study of dentistry nor the total scope of courses has been conclusively defined in the ZApprO. This means that the universities lack key requirements for drawing up a valid curriculum for a new course of study in dentistry. The German Dental Association also points out that the intended dovetailing of medical and dental education within the framework of the implementation of the "*Master Plan Medical Studies 2020*" has not yet been achieved. Joint training in dentistry and human medicine in the pre-clinical phase was an essential core point of the ZApprO reform, with the instruction of the prescriber to take this into account within the framework of the reorganisation of the medical licensing regulations and the "*Master Plan Medical Studies 2020*".

- In 2019, there were no changes in the **health insurance system** relevant to the dental profession.
- **Insurance system:** No changes relevant to dentistry occurred in the German insurance system in 2019.

Investor driven dentistry

Investor-driven chains of dental practices are very critically evaluated by the German Dental Association and other dental organisations. The BZÄK observes current developments with concern; as companies and investors are currently not subject to the regulations of professional law that protects patients. The number

of dental investor-managed Medical Care Centres rose from 458 to 658 in 2018 compared to 2017. According to current numbers, there are already 907 such centres.

The BZÄK 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:

- An 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.

A possible solution to the problems described above could be a change in the Dentistry Act, which the BZÄK 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

In 2019, the Federal Joint Committee decided to adjust the fixed subsidy contributions for dental prostheses with effect from 1 January 2020 onwards. These increased contributions will apply to all treatment and cost plans issued after this date. In private health insurance, on the other hand, there were no changes in the fee schedule for dentists.

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 over 25 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 2021 and 2022.

Further information on activities

In 2019, the German Dental Association organised various formats with topics on European and international affairs.

- European Day: The European Day ("Europatag") took place in Berlin in 2019. The European policy objectives of the German government in economic and health policy were discussed in various discussion rounds.

- German Evening: An evening reception (“*Deutscher Abend*”) was organised on the fringes of the conference of the World Federation of Dentists (FDI) in San Francisco. The purpose of this evening reception was to bring together various national delegations, representatives of the FDI administration and the dental industry to discuss current international political and dental developments in an informal setting and to network.

Major challenges for the German Dental Association

- The adjustment of the **remuneration scheme** for dentists to Germany’s current economic development is 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 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

- Investor-driven dentistry and the associated chain formation of dental practices; experiences in ERO member countries
- Digitalization of dentistry, protection of sensitive (medical) data