

## **Regional European Organisation of the FDI**

### **National Report 2021 Germany**

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

#### **Changes in the Association**

In June 2021, the general assembly of the German Dental Association elected a new managing board. Prof Dr Christoph Benz is the new president. He is supported by two vice-presidents, Konstantin von Laffert and Dr Romy Ermler. Von Laffert, president of the Regional Dental Chamber of Hamburg, is responsible for the European and international affairs for the German Dental Association. Dr Ermler is the first female vice-president serving in the managing board of the German Dental Association.

#### **Trends and developments**

There were no changes in **professional politics**.

In **health politics**, there were discussions about allowing dentists to administer Covid-19 vaccines. From January 2022 it is now allowed for dentists to vaccinate. In preparation for this new task the German Dental Association put [information](#) for dentists together and developed a model curriculum for training dentists and the dental team for the new task. Moreover, a new Federal Law on the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases was adopted in December 2021. This makes provisions for mandatory vaccinations for health care personnel. All medical professions and persons working in the health care sector are covered, including dentists and the dental team. It enters into force on March 15, 2022.

[New oral health goals](#) for Germany were agreed upon. In 1996, the German Dental Association defined oral health goals for the dental profession in Germany for the first time. The third revision of the goals for the year 2030 is now based on new oral epidemiological studies. The formerly tooth-oriented focus has been expanded to include disease-related as well as oral health-promoting and preventive objective areas in the sense of an integrative perspective of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

In **educational politics**, one change started to happen to the education of the dental team. After twenty years, the vocational education and training regulation for dental chairside assistants (*Zahnmedizinische Fachangestellte, ZFA*) is currently being revised and modernised. The reasoning behind this reform is the changed standards. These include, for example, new hygiene requirements, revised recommendations for the authorisation of medical devices, modern communication, digitalisation and medical-technical progress.

All changes in the **insurance system** are described in the section of “*Remuneration of dental services / Changes in Fees*”.

### **Corporate Dentistry**

Investor-driven chains of dental practices are still **seen very critical** 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 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 puts forward in political discussions. 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**

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the private health insurances continued to contribute to the increased **costs for hygiene** in dental practices throughout 2021 (they pay now in addition about 6 Euro per patient contact). The statutory health insurances did not increase their lump sum payment for hygiene costs.

In July 2021 a new regulation entered into force which now allows for the remuneration of the systematic **treatment of periodontitis** and other **periodontal diseases**. After years of deadlock, this new dental service profile now enables dentists to treat patients according to the most current scientific standards within the statutory health insurance schemes.

### **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 25<sup>th</sup> September each year. It is not possible to adapt the German Day of Dental Health to the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 2023 and 2024.

### **International activities of the German Dental Association**

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the international activities of the German Dental Association were very limited. The conference “Europe Day” however was held in an online-format. Panellists discussed the proposals made for a European Health Union as put forward by the European Commission.

### **Three concerns for the German Dental Association**

- Digitalization of dental practices
- Commercial providers of dental services
- Phase-down of dental amalgam and current discussions about a phase-out

### **Three points for discussion in the ERO General Assembly**

- Digitalization of dental practices
- Experiences from the Covid-19 pandemic (vaccinations by dentists, mandatory vaccines for dentists, continued difficulties with regard to the pandemic)
- Commercial providers of dental services