

Regional European Organisation of the FDI

National Report 2018 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 2018.

Trends and developments

- **Professional Politics:** One aim of the German Dental Association in professional politics is that legal persons active in dental medicine have to be obligatory members in the regional dental chambers. Up until now this is not the case. The professional law needs to be extended to corporations investing in dental chains. Professional regulations and control mechanisms must be enforceable independently from who runs a dental office.

Another important topic in professional politics was the European regulation on data protection which entered into force in May 2018. It needed therefore to be implemented also by dentists. The German dentists saw themselves confronted with new regulations to be observed, an increased bureaucratic burden and intensified duties of documentation.

- **Health and social politics:** Already in 2017, first steps were taken to create a national online health portal. At this time, various national actors active in health politics were involved in the process. The German Dental Association was also asked to contribute its expert knowledge. In 2018, the national health ministry published, together with the institute responsible, a first concept on how to implement such a portal into practice. This online portal should provide information on health-related issues in an easily accessible and centrally organized manner for the wide public. This measure should help to improve the German population's health literacy. This project was welcomed by the German Dental Association. However, some of the project's critical issues remain unsolved. The copyright of the information made available is not clearly attributed, the standards for the information compiling are set too high and the proposed control mechanisms are very bureaucratic and therefore hardly practicable.
- In **educational politics**, the reform of the licensing regulations for dentists continues to be a very important concern of the German Dental Association. The legal framework for dental education at the 31 German university locations has been regulated for decades by the licensing regulation for dentistry of 1955. It is therefore very outdated and is no longer considered to be up-to-date in many areas. Despite all the efforts of the dental profession, the draft bill presented in October 2016 on the

new regulation of dental training was not adopted. In August 2017, a revised amendment to the law was presented which provides for a closer link to the study of human medicine and a stronger emphasis on practical preventive training in the first four semesters of study. The dental contents were rebalanced with a stronger focus on prevention, therapy and geriatric dentistry. The reformulation of the proposal also made it clear that the financial framework conditions for training should be adapted to the increased care requirements. Despite the continuing commitment of the dental profession, it has not yet been possible to successfully approve the reorganisation of the licensing procedure for dentists. Due to these delays, questions of professional recognition and the equivalence of professional qualifications are still unresolved.

- **Insurance system:** In 2018, new benefits were added to the catalogue of health insurance benefits. On the one hand, new services in the field of disability and geriatric dentistry were included in the reimbursement catalogue of the health insurance funds. This was already demanded in 2010 by the German Dental Association and other dental organisations in a concept for improved care for disabled and frail persons. Now, in July 2018, a law was passed which, for example, makes visits to immobile patients, preventive measures for people with disabilities and training for nursing staff in this specialist area billable in the health insurance system.

A further concept on dental prevention for small children, which had already been presented by the dentists in 2014, has now also been implemented by politicians. In January 2019, for example, it was decided that three additional dental early detection examinations are planned for infants with statutory health insurance up to the age of 33 months of life. In addition, parents will be given detailed advice and instructions on how to brush their infant's teeth every day. In addition, toddlers are entitled to enamel hardening with fluoride twice per calendar half-year.

- **Dental care for persons applying for asylum or refugees:** In 2018, there were no changes in dental care for refugees and asylum seekers. As in previous years, all asylum seekers have a basic right to dental care for acute pain. If asylum seekers have been in Germany for more than 15 months without any significant interruption or if their asylum application is recognised, they will receive an electronic health card and registration with a freely selectable statutory health insurance. This entitles them to the standard benefits of the statutory health insurance. These also include preventive dental measures to maintain oral health.

Corporate dentistry

Dental corporations and the chain formation of dental practices are evaluated very critically by the German Dental Association and other dental organisations. It is seen as a major disadvantage that such companies, which act as legal entities under private law, are not subject to the supervision of dental chambers and therefore a decisive control instrument is lacking. The compulsory membership of individual dentists in such investor-driven corporations is not considered sufficient to adequately maintain the quality of treatment and patient safety. Losses in the quality of care as well as restrictions in the area of patient protection and freedom of therapy are feared. For this reason, the German Dental Association advocates that dentis-

try companies must also be placed under the professional supervision of the chambers. In addition, the German Dental Association warns political actors of the dangers that such investor-driven practices often entail. The problems of such developments can already be observed in several other European countries.

Changes in fees

In 2018 there were no changes in the remuneration of dental services. However, a scientific commission commissioned by the German government is currently working on proposals for a uniform new remuneration system. These results should be available by the end of 2019.

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 2020 and 2021.

Further information on activities

In 2018, the German Dental Association organised various formats with topics from the European and international affairs.

- European Day: The European Day in 2018 took place in Berlin. The European policy objectives of the new German government in economic and health policy were discussed in various discussion rounds.
- German Evening: An evening reception was organised on the fringes of the conference of the World Federation of Dentists (FDI) in Buenos Aires. 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 cultivate contacts.

Three major challenges for the German Dental Association

- The continuing delay in the reform of the licensing regulations for dentists poses a continuing challenge for the entire dental profession.
- 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 chambers is a major challenge for the Federal Dentists' Chamber.

- The digitalisation of patient files and dental practices as well as the exchange of medical information continues to pose challenges for the 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, patient files and save exchange of medical information