



Regional European Organisation of the FDI

National Report 2023 Germany

German Dental Association (Bundeszahnärztekammer/BZÄK) Berlin / Brussels

Changes in the association and its organization

No changes in the association or its organization occurred in 2024.

Trends and developments

Professional policy

In 2024, there was a push by dental technicians to have certain dental services, such as intraoral scanning, included in the catalogue of their activities. Until today, these services have only been included in the job description for dentistry and not for dental technology. The proceedings are still ongoing.

National health policy

In 2024, there were three relevant developments in national healthcare policy for the dental profession that will extend into the new year 2025. Firstly, the German Dental Association is a member of the inter-ministerial working group on the Medical Device Regulation (MDR). Secondly: In December 2022, the BZÄK signed a joint declaration with the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG), other leading organizations of the German healthcare system and others (including the German federal states and municipal umbrella organizations) for a "Climate Pact for Health". The declared aim is to work together for climate adaptation and climate protection in the healthcare sector. Currently steps and measures are discussed on how climate neutrality can be reconciled with good and sustainable healthcare. Thirdly: Due to the increase in social security contributions in 2024, various reforms to the healthcare system will be discussed in the upcoming election year of 2025. Among other things, changes to the health insurance system are being discussed (view: *Health insurance system*).

Education policy

In October 2023, the Board of the German Dental Association decided to develop and finalize the advanced vocational training for dental assistants to obtain the "Bachelor Professional in Dental Hygiene" qualification. This strengthens vocational training compared to academic DH qualifications and adapts the chamber qualification to the modern training landscape. In this way, the DH has been classified at level 6 of the DQR and an adequate differentiation from the newly regulated training occupation of ZFA has been ensured.

Health insurance system

At the end of 2024, a health insurance company proposed removing dental treatment from the statutory health insurance benefits catalogue. This would bring the goal of cost savings considerably closer. This was also discussed in the political parties to stabilize the financial situation in the healthcare system. One proposal made by the Council of Experts and some self-government players is to incentivize primary medical care through, for example, graduated hospital tariffs with basic primary medical care, where direct access to specialists can be added for an additional charge. This is also subject of internal discussions among political parties.

Corporate dentistry

Investor-driven dental chains continue to be viewed critically by the German Dental Association and other dental organizations. The German Dental Association continues to observe the ongoing trend with concern, as companies and investors are not subject to the patient-protecting regulations of the right of appeal. The BZÄK considers it particularly problematic that investors are hoping for high returns from dental care centers, which can lead to the following worrying developments that can already be observed in other European countries, among others:

- Interference with the dentist's freedom of therapy
- Losses in the quality of treatment
- Higher billing volume for patient treatments; more services are billed than in comparison groups
- At the same time, dentists receive a lower salary

Possible solutions to the problems described could be an amendment to the provisions in the German Social Act V and/or an amendment to the Dentistry Act, which the BZÄK will continue to introduce into the political discussion. The amendment should ensure that all forms of professional practices are based on the dentist's personal responsibility, independence, and non-commercial activity. In addition, for legal entities under private law whose business purpose is the provision of dental services, conditions must be created that guarantee the independence of members of the dental profession for this form of professional practice as well. This could be ensured, for example, by regulations on profit sharing, majorities of company shares and voting rights or chamber supervision.

Remuneration of dental services / fee changes

The Federal Court of Justice has ruled that the scale of fees for dentists now also applies to legal entities that provide dentistry. Furthermore, the law on the financial stabilization of health insurance expired at the end of 2024. As a result, the budgeting of certain dental services has been lifted.

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 October 2024, the Executive Board of the BZÄK had talks in Brussels with members of the European Parliament and Representatives of the European Commission. The topics discussed included the Proportionality Directive (EU 2018/958), the regulation of financial investors, the digitalization of healthcare services and the strengthening of medical care in rural areas.

There were also a number of bilateral meetings with various national dental associations in Europe at which various healthcare policy issues were discussed. During the German Dental Days 2024 in Hamburg, a meeting with representatives of numerous European dental associations was held.

Major concerns for the German Dental Association

- Against the backdrop of the new EU regulations on the creation of a European Health Data Space and artificial intelligence applications, the digitalization of patient records and dental practices as well as the exchange of medical information continues to be a concern. Investor-driven dentistry and the resulting risks for the liberal professions as well as the insufficient supervision of investor-driven dental practices by the regional chambers to date is a major challenge for the German Dental Association.
- The shortage of specialists in the healthcare sector is particularly noticeable in rural areas. The prospects of a worsening situation, especially for (dental) medical specialists, are dramatic. The German Dental Association has developed a number of proposals and solutions and is working to ensure that these are implemented at a health policy 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
- Reducing bureaucracy
- Quality in dentistry