

## **IDS 2023**

"Chances for the improvement of processes, qualities and offerings"

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### **Statement of Vice-President Klaus Bartsch on the occasion of the European Press Talk for the International Dental Show (IDS) 2023 on 25 January in Cologne**

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The VDZI, with its head office in Berlin, represents the economic interests of the professional dental technology laboratories in the guilds as the federal guild association. President Dominik Kruchen and his deputy Klaus Bartsch currently head the VDZI. The main task of the VDZI and of the guilds is to represent the professional and economic interests of the German dental technology trade. The supreme goal is to secure the performance capability of the professional dental technology laboratories as a prerequisite for a quality-assured supply of dental prostheses for the population of Germany. Fifteen guilds belong to the VDZI.

We are living in a time shaped by crises It demands a great deal of flexibility and resilience from us all. It is also important today to remember that dentists and professional dental technology laboratories and their staff have maintained the provision of dental and dental technology services at all times during the difficult corona crisis, also with the support of the dental industry. We can all be proud of that.

We will also continue to demonstrate this. The year 2022 was also defined by another crisis, this time a war-related energy crisis leading to extreme uncertainty about the future and high inflation. Both crises continue.

This is also felt by the dental economy. In the context of this development, dentists and dental technicians have determined in recent months that many patients are postponing recourse to dental technology services.

In the event of urgent care, patients tended to choose an interim rather than a permanent dental prosthesis. Thus, according to the KZBV, the billing data of the first half of 2021 only show an increase in maxillary interim prostheses and total prostheses in comparison with the first half of 2022. Telescopic crowns, bridges or single crowns were on the other hand chosen less often – in the single-digit percentage range.

We hope that a solution for the actual causes, which can be found in the international conflicts, will be found in 2023 and that the fear of inflation and uncertainty will lessen among the general population and patients.

### **Transparent supply structures close to the place of residence**

The close technical cooperation between the commercial dental technology laboratory and the dentist's surgery is the pillar of the supply of dental prostheses.

The VDZI views the model of the self-employed dentist in combination with the independent master dental technician as a successful constellation for specialised and innovative supply quality.

Defending this model against an unbearable commercialisation of dental care is therefore a political objective that unites dentists and dental technicians.

In this context, the statement of Federal Minister of Health Karl Lauterbach (SPD) that there should be no "investor medicine" is a welcome signal. The Federal Ministry of Health (BMG) is accordingly planning a statutory prohibition of the takeover of medical practices by financial investors.

The VDZI sees proof of a progressive commercialisation of dental care in the rapid growth of pure dental community health centres (Z-MVZ). This is supported by the figures of the dental profession. Fundamental here is the recognition that the size and the organisational structures in a dental community health centre also exceeds the scope of the regulatory framework of the independent health care profession. The criteria for the classic practical laboratory do not apply for dental health community centres – especially with several employed dentists. There is also no adequate monitoring tool in the context of legislation regarding professions to ensure the observance of applicable law.

This distortion of competition is borne by commercial dental laboratories. Dental technology services are effectively being withdrawn from the market, and thus also competition in terms of quality and price. Profit and investor-oriented dental health community centres provide an ideal breeding ground for the hazards of a dental prosthesis supply oriented to profit rather

than needs. This must be stopped, and the VDZI thus views the political signals from the BMG positively.

### **Digitalisation in the dental industry is advancing**

The market already offers high-performance systems for many dental technology tasks. The technological developments are proceeding rapidly and are of interest to committed dental technicians. The digitalisation of total prosthetics will surely be a major theme at IDS 2023. Until only a few years ago, digital technology in the dental laboratory was primarily characterised by subtractive processes. The additive processes that have developed in recent years, in connection with new materials, offer many chances for improving processes, qualities and offerings.

In any case, increasing digitalisation in the laboratory will help compensate for the shortage of skilled labour in several sectors in dental technology.

However, digitalisation is not taking place only in diagnostics, planning and production, but is also utilised in the communication between the surgery and the laboratory. This offers new chances and possibilities. Whether the transfer of patient and order data, of image files extending to video conferences: the amount of data is increasing, and the focus is thus also shifting to the themes of data security and networking with regard to surgery and laboratory administration software.

### **Integration into the telematics infrastructure, also for dental technicians**

The requirements for the telematics infrastructure are regulated by law, and the VDZI is already working on the implementation of the legal standards. There is a legislative will to integrate the dental technology laboratory into the telematics infrastructure within the health care system as of mid-2024, and to thus increase data security. With the Digital Healthcare and Nursing Care Modernization Act (Digitale-Versorgung-und-Pflege-Modernisierungs-Gesetz – DVPMG) from 2021, occupation groups of the health care system, such as in dental technology, will be linked with the telematics infrastructure. This means that the electronic exchange of information in connection with the provision of dental technology services will also increase in importance.

### **New training regulations since August 2022 – the future of the dental prosthesis supply**

Without well-trained skilled labour, a dental technology laboratory cannot be successful and competitive in the digitalised world. The new training regulations, which came into force on 1 August 2022, will adequately address the dynamic technical progress and the requirements of a technically and communicatively networked and digitalised world of work.

The required knowledge and skills involved in digital production will increase in importance in the new training and testing system. The dental technicians of the future will also be taught expanded skills in the field of technical planning, risk and quality management, as well as technical information and communication. This will make them better able to fulfil the dental technology requirements of customers.

### **Compensation for crisis-related additional costs**

The additional costs related to the pandemic on the one hand and the sustained inflation of costs on the other guide the legal regulations for the price negotiations of dental technicians ad absurdum. The prices for dental technology services may thus not increase more than the revenues of the health insurance funds, measured in accordance with the change rate pursuant to § 71, Par. 3 Social Security Code (SGB V). This endangers the businesses in the

event of high inflation. The education campaign of the VDZI in this matter is bearing initial fruit. The VDZI thus welcomes the motion of the CDU/CSU Bundestag faction to support the dental technician trade of 13 December 2022, which is a step in the right direction. It calls on the government party factions to undertake coordinated action aimed at assuring the performance capability of the businesses.

A permanent and universal ensuring of the dental technological provision of standard benefits and especially of the urgent upkeep for those insured with statutory health insurance is only possible when compensation for these additional costs is provided quickly and unbureaucratically. The VDZI member guilds also emphasised this with a resolution at the end of November 2022. As long as no substantial amendment or abrogation of the price regulation for standard benefits in the dental technology supply are enacted, the dental technology laboratories must be disencumbered within the framework of an appropriate one-time payment.

### **The dental technician trade**

The almost 7,650 professional dental technology businesses ensure a quality-tested and comprehensive supply of dental prostheses in Germany. At the end of March 2021, there were 47,500 dental technicians subject to social insurance contributions employed in Germany.

Almost 5,100 young people are currently completing a highly qualified programme of training in the dental technician trade. Almost two thirds of the trainees are female. The dental technician profession is in sixth place in the top ten of the most popular professions among female trainees in the trade.

With an apprenticeship quota of nearly 20 percent - five times the average of the overall economy - the professional dental technology laboratories impressively demonstrate their willingness to train apprentices.

### **The dental technician trade at the IDS - apprentices and masters present themselves**

IDS 2023 will once again be a display window for the dental technicians of tomorrow. The strong young generation once again demonstrates its ability in the context of the Gysi Prize, the "competition of the apprentices" in the dental technology trade. All visitors to the IDS can once again see for themselves this year. The best dental technology works of the participants from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years of apprenticeship will be honoured with the Gysi Prize, named for the researcher and teacher Alfred Gysi (1865-1957). The award ceremony takes place on 16 March in the context of the IDS in Cologne.

However, not only the apprentices will be represented at the IDS. Die Klaus Kanter Stiftung will honour the best masters with the Klaus Kanter Prize. The VDZI is pleased that the coming generation of dental technicians will thus be represented in Cologne.

**The trade fair stand of the VDZI in hall 11.2, aisle S 10/12 will also be the meeting place for all questions concerning dental technology during the entire trade fair.**