

COUNTRY REPORT BELGIUM

Belgian Association for Dental Hygienists - BBM

HoD IFDH Seoul 2024



Current numbers (on 21 May 2024)

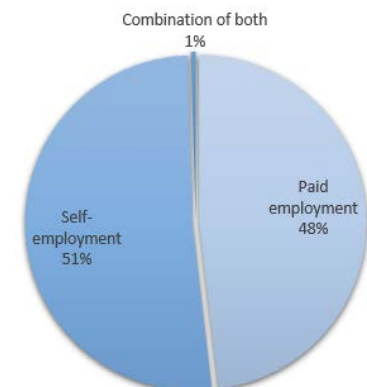
- The first Belgian Dental Hygienists (DHs) graduated in 2019.
- We founded our association 'BBM' in 2019. This year, we celebrate our 5-year anniversary.
- Number of DHs that are officially recognized by the Belgian government: 538
- Number of BBM members:
 - o Number of DHs: 192
 - o Number of DH-students: 98

Annual Belgian Dental Hygienist Survey

The Belgian Association for Dental Hygienists 'BBM' started conducting annual surveys in 2022. The questionnaire includes themes such as characteristics of employment and job satisfaction. The aim of this survey is to identify needs in the field and to optimally represent the Belgian DHs. Conducting this survey annually allows the association to explore possible evolutions throughout the years. In the annual survey of 2023 (conducted in December), 128 Belgian DHs completed the full questionnaire. These were the most important results:

Kind of employment

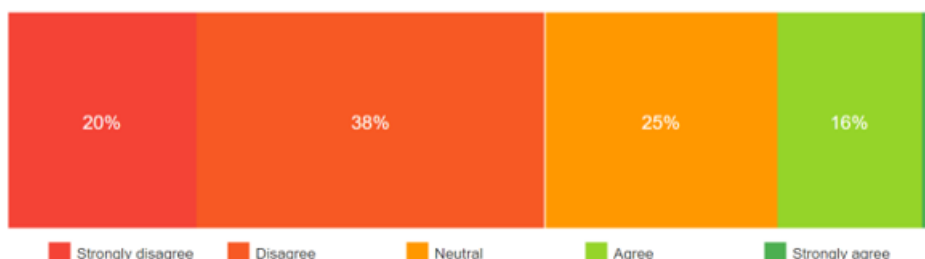
In comparison with previous years, we can observe an increase in the number of DHs that are self-employed. In December 2022, only 38% was self-employed.



Satisfaction with the professional profile

The graph below shows that over half of the Belgian DHs are not satisfied with the professional profile.

"I am satisfied with the professional profile/tasks of the dental hygienist defined by the Belgian Royal Decree""



Overall, there is a desire for more autonomy in the professional profile. Currently, a large portion of the tasks of the DH are either only allowed when prescribed by a dentist (e.g. SRP DPSI ≤ 3 -) or 'under supervision' which requires the presence of a dentist when the task is being performed (e.g. SRP DPSI ≥ 3 + or medical imagery). Another question explored what the Belgian DHs are missing in the professional profile. The most desired expansions to the Royal Decree are performing local anesthesia and the annual check-up. Obtaining these expansions is one of our association's main goals.

Current status of reimbursement/financial aspect

As of October 2022, the following two DH tasks are reimbursed in Belgium:

- Sealing
- Prophylactic cleaning/scaling

All other tasks (some of which are reimbursed when being performed by a dentist) are not reimbursed - yet. Our association is currently working with the Belgian National Institute for Health Insurance to see if this list can be expanded. However, this will take some time. In addition, the Belgian government has provided grants for several pilot projects to explore how best to implement DHs outside of dental practices in primary care (residential care centers, community health centers, multidisciplinary practices in collaboration with general practitioners). Our association is pleased to see that preventive oral health is increasingly included in national policy plans.

Current challenges

Language border

Belgium is divided into two major regions (Flanders in the north and Wallonia in the south), with three national languages (Dutch, French and German). The first DH programs only started in Flanders, so our association was founded by Dutch-speaking DHs. A few years later, the first French-speaking DHs graduated in Wallonia. Since then, we try to involve the French-speaking DHs as much as possible in our association. We translate all of our communications (newsletters, magazines, social media posts, ...), organized two French symposiums and try to recruit French-speaking board members. This has been very challenging: not only is there a language barrier, but there is also a lack of resources to achieve optimal collaboration (our association relies on volunteer work). In October 2024, our association will organize a first English symposium, where we welcome both Dutch- and French-speaking DHs. We are still looking for possible solutions/best practices to facilitate the collaboration between Flanders and Wallonia.

Outflow of Belgian graduates to the Netherlands

Since the beginning of our DH programs, a large part of the DH students in Flanders are Dutch. In the Netherlands, the number of students who can enroll in the DH program is limited. In Belgium, there is no limit. A large number of our graduates return to the Netherlands, which means that we train a lot of DHs in Belgium, but the actual number of DHs working in Belgium is significantly lower. This creates a lot of barriers for both Belgium (e.g. financial, as our registration fees are low and the DH program is expensive) and for the Netherlands, as there is a difference in our professional profiles defined by our Royal Decree (e.g. in Belgium, the DH is not allowed to perform local anesthesia or to drill, while this is allowed in the Netherlands). This means that these Belgian graduates have to take additional courses in order to be recognized as a DH in the Netherlands.

Involvement of volunteers

The board members of our association are volunteers. Since we have limited resources as a very young association, all of our board members combine their association work with a full-time job. Therefore, we need the help of additional volunteers. We do offer a small volunteer allowance and free attendance at our symposia, but we find it very difficult to motivate DHs and DH students to volunteer. We would like to hear how other countries motivate DHs to become involved in their association to ensure the continuity of the important work that our associations do.



HIDES, the Spanish Dental Hygienist Federation for the last 2 years has worked harder.

We have 12 delegation in the different states.

We are currently preparing our 35th National Congress of Hygienists, where we think more than 250 hygienists from all over the country will attend.

Next month we will have the final of our ORAL HYGIENE OLYMPICS GAMES for students, another revolutionary success that has made students motivated and compete to be the best.

Our PODCAST channel also allows us to reach even hygienists from Latin American and Spanish-speaking countries. We are ranked 494 in our health category on Ivoox and Spotify.

Regarding the development of the profession, we regret to report that we remain the same, nothing has changed.

We have accessed European parliamentarians from the health commission and they have shown interest in the need for all European citizens to have the same opportunities in oral health.

We have explained these reports at the EDHF meeting so that other countries can take an example and repaint our strategy.

Our profession is very battered in our country and dentists have a lot of power, but we are going to achieve it.

In education, we have a category of senior technicians, 2000 hours. In recent years, the study centers have multiplied; you can even carry out your studies online and, in addition, if they demonstrate having worked in a dental clinic previously, their internships are validated, which makes it easier for them to. Even people from other countries obtain the degree in our country for €6,000 and practice in their original country without being validated. This is going to be a major problem for everyone. A year ago we warned the authorities and they agreed with us, but they have not yet enacted the law prohibiting this validation. There is a lot of money at stake.

Many are taking advantage of the situation of dental hygienists. They don't help us, they only profit about our dark situation.

Dental hygienists can work in public healthcare practically throughout the country, except in the south, Andalusia.

A year ago we submitted a legal report to put pressure on them to introduce our figure. They have just published the Oral Health Plan without Dental Hygienists appearing. We are



considering taking legal measures, because we have discovered that it is the dentists who are exercising our professional skills.

As for the private sector, they continue to demand hygienists to perform professional skills that we don't have recognized and they don't want to recognize. In this sense, HIDES is very burdensome in sending letters threatening to sue for inciting the crime of professional intrusion. We think that in addition to being our obligation, we exert pressure to negotiate our powers.



EMIRATES DENTAL HYGIENISTS CLUB COUNTRY REPORT 2023-2024

Al Safeer Congress Ambassador award, 2023
Friday 3rd of March, 2023



Dubai Tourism has recognised and awarded EDHC for winning the bid to host the international symposium of dental hygiene in Dubai 2028. Hanan and Shaymaa were honoured as members of Al Safeer Congress Ambassador for Dubai.

The Dental professionals approach for a special care patient

Friday 17th of March, 2023



On the occasion of World Oral health day, EDHC hosted an event to raise awareness on the importance of oral health care for our special care patients in the community. Collaborating with Philips Health Care Arabia and Al Maharat learning center.

Ramadan Iftar, 2023

Friday 14th of April, 2023



EDHC hosted an iftar gathering to celebrate the occasion of Ramadan in collaboration with Curaprox Arabia. This event brought together our community of dental hygienists during the holy month.

Guided biofilm therapy (GBT) course

Saturday 10th of June, 2023



EDHC organised a theory and hands on GBT course for dental hygienists in the UAE. This two part course allowed our hygienists to become familiar with new technologies and enhance their overall dental skills and knowledge.

Ramadan iftar 2024

Thursday 28th of March, 2024



EDHC hosted the first social event of the year, bringing together our community of dental hygienist during the holy month of Ramadan.

Guided Biofilm and Supportive Periodontal Therapy

Sunday 28th of April, 2024



EDHC organised a theory and hands-on GBT course designed for dental hygienists in the UAE. This comprehensive two-part course enabled our hygienists to empower themselves with advanced dental technologies and enhance their overall dental proficiency and expertise.

Guided Enamel Regeneration: The revolutionary approach in dental preventative treatment.

Monday 13th of May, 2024



For the first time in the UAE, EDHC held a seminar for dental professionals covering preventive treatment, Curadont enamel regeneration, and hydroxyapatite for addressing early cavities using biomimetic dental science.

