
47th German Hospital Day – A Platform for Debate, Proposals, and Criticism from the Hospital Sector



Numerous discussions, passionate contributions, engaging presentations, and in-depth conversations with industry colleagues defined this year's 47th German Hospital Day in Düsseldorf. Yesterday, the major event for the hospital sector concluded after four intensive days. Traditionally, the German Hospital Day takes place alongside the world's largest medical trade fair, Medica, and the simultaneously held Compamed. This offers participants from hospitals the opportunity to engage directly with new trends in research and product development and to connect with exhibitors.

From the 11th to the 14th of November, the German Association of Hospital Directors (Verband der Krankenhausdirektoren Deutschlands, VKD) took a clear position on numerous issues before the professional community and the public. The conference theme, "Orientation in the Revolution," made it evident that the focus, from various perspectives, was on hospital reform, a subject the VKD has repeatedly criticised in key areas.

This critique was highlighted by VKD President Dirk Köcher both during the press conference and in his opening remarks at the Hospital Day. He stressed that the foremost requirement for stabilising hospitals is compensating for the financial deficits caused by inflation in 2022 and 2023. He warned about the existential threat posed to smaller, rural hospitals by the proposed standby funding model. "The fact that 80% of hospitals are now reporting losses can no longer be attributed to management errors," he emphasised.

Unfulfilled Expectations

In the VKD Forum on the second day of the conference, titled "Is De-Economisation Coming from the Federal Level?" speakers reviewed the two years since the hospital reform was announced. In his opening statement, Dirk Köcher observed that the expectations held at the end of 2022 had not been met. "With or without adjustments, this reform will leave hospitals in the worst financial state they have ever been in. Over the years, the economic foundation has eroded because revenues have failed to keep pace with rising costs. Without an appropriate adjustment of the state base rates, the financial situation of hospitals cannot improve significantly. Moreover, the complete lack of planning certainty is problematic." The VKD has therefore called for the planned standby funding model not to be implemented and for the states to retain their planning authority.

The NRW Planning Model as a Blueprint

Whether the implementation of North Rhine-Westphalia's (NRW) hospital planning can serve as a model for the entire country was explored by Wolfgang Mueller, First Vice President of the VKD. As Managing Director of Vestische Caritas-Kliniken GmbH in Datteln, he is well-acquainted with the nearly completed planning reform in NRW. His presentation delved into the procedure based on service groups and the now evident practical impacts of the reform on hospitals in the state.

"The NRW hospital planning introduces profound changes to care structures and the hospital landscape. The more specialised the services, the greater the concentration. This outcome was achieved based on NRW's quality and cooperation criteria," he explained. Reflecting on the additional five service groups included in the federal reform, he remarked, "No one needs these five additional service groups or further tightened quality criteria." He described NRW's planning model as purely focused on regional care provision.

In conclusion, he stated, "The NRW model is transferable to other federal states. NRW has implemented a reform without chaos – that is the crucial difference to a revolution."

The forum was moderated by VKD Press Spokesperson Andreas Tyzak.

Whether there will be significant changes to the federal reform law will become clearer on 22 November. The Federal Council, meeting that day, could refer the law to the Mediation Committee, a move many participants are hoping for.

Workplace Transformation

On Tuesday morning, discussions focused on the numerous changes shaping not only the workplace of hospital staff today but also those that will arise from the hospital reform. The theme, "People Make Medicine," covered topics such as proposed staffing models for doctors, the role of artificial intelligence in medicine, and collaboration among different professional groups.

Wednesday was dedicated entirely to nursing: "Daring Competence – Nursing as a Driver in Healthcare." Discussions included nursing education within restructured hospital frameworks, the opportunities presented by hospital reform for nursing practice, and optimised acute care for geriatric patients.

On Thursday, the focus was on healthcare provision in ageing societies – a comparative analysis of the healthcare systems in Germany and China.

Activity at the VKD Stand

Throughout the four days, the VKD stand was a popular hub for conversations among colleagues, partners from other associations, VKD supporters, and individuals interested in learning more about the association's positions, structures, services, events, and partnerships. Information materials were also provided. "We are very pleased with the response," said VKD Managing Director Dr Jens-Uwe Schreck. "Our stand team was kept busy. Once again, alongside the Managing Director and Anke Kraft from the VKD office, VKD honorary member Peter Förster and his wife Christine Förster were part of the team."

"Our location in Hall 12 was, once again, right at the heart of the action, particularly as this year's congress events were held in close proximity. We were able to welcome over 160 guests," reported the VKD Managing Director.

Positive Outcomes from Medica

The Düsseldorf trade fair organisers also expressed satisfaction with the success of Medica 2024 and the parallel supplier trade fair, Compamed 2024. "The event offered excellent opportunities for global networking, alongside an incredible range of forward-looking innovations and top-level programme highlights. Medica's global appeal is unique," said Marius Berlemann, Managing Director of Messe Düsseldorf.

The 5,800 exhibitors from 72 nations showcased their products and services to approximately 80,000 professional visitors from 165 countries over the four days. With a high proportion of decision-makers and strong satisfaction ratings, both events seamlessly built on the excellent results of previous years, the organisers stated.

The annual German Hospital Day, an important interdisciplinary congress for German hospitals, is organised by the Society for German Hospital Day (Gesellschaft Deutscher Krankenhaustag, GDK). The VKD is a stakeholder in the GDK.

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