

Speech at the event

**„Our health, Our SOCIETY“ in Brussels**

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- The spoken word is valid. -

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the invitation. I feel very honoured at the opportunity to speak before this well-informed and international audience today.

May I kindly request your patience and understanding with my Bavarian-tainted English? I will try my very best ;-)

Every individual should receive the right treatment, at the right place, and at the right time:

This is the objective of the Baden-Württemberg state government and, as the Minister of Health of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg, it is mine, too!

Presently, I see three major lines of development in the European health policy:

First of all: demographic change, which goes hand in hand with ageing societies, but also means an increase in the number of chronic diseases and a growing number of so-called lifestyle diseases (obesity, diabetes, etc.).

Secondly: technical progress with regard to digitalisation and personalised medicine, these being the largest fields of action that will utterly and completely change the world of medicine as we know it.

Thirdly: a lack of skilled workers, particularly in the nursing care and medical sectors.

To start with, we need a healthcare system that does not shy away from new developments. Quite the contrary: we need a healthcare system that utilises these developments in a targeted way to bring about improvements;

yet without neglecting the risks and problems involved.

Secondly, we need a healthcare system that is uncomplicated, transparent, and a system that people understand.

Thirdly, we need a healthcare system that can transcend rigid boundaries.

By that, I am not simply referring to the sectoral boundaries as we perceive them, for example, between general practitioners and specialists, hospitals and nursing care, or preventative care and rehabilitation;

but also, quite unequivocally, national borders.

Here in Europe, we need to cooperate more closely, network more closely, exchange more information, and succeed at learning from one another.

And we also may not lose sight of the pan-European perspective. When it comes to junior physicians, for example, it goes without saying that we are delighted that young physicians from across Europe and around the world would like to work in Baden-Württemberg.

However, taking these doctors away from their home countries where they are needed wouldn't be right; we have to undertake

joint efforts to find good healthcare solutions for the respective countries.

Here, one aspect is crystal clear:

With all of our actions: It is the patients who are at the centre of all our work. Everything must revolve around their well-being!

## **1st Message: Seize the opportunities offered by digitalisation!**

Digital change is just as profound as, for instance, the invention of X-rays or the discovery of antibiotics.

It would seem that digitalisation and artificial intelligence offer endless opportunities for the medical sector - and there can be no doubt:

We need to seize these opportunities!

Improved diagnoses, improved therapies, improved care - all for better-informed patients:

That's my goal, and I'm working very hard to achieve it in my federal state.

We cannot allow discrimination or exclusion - everyone must be able to benefit from digital opportunities;

and this also holds true for those who are not digital natives.

We cannot accept gaps and errors in data privacy.

And we do not desire, nor do we strive for, nor do we even believe it is possible to have a future in which machines will replace doctors and specialist staff.

Because no machine can replace human empathy and care!

Digital change calls for courage and, at the same time, humility.

In the following, I would like to say a few words about my experience as the health minister of a German federal state.

In Baden-Württemberg, my federal state, we have been shaping digital change for quite some time, now!

Please forgive me if I say this with some pride:

When it comes to e-health, Baden-Württemberg catches the attention of representatives of health policy and the healthcare sector in Germany:

We have a federal state digitalisation strategy, digital@bw.

And we will be investing about one billion euros in digitalisation during this legislative period.

Health and healthcare play an important role here.

With the DocDirekt project, for instance, we operate the first remote treatment for patients with a statutory health insurance in Germany.

Together with the Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians, for example, we want to succeed at avoiding unnecessary contacts between patients and hospital outpatient departments and relieve medical practices in "under-supplied" regions. Following its launch in the Tuttlingen district and in Stuttgart, docdirect has been up and running for all statutory health-insured patients throughout Baden-Württemberg since October 2018.

We have also reached the next stage:

Using funds of the digitalisation strategy, the federal state of Baden-Württemberg is funding the "protected e-prescription service of pharmacies" model project of the Pharmacists Association and the Chamber of Pharmacists with one million euros.

The first ePrescription is to be issued to statutory-insured patients in November.

Here, too, Baden-Württemberg is a pioneer.

Because we unite the three important cornerstones of digitalisation in Baden-Württemberg:

Research, economy and care.

Last year, we founded the Baden-Württemberg Health Forum.

Here, where we get all the players together, we create new alliances and provide a setting that allows innovations.

The needs of people, everyday life, professional practice, science, and the latest technologies and processes: That's what we bring together, and that is what we want to connect more closely.

This way, we can broaden our position as a business location and open up new areas of growth.

Here, digitalisation and artificial intelligence are an important topic:

We also promote personalised medicine under the heading of the Health Location Forum.

## 2nd Message

### **Personalised medicine: A pioneering role and innovation through participation**

Personalised medicine is regarded as a paradigm shift in therapy. Research, care and digitalisation meet here.

The goal is to have a precise understanding and treatment of the symptoms - we are talking about precision medicine.

Huge data volumes are used to promote this, and we have to be in a position to master it.

Thanks to interoperable databases, we can search for the same or similar patterns.

We cannot afford to make any mistakes, and transparency and security are indispensable!

The European Commission would like to create reliable standards for collecting and exchanging sensitive data, and that is a good thing.

In Baden-Württemberg innovation and participation come together.

This means:

Firstly: We bring all actors together: Politics, hospitals, general practitioners, statutory health insurance, patients, and their associations, as well as university hospitals.

Secondly: We understand personalised medicine, not only from the aspect of the freedom of research, but also from the aspect of responsibility in healthcare.



For us, it's all about bringing innovative research and healthcare structures together - and keeping the translation phase, i.e. the period in which research successes flow into healthcare, as short as possible.

Here, for instance, local drop-in centres could be helpful.

This year, we will still identify four centres for personalised medicine (ZPM) at the university clinics.

We have succeeded at - and this fills me with pride! – creating a mutual database.

Networking works here - even on a voluntary basis.

This can possibly serve as a model for other regions.

Currently a debate is on as to whether the concept should be extended to the whole of Germany

We are presently also analysing the situation in Baden-Württemberg and creating recommendations for action.

In Baden-Württemberg, we also want the therapeutic offer to reach everyone with a medical indication.

With all of this, we need to find answers to the question on how to finance all of this in our solidarity system.

We are talking about therapy costs of up to several 100,000 euros for individual treatment trials under the "off-label use" heading - we also have to take this into account.

Also important in this regard is:

We must ensure that we do not fall behind, when compared with the international, private-sector groups.

These groups are currently investing huge sums of money, which ultimately need to be

refinanced.

We may not allow our public health systems to become dependent on private monopolists.

That is yet another reason why we need to cooperate even more closely in Europe.

## **Closing**

Within Europe, we have a large number of different health systems, and it is not possible to compare any of them directly to one another.

However: We have to learn from one another!

We can only solve the significant challenges of global health in cooperation with one another!

This does not only apply to infectious diseases, which have never stopped at national borders and demand mutual solutions.

Even the major civilisation diseases such as diabetes or cancer, need the joint efforts and the good ideas of all countries to find meaningful and sustainable solutions.

Good research and innovation can only be successful together, and these sectors need to intertwine.

Today, healthcare is still also an economic issue. We in the EU must work on this.

Health should not be a question of financial means.

Everyone should be able to get the right healthcare, at the right place, and at the right time.

Here, we need joint efforts to give health equity the status it deserves.

Because this where we address the socially-relevant questions of social cohesion and solidarity.

These are the topics that, in these turbulent times, have become more important than ever.