

Why Oral Health Matters?

Policy recommendations to improve oral health in the EU

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Having the confidence to smile, eat and enjoy life is a fundamental right for every European citizen. This can only be achieved by ensuring effective consideration of oral health in all policies.



What is Oral Health?

Oral health is a fundamental part of general health and well-being. It is essential for quality of life and self-esteem. Good oral health involves being free from pain, infection, discomfort and disease in the mouth and having the confidence to eat, taste, smile, socialise and express emotions.

Untreated dental cavities (caries) are the most prevalent non-communicable disease both worldwide and in Europe. They can result in pain, tooth loss, infection, and loss of productivity.

- The total cost for treating oral health related diseases in the EU is an estimated **€100 billion** per year.
- Productivity losses due to dental diseases are estimated to reach some **€57 billion** a year.

Oral diseases are almost entirely preventable with the right policies and incentives. Investing in good oral health brings value to both EU citizens and health systems.

Did you know?

Poverty plays a significant role in poor oral health:

Economically disadvantaged European citizens are more likely to have bad oral health and are less likely to be able to afford dental treatment. Oral health is therefore critical to advance the policy agenda towards reducing health inequalities in Europe. Every child and adult in Europe should have the basic right of access to healthcare, including oral health care.

Did you know?

There are strong links between oral health and general health. Oral diseases share common risk factors with other non-communicable diseases.



What can policy-makers do?

To bring wellbeing and good oral health to all European citizens, policy actions are required at both the EU and country levels. This is central to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3, to ensure healthy lives, and promote wellbeing at all ages.

We call on European policy-makers to take the necessary actions to actively promote good oral health by taking forward the following five policy recommendations:

1. **Promote joined-up policies and adopt adequate budgets to alleviate the burden of oral health inequalities amongst European citizens;**
2. **Support the adoption of the WHO recommendations to reduce sugar consumption among EU citizens through a range of policy options, such as through ensuring proper implementation of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive;**
3. **Encourage countries to adopt European evidence-based best practices on oral health promotion and education throughout the life-course, such as through tooth brushing with fluoride toothpaste in schools and care homes;**
4. **Adopt policy recommendations to support the achievement of Universal Health Coverage and SDG Goal 3, including ensuring access for all EU citizens to affordable quality oral health care;**
5. **Ensure systematic collection of relevant oral health data to allow for better data-driven policy-making to reduce health inequalities and promote better health.**

About the Platform

The Platform for Better Oral Health in Europe is a joint initiative of the Association for Dental Education in Europe, the Council of European Chief Dental Officers, the European Association of Dental Public Health, the Pan-European Region of the International Association for Dental Research and the Oral Health Foundation. As the 'go to' umbrella representative of leading oral health organisations, our shared goal is to create a common European approach towards improved oral health outcomes through research, education, promotion and access to care.

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