edsa
European Dental Students' Association

WHO GLOBAL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN ON ORAL HEALTH 2023-2030

European Dental Students' Association

2026

European Dental Students' Association

International Office - Dublin Dental University Hospital

Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin

Lincoln Place Dublin 2

Ireland D02 F859

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

1. Introduction 3
2. Definitions 6
3. Purpose 6
4. Scope 7
5. Policy Statement 7
6. Roles and Responsibilities 8
7. Related Documents 9
8. Contact 9
9. Policy Review 9
10. References 10

European Dental Students' Association

International Office - Dublin Dental University Hospital

Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin

Lincoln Place Dublin 2

Ireland D02 F859

1. Introduction

The WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Oral Health sets important rules for improving oral health systems and results nationally and globally (WHO, 2024). The improvement of dental care relies heavily on strong teamwork across various healthcare fields (WHO, 2024). Over the years, different healthcare organizations have emphasized the need for collaboration and thorough public health training to achieve good healthcare outcomes worldwide, including basic oral healthcare in national health services as part of Primary Health Care, which is key to Universal Health Coverage (WHO, 2024). Adequate prevention in terms of early identification, management of associated health conditions, and equal access to high-quality care are just a few benefits of this important integration (WHO, 2024).

According to recent Eurostat data, 4.6% of individuals in the European Union who are 16 years of age or older said that their demands for dental examinations or treatments were not met in 2024. 3.3% of those 16 years of age and older had unmet needs specifically related to cost, distance, or waiting lists (Eurostat 2025). Given the limited resources available to dental professionals, addressing the growing demand for dental care requires a detailed strategy, careful assessment, and alignment of healthcare systems with the real needs of the population (WHO, 2024). Health workers providing oral health services must actively participate in the primary healthcare team (WHO, 2024).

In line with WHO's goal of enhancing oral health's role as a significant component intricately linked to overall health, collaboration amongst healthcare sectors makes it possible for everyone to access healthcare services (WHO, 2024). Nowadays, significant obstacles to oral health accessibility among public health goals are presented by the ageing of the population and the widening of socioeconomic gaps (WHO, 2022). Including dental prevention in the primary healthcare structures enables extensive dissemination of crucial health-related information focused on the importance of oral health in the general health

context (WHO, 2024). It is essential that people from all socioeconomic statuses, including refugees and immigrants, have access to dental care from prevention to treatment and rehabilitation (WHO, 2024). This is because oral health is a fundamental human right (WHO, 2024). Oral health is a core component of general health, so no one should be excluded (WHO, 2024). Nevertheless, developing common care pathways for oral and general health conditions can enhance coordination and improve patient outcomes (WHO, 2024).

Patients will greatly benefit from this integration because it simplifies access to comprehensive care and improves health management (WHO, 2024). Achieving integration requires policy changes, training healthcare providers to collaborate effectively, and promoting a holistic approach to healthcare (WHO, 2024). Education of the workforce as well as medical and dentistry students and providing active collaboration by ensuring both sides understand the links between oral health and general health will ensure that the health sector, united, will work together for the best benefit of our patients by looking at them as a 'whole' (WHO, 2024).

Although great efforts have been made to ensure advancement in health services, the promise that 80% of the population would have access to essential oral healthcare has not yet been achieved (WHO, 2024). Current unmet needs and access continue to vary among people belonging to different socioeconomic statuses and regions of the country, and we should redouble our efforts to equalize provision (WHO, 2024).

The three key objectives related to oral health—cutting down on sugar, smoking cessation and delivering fluoride effectively—are key elements in public health protection globally (WHO, 2024). It is realistic to implement policies such as taxation on sugar-sweetened beverages and introducing healthier nutrition in schools (WHO, 2024). However, the stress of the food and beverage industry

makes these policies difficult, and a comprehensive approach and strong public health advocacy are needed (WHO, 2024).

Of course, we know that in real life, due to social determinants of health and nutrition, it is not possible for people to have access to vegetables, fruits, and healthy products due to their extremely low purchasing power. For that reason, we need to make upstream interventions on social and commercial determinants of health (WHO, 2022). A society with equity is the key to ensuring a healthier society because an equal society is a healthy society (WHO, 2022).

In any case, providing low-cost fluoride toothpaste and supplements and investigating the possibility of adding fluoride to drinks will lead to a broad-range control of tooth decay throughout the country (WHO, 2024). Otherwise, the WHO global strategy tries to implement the inclusion of essential dental products in national healthcare systems, empowering dental professionals to act as pillars of reforming the current socio-political landscapes (WHO, 2024). This is also in accordance with the necessity for interdisciplinary collaboration to address public health goals efficiently (WHO, 2024).

The significance of these priorities is reinforced by recent developments in Europe and around the world. Adopted at the WHO Global Oral Health Meeting in November 2024, the Bangkok Declaration, No Health Without Oral Health: Toward Universal Health Coverage for Oral Health by 2030, emphasizes the integration of oral health into noncommunicable disease policies, universal health coverage, and primary healthcare and calls for the recognition of oral diseases as a global public health priority (WHO, 2025).Launched in Athens on May 12, 2026, the Cyprus Declaration on Oral Health in Europe aims to make oral health, including dental caries prevention and management, visible and sufficiently funded within European universal health coverage and noncommunicable disease policies (Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future, 2026). In addition to supporting coordinated action by legislators, medical professionals, educational institutions, and

students, these programs supplement the WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Oral Health 2023–2030 (WHO, 2024; WHO, 2025; Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future, 2026).

2. Definitions

Public Health (PH): Aims to improve the health of populations by improving their health and preventing disease (European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies).

Dental Public Health (DPH): Science and art of preventing and controlling dental diseases and promoting dental health through organized community efforts (Schütte & Walter, 2008).

Primary Health Care (PHC): A strategy that addresses people's healthcare needs, from prevention to treatment, ensuring equity in allocating healthcare practices (WHO, 2023).

Social Determinants of Health (SDH): The circumstances in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age. These non-medical-related factors significantly affect health outcomes (CDC, 2022).

3. Purpose

The aim of this policy is to express EDSA's recognition of the major importance of public health integration into dental education frameworks. This is an excellent start to a commitment to promoting the reduction of the oral disease burden across countries, aligned with the WHO strategy (WHO, 2024). This policy focuses on the need for cross-European standardization in both undergraduate and postgraduate curricula when it comes to Dental Public Health, with the final goal of shared values amongst dentistry students from different backgrounds, while at the same time respecting community-specific needs of the local population.

European Dental Students' Association
International Office - Dublin Dental University Hospital
Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin
Lincoln Place Dublin 2
Ireland D02 F859

4. Scope

This policy applies to the wider EDSA community by raising awareness of interdisciplinary collaboration between dental care and public health specialists. It wants to integrate dental students into collaboration with educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and policy-makers to enable the implementation of healthcare strategies based on evidence on oral health disparities and socioeconomic challenges.

5. Policy Statement

EDSA calls upon educational institutions to:

- **Integration of Public Health in Educational Curricula:** Implement the public health components firmly and without exception in dental education curricula, preparing students to recognize the significant interactions between oral health and public health (WHO, 2024).
- **Promoting Prevention:** Teaching and initiatives to reduce oral health inequities (WHO, 2024).
- **Research:** Ensure support of population-based research on Dental Public Health, where this leads to new policy, regulation and legislation (WHO, 2024).
- **Evaluate Existing Health Sectors:** The primary step will be a thorough examination.
- **Engage diverse specialities:** Encourage experts from different disciplines (e.g., epidemiologists and medical doctors) to participate in the development of holistic training.
- **Support Student Advocacy:** Join students in promoting oral health.
- **Indicating Desirable Directions for Future Work Community Projects:** Community projects encourage students to bring public health promotion-related evidence-based strategies to the public.

- **Alignment with Current Oral Health Priorities:** Consider the objectives of the WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Oral Health 2023–2030 and relevant international and European initiatives, including the Bangkok Declaration and the Cyprus Declaration on Oral Health in Europe, when developing dental public health curricula and initiatives, particularly in relation to prevention, equitable access to care and the integration of oral health into primary healthcare (WHO, 2024; WHO, 2025; Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future, 2026).

EDSA calls on dentistry students and young dentists to:

- Reassess dental treatment frameworks within healthcare systems.
- Align with WHO, FDI, ADEE and other related policy guidelines.
- Utilize technology for enhanced preventive care strategies.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

EDSA Delegates, Board of Directors and Officers, Supervisory Board, and members are responsible for policy awareness promotion. Educational institutions are accountable for implementing the policy's recommendations as part of a combined effort to promote public health equality and equity. However, this policy does not only target the managers of dental institutions but also the wider dental health workforce, including undergraduate students.

Through international exchanges, research collaborations and advocacy, EDSA plans to provide platforms for students to share best practices and gain broader perspectives on global oral health.

European Dental Students' Association
International Office - Dublin Dental University Hospital
Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin
Lincoln Place Dublin 2
Ireland D02 F859

7. Related Documents

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Oral Health 2023–2030 https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240090538
- FDI Vision 2030 https://www.fdiworlddental.org/vision2030
- ADEE Profile and Competences for the Graduating European Dentist https://adee.org/graduating-european-dentist
- WHO Bangkok Declaration – No Health Without Oral Health: Towards Universal Health Coverage for Oral Health by 2030 (2025 publication; adopted in 2024). https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/bangkok-declaration---no-health-without-oral-health
- The Cyprus Declaration on Oral Health in Europe (2026). https://www.acffglobal.org/projects/cyprus-declaration/

8. Contact

Any queries regarding this policy should be directed to the EDSA Policy Officer at *policy_officer@edsaweb.org.*

9. Policy Review

The policy is subject to review by EDSA for continual enhancement and alignment with global health strategies.

European Dental Students' Association

International Office - Dublin Dental University Hospital

Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin

Lincoln Place Dublin 2

Ireland D02 F859

10. References

1. World Health Organization (WHO). (2024). *Global strategy and action plan on oral health 2023–2030.* Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240090538
2. Eurostat. (2025). *Unmet needs for dental examination and treatment.* Statistics Explained. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/SEPDF/cache/37395.pdf
3. European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. *Public health.* Available at: https://eurohealthobservatory.who.int
4. Schütte, U., & Walter, M. (2008). "Dental Public Health." *Encyclopedia of Public Health.* Available at: https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/1-4020-5614-7_755
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2022). *Social Determinants of Health.* Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/public-health-gateway/php/about/social-determinants-of-health.html
6. World Health Organization (WHO). (2025). *Bangkok Declaration – No Health Without Oral Health: Towards Universal Health Coverage for Oral Health by 2030.* Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/bangkok-declaration---no-health-without-oral-health
7. Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future. (2026). *The Cyprus Declaration on Oral Health in Europe.* Available at: https://www.acffglobal.org/projects/cyprus-declaration/



European Dental Students' Association
International Office - Dublin Dental University Hospital
Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin
Lincoln Place Dublin 2
Ireland D02 F859