

Call to Action for Better Oral Health in Europe

Promoting education, prevention and access to dental care



Oral diseases in Europe – a major public health issue

- Oral diseases, including dental caries and periodontal disease, are major health burdens in Europe, affecting most school-aged children and a vast majority of adults. According to a recent Eurobarometer survey, only a minority of Europeans (41%) still have all their natural teeth.¹
- Across the EU, the provision of oral healthcare is estimated to cost more than EUR 54 billion per year, representing a significant share of overall public health expenditure.²
- Profound oral health disparities persist across the EU and within Member States, related to socioeconomic status, age, gender, and general health status.

Improving oral health in Europe

- Oral health diseases are easily preventable by routine oral hygiene practices, including the use of fluoride containing toothpaste, flossing, chewing gum, and regular dental check-ups.
- Various Member States have successfully applied different, yet similarly effective dental prevention policies that have shown to reduce the number of decayed, missing or filled teeth (DMF) substantially, particularly among children.
- In addition, improving access to and promoting frequent use of dental care services by those most in need has shown to lead to significant improvements in oral health.

Call to Action

In order to make progress and reduce the burden and cost of oral diseases across the EU, we call on the European Commission to draw up a specific **EU Action Plan on Oral Health** that will define the EU's role in promoting dental public health and:

- **to make oral health a priority** under the Community Health Action Programme to help exchange best practice in oral health prevention, to improve data collection, and to reduce the detrimental effects of common risk factors on dental health.
- **to address existing oral health inequalities** as part of the implementation of the EU Strategy for Reducing Health Inequalities in Europe.
- **to provide funding** under the Research Framework Programmes in order to investigate the future use of innovative approaches in dental prevention and develop effective strategies for a better inclusion of socially and economically disadvantaged populations in dental care.

¹ Eurobarometer on Oral Health (February 2010) http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_330_en.pdf

² Based on a survey among Chief Dental Officers and WHO and World Bank data, as quoted in: 'Oral healthcare systems in the extended European Union', *Oral Health and Preventive Dentistry*, Eeva Widström, 2004, Vol 2, part 3, pages 155-194.