



## Position on dental workforce

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# Recommendations for national governments

The Council of European Dentists (CED) adopted policy recommendations on solving imbalances in dental workforce numbers and distribution, calls for robust measures to improve current status quo. This is the result of the General Meeting of CED in Stockholm in May 2023.

On 27 May 2023, the Council of European Dentists (CED) delegates discussed and adopted unanimously the “Position on dental workforce” during their General Meeting in Stockholm, Sweden. The meeting was held under the Chairmanship of CED President Dr Freddie Sloth-Lisbjerg and was kindly hosted by the Swedish Dental Association (Sveriges Tandläkarförbund).

CED Vice-President Dr Anna Lella who is also Chair of its Board Task Force Internal Market that developed the Position together with Working Group Education and Professional Qualifications, welcomed the adoption. Dr Lella highlighted the crucial need for continuous work on this complex issue that impacts the dental profession of today and tomorrow alike. The Position is based on the existing CED White Paper on workforce challenges for dentistry that the General Meeting adopted in November 2022. It sets out the CED’s position and recommendations regarding the multi-layered issues related to workforce in dentistry.

The status quo corresponds to the overall trend that Europe has been facing when it comes to healthcare professionals. There are a number of factors affecting the planning and distribution of dental professionals between and within some countries—examples include discrepancies in wages and opportunities, the rural versus urban divide, the changing nature of European demographics.

Based on a detailed analysis of this topic, CED recommends that:

- The balance in the relationship between the dentist and the dental team members should be maintained, with the dentist as the team leader. Task delegation and no substitution should be continuously encouraged, with the permanent supervision of the dentist.
- Workforce planning must begin at the national level, and all countries should be equipped and prepared to educate and train the right number of dental professionals for their own needs.
- National dental chambers and associations must have a strong role in the workforce decision-making and planning at country level.
- Education is of crucial importance for solving the issue: it is therefore recommended for national governments to consider increasing the publicly funded dental courses if there is a need for more dentists within their specific health systems.
- Universities should offer expanded education and trainings for dentists, incorporating skills such as digital skills and managing a practice and a team.
- EU policymakers should also prioritise the update of the Annex V.3/5.3.1 of the Directive 2005/36/EC (Professional Qualifications Directive) introducing competences. As a minimum, the update of the subjects listed would ensure more up-to-date relevance to current dental education.



- The recognition of dental qualifications (as per Directive 2005/36/EC), obtained outside the European Union must be complete and in accordance with the applicable EU requirements before a dentist may start practising dentistry for the first time in the European Union.
- Prevention should continue being prioritised and promoted within national healthcare systems, ensuring a reduction of costs, reducing the burden of disease and improving public health as a whole. Prevention programmes for oral health must acknowledge that dentistry goes far beyond caries treatment. Prevention and oral health literacy should be encouraged through supranational initiatives in support of current and future national level actions.
- Better oral health means better public health. As such, national governments must prioritise the creation of policies supporting adequate remuneration (e.g. fair prices for the services performed) for dentists in all European countries.
- National governments should ensure that, as part of their health workforce initiatives and strategies, there are policies that also support appropriate workload, continuing education, favouring retention of the dental workforce. Furthermore, national governments should offer an expanded set of incentives, e.g. spouse career opportunities and children's education, that favour retention of the healthcare workforce in terms of geographical distribution, especially in relation to rural dentistry/dentistry in remote areas. This also includes regulations and financial incentives to influence the choice of practice location for new dentists.

Read more: CED Position on Dental Workforce



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