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## Statement of the Council of European Dentists

# Waste management and sustainability in dentistry

At the General Meeting in May 2024 the CED adopted a statement on waste management and sustainability in dentistry.

Dentists spend many hours in the dental practices aiming to provide safe dental services to as many patients as possible. Dentists receive further training and continuous professional development and follow meticulously hygiene regulations and treatment protocols in order to make sure to give patients the best treatment and oral healthcare.

### Sustainability

The Council of European Dentists (CED) is convinced sustainable dentistry is possible. Content of the statement: "If we work together we can improve oral and consequently overall health to reduce the amount of curative treatments and lower the pollution caused by medicine residues and travel movements. By increasing the public knowledge about good oral healthcare we can prevent a lot of treatments and lower the use of dental materials. All materials that we do not have to use are helping us to reduce waste. We advocate for more education on our environmental impact to increase awareness amongst dental professionals and the dental industry. So we can make a more conscious

decision in order to improve sustainability in the dental profession."

Manufacturers play a vital role in promoting sustainable waste management in dentistry. The CED believes that manufacturers should focus on developing eco-friendly and recyclable dental products, reducing the environmental impact of their materials. They can also focus their efforts on minimising excessive packaging and opt for sustainable materials to reduce plastic waste whenever possible and focus on eco-friendly production line practices and materials targeting to minimise the CO<sub>2</sub> production. Finally, CED urges them to establish takeback and recycling programmes for used dental products and materials, encouraging proper disposal and recycling. Dental practices who wish to do so can seek and obtain environmental certifications that demonstrate their commitment to responsible waste management and sustainability.

EU funding and national subsidies supporting dental practices that are looking to implement waste-reduction practices should be encouraged. CED wishes to underline that any national and EU healthcare waste management strategies should

be developed through the participation of relevant stakeholders, dentists included. It is important that any obligations for healthcare professionals in relation to such strategies and policies are proportionate and realistic. Such strategies should not introduce any significant financial and administrative burdens on dental practices that qualify as micro and small enterprises and that will not be able to cope with such requirements. Excessive bureaucracy is the wrong approach and must be avoided.

### Conclusion

Sustainable waste management as it is already in place in many EU member states is a necessity for the dental sector in the European Union. By implementing the recommended measures, dental practices, as end users, and manufacturers can significantly reduce their environmental footprint and contribute to a healthier and more sustainable future for all. "By working together, we can safeguard our environment while delivering high quality dental care to patients across the EU."

*Adopted at the CED General Meeting in May 2024*