The Cyprus Declaration on Oral Health in Europe

There Is No Health Without Oral Health: A Step Further - Oral health is a human right, not a privilege

Ratified in Athens, Greece on 12th May 2026

Why the Cyprus Declaration on Oral Health in Europe matters:

Why should I care?

- In Europe, we should recognize that oral diseases are a major health and economic burden in many countries and impact people across their lifetime, causing pain, discomfort, disfigurement and even death. There are significant economic and environmental impacts for people and populations
- Tackling poor oral health should also be a priority for governments and health systems – considering the significant economic and environmental impacts
- Need to "put the mouth back into the body" – oral diseases are now considered to be Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Prevention and care of oral diseases should now be integrated with those for other NCDs in general health according to the United Nations, the World Health Organisation and leading oral health and health Associations
- The new World Health Organisation Guideline on Environmentally Friendly and Less Invasive Caries Care is an exciting example of how there is a now a change in the paradigm of oral health care, with a priority on prevention

This is a public health problem because…

- Oral Health is multi-faceted and includes the ability to speak, smile, smell, taste, touch, chew, swallow and convey a range of emotions through facial expressions with confidence and without pain, discomfort, and disease of the craniofacial complex.
- There continues to be an unacceptable burden of preventable diseases across the lifecourse in Europe, with high levels of disease concentrated in vulnerable and socio-economically deprived groups
- Inequities persist - Oral health is a human right, not a privilege. Currently, those with the least have most oral disease.

What is this Declaration for?

- To promote and explain the newly available, international, advice and policy recommendations on oral health from the United Nations (UN) and World Health Organisation (WHO)
- To bring together and empower key stakeholders across Oral Health and Health / Primary Care who can influence policy and practice
- To highlight the new opportunities and start a Collaborative *movement* to improve oral health while integrating oral health and wider health in Europe by implementing the exciting new United Nations (UN) and World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations and guidelines

1) United Nations (UN) Declaration on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs), December 2025[1]

We welcome the recent UN Political declaration of the fourth high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and the promotion of mental health and well-being entitled *Equity and integration: transforming lives and livelihoods through leadership and action on noncommunicable diseases and the promotion of mental health and well-being* which was adopted by world leaders. The Declaration emphasizes the need to include prevention and treatment of oral diseases in primary health care settings, and to ensure funding of those services from National Health Schemes achieving high levels of Universal Health Coverage.

Specifically, the UN committed "to accelerating the implementation of a priority set of evidence-based, cost-effective and affordable actions, and in this regard" they:

> (39.) "Recognize also that oral diseases are a major health and economic burden in many countries and impact people across their lifetime, causing pain, discomfort, disfigurement and even death, that untreated dental caries (tooth decay) in permanent teeth is among the most common health conditions, and that oral diseases are largely preventable and caused by a range of modifiable risk factors, requiring a continuing focus on social, environmental and population strategies, and can contribute to other noncommunicable diseases"

and seek to strengthen primary health care:

> (56.) "Scale up services to address the excessively high rates of oral health conditions through health promotion, prevention, early detection and treatment, applying multisectoral strategies and integrating oral health services into primary health care and universal health coverage"

In order to ensure adequate follow-up, they also:

> (80.) "Call upon the private sector to strengthen its commitment and contribution to the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and the promotion of mental health and well-being through the implementation of the present political declaration… taking into account the need to prevent conflicts of interest"

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- **Recognises** that oral diseases (caries, gum diseases, tooth loss) cause long term disability and deepen inequalities. They cause pain, stigma and exclusion - especially among vulnerable groups of society
- **Acknowledges** that prevention, early diagnosis, and access to timely intervention for all are critical in reducing the burden of oral diseases.
- **Stresses** the association between oral health and overall health. Oral diseases are linked with major systemic diseases (eg diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and obesity)
- **Highlights** that oral diseases are the most prevalent NCD's and that oral diseases are socially patterned like other non-communicable diseases. Therefore, efforts need to be directed towards tackling the wider social, environmental and commercial determinants of health alongside universal health coverage
- **Urges** stakeholders, governments, health professional bodies and civil society to intensify efforts to ensure progress in achieving the **following goals** towards**:**
  - Oral Health integration into NCD prevention strategies and action plans, and;
  - Integration of essential oral health services into UHC and primary care delivery, by ensuring political commitment, health system financing and strong support from public opinion
  - Promoting equity in access to overall health care aligned with "Health for All" by removing financial and health literacy barriers

2) New WHO guideline on Environmentally Friendly and Less Invasive Caries Care, March 2026[2]

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- **Recognises** the importance of ***both*** upstream public health actions ***and*** downstream preventive clinical activities
- **Supports** the implementation of the WHO Guidance on Environmentally friendly and less invasive oral health care for preventing and managing dental caries
  - **Recognises** that this first WHO Guideline on Oral Health combines evidence from the environmental, public health and economic domains with evidence on clinical effectiveness and practice, as well as materials science
  - **Recognises** that this Guideline underscores the move to a more preventive approach seeking to minimize the need for any invasive restorative intervention
  - **Notes** the important changes needed to facilitate implementation of the Guideline in Europe and the benefits they will bring to patients, populations and health systems
  - **Suggests** the Identification of barriers and drivers in the process of including oral health in UHC
  - **Recognises** that implementation will need more resources for appropriate care, not just for interventive/restorative treatment
  - **Recognises** that many health professionals, including some dentists, are not trained or equipped to deliver modern prevention

3) Building on WHO Recommendations for No Health Without Oral Health and on Global Consensus [3-6]

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Will build on a series of previously developed and published policies and recommendations to promote action to improve oral health and health.

- ***The WHO World Health Assembly Resolution on Oral Health (WHA74.5, May 2021)***[3] was a pivotal step forward in recognising the importance of oral health in the context of general health, recognising the burden or oral diseases and the links with other NCDs.
- ***The WHO Global strategy and action plan on oral health 2023–2030 (WHA76 (9), May 2023)***[4] was the result of global consultations to produce a comprehensive Action Plan to secure meaningful and sustainable improvements in oral health in the context of both integrating with other NCDs and incorporation into Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in primary care. This document provides a detailed blueprint of what is required.
- ***The WHO Bangkok Declaration - No Health Without Oral Health - Adopted in Bangkok, Thailand, November 2024***[5] came from the first ever Global Meeting on oral health convened by the World Health Organization. This brought Governments, Health Ministers and Chief Dental Officers together with many other stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organisations. The Declaration was designed to provide material to fit into the recently adopted United Nations Declaration on NCDs[1] – which it did.
- ***A Global Consensus for Achieving a Dental Cavity-Free Future***[6] was based on advice and policy recommendations from the ACFF Making Cavities History Taskforce and published in March 2021. As well as outlining a range of policies to tackle tooth decay, this initiative also provides a model for communicating this type of material to the different types of stakeholders involved. This is to produce a Key Document, an Executive Summary and a more detailed Reference Document to satisfy the needs of different groups. **This is the model we are using** for the Cyprus Declaration. The ***Declaration*** (the key Document) will also be supplemented by a short ***Executive Summary*** for Policy makers, as well as eventually a more ***detailed Reference Document*** including case studies to facilitate implementation across Europe in concert with a range of oral health and health organisations. (The other two documents are in development).

Reflecting on the international evidence and the above key documents on oral health, this Declaration Recognises:

- ***Oral Health is a fundamental human right*** and that there is ***No Health without Oral Health***
- Oral diseases (caries, gum disease, tooth loss, oral cancer) are among the most common non-communicable diseases globally
- Oral diseases are estimated to affect over 3.5 billion people worldwide
- Dental caries is the most common non-communicable disease (NCD) worldwide
- Annual global spending on oral health has been estimated to exceed €326 billion, most of it out of the pocket and concentrated in high-income countries, and in many lower-income settings, even basic treatment is unaffordable. With few public services, most national health schemes do not include essential oral health services, leading to greater health inequality
- Oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated at an early stage
- Most oral diseases and conditions share modifiable risk factors such as tobacco use, alcohol consumption and an unhealthy diet high in free sugars that are common to other NCDs including cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes
- Oral diseases disproportionately affect the poor and socially disadvantaged members of society. Those most in need of care are often least likely to access oral health services, in particular preventive ones
- Oral health is fundamental to general health, quality of life, self-esteem, productivity and social well-being
- WHO emphasizes the importance of oral health as part of NCD prevention and management

4) A Step Further - moving towards implementation

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Aspires to bring many oral health and health Associations and entities together to give a stronger opportunity for effective and coordinated implementation action – many of the supporting groups seek to together "speak with one voice", but provide many perspectives

It is hoped that this Declaration can be a catalyst for new and exciting developments in Europe, ideally through a ***European Collaborative on Oral Health*** that can start a broad and positive movement around oral health and health.

Implementation topics that supporting organisations and individuals have already put forward include:

- **Support to and collaboration of NGOs**
  - Accelerate the efforts of Organisations and improve overall impact by working together
- **Monitoring & Evaluation**
  - Need for a monitoring framework for oral health; this could utilise more collaboration at European level between active NGOs
  - Need for evaluation of the reforms proposed as they are implemented
- **AI & Digital Tools**
  - The potential for the use of "AI" in this field is very significant. However, AI needs to be used (and not abused) in positive ways
  - Explore the links to digital health across oral health and health
  - Explore using the outputs from the 2023 Research Report from the former EU Project **DELIVER: Digital EducationaL programme invoIVing hEalth pRofessionals –** this project aspired to enhance the digital skills of Health Care Professionals by supporting the digital transformation of health within European regions
- **Glossary & Translation into Action**
  - Terminology and language will be important as many stakeholders are unfamiliar with many terms and acronyms. There are also specific issues with some languages around comprehending the wider picture of World Health Organization's meaning of "Oral Health" – the public (and also some health professionals) often do not understand the broader concept
  - Seek to explain to stakeholders the impact of oral health on enjoying life
  - Explore using the outputs from the EU Project **PRUDENT: Prioritization, incentives and Resource use for sUstainable DENTistry** - this ongoing project aims to develop and implement an innovative and context-adaptive framework for optimized financing of oral care.
  - Utilise the new EU Project DELIVER Oral Health Quality Toolkit which aims to support evidence-based policymaking and system-level improvement by addressing the quality, safety and equality of oral healthcare (DELiberative ImproVEment of oRal care quality) through the development of a Deliberative Quality Improvement Model, linking practice, community, and policy perspectives and engaging key stakeholders, including citizens, patients, healthcare professionals, and policymakers.

Note – the financial and population estimates used in this Declaration are from the WHO GOHAP/Bangkok Declaration

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References

1. United Nations - Political Declaration of the 4th High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases and the Promotion of Mental Health and Well-being, December 2025
2. WHO Guideline on environmentally friendly and less invasive oral health care for preventing and managing dental caries, March 2026
3. WHO World Health Assembly Resolution on Oral Health (WHA74.5, May 2021)
4. WHO Global Oral Health Action Plan (WHA76 (9), May 2023)
5. WHO Bangkok Declaration - No Health Without Oral Health - Adopted in Bangkok, Thailand, November 2024
6. ACFF Global Consensus for achieving a dental cavity-free future, March 2021