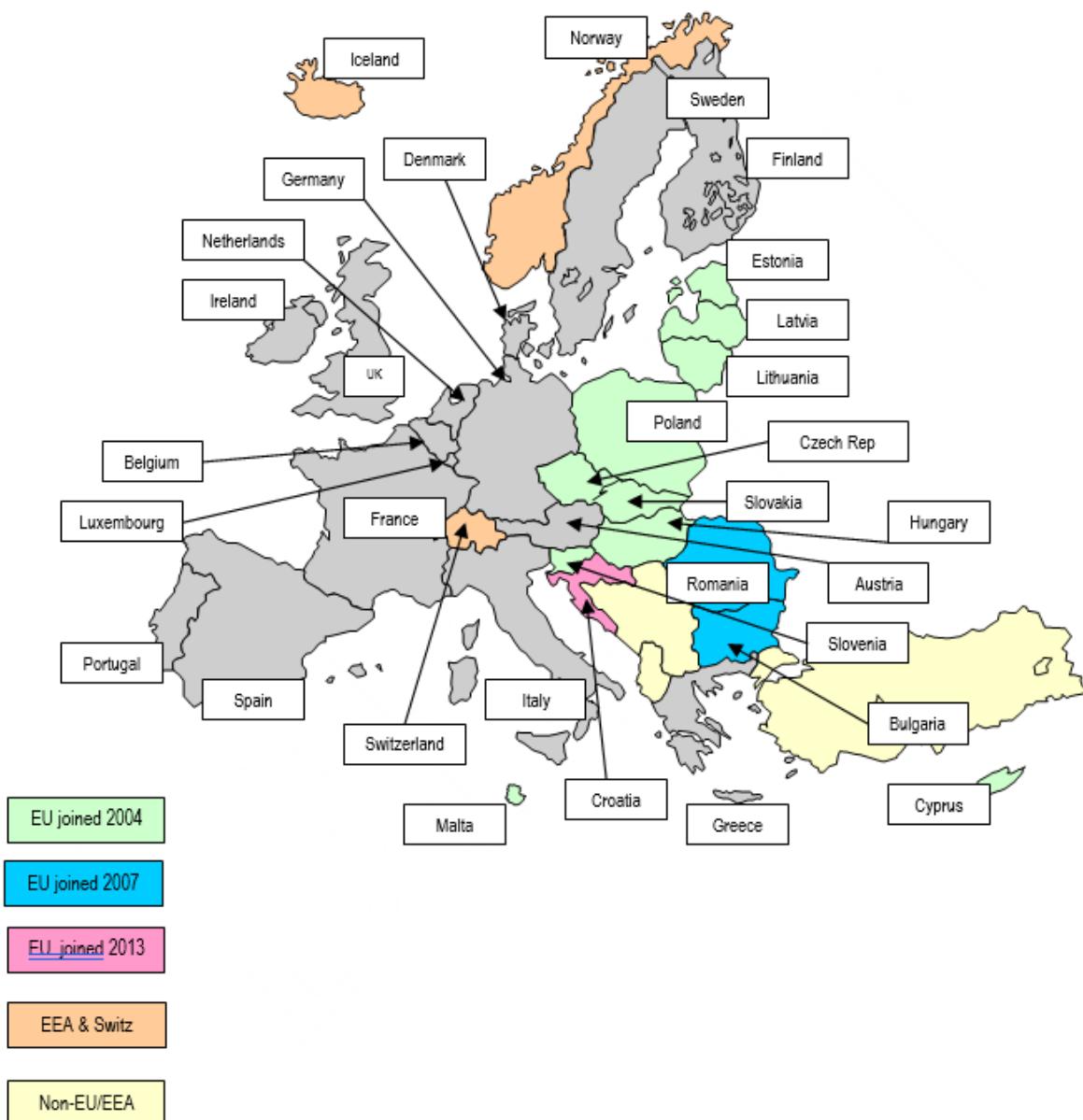


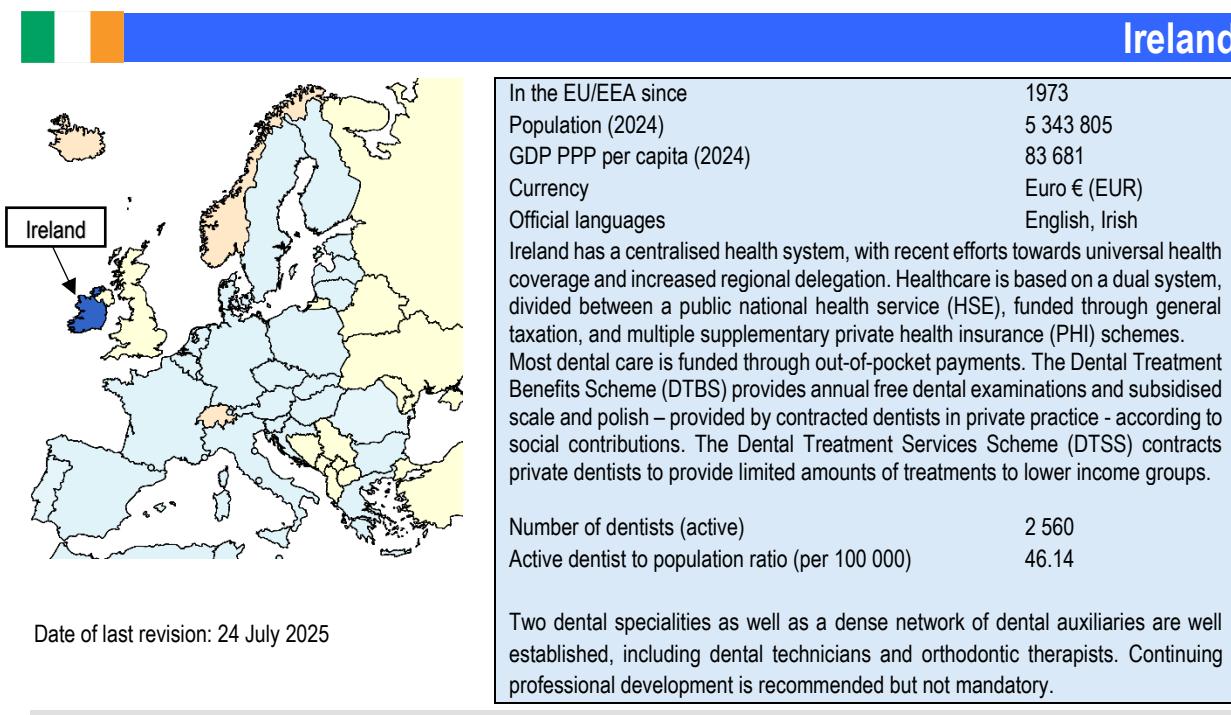
Council of European Dentists

MANUAL OF DENTAL PRACTICE 2026

Ireland

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2026





Government and healthcare in Ireland

Ireland is a parliamentary democracy. The National Parliament (*Oireachtas*) consists of two Houses: *Dáil Éireann* (the House of Representatives) and *Seanad Éireann* (the Senate).

General healthcare is largely administered and regulated by the Department of Health. State healthcare expenditure grew by 12% between 2019 and 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic. A significant proportion of healthcare is now privately funded. However, the private sector is partly subsidised through tax relief for health insurance premiums.

The public healthcare system is governed by the Health Act 2004. The Health Service Executive (HSE) is responsible for providing health and personal social services to all Irish residents, funded by general taxation.

The *Sláintecare* reform programme, adopted in May 2021 both by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health, aims to deliver universal health coverage by shifting the structure and abolishing the previous two-tier health system. This includes the creation of Regional Health Areas (RHAs) through 6 Health Regions responsible for planning and integration of regional health services, efforts to reduce waiting times, and excluding private services from public hospitals.

The HSE also provides some free dental treatment provided either by public dentists employed by Local Health Offices, or by private dentists holding contracts with HSE for certain services. The Dental Treatment Benefits Scheme (DTBS) provides annual free dental examinations and subsidised scale and polish – by contracted private dentists – according to social contributions.

A Medical Card is available to those receiving welfare payments, low earners, those with certain long-term or severe illnesses and in certain other cases. In 2023, 30.5% of the population held a Medical Card. This card entitles adult holders over 16 years old to some free dental services through the Dental Treatment

	Year	Source
% GDP spent on all healthcare	6.1	2022 Irish Central Statistics Office
% of this spent by government	77	2023 Irish Central Statistics Office
% of private insurances in total health spending	22.6	2022 OECD

Service Scheme (DTSS), including one dental examination, teeth cleaning, extractions and two fillings each year. Some other treatments may also be available for high-risk patients and patients with certain medical conditions, with prior approval. These treatments include dentures, gum treatments and fillings.

Some free dental services are also provided to children through local HSE, including school programmes routine dental examinations, emergency dental care for children under 16, and some orthodontic treatments for severe cases.

46.7% of the Irish population purchased supplementary private health insurance (PHI) in 2023. PHI commonly helps cover co-payments and allows faster access to healthcare services. This accounted for 22.6% of total healthcare spending in 2022, with the addition of out-of-pocket payments. PHI is provided by multiple small insurance schemes.

Private insurances include the Voluntary Health Insurance Board (VHI), appointed by the Minister for Health. Laya Healthcare, Aviva, GloHealth and the Hospital Saturday Fund Health Plan (does not provide cover for hospital in-patient costs) also operate as voluntary private health insurance providers.

Oral healthcare is primarily funded by out-of-pocket expenditure, accounting for approximately 82% of total oral health expenditure. State funded dental services, accounts for 15% of oral health expenditure, with private healthcare insurances covering other costs.

Education, Training and Registration

Undergraduate Education and Training

Undergraduate training of five years duration may be undertaken in the two dental university schools in Cork and Dublin.

Applicants must obtain the required number of points in the Leaving Certificate Examination, as well as a H3 or H4 in two of physics, chemistry, biology or physics/chemistry. For British students, a minimum grade of B or C is required in advanced GCE or A Levels, and a HL Grade of 5 or 6 is required for students with an international Baccalaureate.

There are two publicly funded school: the School of Dental Science from Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and Cork Dental School at University College Cork (UCC).

A privately funded dental school, the School of Dentistry at the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI) in Dublin, was officially recognised as a university in 2019.

Year of data	2024
Number of schools	2
Student intake (2023-24)	91
Number of graduates a year	90
Duration of studies	5

A significant number of students studying dentistry in Ireland originate from outside the European Economic Area (EEA), with 36% of all incoming students studying at TCD and 47% of all incoming students studying at UCC as non-EEA students in 2023/24.

The Irish Dental Association (IDA) is calling for the introduction of a 20% cap on non-EEA students.

Quality assurance of the curriculum is monitored and checked by the Dental Council of Ireland.

The title on qualification is Bachelor of Dental Science (B Dent Sc) from Dublin Dental University School; and Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) from Cork Dental University School.

Registration

In order to practice dentistry in Ireland one must be registered with the Dental Council of Ireland (the Competent Body) and listed on the Irish Register of Dentists. Full registration includes:

- Graduates in dentistry from a university in Ireland.
- Nationals of EEA Member States who graduate within the EEA with a scheduled dental degree/diploma.
- Nationals of EEA Member States who qualify for registration under the provisions of the Directive 2001/19/EC.

Non-EEA dental graduates are required to sit and pass a Dental Council examination before applying for registration.

Cost of registration	€330
Annual membership fee	€380

Vocational Training (VT)

There is no mandatory post-qualification vocational training. A significant proportion of Irish graduates currently enter vocational training schemes in the UK. Voluntary vocational training is however available for recent dental graduates.

Language requirements

For citizens of EU/EEA countries holding EU/EEA dental qualifications there are no formal linguistic tests or other tests in order to register to practice dentistry in Ireland. However, employers are free to conduct appropriate language tests.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The Dental Council obliges dentists to keep their professional knowledge and skills up-to-date and undertake continuing professional development (CPD). Course organisers apply for credit points for their courses, and these are then allocated to course participants. A dentist who has accumulated a target number of points in a calendar year is entitled to a CPD Certificate. This is known as "Verifiable CPD".

The Dental Council recommends dentists complete and keep records of at least 50 hours of CPD per year, at least 20 of which should be verifiable and structured CPD.

While the amount of CPD hours completed may vary from year to year, dentists should complete at least 250 hours of CPD every five years, of which a minimum of 100 hours should be verifiable CPD. No accreditation body exists.

There is an extensive system for the delivery of continuing education, through courses provided by the Dental Schools, the Royal College of Surgeons, the Irish Dental Association, and various societies.

Specialist Training Requirements

There are two officially recognised specialties:

- Oral Surgery
- Orthodontics

To become a specialist, 2 years of general professional training must be undergone after primary qualification, and this is followed by 3 years of full-time specialist training. To be a consultant may involve a further 3 years of higher training. The training takes place in university teaching hospitals in Ireland, or other such recognised training establishments.

Trainees provide dental care during their training and would normally be paid.

On completion of training as a specialist graduates receive a Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training in orthodontics or oral surgery, issued by the competent authority (the Dental Council of Ireland). Then, their name is entered onto the appropriate Specialist Register. They may also receive a diploma from one of the Royal Colleges of Ireland or the UK, such as a "Fellowship" or "Membership" or a master's degree or PhD, or a certificate in a non-recognised speciality.

Workforce

Dentists

Year of data	2023
Total Registered (licensed dentists)	3 642
In active practice* (2024)	2 560
Population to dentist ratio**	45.1
Percentage female	NA

*estimated data, according to the National Healthcare Statistics, Irish Ministry of Health
**active dentists only

Movement of dentists across borders

An observable number of Irish dental graduates practice or carried out post-graduate studies abroad, including in the UK. A movement of dentists is also observed for non-Irish nationals. No national data is available.

There are a small number of unemployed dentists. No official statistics are available.

Specialists

In Ireland, two dental specialties are officially recognised.

Year of data	2023
Oral Surgeons	70
Orthodontists	204

Oral surgeons work mainly in hospitals and universities. Most orthodontists work in private practice, although some work in hospitals, universities and the Public Dental Service.

There are other traditional specialist areas of dentistry such as Paediatric Dentistry, Periodontology, and Endodontics, where practitioners have undertaken further training and have limited their practices to their speciality.

Patients see specialists on referral only.

Relevant specialist associations are best contacted through the Irish Dental Association.

Auxiliaries

The main types of dental auxiliary are as follows:

- Dental hygienists
- Clinical dental technicians (CDT)
- Dental chairside assistants or dental nurses
- Hygienists
- Orthodontic Therapists
- Oral health educators

Year of data	2023
Clinical dental technicians (CDT)	40
Chairside assistants (dental nurses)	762
Hygienists	626
Orthodontic Therapist	74

Dental Hygienists

Hygienist training is undertaken at both Dublin and Cork Dental Schools, over a period of 2 years. To enter this training an applicant must have an appropriate Leaving Certificate result.

Qualification is by way of a diploma, which is a registrable with the Dental Council before they can practise.

Hygienists may only practise under the supervision of a dentist. This does not mean that a dentist must be present throughout treatment but rather that a dentist will have prescribed the treatment plan and must be responsible for the treatment.

Dental technicians

Dental technicians are a recognised form of laboratory worker. Training is provided by a four-year apprenticeship, or a three-year course at the Dublin Dental Hospital, leading to a Diploma in Dental Technology. There is no register. All work must be done with the prescription of a dentist.

Technicians normally work in commercial laboratories, although some work in practices. They construct prostheses for insertion and fitted by dentists, and they invoice the dentist for the work that is done. They would normally be salaried.

Laboratories have to be registered with the Irish Medicines Board.

Clinical Dental Technicians

In 2008 the Dental Council approved the grade of Clinical Dental Technician (CDT). They are legally entitled to provide dentures directly to members of the public.

A Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Dental Technology is required. This course is available in Dublin Dental University Hospital. Applicants must possess a degree in Dental Technology or an equivalent qualification. Admission would normally follow, as a minimum, a three-year period of professional experience in a dental laboratory.

Orthodontic Therapists

Orthodontic Therapists are registered professionals and carry out certain parts of orthodontic treatment, only under the supervision of a registered orthodontist. Such dental work must only be carried out after the orthodontist has examined the patient and has indicated the treatment to be provided.

Graduates having obtained a Diploma in Orthodontic Therapy from the Dublin Dental University Hospital are entitled to automatic recognition and may immediately apply for registration.

Graduates holding other qualifications, including from foreign institutions, must apply for assessment and recognition of their orthodontic therapist certificate.

Dental Chairside Assistants (Nurses)

Dental nurses assist dentists. Many undergo formal training in one of the dental schools. Others are trained 'on the job'. Formal qualification and registration are not mandatory and based on voluntary registration with the Dental Council.

Other Useful Information

Main national associations

National dental associations and information centres
<p>Irish Dental Association <i>(Cumann Fiaclóirí na hÉireann)</i></p> <p>Irish Dental Association, <i>(Cumann Fiaclóirí na hÉireann)</i> Unit 2 Leopardstown Office Park, Sandyford Dublin 18 IRELAND Tel: +353 1 2950072 Email: info@irishdentalassoc.ie Website: www.dentist.ie</p>

Competent authorities

The Dental Council of Ireland
<p>57 Merrion Square Dublin 2 IRELAND Tel: + 353 1 676 2069 E-mail info@dentalcouncil.ie Website: www.dentalcouncil.ie</p>

Main Professional Journal

Journal of the Irish Dental Association
<p>Unit 2 Leopardstown Office Park Sandyford Dublin 18 IRELAND Tel: +353 1 2950072 Email: info@irishdentalassoc.ie Email editorial team: articles@irishdentalassoc.ie Website: https://www.dentist.ie/journal.8012.html</p>

Dental Schools:

School of Dental Science Trinity College Dublin (TCD)	Cork University Dental School and Hospital University College Cork (UCC)
<p>Dental School Trinity College Lincoln Place Dublin 2 IRELAND Tel: +353 1 612 7306 Tel Dean of Dental Affairs & Head of School: +353 1 896 1690 Email: info@dental.tcd.ie Website: www.dentalhospital.ie/</p>	<p>University Dental School and Hospital Wilton Cork IRELAND Tel: +353 21 4901100 Fax: +353 21 434 3561 Email: dental@ucc.ie Website: wwwuccie/en/dentalschool/</p>