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AND ORAL HEALTH

The Copenhagen Declaration on Dental Undergraduate Training

April 2026

European dental professionals urge the EU to modernise undergraduate training, and update clinical standards originally established in 1978

Union of Skills

Under the Union of Skills, the Skills Portability Initiative developed by the European Commission aims to facilitate and strengthen the free movement of professionals and the automatic recognition process, applying to the dental profession.

Dental skills

Every year in the EU the automatic recognition principle for regulated professions applies to an estimated 14 000 additional dental degrees.

However European dental professionals and stakeholders note that:

- There is currently no unified or aligned dental education framework, with dental education remaining highly fragmented and diverse across European programmes[1] [2].
- The standards set in EU law for the dental clinical training to undertake with patients have not been adapted since 1978[3].

Mobility

Recognising that the dental profession is the 5th most mobile profession in Europe and acknowledging the strong interest of dental students in studying and working abroad, a 2024 study conducted by EDSA found that 66,19% of undergraduate dental students intended practising in another EU country in 2024.

Unanimous call

Reflecting on repeated calls from across the dental sector, including from dental educators, dental students, general dental practitioners and dental regulators, there is a clear need for the Union of Skills to update and align minimum training requirements across dental studies. This would complete the insufficient revision in 2024 of training subjects listed in Annex V of the Professional Qualifications Directive (the 'Directive').

Context & solutions

The WHO Global oral health action plan 2023-2030 calls for measures to improve the oral health workforce curricula and training, as well as to better align private and public oral health workforce training[4]. The

[1] As is reported in 2026 Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2026) 64 final (page 32)
[2] Please also see Field J, Dixon J, Davies J, et al. (2023). O-Health-Edu: A vision for oral health professional education in Europe. Eur J Dent Educ. 2023; 27: 382-387. Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/eje.12819
[3] Directive 78/687 of 25 July 1978 concerning the coordination of provisions laid down by Law, Regulation or Administrative Action in respect of the activities of dental practitioners
[4] Strategic Objective 3 of the WHO plan.

collaborative Erasmus+ project "O-Health-Edu" developed in 2022 a Charter and a Vision for Oral Health Professional education across Europe to help reach the milestones outlined under the WHO action plan[5].

It is with this purpose that on 26 February 2026, a coalition of representatives from across the dental community gathered in Copenhagen to further discuss undergraduate training requirements, building on an initial Stakeholder event in Dublin, in February 2025[6].

The meeting addressed ways to define and monitor clinical readiness, with the aim of better aligning and strengthening Oral Health Professional training. The group explored how various elements of the clinical curriculum can sit within the overarching ADEE Graduating European Dentist (GED) framework.

Recommendations

The coalition of European dental professionals, engaged across dental education, dental regulation, professional practice, and oral health management, therefore call on EU institutions to better align the dental sector with the EU agenda and:

In accordance with both 2026 Council Recommendations on human capital in the EU & 2024 Council Recommendations on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education, to

- Renew efforts for capacity building within the dental education workforce. This includes increasing staffing levels (among which, qualified instructors and clinical supervisors) to improve clinical teaching ratios and ensure sufficient allocation of financial resources for undergraduate training and training infrastructures.

In compliance with Directive's provisions on updated skills, to

- Introduce in the Directive's Annex the request for an electronic portfolio of study. In line with the EU Skills Portability Initiative this should capture all of the practical and theoretical competencies acquired in undergraduate dental studies and help to ensure consistent monitoring of student development towards graduation.

- Distinguish and recommend a ratio between theoretical and practical clinical training, including direct patient care under the Directive, incorporated under the "at least 5 000 hours of full-time theoretical and practical training".

- Strengthen minimum practical training requirements, by introducing a list of fields of clinical practice under Annex V (5.3.1)

- Establish recommendations for ways in which students are monitored, and minimum standards are set during their practical training hours.

- Regularly update the subject list in Annex V of the Directive's Annex V, to ensure that dental programmes remain aligned with scientific advancements.

In accordance with Directive's provisions on updated skills & the 2026 Council Recommendations on human capital in the EU, to

- Update Article 55 of the Directive to extend provisions to all dental practitioners, regardless of their country of qualification, in relation to « in-service training and/or a period of professional experience in order to be approved by a health insurance fund » organized in some Member States.

[5] Please see: Field J, Dixon J, Davies J, et al. (2023). O-Health-Edu: A vision for oral health professional education in Europe. Eur J Dent Educ. 2023; 27: 382-387. Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/eje.12819

[6] Please see the full report of the 2025 event here: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/eje.70028

In keeping with the European Education Area's development, to

- Encourage measures to standardise the monitoring of student performance that align with the wider group's understanding of the term 'competence' and how it can be best adapted to suit individual institutional and local population needs.

- Establish a common EU accreditation scheme for dental programmes, to ensure a minimum common standard in the quality of dental education and encourage the free movement of dental students and professionals.

In keeping with 2023 Commission Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals, to

- Encourage Member States to incorporate national support programmes into the recognition process for foreign dental qualifications, including supervised clinical practice and training modules on the structure and functioning of the national oral healthcare system.

In line with European Court of Auditor's recommendations, to

- Establish the use of the Directive's EU alert mechanism across all EU Member States, particularly in cases involving professional sanctions, suspected clinical misconduct or false diplomas in the home country.

Co-signatories:

The Association for Dental Education in Europe (ADEE)

The Council of European Dentists (CED)

The Council of European Chief Dental Officers (CECDO)

The European Dental Students Association (EDSA)

European Regional Organisation of the FDI World Dental Federation

The Federation of European Dental Competent Authorities and Regulators (FEDCAR)