

EDSA Policy Café Guidelines

European Dental Students' Association

Preface

These guidelines provide a structured framework for organising and facilitating EDSA Policy Cafés. The Policy Café is a student-led discussion format designed to make health policy accessible, participatory, and impactful for dental students across Europe. By systematically integrating student perspectives into policy development, the Policy Café strengthens the legitimacy, relevance, and sustainability of EDSA's policy work.

This document is intended for Policy Officers, Board Members, and EDSA representatives involved in policy-related activities and aims to ensure consistency, quality, and continuity across terms:

1. Definition and Purpose

1.1 What is an EDSA Policy Café?

An EDSA Policy Café is a structured, interactive discussion format focusing on oral health-related policy topics relevant to dental students.

The Policy Café:

- is student-led and discussion-based
- focuses on policy, education, public health, and advocacy
- values student experience as legitimate policy input
- directly informs EDSA policy papers, statements, and endorsements

It is not a lecture, academic seminar, or formal debate.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Policy Café are to:

- increase student engagement in health and oral health policy
- collect diverse perspectives across countries and educational systems
- strengthen the evidence base of EDSA policy work
- connect education, clinical reality, and public health perspectives
- support long-term, student-led policy development within EDSA

2. Governance and Responsibilities

2.1 Oversight

The Policy Café is coordinated by the **EDSA Policy Officer**, in collaboration with relevant Board Members, Officers, or partners where appropriate.

2.2 Responsibilities of the Policy Officer

The Policy Officer is responsible for:

- topic selection and policy framing
- alignment with EDSA priorities and external frameworks
- moderation or appointment of moderators
- documentation and policy follow-up

3. Topic Selection and Policy Scope

3.1 Topic Criteria

Policy Café topics should:

- relate to oral health, public health, or health systems
- align with WHO, FDI, EU, or UNESCO frameworks
- allow experience-based, student-led discussion

- have clear potential for policy recommendations or statements

Topics should avoid:

- highly technical clinical training
- purely academic or research-focused content
- unnecessary duplication of recently addressed themes

3.2 Framing the Topic

Each Policy Café must be framed around:

- a clear policy challenge or guiding question
- defined discussion dimensions (e.g. education, equity, professional role)
- an explicit link to potential EDSA policy outputs

4. Preparation and Planning

4.1 Structure and Timing

A standard Policy Café is designed as a **90-minute session**.

Recommended structure:

- Introduction and framing
- Context-setting input
- Student-led discussion
- Case-based reflection
- Policy-oriented synthesis

4.2 Discussion Prompts and Cases

Organisers should prepare:

- 1–2 overarching policy questions
- 3–5 open discussion prompts
- 2–3 realistic, policy-relevant cases

Cases should connect student experience with structural and systemic factors.

4.3 Slides and Materials

Slides should:

- support discussion rather than deliver content
- remain concise and text-light
- clearly display discussion questions

No mandatory preparation or pre-reading is required for participants.

5. Conducting the Policy Café

5.1 Opening the Session

At the beginning of the session, organisers should:

- explain the Policy Café format and purpose
- clarify that the session is discussion-based
- emphasise that all student perspectives are valid

5.2 Moderation Principles

Moderators should:

- facilitate inclusive participation
- prevent dominance by individual voices
- translate discussion into policy-relevant language where appropriate
- respect differing national, cultural, and educational contexts

Moderators should guide discussion without imposing conclusions.

5.3 Managing Complexity

During discussion:

- consensus is not required
- tensions and disagreements should be documented
- emphasis should be placed on recurring themes and systemic barriers

6. Participation, Accessibility, and Collaboration

6.1 Participation

EDSA Policy Cafés are open to:

- EDSA members and delegates
- dental students from EDSA member countries

Participation:

- requires no prior policy knowledge
- is intentionally low-threshold
- should reflect diversity across countries, institutions, and educational systems

6.2 Participation of External Students and Contributors

Depending on the topic, Policy Cafés may also include:

- students from other health-related or social science disciplines
- representatives of EDSA partner student organisations
- invited external contributors with relevant policy or public health expertise

The inclusion of external participants aims to:

- broaden perspectives beyond dentistry
- strengthen interprofessional understanding
- enhance the relevance and credibility of policy discussions

Participation of external contributors should always remain **student-centred** and aligned with EDSA's policy objectives.

6.3 Collaboration with EDSA Partner Student Associations

Collaborations with **student partner organisations of EDSA** are strongly encouraged, particularly when Policy Café topics are:

- prevention-oriented
- public health-focused
- interprofessionally relevant

Such collaborations may involve:

- European and international student associations
- health, social science, and allied health student organisations
- partners with shared advocacy priorities and policy interests

Collaborative Policy Cafés can:

- enrich discussions through complementary disciplinary perspectives
- support coherent, cross-sectoral student policy positions
- strengthen the external visibility and impact of EDSA's policy work

In collaborative settings:

- roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined in advance
- EDSA retains responsibility for documentation and policy follow-up
- outcomes may inform joint, aligned, or parallel policy initiatives where appropriate

6.4 Principles for External Participation and Collaboration

When involving external participants or partner organisations, organisers should ensure:

- alignment with the objectives of the Policy Café
- respectful and balanced participation
- transparency regarding the use of discussion outcomes

Participation in a Policy Café does not imply automatic endorsement of final policy positions by any organisation involved.

7. Documentation and Policy Follow-Up

7.1 Documentation

After the session, organisers should:

- summarise key themes and insights
- avoid attributing statements to individuals
- focus on policy-relevant content

7.2 Policy Integration

Policy Café outcomes may be used for:

- development of EDSA policy papers
- formulation of policy recommendations
- endorsements or external advocacy activities

Clear communication on how inputs are used is essential to maintain trust and engagement.

8. Quality Assurance and Continuity

8.1 Institutional Memory

To ensure continuity:

- topics and summaries should be documented
- formats should remain flexible but recognisable
- materials should be accessible to future Boards and Officers

8.2 Common Pitfalls

Organisers should avoid:

- turning the Policy Café into a lecture

- over-framing discussions with predefined conclusions
- treating the session as an isolated event
- prioritising technical detail over student experience

9. Key Principles

- Policy Cafés are a **process**, not a one-off event
- Student voices provide legitimacy to policy work
- Interprofessional dialogue strengthens policy quality
- Policy development is iterative, participatory, and collective