

THE ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN COELIAC SOCIETIES

THE EU YOUTH STRATEGY POST 2027



AOECS
Association of European Coeliac Societies



POSITION
PAPER

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH COELIAC DISEASE TO THRIVE, PARTICIPATE AND LEAD

The Association of European Coeliac Societies (AOECS) welcomes the development of the next EU Youth Strategy and the opportunity to ensure that the voices of young people, including those living with chronic health conditions, such as young coeliac patients, are reflected in future EU policies.

Young people with coeliac disease face unique challenges that affect their health, education, social participation, mobility, employment opportunities and overall well-being.

The [next EU Youth Strategy](#) should adopt a holistic and inclusive approach that recognises health as a prerequisite for participation and ensures that no young person is left behind.



AOECS
PRIORITIES
FOR THE NEXT
EU YOUTH
STRATEGY



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AOECS PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT EU YOUTH STRATEGY

PROMOTE YOUTH HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Health and well-being should be at the heart of the next EU Youth Strategy. For young people living with coeliac disease, access to safe food, appropriate healthcare, timely and accurate diagnosis, and mental health support are essential to enabling their full participation in education, employment, and social life.

The transition from adolescence to adulthood, particularly between the ages of 18 and 30, can present additional challenges, as the psychological and social impacts of managing a lifelong condition often become more pronounced during this period of increasing independence and responsibility.

AOECS calls for:

- **Greater recognition of invisible disabilities and chronic health conditions.**
- **Improved access to mental health and well-being support.**
- **Integration of health considerations across education, employment, mobility and social policies.**
- **Stronger efforts to reduce inequalities affecting young people with chronic conditions.**

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AOECS PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT EU YOUTH STRATEGY

BUILD AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE EUROPE

Many young people with coeliac disease experience barriers to participation in education, social activities, travel, volunteering and employment due to dietary restrictions, limited awareness and inadequate accommodation of their needs.

The next EU Youth Strategy should:

- **Promote equal opportunities for young people with chronic health conditions and fewer opportunities.**
- **Address barriers to participation in mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ and other European initiatives.**
- **Foster inclusive environments in schools, universities, workplaces and youth activities.**
- **Strengthen awareness and understanding of coeliac disease and other invisible conditions.**





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AOECS PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT EU YOUTH STRATEGY

INTEGRATE THE YOUTH DIMENSION INTO HEALTH, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH POLICIES

The perspectives of young people, including those living with chronic conditions such as coeliac disease, should be systematically integrated into policy areas that have a significant impact on their lives.

AOECS identifies the following priority areas:

- **Health and well-being.**
- **Education, training, employment and entrepreneurship.**
- **Research and innovation.**

This approach will help ensure that future policies are responsive to the needs, aspirations and realities of young people with coeliac disease across Europe.

LOOKING
AHEAD

LOOKING AHEAD

AOECS believes that the next EU Youth Strategy should empower young people not only as beneficiaries of policy but also as active contributors to Europe's future.

By prioritising health, inclusion and equal opportunities, the European Union can create conditions in which all young people, including those living with chronic conditions such as coeliac disease, can thrive, participate fully in society and realise their potential.

Through its youth network, [Coeliac Youth of Europe](#), AOECS has a long-standing commitment to supporting young leaders and ensuring that young people with coeliac disease are represented in decisions that affect their future.

We stand ready to contribute to the implementation of a more inclusive, equitable and youth-centred European agenda.



ABOUT AOECS

AOECS is an independent, non-profit organization. Since 1988, we have been dedicated to improving the lives of people affected by coeliac disease. AOECS represents 40 European national coeliac member societies and seven affiliated coeliac organizations from outside of Europe.

Coeliac disease (also spelled celiac disease) is an autoimmune disorder in which cereals containing gluten trigger an inflammatory reaction in the small intestine.

It is estimated that around 100 million people worldwide suffer from coeliac disease. However, only about 25% of them have received a diagnosis; the rest are either unaware of their condition or suffer from various related ailments.

If left untreated, the disease can lead to a severely reduced quality of life and symptoms such as infertility, osteoporosis and chronic fatigue.

As of today, the only known cure for coeliac disease is a lifelong, strict gluten-free diet.

Read more on www.aoecs.org



Young girl overwhelmed by the selection at a gluten-free festival in the Netherlands.