

Integrating coeliac disease into Europe's food and health strategies: AOECS call for action for the Food Drink Partnership Days 2026

Coeliac disease is far from a marginal condition. **Affecting an estimated 1-2% of Europeans**, with up to **80% remaining undiagnosed**, it represents a significant yet **under-recognised public health and societal challenge** across the continent.

Coeliac disease is a **cross-sector issue that connects healthcare systems, mental health and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), food systems, workforce participation, and social inclusion**. Despite progress in awareness and regulation, people living with coeliac disease continue to face uneven conditions across Europe, including delayed diagnosis, inconsistent awareness and training among healthcare professionals, limited access to affordable gluten-free foods, and fragmented support and reimbursement schemes.

Recognising coeliac disease within existing European food and health strategies offers a practical opportunity to improve health outcomes, strengthen food system inclusivity, and reduce avoidable economic and social costs. Addressing coeliac disease does not require new structures, but stronger integration into current initiatives and coordinated action across sectors. AOECS calls on policymakers, industry actors, healthcare professionals, researchers, civil society and other patient organisations, to **work together around 4 priority areas**:



Embed coeliac disease within mental health and NCDs strategies

Coeliac disease is a chronic autoimmune condition requiring lifelong treatment and should be systematically reflected within European discussions on non-communicable diseases and mental health. Early diagnosis, multidisciplinary care, and stronger monitoring are essential to reduce long-term complications, improve quality of life, and lower healthcare system costs.



Strengthen health workforce skills

Healthcare professionals play a critical role in reducing underdiagnosis and improving patient outcomes, yet training remains inconsistent across Europe. Disparities exist not only between Member States, but also across regions, healthcare systems, hospitals, and local care settings, leading to uneven diagnosis and management pathways.



Ensure inclusive food systems

A competitive and resilient European food system must reflect the diversity of consumer needs, including those requiring medically necessary diets. AOECS maintains robust food safety schemes, developed by and for people with coeliac disease, and works closely with the food industry and HORECA sector to ensure that a safe gluten-free diet is accessible across Europe, whether in restaurants, hospitals or supermarkets.



Reduce the financial burden

The price gap between gluten-free and conventional products remains substantial across Europe, placing a disproportionate burden on individuals and families.

1

Explicitly address mental health outcomes, socioeconomic impacts, and stigma associated with coeliac disease through improved monitoring, awareness, and integrated care approaches.

2

Improve training, harmonise clinical pathways, and support exchange of expertise to reduce underdiagnosis and improve patient care.

3

Promote affordable and safe gluten-free options, strengthen labelling and compliance, and integrate coeliac considerations into food policy and sustainability frameworks.

4

Support equitable access through national and European measures such as fiscal incentives, reimbursement approaches, and exchange of best practices.

Key actions

Time for joint EU action: Coeliac disease at the heart of Europe's political agenda

Integrating coeliac disease into Europe's food and health strategies requires coordinated action across governance levels and sectors. Recognising coeliac disease as a cross-cutting issue and embedding coeliac-relevant measures into existing frameworks, policies, and practices is the first step towards a more equitable, resilient, and inclusive system that supports the wellbeing and participation of millions of citizens.