

JOINT STATEMENT

A collective call to action on tackling iodine deficiency in Europe

25 March 2025

Iodine is essential for human health, playing a crucial role in thyroid function, metabolism, cognitive development, and growth. Adequate iodine intake is particularly vital for pregnant women, infants, children, and adolescents. Yet, despite well-documented health risks—including impaired brain development, impaired growth, goitre, and thyroid disorders—iodine deficiency remains largely overlooked by policymakers and the public.

The first EUthyroid project (2016-2018) revealed alarming findings: up to 50% of newborns in Europe are at risk of iodine deficiency, and do not reach their full cognitive potential due to insufficient iodine intake. This represents a major but preventable public health issue. Despite these risks, most European countries lack dedicated policies to prevent iodine deficiency disorders, and no harmonised framework exists across the European Union (EU).

Recognising the urgency of this issue, 65 organisations, including patient groups, healthcare professionals, scientists, and industry representatives, endorsed the Krakow Declaration on Iodine¹, calling for decisive political action. However, progress has been slow, and iodine deficiency remains widespread across Europe.

In 2023, EUthyroid2 was launched to build on the first EUthyroid initiative, aiming to improve iodine knowledge and intake, particularly among children, adolescents, and young women. The WHO-IGN 2024 report² later confirmed that changes in diet and lifestyle are threatening a re-emergence of the problem in parts of Europe, with pregnant women being especially vulnerable. To address this, the Iodine Coalition Europe (ICE) was established in 2025 as a multi-stakeholder partnership bringing together iodine nutrition experts, representatives from the salt, food, and iodine industries, experts in research and endocrinology, and organisations with global reach to promote the use of iodised salt in processed foods and advance iodine nutrition initiatives. While salt iodisation is a safe, effective, and affordable solution, several obstacles hinder the wider use of iodised salt in Europe.

¹ The Krakow Declaration on Iodine - Tasks and Responsibilities for Prevention Programs Targeting Iodine Deficiency Disorders, The EUthyroid Consortium. Available on: <https://tinyurl.com/3eph8xvj>

² Prevention and control of iodine deficiency in the WHO European Region adapting to changes in diet and lifestyle, World Health Organization (WHO) and Iodine Global Network (IGN), 2024. Available on: <https://tinyurl.com/5t2stys7>

A call for coordinated action

Food fortification—adding iodine to ingredients and/or foods—has proven to be an effective strategy for combating iodine deficiency. However, inconsistent national policies across the EU are undermining these efforts. To ensure that all European citizens have adequate iodine intake, a harmonised approach is needed.

As Members of the European Parliament, we call for urgent action from the European Commission and national governments to:

- Recognise the essential role of iodine in human nutrition and health.
- Recognise iodine deficiency as a public health priority in Europe.
- Review national policies on salt iodisation to remove intra-community trade barriers and provide legal certainty for commercial operators
- Simplify labelling to encourage the use of iodised salt in food production.
- Provide a uniform interpretation of the EU Fortification Regulation to ensure harmonised enforcement among Member States.
- Ensure that the current EU conversation on setting maximum levels for vitamins and minerals does not introduce new barriers to salt iodisation.
- Monitor dietary iodine intake at the national level across Europe

Stronger EU-wide regulations and monitoring mechanisms are essential to protect public health and ensure that future generations do not suffer the consequences of preventable iodine deficiency.

We kindly ask the Members of the European Parliament to actively engage in this important public health issue and support policies that promote the health and well-being of European citizens. **The time to act is now.**