

Dementia in Swiss healthcare policy

Healthcare policy in Switzerland is characterised by federalism, subsidiarity and liberalism, with a range of actors responsible for the delivery of healthcare. In this article, the Coordination Unit of the National Dementia Platform gives an overview of the place of dementia in healthcare policy in Switzerland.



nationale plattform demenz
plateforme nationale démence
piattaforma nazionale demenza

Special features of Swiss healthcare policy

Healthcare policy in Switzerland, with its 26 cantons and four language regions, is characterised by federalism, subsidiarity and liberalism: The Confederation, cantons, municipalities and private actors share responsibility for high-quality healthcare. This can lead to differences in the care provided to the population, while also allowing for customised solutions to address the specific needs of each region.

The federal government only takes on tasks for which there is an explicit constitutional or federal legal basis. The Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) is responsible for the implementation of over 20 laws, for example health and accident insurance. The cantons have their own healthcare legislation and are responsible for healthcare provision (e.g. hospital care, long-term care). They have a great deal of freedom to act, which however also depends on their financial resources.

Both health and social policies are of great importance in the field of dementia. At the federal level, the Federal Social Insurance Office has competences that are complementary to health policy, for example with regard to care services for people with dementia.

The importance of dementia in Swiss health policy

Dementia is one of the leading causes of death and the main reason for the need for long-term care in Switzerland. Due to demographic ageing, the number of people affected

is increasing, with individual and social consequences. Dementia is therefore being taken seriously in Swiss healthcare policy.

In order to ensure the best possible care and support for people with dementia, their caregivers and the professionals involved, the FOPH, together with the cantons, has implemented a national dementia strategy. After six years, this strategy has been transferred to the National Dementia Platform.

The need to provide sufficient, high-quality and affordable services for people with dementia is constantly increasing. In addition, the large number of actors in health and social services requires effective collaboration to provide the necessary support.

Retrospect: The National Dementia Strategy

With the National Dementia Strategy 2014 - 2019, the federal government and the cantons, together with the municipalities, professional associations, patient organisations and service provider associations, have given the topic of dementia a national framework.

A number of products have been developed that still serve as important references for professionals today. They help stakeholders to raise public awareness, optimise services (e.g. the quality of advice, support, care and treatment) and enhance the skills of professionals.

Many cantons have developed their own dementia strategies based on the national strategy, some of which have led to municipal strategies. This demonstrates the trickle-down effect of national strategies within a federal framework.

Current status: The National Dementia Platform

The federal government and the cantons are aligned in their view that, despite the achievements of the dementia strategy, there is still a need for further action to ensure optimal care for people with dementia. The National Dementia Platform has therefore been established. It supports the ongoing work on solutions and focuses in particular on the following areas:

- Developing and updating key documents (incl. products of the strategy)
- Supporting the dissemination and implementation of these documents in practice
- Promoting networking among stakeholders (e.g. organising networking events, collecting inspiring dementia projects at: <https://www.bag-blueprint.ch>).

The platform has 88 member organisations, including all cantons and national organisations such as Alzheimer Switzerland.

In addition, the platform is committed to ensuring that dementia is taken into account in other areas of federal policy ("dementia mainstreaming"). For example, it recently succeeded in securing four years of financial support for dementia prevention projects along the health pathway. Overall, the National Dementia Platform acts as a soft law format that is committed to providing the best possible care for people with dementia, their caregivers and the professionals involved, as long as it can support the stakeholders in their work.

More information on the National Dementia Platform is available at

- DE: <https://www.bag.admin.ch/demenz>
FR: <https://www.ofsp.admin.ch/demence>
IT: <https://www.ufsp.admin.ch/demenza>