

Launch of EAPC Atlas of Palliative Care in the European Region 2025: 10 Key Insights Shaping the Future

1. In Europe, more than half of the countries do not teach palliative care to future doctors and nurses at university level. Fifteen countries are already leading the way by including palliative care training in all medical schools.
2. Access to essential pain relief medicines remains profoundly unequal in Europe. While in Western Europe their use is high and widespread, in Central and Eastern Europe it is up to ten times lower, reflecting an unacceptable gap in the relief of suffering according to place of birth.
3. There are already more than 7,000 specialised palliative care services in Europe, present in 52 countries. Although growth since 2019 has been modest - around 10% - the trend is positive. However, there are still large differences: the countries with the most resources have twice as many services per inhabitant as the European average, which is around one per 100,000 people. Even so, access to care continues to progress step by step across the continent.
4. Only 15 European countries - just one in four - have a national palliative care strategy that has been updated and evaluated within the last five years. In a context of growing need and with medicine increasingly prepared to respond to complex situations, it is difficult to understand why most governments do not have an up-to-date national plan. Policy makers do not directly alleviate suffering, but they do have an obligation to plan, coordinate and create the conditions to make such relief possible and accessible to all.
5. The 2025 edition of the Atlas of Palliative Care in Europe represents a leap in quality compared to previous editions. It provides the most comprehensive and accurate portrait to date of the situation on the continent, and allows a better understanding of what is happening in each country. This substantial improvement is due to a more rigorous methodology, the use of the new WHO conceptual framework, internationally recognised indicators and the participation of more than 200 experts specifically trained for this task. The Atlas is available free of charge in the repository of the University of Navarra and also in printed format on demand. Its visual design, with maps, graphs and infographics, has been conceived to serve as a practical tool for advocacy and awareness-raising in all countries.
6. More than 4 million people die each year in Europe with severe health-related suffering, including more than 100,000 children. Many of these cases could be alleviated with adequate access to palliative care.

7. Cancer causes 43% of deaths in Europe, followed by cardiovascular diseases (17%), dementia (8%) and lung diseases (7%). These four conditions account for three out of four deaths and require the most palliative care.
8. Specialised paediatric palliative care services, while still rare, have increased their presence: they now exist in 41 countries in Europe, up from 38 in 2019.
9. Austria has become the ninth country in Europe to pass a specific national law on palliative care. The new legislation not only recognises palliative care as a right, but also guarantees its public funding.
10. Medical specialisation in palliative care is already an established reality in most Western European countries. The great exception is Spain, where there is still no official recognition of this specialised training.