

PRESS RELEASE

EUROPE'S CANCER CARERS LACK SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION

Brussels, 19 October 2017 – The European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC) and Eurocarers released their White Paper on Cancer Carers at a launch event in the European Parliament today, with the support of Member of the European Parliament Heinz K. Becker (EPP, Austria), co-chair of the Parliament's Interest Group on Carers. The White Paper reveals a troubling contradiction between the tremendous contribution that cancer carers make to European health systems and the insufficient support they receive in return. Throughout Europe, cancer carers are lacking paid leave, adequate training, financial assistance, psychological support and flexible working arrangements.

The sustainability of health systems depends on informal carers, as they provide around 80% of care across Europe. Yet their vital role is often unrecognized and wholly unregulated. The White Paper demonstrates the urgent need to establish a robust policy framework to address cancer carers' rights and needs.

Joined by his colleagues Theresa Griffin (S&D, UK) and Jana Zitnanska (ECR, Slovakia), MEP Becker urged European and national policymakers to use the full breadth of tools at their disposal to recognize, support and protect carers as a matter of urgency. "We must depart from the current caring framework defined by duty and need, and build a framework that provides carers with flexibility, security and choice," Becker said.

The White Paper makes proposals about what that framework could look like, with recommendations for national and EU policymakers to intervene across employment, social, health and education policy to provide people with cancer and their carers a proper quality of life. To achieve this goal, it identifies four core principles: identification, valuation, compensation and support of carers. These should be included in national strategic health and employment plans, as well as in social protection and inclusion policies. "To be successful, policies targeted at the wellbeing and social inclusion of carers should take into account the interplay between a broad set of social, employment and care policies: these issues cannot be separated from each other!", stated Claire Champeix, representing Eurocarers.

ECPC President Francesco De Lorenzo, meanwhile, highlighted the fact that "the care that friends and relatives provide to loved ones across Europe cannot be replaced, nor should it be. The White Paper shows that choice and comprehensive support for carers will improve the resilience of European health systems and establish a fairer, more productive economy."

Caregiving represents an enormous cost saving to health systems. Of the €126 billion cancer cost the EU in 2009, patients and their families carried a staggering of €75 billion. In the United Kingdom alone, the care provided unpaid by carers has been estimated at £119 billion per year, considerably more than the total spending on the National Health Service. The ageing population and growing burden of disease in Europe means that without appropriate compensation and support for carers, this structure of care risks collapse.

Public health stakeholders at the event called on EU Institutions and Member States to do more in support of carers, pointing to the proposed directive on work-life balance for parents and carers in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The directive notably suggests that workers should have the right to five days of paid carers' leave per year, and that parents and workers with caring responsibilities should have the right to request flexible working arrangements. ECPC and Eurocarers argue that it should be adopted without being watered down and serve as a basis for developing ambitious strategies for carers at

national level. The event also highlighted best practices from Member States, including the work of support group MammaHELP in the Czech Republic and the 2014 Commitment to Carers pledge by the NHS England.

-----ENDS-----

Press contact: Lydia Makaroff, Director European Cancer Patient Coalition lydia.makaroff@ecpc.org

Follow us on Twitter: [@cancereu](https://twitter.com/cancereu)

Follow the Twitter conversation: [#CancerCarers](https://twitter.com/CancerCarers)

Download the White Paper at:

<http://www.ecpc.org/activities/policy-and-advocacy/policy-initiatives/carers>

NOTES TO EDITORS

An **informal carer** is a person who provides unpaid care to someone with a chronic illness, disability or other long-lasting health or care need, outside a professional or formal framework. The term “informal” underlines the difference between ‘in-patient care’ provided by healthcare professionals and the care provided outside of those formal settings.

About the European Cancer Patient Coalition

The European Cancer Patient Coalition is the largest European cancer patients' umbrella organization.

The European Cancer Patient Coalition is the voice of cancer patients in Europe. With over 400 members, ECPC is Europe's largest umbrella cancer patients' association, covering all 28 EU member states and many other European and non-European countries. The European Cancer Patient Coalition represents patients affected by all types of cancers, from the rarest to the most common.

Website: <http://www.ecpc.org>

Email: Lydia.Makaroff@ecpc.org

About Eurocarers

Eurocarers brings together carers' organisations as well as relevant universities & research institutes.

Eurocarers network works to ensure that care is valued, and unpaid care is recognised as central to the sustainability of health and long term care systems. Eurocarers believes that carers' know-how and needs are worth listening to and people should have the right to choose freely whether they want to be a carer, and to what extent they want to be involved in caring.

Website: <http://eurocarers.org/>

Email: info@eurocarers.org