



A Call to Action: A Mandate for Improved Cancer Care for the European Citizen

In Europe, three Europeans died from cancer every minute in 2012.

The recently released WHO Europe report *“European Health Report 2012: Charting the way to well-being”*, highlights that cancer has replaced cardiovascular disease as the leading cause of premature death in 28 of 53 European nations.¹ The just published EUROCARE-5 study, a pan European study on cancer outcomes, emphasises the significant disparities in cancer mortality that exist between different European nations.²

The disparities in cancer mortality have their roots in inequities in health between European countries and even in regions of the same country. During the last few years, the economic crisis in Europe has exacerbated the already existing health inequities, depriving cancer patients of the care that they need.

The increasing cancer burden that we experience in Europe will have a profound impact not only on patients and their families, but it will also be a significant challenge for our healthcare systems and for the future economic competitiveness of Europe. The ageing of the European population is leading to an exponentially increasing cancer trajectory such that, within our lifetime, a European citizen will succumb to this deadly disease every 10 seconds. In order to halt this impending cancer epidemic, we must act now!

On World Cancer Day February 4th 2014, the European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC) and its 342 members across Europe, in partnership with the European Cancer Concord (ECC), urge the MEPs and the European Parliament:

1. To make cancer a priority on the political agenda and to address the disparities that cancer patients and families face every single day of their lives throughout Europe;
2. To actively support the implementation of an EU Cancer Plan ;
3. To support the right of European citizens to an optimal standard of cancer care wherever they live and irrespective of their income;

4. To engage proactively with the European Cancer Concord (ECC), an equal partnership involving patients, patient advocates and cancer healthcare leaders from across Europe ;
5. To adopt the principles of the European Cancer Patients Bill of Rights, a charter for change in cancer care in Europe;
6. To strengthen a cross party MEPs against Cancer (M.A.C.) alliance so that it soon qualifies to become an EU Parliament interest group to actively represent cancer related issues;
7. To encourage and intervene for the establishment of a European Cancer Survivorship Plan, to address the needs of the more than 14 million European citizens, living with cancer.

We call on

8. Prospective incoming members of the European Parliament to place cancer firmly and transparently within their election mandate and to join the MEPs against Cancer (M.A.C.) group
9. The European Commission to:
 - a. place cancer high on the political agenda,
 - b. support research excellence in cancer and it's translation for measurable benefits for European cancer patients
 - c. present an EU Action Plan on Cancer according to Article 20 of the Council Conclusions on reducing the burden of cancer (Luxembourg, 10 June 2008): *“which will address all aspects of comprehensive cancer control, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care through a multidisciplinary approach and consider the appropriate framework for effective cancer control policies and sharing best practices in cancer prevention and care”*.

We emphasise the need for the European Parliament and the European Commission to both listen to and respond to the voice of European cancer patients.

Cancer does not respect national borders, it knows no boundaries, either geographical or social - it affects all parts of our society. It is not a problem of any single nation; we must all contribute to the solution. Therefore, as Europeans we must stand together, Patients, Health Care Professionals, Researchers, Industry and Politicians, united in our goal to address our common enemy – Cancer.

¹ World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe. (2013)

² De Angelis R, Sant M, Coleman MP et al. *Lancet Oncol* (2014)