

Press Release

## MEPs joined forces for the kick-off meeting of the Challenge Cancer Intergroup

Brussels, 28 October 2020

On Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2020, a **virtual meeting of the EU Parliamentary Intergroup on Cancer “Challenge Cancer”** was held to discuss the agenda with the proposed activities for 2021, aiming to address new challenges related to cancer care in Europe. The Intergroup discussed also projects aligned with the forthcoming Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan and with the Cancer Mission’s concept in Research and Innovation.

MEP Alessandra Moretti, the Co-Chair of the Intergroup stressed during the meeting that *“we can be effective if we translate our discussions into concrete legislative measures. In order to do so, we need to coordinate our efforts towards collaborating in the activities of the different committees in the European Parliament. Therefore, it is important to link the activities of the ChallengeCancer Intergroup with the work of the BECA Special Committee, ENVI, ITRE and others.”*

ECPC Past President and Scientific Committee Chair Francesco de Lorenzo, who led the preparation of the thematic agenda and presented it at the kick-off meeting added: *“The direction that we were following when building the agenda was that of the Mission on Cancer and of the European Cancer Plan. These both are strong guides and the best way to take our documents and ideas and translate them into concrete legislation.”*

The Intergroup agreed to hold, with a possible date in early December, an event addressing rare cancers. On this occasion, the members of the Intergroup will discuss measures to ensure the timely and appropriate implementation of the EU Joint Action on Rare Cancers (JARC) recommendations of the “Rare Cancer Agenda 2030” and request the full implementation of the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive and the support of the four European Reference Networks (ERNs) for cancer in the interest of rare cancer patients.

In future meetings, the Intergroup aims to address cancer patients’ challenges in times of COVID-19 and the role of policy makers in ensuring more sustainable European public health systems that will be able to cope with future crises. *“We urgently need to identify measures and actions to implement in all EU Member States in order to help the strained EU health systems after the COVID-19 pandemic with a particular focus on patients with cancer. We believe that immediate policy interventions are crucial to mitigate the direct and indirect effects on EU cancer patients caused by the pandemic,”* said MEP Cristian Busoi, the Chair of the Intergroup.

*“There is a great need to ensure that lessons learnt from the beginning of the pandemic will guide policy measures assuring the continuity of cancer care, among the rising cases of*

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*covid-19 infections within the EU. There is a need to promote a more comprehensive cancer treatment protocol, eliminating unnecessary bureaucratic procedures with the use of digital health, which should assure continuity of care on an outpatient basis, while integrating innovative therapies and access to all cancer treatment modalities.”* added Kathi Apostolidis, the President of European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC) that serves as a Secretariat of the Intergroup.

In order to develop and assess the implementation of Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, members agreed on involving cancer research, prevention/health care and cancer patient communities at all stages of policymaking, as well as moving towards evidence-based predictive and personalized cancer medicine. Environmental factors causing cancer were also highlighted to address the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (CMD), new legislation on pharmaceuticals in the environment and the implementation of the recent Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability. Besides, as legislative protection of outdoor workers from UV radiation is still lacking, the Intergroup intends to work on this topic too

Early cancer diagnosis ensures the best possible treatment and outcome, therefore advocating at a European level for biosimilars and policy measures became a necessity, as cancer patients have the fundamental right to optimal care, equal access to medicine and new innovative treatments, and participation in clinical trials. Moreover, the Intergroup called the attention to cancer-related complications and comorbidities and the need to be considered an individual pillar in the EU Cancer Plan.

Further actions will also be taken related to personalized medicine and biomarkers, survivorship care, social disparities, and efficiency in cancer care, as well as particular attention to digitalisation.

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**THE END**

#### **About the Challenge Cancer Intergroup:**

The new European Parliament Challenge Cancer Intergroup is the first and only EU Parliamentary Intergroup on cancer, conceived by the ECPC and chaired by MEP Cristian Silviu Buşoi. It was created with the ultimate goal of ensuring continuity in the European Parliament’s work on cancer during the previous and the current mandates.

The Intergroup acts as a two-way communication channel by holding hearings and debates and leading fact-finding missions on salient topics such as prevention, access to treatment, medicine shortages, cancer research on quality of life, innovation in cancer care, and survivorship. Therefore, it is shaped as a forum for MEPs from all political parties to engage in dialogue with patients, cancer survivors, carers, scientific and medical societies, research institutions, think tanks, medical practitioners and researchers, policy makers and leaders of the health industry, civil society at large, national governments, and institutions.

Group members:

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Chair: MEP Cristian Buşoi  
Co-chair: MEP Alessandra Moretti  
Co-chair: MEP Aldo Patriciello  
Co-chair: MEP Frédérique Ries

List of all members of the intergroup is available [here](#).

### **About the European Cancer Patient Coalition**

European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC) is the voice of cancer patients in Europe. With over 450 members, ECPC is Europe's largest umbrella cancer patients' association, covering all 28 EU member states and many other European and non-European countries. ECPC represents patients affected by all types of cancers, from the most common to the rarest.

ECPC plays the role of the mediator between the EU Parliamentary Intergroup on Cancer and civil society at large. In its capacity as the Secretariat of the intergroup, ECPC provides the members with access to real patient experience and a variety of European and national cancer stakeholders, while allowing citizens to express their needs directly to European policymakers.

### **Notes to editors:**

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