



European Cancer Patient Coalition



ECPC statement on significant health and research budget cuts in the multiannual financial framework (MFF)

Sorely tried health sector got another blow

ECPC believes that the outcome of the European Council summit deciding on budget cuts in MFF is regrettable, and we have serious concerns that the depleted budget is unlikely to meet the EU cancer patients' expectations or successfully implement ambitious health policies and innovations in cancer healthcare within the whole EU.

Deal!

On Tuesday 21st July 2020, EU heads of Member States struck a deal on the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 and coronavirus recovery plan. Despite the coronavirus pandemic revealed weaknesses of each Member State's health system what seemed to be the

from the proposed €9.4 billion to €1.7 billion. The Horizon Europe Programme funding research was degraded from €94.4 billion to €80.9 billion.

Health is a driver for economic growth and development

Cuts to public health services are short-sighted and represent a false economy, with substantial opportunity costs. Investing in health is rewarding, a systematic review published in the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* concludes that for every €1 spent on public health citizens save an extra €15 on the investment.^[1]

The European cancer community started the year with the vision that with a changed approach focusing on prevention and research, with a new data strategy and equality in treatment across Europe, we could beat cancer^[2]. The European Commission recognized cancer as one of the main priorities on the health domain and when the pandemic hit Europe hard, the whole world realized how essential health is. Heading now to the obscure economic crisis underlines the importance to the economy of a healthy population. This was the wake-up call our leaders terribly missed.

The same leaders that demanded an immediate EU action on health just a few months ago are now showing us that health is still not the priority.

Cancer Patients Call

The European cancer community in particular is worried about expected subsequent waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two large studies published in *The Lancet* last May examined how cancer patients are affected by SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Both studies pointed out a high rate of mortality among COVID-19 patients who also suffer from cancer. The first study analysed data on more than 900 COVID-19 and cancer patients from the United States, Canada, and Spain and found that 13% died ^[3], while the second study looked at 800 UK patients with COVID-19 and cancer and found that 28% died. It appears that mortality from COVID-19 in cancer patients is mainly driven by age, gender, and comorbidities.^[4]

We call on European institutions and EU Member States' leaders to reconsider the current decision on budget allocation on health and research and we urge them to place health where it belongs, that is in the center of strategic priorities. Building on the lesson the pandemic taught us, ECPC believes health merits more investments. We should not wait for another health crisis to remind us this.

[1] Masters R, Anwar E, Collins B, Cookson R, Capewell S. Return on investment of public health interventions: a systematic review. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 2017 Aug 1;71(8):827-34. Available at: <https://jech.bmj.com/content/71/8/827>

[2] Press Release 4.2.2020: European Commission launches EU-wide public consultation on Europe's Beating Cancer Plan https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_154

[3] Kuderer NM, Choueiri TK, Shah DP, Shyr Y, Rubinstein SM, Rivera DR, Shete S, Hsu CY, Desai A, de Lima Lopes Jr G, Grivas P. Clinical impact of COVID-19 on patients with cancer (CCC19): a cohort study. *The Lancet*. 2020 May 28. Available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31187-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31187-9/fulltext)

[4] Lee LY, Cazier JB, Starkey T, Turnbull CD, Team UC, Kerr R, Middleton G. COVID-19 mortality

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in patients with cancer on chemotherapy or other anticancer treatments: a prospective cohort study. *The Lancet*. 2020 May 28. Available at:

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31173-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31173-9/fulltext)

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Rue Montoyer 40

Brussels 1000

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