

# Together in Europe we can defeat cancer

## Press Release

**One day before the World Cancer Day, the European Commission launches the much-awaited Europe's Beating Cancer Plan as the EU's response to the growing burden of cancer deaths. European Cancer Patient Coalition is pleased to see that the fight against cancer remains a top priority for the European Commission despite the unprecedented reach and proportion of the coronavirus health crisis.**

### **Mission: Fighting cancer together**

ECPC applauds particularly to the comprehensiveness of the Plan that aims to tackle the entire disease's pathway: from cancer prevention and early detection to treatment and survivorship. Moreover, we welcome that the Plan addresses the debilitating [cancer complications and comorbidities](#) that have impact on the quality of life of cancer patients and are in many cases fatal and still too often neglected in policy and research.

ECPC notes with satisfaction that the Plan *"places the interests and well-being of patients, their families and the wider population at its heart, every step of the way."*<sup>1</sup> Patient centricity together with the improvement of health literacy, reduction of tobacco use, equal access to medicine and innovation, are promising actions to effectively tackle the cancer burden across Europe. Actions that will help revert the dramatic trend of cancer becoming the leading cause of death in Europe.

We believe that the National Comprehensive Cancer Centres together with the European Reference Networks (ERNs) are the backbone of a well-functioning Plan and essential tools to battle the unacceptable inequalities across the EU. We welcome the planned cross-border cooperation of these establishments that will surely contribute to address inequalities and ultimately benefit all cancer patients.

Regarding cancer survivorship, ECPC stresses a lack of ambition in promoting the EU values of solidarity, equality, social inclusion, and wellbeing of citizens. Some priorities were identified in the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan Roadmap and need to be tackled. Moreover, to facilitate access to financial services for cancer survivors, ECPC strongly believes the best solution possible would be the recognition of the Right to be Forgotten for cancer survivors in all EU Member States. Although appropriate solutions facilitating access to financial services are considered, the EU Commission does not promote a legal framework coherent and consistent with the consumers rights and the EU Treaties.

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<sup>1</sup> EU's Beating Cancer Plan 2021:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/non\\_communicable\\_diseases/docs/eu\\_cancer-plan\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/non_communicable_diseases/docs/eu_cancer-plan_en.pdf)

## How to measure success?

Last year, ECPC joined forces with European Cancer Organisation (E.C.O.) and European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries (EFPIA) to propose a European Cancer Dashboard to support the implementation of the Plan. The principles presented back-then have potential to uplift the Plan and to monitor success.

*“As much as we are thrilled to see that Europe is planning to take radical steps to end the rising burden of cancer, it is equally important to ensure the effective implementation of the Plan. We have to act now to reverse the rising trend of cancer diseases in Europe and the European cancer patient community is ready to support the execution of the plan,”* said Ken Mastris, ECPC President.

## After-COVID era: Reviving cancer care in Europe

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted healthcare systems across Europe, not excluding cancer care and cancer detection. Regrettably, with approximately a 40 per cent drop in diagnoses of cancer in 2020<sup>2</sup> this will negatively affect cancer outcomes in the near future. Moreover, the coronavirus is endangering cancer patients directly, putting them at higher risk for more severe forms of the disease.

While the pandemic has been leading the headlines, we are thankful that the EC President Ursula von der Leyen and Commissioner Stella Kyriakides kept the word they gave us exactly one year ago and that Europe is ready to roll up their sleeves to defeat cancer.

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## 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 27 EU member states and many other European and non-European countries. ECPC represents patients affected by all types of cancers, from the rarest to the most common.

Notes to editors:

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<sup>2</sup> 4. De Vincentiis, L., Carr A., Mariani, M., Ferrara, G., 2020. COVID-19 and Oncology: Service transformation during pandemic: [online] Available at: <https://jcp.bmj.com/content/early/2020/06/19/jclinpath-2020-206833>. [Accessed August 2020]