

Brussels, 24 June 2009

Fighting Cancer: A European partnership is born

Today, the European Commission reinforces its long-term commitment to the fight against cancer by creating a European Partnership for Action against Cancer. The partnership will focus on actions that can be taken at EU level to more effectively prevent and control cancer across Europe. In Europe, one in three people will develop cancer in their lifetime. This translates to 3.2 million people being diagnosed with the disease every year. Cancer is not equally distributed in Europe and the chances of surviving cancer differ greatly between countries. By bringing together all relevant organisations working on cancer, the intention is to identify gaps, address needs and learn from each other.

The European Partnership for Action against Cancer will be launched officially in Brussels in the autumn of 2009, and the Commission hopes that all Member States and stakeholders committed to the European fight against cancer will join this sustainable action to curb the European burden of cancer, by working together - in partnership.

The European Commissioner for Health, Androulla Vassiliou, said: *"Action at European level can make a real difference for cancer patients and their relatives, right across the Union. I hope that the European Partnership marks the beginning of a European movement which galvanises political support and collective action to seriously reduce the cancer rate in Europe."*

European Partnership for Action against Cancer

The Partnership aims to support countries in their efforts to tackle cancer by providing a framework for identifying and sharing information, capacity and expertise in cancer prevention and control. It aims to engage a wide range of stakeholders, including non governmental organisations, researchers, patients groups, industry and national authorities across the EU in a collective effort and with a common commitment to addressing cancer. This partnership approach will also help to avoid scattered actions and the duplication of efforts by contributing to better use of limited resources available.

Areas and actions in the Partnership

The Communication broadly sets out the objectives for the European Partnership for Action against Cancer. It is, however, intended that the Partnership will determine its key areas and actions through the partnership approach itself. Identified key areas and actions to be further taken forward by the Partnership include:

Health promotion and early detection of cancer

One third of all cancers are preventable, and prevention offers the most cost-effective, long-term strategy for reducing burden of cancer. The Partnership aims to put in place healthy lifestyle interventions and improved early detection of cancer, by achieving 100% population coverage for screening for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer, which can dramatically reduce the impact of the disease and the loss of lives.

Identification and dissemination of good practice in cancer-related health care

By focusing on best practice, the Partnership hopes to encourage a multi-disciplinary and comprehensive approach to cancer-related healthcare, which will ensure a better quality of life for cancer patients. This will help to reduce inequalities in cancer deaths related to health care between different Member States; the Partnership is aiming for a 70% reduction by 2020.

Priorities for cancer research

The Partnership will work towards developing a more coordinated approach to cancer-related research across the EU, with a particular focus on identifying and tackling discrepancies and obstacles in cancer-related research. By doing so, at least one third of all European research efforts should be coordinated by the end of the Partnership.

Health information and data

It is important to continuously collect and analyse information and data on cancer in order to ensure effective public health interventions. To this end, the Partnership will examine current obstacles in the collection of this necessary information and look for solutions – by 2013, comprehensive data for all Member States should be available for the first time.

Background on EU action on Cancer

Since 1985, cancer has been a priority issue for EU public health policy. This priority has been reflected in three successive Europe against Cancer action programmes (1987 to 1989, 1990 to 1994, and 1996 to 2002).

In December 2003, the Council adopted a Recommendation on cancer screening, which sets out fundamental principles of best practice in the early detection of cancer, and invites all Member States to take common action to implement national population-based screening programmes for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer, with appropriate quality assurance at all levels. The Commission has published European guidelines for quality assurance in breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnosis, as benchmarks in this process. On 22nd December 2008, the Commission adopted its Report on the Implementation of the Council Recommendation on cancer screening. ([IP/09/113](#))

European Partnership and further information on EU actions in the field of cancer:

[MEMO/09/293](#)

[MEMO/09/294](#)