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Summary: EUCanScreen Joint Action Marks a Successful First Year Advancing Cancer Screening Across Europe

The **EUCanScreen Joint Action** successfully completed its first year of implementation, marking an important milestone in strengthening and modernising cancer screening programmes across Europe.

Launched under the **EU4Health Programme**, EUCanScreen brings together public health authorities, research institutions and stakeholders from EU Member States and associated countries. The Joint Action aims to support the effective implementation of evidence-based, organised population screening programmes for cancer, in line with European recommendations and the objectives of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

During its first year, EUCanScreen focused on:

- Establishing strong governance and coordination structures at European and national levels
- Mapping existing cancer screening policies, programmes and capacities across participating countries
- Developing common methodological frameworks, tools and indicators to support quality, equity and effectiveness in screening
- Strengthening collaboration and knowledge exchange among national screening authorities and experts

Significant progress was also made in stakeholder engagement, capacity building and the alignment of national efforts with EU-level priorities, ensuring that lessons learned and good practices are shared across borders.

WP progress analytically:

WP3: Evaluation of the project successfully delivered the Data Collection Plan in May 2025, establishing a comprehensive framework for monitoring and evaluating EUCanScreen's progress through Key Performance Indicators and systematic data collection. The team completed analysis of the Turin Consortium Meeting survey and provided feedback to the coordinator. Building on the foundations of the Logic Model, Evaluation Plan, and Key Performance Indicators, WP3 is now positioned to begin process monitoring and interim evaluation activities.

WP4: Sustainability developed innovative concepts, tools, and guidelines to enhance cancer screening in Europe, addressing sustainability, barrier assessment, governance, prioritization, networking, and leadership. The tools will be piloted in selected countries. Workshops on sustainability and leadership as well as targeted-support mechanism will facilitate the practical implementation of EUCanScreen project outcomes.

WP5: Monitoring has created a basis for data harmonisation along European cancer screening programmes by creating common data models for three traditional screening programmes (breast, cervical and colorectal). The data models are implemented into a robust analysis pipeline that will enable both monitoring screening programmes and research using screening data, and that will help screening data holders and research institutions to develop future EHDS compatibility.

WP6: Addressing barriers and facilitators in cancer screening has progressed work across multiple tasks addressing barriers to cancer screening. Task 6.1 is piloting a barrier assessment tool originally developed in Task 4.3 to identify implementation challenges in organised screening programmes in eight countries, while Task 6.2 has conducted a colorectal cancer screening workshop in Vienna focusing on systemic barriers. Task 6.3 is carrying out a large systematic review and data analyses on individual barriers to screening participation, and Task 6.4 has selected migrant background groups, including Ukrainian, Polish, Thai and Filipino populations, for testing culturally adapted interventions. Task 6.5 has completed a systematic review and developed a European memorandum calling for improved cancer screening for people with intellectual disabilities, while Task 6.6 has collected survey data across European countries on legislation and practices related to screening for gender minorities. Task

6.7 has delivered training activities on health literacy and communication, Task 6.8 has started to compile results from all WP6 tasks to be translated into practical, evidence-based tools in the EUCanScreen toolkit.

WP7: Implementation research to improve the existing screening programmes has launched a quality assurance and patient-reported outcome survey and is preparing data extraction for a scoping review on interval cancer methodologies. Expert working groups are actively developing a knowledge base to inform future AI guidelines. Surveys on innovative invitation strategies and self-sampling in cervical screening have been deployed. Finally, web-based decision aids have been mapped to inform the design of a new mock-up.

WP8: Facilitation of the new screening approach implementation in February this year, held a successful in-person meeting with all pilot sites in Rotterdam to discuss progress, challenges, and shared approaches. In total, 10 pilots are planned, of which 5 have already started. The remaining pilots are preparing to launch soon. WP8 is closely collaborating with PRAISE-U to ensure alignment and knowledge exchange.

WP9: Risk-based approaches deals with cancer screening risk-based approaches to support Member States to appropriately apply it within their organised programmes. Two surveys on the adoption of risk-based approaches and related communication modalities in Europe were launched: a preliminary analysis showed unsatisfactory response rate and both the surveys were re-opened for countries that did not respond. The risk-based conceptual framework was finalised and a scientific paper is in development. A literature review on communication on risk-based approaches is ongoing, and the full-text review for a scoping review mapping linkage between primary, secondary and tertiary prevention is underway. A literature review on experimental stratified breast cancer screening as well as a consensus process have been completed and the first draft of the scoping review protocol for personalised cervical cancer screening is now available. Testing of solutions for the shared data analysis of the colorectal QuantiFIT multicenter study is ongoing. Lastly, co-development of 3 new data extraction templates for gastric, prostate and lung cancer experimentations is underway.

In the context of **WP10: Modelling and health technology assessment to optimise cancer screening programs across Europe**, preliminary analyses on how to adapt cervical cancer screening to HPV vaccinated cohorts were conducted. Moreover, models for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer, and for lung, gastric and prostate cancer were calibrated on country-specific data. A prioritisation framework for cancer screening was drafted and revised. Also, four AI pilot cases were identified, and information collection has begun ahead of time. There is ongoing work on a systematic review of studies modelling MCEDs.

Over the past year, **WP11: Capacity-building** has progressed according to plan, with all tasks initiated and advancing, and no major deviations from the Grant Agreement. The work package has delivered substantial progress in strengthening human capacity, training infrastructure, and professional competence across multiple cancer screening domains in Europe. Training frameworks were developed for leadership, physicians, radiologists, endoscopists, gynecologists, and screening specialists; regional training centers were established or operationalized, notably for mammography in Riga and LDCT in Budapest; blended learning models combining e-learning, webinars, face-to-face courses, and train-the-trainer approaches were widely implemented; for gynecologists and upper endoscopists; colonoscopy trainings showed substantial methodological and organisational progress; Minor delays were effectively managed, and WP11 remains on track with strong foundations for sustainable future implementation. All issues were managed within the project governance framework and did not negatively affect WP11's overall implementation or expected outcomes.

As EUCanScreen enters its second year, the Joint Action will build on these foundations to further support countries in improving coverage, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation of cancer screening programmes, with a strong focus on reducing inequalities and improving population health outcomes. EUCanScreen reaffirms its commitment to supporting Member States in delivering high-quality, accessible and sustainable cancer screening for all citizens.