Policy priorities for advancing sustainable cancer screening in Europe



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EUROPE'S BEATING CANCER PLAN - INTRODUCTION

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan is the first comprehensive European action plan against cancer since the early 1990's

It addresses cancer in an integrated, health-in-all-policies and multi-stakeholder approach:

- 4 main pillars: (1) prevention, (2) early detection, (3) diagnosis and treatment, (4) quality of life
- Cross-cutting themes: New technologies, research and innovation, reducing inequalities, paediatric cancer
- 10 flagship initiatives and 32 further actions

EUROPE'S BEATING CANCER PLAN - FUNDING

The Cancer Plan is funded through various programmes, such as EU4Health, Horizon Europe, and Digital Europe.

- EUR 2.7 billion support Member States in strengthening of their health systems

Link to project website

- over EUR 500 million under EU4Health
  - Prevention: 24.5 %
  - Early detection: 19.8 %
  - Diagnosis and treatment: 43.6 %
  - Quality of life: 6.7 %
  - Reducing inequalities: 4.9 %
  - Others: 0.5 %

To note: Not representative, as this is a cross-cutting theme!

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FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES



IMPROVING EARLY DETECTION OF CANCER

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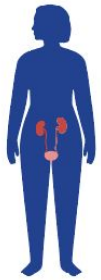
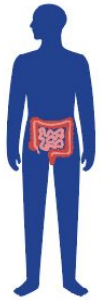
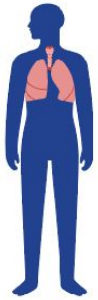
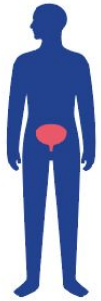
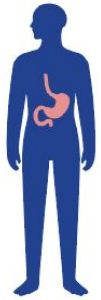
EU Cancer Screening Scheme

- Council Recommendation on cancer screening
- European guidelines and quality assurance schemes
- Improved monitoring and exchange of data

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COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON CANCER SCREENING

Technical annex:

 BREAST CANCER suggesting a lower age limit of 45 and a higher age limit of 74 (standard 50 – 69), plus MRI scans when medically appropriate	 HPV testing for women aged 30 to 65, every 5 years or more, to detect CERVICAL CANCER, taking account of HPV vaccination status	 Triage testing for COLORECTAL CANCER in people aged 50 – 74 through faecal immunochemical testing (FIT) to determine follow-up via endoscopy/colonoscopy
 LUNG CANCER testing for individuals at high risk (i.e. smokers), incl. prevention approaches	 Prostate specific antigen testing for PROSTATE CANCER in men, plus MRI scans for follow-up	 In places with high GASTRIC CANCER incidence and death rates, screening for Helicobacter pylori and surveillance of precancerous stomach lesions

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COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON CANCER SCREENING

- to implement accessible screening programmes in accordance with **European guidelines and quality assurance schemes**, where they exist,
- to facilitate the development of piloting '**risk-stratified cancer screenings**' protocols, guidelines, and indicators for high quality and accessible cancer screening programmes;
- to **adequately train personnel** at all levels to ensure that they are able to deliver high-quality screening.

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COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON CANCER SCREENING

- to take action to ensure **equitable access to screening** taking due account of the possible need to target particular socio-economic and marginalised groups or regions in the country;

- to ensure by appropriate means that **persons with disabilities**, as well as **people living in rural or remote areas**, can access cancer screening services, and that clinical facilities for cancer screening are suitable for persons with disabilities;

- to **report to the Commission on the implementation of this Recommendation** within three years of its adoption and, subsequently, every four years to help follow up on this Recommendation in the Union.

COMMISSION INITIATIVES



Breast cancer guidelines and quality assurance



Cervical cancer guidelines and quality assurance



Colorectal cancer guidelines and quality assurance



Gastric cancer guidelines and quality assurance



Lung cancer guidelines and quality assurance



Prostate cancer guidelines and quality assurance

EUROPE'S BEATING CANCER PLAN – REVIEW

Published in February 2025 to assesses whether the current state of implementation of the Plan will allow to achieve its objectives and to assess their relevance of in light of future needs.

Results:

- Five years after adoption, 90% of actions of the Cancer Plan have been launched or are still ongoing
- Plan remains highly relevant and is a model for a succesfull health-in-all-policies-based initiative
- Widespread stakeholder support for comprehensive approach and responsiveness to recent social, political and technological developments

Key takeaway: major focus of the work should be on **continuing the implementation of ongoing actions** to achieve the Cancer Plan's aims.

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EUROPE'S BEATING CANCER PLAN – ECA REPORT

Special report of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) on the implementation of the Cancer Plan, published in February 2026.

Recommendations:

1) Tailor key initiatives to Member States' needs and capacities

2) Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan

The Commission accepted all recommendations and will follow up with concrete actions.



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Thank you

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