Cancer screening

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The Commission presents a report on the implementation of the Communication from the Commission on 'Action Against Cancer: European Partnership' and on the Council Recommendation 2003/878/EC of 2 December 2003 on cancer screening.

To recall, the council Recommendation on cancer screening, unanimously adopted, acknowledges both the significance of the burden of cancer and the evidence for effectiveness of breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening

The Recommendation calls on Member States to take common action to implement national **population-based** cancer screening programmes with **appropriate quality assurance**, in accordance with **European best practice guidelines**. It further invites the Commission to: (i) report on the implementation of cancer screening programmes, (ii) consider the extent to which the proposed measures are working effectively, and (iii) consider the need for further action. In 2008 a first implementation report on the Recommendation was published, covering the period 2003-2007 (*please see summary dated 22/12/2008.*)

The report summarises the main achievements in the fight against cancer in the EU in the framework of both initiatives towards the target to reduce cancer incidence by 15% by 2020.

Main results:

- **Political will**: the vast majority of Member States – 24 out of 28 - met the target of producing a National Cancer Control Plan (NCCP) before 2013.

- **Support for Member States**: through a Joint Action under the Health programme, guidance for Member States on establishing national cancer plans and on cancer care has been developed. A **new Joint Action launched in 2014** will lead to a **European Guide on Quality Improvement in Comprehensive Cancer Control.** The Directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare provides further opportunities for increased cooperation through European Reference Networks between healthcare providers and centres of expertise.

- **Prevention:** the fourth version of the European Code Against Cancer supported by the Commission through administrative agreements with the International Agency for Research on Cancer will be launched soon.

- **Screening:** based on current projections, well over 500 million screening examinations for breast, cervical and/or colorectal cancer will have been performed in publicly mandated programmes in the EU between 2010 and 2020. European Guidelines for quality assurance in screening and diagnosis have been produced for breast cancer (2006, supplements 2013), cervical cancer (2008, second edition 2014) and colorectal cancer (2010).

- **Quality assurance**: the Commission is developing a Quality Assurance scheme for Breast Cancer Services based on the European legislative framework.

- **Research:** during the last seven years, the EU has invested more than **EUR 1.4 billion** in research efforts in relation to cancer. More than half of this budget – EUR 770 million – has been invested in collaborative research projects to find new ways of fighting cancer and supporting patients.

- **Cancer information**: in 2012, the Joint Research Centre was made responsible for coordinating the European Cancer Information System and acting as repository of European Union data and tools.

- **Coordination:** to improve the coordination of the range of cancer initiatives at EU level, the Commission established a European Union Group of Experts on Cancer Control in 2014.

Next steps: EU action on cancer based on the Commission Communication has strengthened cooperation between the European Union, Member States and relevant stakeholders and has created **European added value** in relevant areas (NCCP, screening, cancer information system, rare cancers, etc.) as well as a practical basis on which to continue and expand mechanisms for cooperation.

This cooperation in strategic areas provided a framework which made a sustainable contribution to reduce the burden of cancer in the EU and towards maintaining the target of a 15% reduction by 2020. According to the last available data, in the period 2000-2010, the incidence of the most frequently occurring forms of cancers (i.e. breast, lung, prostate and colorectal) **decreased by about 10%.**

In order to take forward this cooperation, the Commission sets out some of the next steps:

- the 3rd EU Health Programme offers opportunities to promote public health action on cancer and Horizon 2020, in particular its Health, demographic change and wellbeing objective, offers opportunities to pursue research on cancer and other major chronic diseases.

- continued support for the development of high quality National Cancer Plans in the European Union;

- the new Tobacco Products Directive which should be fully operational by ensuring full use of its delegated and implementing powers as well as supporting its implementation by Member States in order to reduce smoking throughout the EU and contributing to reduce the incidence of cancer;

- enhance cooperation between the fields of Public Health, Environment and Occupational Health in order to tackle the avoidable causes of cancer from a broader perspective;

supporting a voluntary European Quality Assurance scheme for breast cancer services;

- creation of European Reference Networks, including on rare tumours. The Commission intends to organise calls for Networks in 2014 and 2015;

improving screening programmes and networking between centres and experts, at the EU, national and regional level;

- consideration of a specific Action on Rare Cancers;

- wider uptake of eHealth for efficient disease management and to strengthen effective prevention practices.

The recommendations of Members States and stakeholders, in the framework of the Commission Group of Experts on Cancer Control, will also be taken into account.

The report states that the Commission maintains the objective of reducing the burden of cancer in the EU, and the target of a 15% reduction of cancer incidence by 2020 (**510,000 new cases**).