

# Europe's Beating Cancer Plan: Joining Forces

31 January 2024, Charlemagne building,  
Brussels

**#EUCancerPlan #WorldCancerDay**



## Speaker biographies

**Ursula Von der Leyen**, President of the European Commission



Ursula von der Leyen, Dr., born in 1958, was a member of the German Bundestag from 2009 to 2019 and a Federal Minister in Germany for more than 14 years, responsible for Family Affairs (2005-2009), then for Labour and Social Affairs (2009-2013) and later for Defence (2013-2019). She completed her medical studies with a state examination and licence to practise medicine in 1987, followed by a doctorate in 1991 and a Master of Public Health in 2001. She has been a member of the CDU since 1990. From 2003 to 2005, she was a member of the CDU Parliamentary Group in the Lower Saxony State Parliament. In 2019, she was elected President of the European Commission. As the head of the European executive, she has defined six headline ambitions for Europe for her mandate: a European Green Deal, a Europe fit for the digital

age, an economy that works for people, a stronger Europe in the world, promoting our European way of life, and a new push for European democracy. [@vonderleyen](#)

**Margaritis Schinas**, Vice-President of the European Commission, Promoting our European Way of Life



Margaritis Schinas took office as Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life in the Von der Leyen Commission in December 2019. In this capacity, he oversees the EU's policies for migration, security union, social rights, skills, education, culture, youth, health and dialogue with churches, religious associations and non-confessional organisations. Mr Schinas started his career in the European Commission in 1990. He also served as a Member of the European Parliament, from 2007 until 2009. Upon the completion of his parliamentary term of office, he returned to the European Commission and held various senior positions. Margaritis Schinas holds an MSc on Public Administration and Public Policy from the London School of Economics, a Diploma of Advanced European Studies on European Administrative Studies from the College of Europe in Bruges and a Degree in Law from the

Aristotelean University of Thessaloniki. [@MargSchinas](#)

### **Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament**



Roberta Metsola was elected President of the European Parliament in January 2022. She was first elected to the European Parliament in 2013, becoming one of Malta's first female Members of the European Parliament. Metsola was re-elected in 2014 and then again in 2019. In 2020 she was elected as the First Vice-President of the European Parliament, becoming the first Maltese national to hold the post. Within the European Parliament, President Metsola was the EPP Group's Coordinator in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, between January 2017 and 2020. Professionally she is a lawyer who has specialised in European law and politics. Prior to her election as a MEP, President Metsola served within the Permanent Representation of Malta to the European Union and later as the legal advisor to the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

She completed an Erasmus exchange in France and graduated from the University of Malta and the College of Europe in Bruges. [@RobertaMetsola](#)

### **Stella Kyriakides, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety**



European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides leads the work to establish the European Health Union. She is also responsible for the "Farm to Fork" strategy for sustainable food production and consumption. Commissioner Kyriakides has been at the forefront of the EU public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and EU efforts to support Ukraine and its people in the area of health. In 2006-2019, she was elected to the Cyprus Parliament for the Democratic Rally party, of which she was the Vice-President for ten years. She was the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. In 2011, she was appointed Head of the Cyprus Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). In 2017, she was elected President of the PACE, the fourth woman to hold this position in the history of the Assembly and the first Cypriot

since the accession of Cyprus to the Council of Europe in 1961. Commissioner Kyriakides graduated from Reading University attaining a BA in Psychology. Previously, she worked as a clinical psychologist for the Cyprus Ministry of Health. Throughout her career, she has been a longstanding advocate for women's, children's and patients' rights, and for better mental health. [@SKyriakidesEU](#)

**Oriana Sousa**, Patient advocate, European Network of Youth Cancer Survivors



Diagnosed with rare, aggressive ovarian cancer at 22, Oriana's life underwent a profound transformation as she navigated her survival journey. Overcoming obstacles in accessing expert care and treatments, she embraced groundbreaking immunotherapy, setting a precedent for her cancer type. This life-threatening diagnosis reshaped Oriana's career, ambitions, and motivation, fueling her commitment to patient advocacy. Currently, within European Network of Youth Cancer Survivors (EU-CAYAS-NET), Oriana champions CAYAS cancer, balancing her roles as a dedicated psychologist and a passionate Patient Advocate. Her advocacy extends to the domain of small-cell ovarian cancer, aligning her with the cause of rare cancers. Oriana is a member of the Social Policy Action Group (SPAG) at EURORDIS and is certified as a Patient Expert by EUPATI. Actively engaged in diverse projects and networks, she collaborates to foster patient-centered care. [@OrianaSousa3](#)

**Loucas Furlas**, Member of the European Parliament



Loucas Furlas is an MEP since 2019. He is a graduate of the Department of Economics and Political Sciences of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He served as Vice-President of PROTOPORIA, a student political department of the Democratic Rally, and also as President of the EFEK, the National Student Union of Cypriots in Thessaloniki. In 2006, after obtaining his degrees, he attended the Universities of Columbia and George Washington in the USA through a scholarship, studying Research Journalism and International Crisis Coverage. He worked for 23 years as a journalist. Last but not least, Loucas Furlas is also well known for his intense social activity. He is Ambassador of the Charity Foundation HOPE and founder of the philanthropic organisation Little Heroes which helps children suffering from cancer. [@loucas\\_furlas](#)

**Prof. dr. Rob Pieters**, Chief medical officer and co-CEO at the Princess Maxima Center for Pediatric Oncology, Utrecht, the Netherlands, EU Horizon Cancer Mission Board Member



Rob Pieters is Chief Medical Officer (CMO) at Princess Máxima Center for Pediatric Oncology and Professor of Pediatric Oncology at the University of Utrecht. In 1987 he obtained his MSc in human movement science and his MD at the Free University of Amsterdam and in 1991 his PhD with a thesis on drug resistance in leukemia. After finishing his training in pediatrics in 1995, he received a clinical fellowship in pediatric oncology from the Dutch Cancer Society. He was Head of Pediatric Oncology/Hematology at the Erasmus MC-Sophia Children's Hospital in Rotterdam and a full professor in Pediatric Oncology at Erasmus University Rotterdam from 2000-2017. Rob Pieters is initiator and one of the founders of the Princess Máxima Center for Pediatric Oncology. This national center has merged all expertise from all former childhood cancer centers in the Netherlands, thereby establishing the largest center in Europe for treatment and research of childhood cancer. Rob Pieters' research is focused on the development of personalized therapies for childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL).

**Dr Ondřej Májek**, Scientific Lead of the National Screening Centre at the Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic



Ondřej Májek, PhD is the Head of Department of International Affairs at the Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic and the scientific lead of its National Screening Centre, where he is involved in monitoring and evaluation of screening programmes and introduction of new disease early detection projects. He is also an assistant professor and the head analyst of cancer screening programmes at the Institute of Biostatistics and Analyses, Faculty of Medicine, Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. His research interests include monitoring and evaluation of disease detection programmes, cancer epidemiology, and medical biostatistics. [@ondmaj](#)

**Dr Luzia Travado**, Senior Psycho-oncologist at the Champalimaud Foundation, Portugal



Luzia Travado, PhD, MSc, ClinPsych, is a Clinical psychologist specialised in health psychology and psycho-oncology. Her hospital career spans more than 35 years. She is currently Senior Psycho-oncologist, Clinician and researcher at Champalimaud Clinical & Research Centre, Champalimaud Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. She is the President-Emeritus of the International Psycho-Oncology Society, a faculty member of the European School of Oncology and an active advocate of psychosocial oncology care at European cancer policy level. In recognition of her achievements, the International Psycho-Oncology Society (IPOS) awarded her the Jimmie Holland Memorial Award in 2022. Her main interests are psycho-oncology, psychological interventions for cancer patients, survivorship care and quality of life, biobehavioral process linked with stress,

negative affect, and survival in cancer patients, communication skills training for cancer healthcare professionals, and cancer policies. She has many scientific papers published in internationally peer-reviewed journals and book-chapters, and is on the Editorial Board of several scientific journals.

**Dr Tit Albreht**, Scientific Co-Ordinator at National Institute of Public Health of Slovenia with expertise in European and Global Health



Dr. Tit Albreht, M.D. (1961), is a Ph.D. in Health Services Research at the University of Amsterdam, Head of the Centre for Health Care at the National Institute of Public Health of Slovenia, Senior Researcher in the field of health services research, health policy and health systems research, Member of the Scientific Committee of EUPHA and President of the Slovenian Preventive Medicine Society. He has worked on national and EU policies in cancer control and cancer care since 2006. He is the scientific coordinator of the Joint Action innovative Partnership for Action Against Cancer and the Scientific Coordinator of the JA CraNE. He is also an Assistant Professor of Public Health at the Medical Faculty of Ljubljana, Slovenia, as well as at the Faculties of Medicine and Health Sciences of the University of Maribor. He is President-

Elect of the European Public Association. [@TitAlbreht](#)

**Dr Alberto Costa**, Scientific Advisor on strategies against cancer to Commissioner Kyriakides



Dr Costa is internationally recognised for his work for the advancement of breast cancer management and renowned for his innovative ideas in scientific communication and educational development and as Director of the European School of Oncology. He has served as Secretary General of the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) and as a member of the European Commission's Europe Against Cancer programme. He is a member of the editorial boards of various cancer publications and author of over 250 scientific publications.

**Carina Schneider**, European Network of Youth Cancer Survivors and Managing Director of Childhood Cancer International Europe



Today a passionate patient advocate, Carina was diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma at the age of 17. Experiencing the lack of adequate long-term follow-up care, she became active in patient advocacy in 2009. In 2017, she was part of the group of survivor-representatives from across Europe who launched the survivors-network within CCI Europe. Later that year, she joined the CCI Europe Committee. Carina is a psychology graduate and has worked in paediatric oncology since 2013, first in the Austrian Childhood Cancer Organisation as project manager and later at the Medical University of Vienna as research coordinator in the psychosocial team of the Paediatric Neurooncology Department. In January 2022, she became CCI Europe's Managing Director and works, together with a committed team, dedicated

Committee Members and patient advocates from all over Europe for a better future for children, adolescents and young adults, as well as their families, who are affected by cancer.

**Dr Monica M. Bertagnolli**, Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), United States



Monica M. Bertagnolli, M.D., is the 17th director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). She was nominated by President Joe Biden on May 15, 2023, confirmed by the U.S. Senate on November 7, 2023, and took office on November 9, 2023. She is the first surgeon and second woman to hold the position. As the NIH Director, Dr. Bertagnolli oversees the work of the largest funder of biomedical and behavioral research in the world. Throughout her career, Dr. Bertagnolli has been at the forefront of the field of clinical oncology. Her laboratory focused on advancing our understanding of the genetic drivers of gastrointestinal cancer development and the role of inflammation as a promoter of cancer growth. [@NIHDirector](#)

**Dr. Javier Padilla**, Secretary of State for Health, Spain



Born in 1983 in Madrid. Degree in Medicine from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (2001-2007). Master in Public Health and Health Management by the Andalusian School of Public Health (2013-2014). Master in Health Economics and Medicine (UPF 2012). Resident Medical Intern at the Andalusian Health Service (2008-2012). Family and Community Physician in the Madrid Health Service (2012-2021). Regional Deputy of Más Madrid (2021-2023). Currently, and since November 2023, he holds the position of Secretary of State for Health of the Government of Spain.

**Dr Hans Kluge**, Regional Director of Europe, World Health Organization



Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge of Belgium embarked on his role as WHO Regional Director for Europe on February 1, 2020, shortly before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. Having qualified in medicine, surgery and obstetrics, Dr Kluge's extensive global experience includes seminal years with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Belgium amid health and humanitarian crises in Liberia and Somalia, as well as serving as the Moscow-based Regional TB Advisor for countries formerly part of the Soviet Union. He joined WHO in 1999, first as TB/HIV Project Manager at WHO Russia, and then at WHO Myanmar as TB Medical Officer, eventually becoming Team Leader for the HIV, TB and malaria unit. Dr Kluge moved to the WHO European Regional Office in 2009, and a year later was appointed Director of the Division of Health Systems and Public Health, as well as Special Representative of the Regional Director to Combat Multi/Extensively Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis. In his current role, Dr Kluge advocates all with governments and funders for health systems strengthening, prioritising primary health care as a cornerstone of public health. [@hans kluge](#)

**Dr Cary Adams**, Chief Executive Officer of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)



Born in London, Cary Adams has a BSc Honours degree in Economics, Computing and Statistics, a Masters degree (with distinction) in Business Administration. He is a Harvard Business School alumni and has received two Honorary Doctorates in International Relations and Health. In 2009, Cary made a career change, moving from the management of international businesses in the banking sector to become CEO of UICC, based in Geneva – the largest international cancer NGO of its kind with more than 1200 member organisations in over 170 countries and territories. UICC unites and supports the cancer community to reduce the global cancer burden, to promote greater equity, and to integrate cancer control into the world health and development agenda. UICC also boasts more than 60 strategic partners. [@DrCaryAdams](#)

**Frank Vandenbroucke**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health, Belgium



Prof. Frank Vandenbroucke is Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health. He previously took on academic positions at the University of Antwerp (part-time Professor at the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy, 2012-2020), the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (professor full-time 2012-2015), and the University of Amsterdam (professor full-time 2015-2020). He served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1994-1995), Minister for Social Affairs and Pensions (1999-2003) and Minister for Employment and Pensions (2003-2004) in the Belgian Government. He was also Vice-Minister-President of the Flemish Government, Flemish Minister for Employment, Education and Training (2004-2009). He received a D.Phil. from the Faculty of Social Studies, Oxford University.

Master of Ceremonies: **Jan Geissler**, Patient advocate, past chair of WeCan and social entrepreneur



As a patient living with Chronic Myeloid Leukemia since 2001, Jan Geissler co-founded the patient advocacy organisations LeukaNET, the CML Advocates Network, the Acute Leukemia Advocates Network and WECAN, the network of pan-European cancer patient organisations. He was Director of the European Patients' Academy (EUPATI). He manages Patvocates, a think tank on patient engagement and patient advocacy, and the European Patient Advocacy Institute (EPAI), a non-profit platform for patient engagement. Jan represents patient perspectives in committees e.g. in the European Cancer Organisation, the European Hematology Association and the German National Decade Against Cancer. He serves as a lay member in the Ethics Committee of the Bavarian Chamber of Physicians. He is also work package leader in the IMI big data project HARMONY Alliance and the EU-funded project SafePolyMed. In 2016, he was awarded with the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his work as a patient advocate. [@jangeissler](#)

**Sea of Change choir**



A group of cancer survivors and supporters who got to the finals of Ireland's got Talent 2019 and an annual fixture at the European Commission's World Cancer Day event. [@SeaofChange1](#)