



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Joint Meeting of the Horizon 2020 Programme Committee configuration SC1 (Health) and the Steering Group on Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Management of Non- Communicable Diseases

24 January 2020

Flash report

On 24 January 2020, the Horizon 2020 Programme Committee SC1 (Health) and the Steering Group on Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Management of Non-Communicable Diseases held a joint meeting.

This was the second time the Committee and Steering Group met, after an earlier exchange in February 2019. The focus of today's meeting was on cancer, one of the Von der Leyen Commission's top priorities. The Committee and Steering Group were informed of the Commission's aim to work closely together across Directorates, approaching the topic from both the policy and research angles.

Thus, the new Europe's Beating Cancer Plan will be developed in full synergy with the Commission's cancer mission. The consultation for the Plan will be launched on February 4, at an event organized by the Commission with the participation of President Von der Leyen, and co-hosted by the European Parliament. The plan will be comprehensive, and research will be fully integrated as a horizontal issue.

The participants were informed on the outcomes of a survey among Member States and Associated Countries, with the aim to get a snapshot of their current activities including their research needs on cancer. The information gathered will be shared with the Mission Board on cancer and be fed into the development of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

The next discussion focused on three questions that were put to the participants in advance of the meeting: on primary national (research) challenges, suggestions on how to improve the impact of research funding, and specific areas for action and/or research that would particularly benefit from cross-national cooperation. Many issues were put forward for consideration, most notably on data collection (and the role of registries) and open access to data; effectiveness of cancer screening, treatment and prevention; the need for transnational networks and translational work; social aspects of cancer; and an overall need to better understand prevention. Aspects related to research infrastructure, interoperability, and advancing collaboration between research and clinical care were stressed.

The attention then shifted to opportunities to develop new approaches in the policy domain, bearing in mind that research and policy are inextricably linked. As stressed earlier, research components will be integrated into the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. Policy needs to understand how it can best facilitate research and support a good and sustainable infrastructure, where best to invest, and what role the various EU agencies can play. Another key question is how policy can ensure optimal implementation and uptake of research outcomes, also translating this into policy reform when and where appropriate.

The participants were also informed on the state of play in the development of the Europe's Beating Cancer plan. They were reminded of the longstanding involvement of the European Commission in the fight against cancer, dating back more than thirty years. Since then, for example legislation has been developed on tobacco and occupational health issues. The 2003 Council Recommendation on Cancer Screening has provided a helpful framework, as has the European Code Against Cancer. Participants were also reminded of the internationally agreed targets such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals that include the aspiration to reduce mortality on diseases such as cancer by one third.

Reflections from the participants provided rich input, for which the Commission expressed great appreciation, also stressing how helpful a joint meeting like the one today can be to take the thinking on this European initiative to the next level.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of 24 Member States and 9 Associated Countries. In addition to DG Research and Innovation, and DG Health and Food Safety, DG Eurostat and the European Investment Bank were also present.