



Summary
report



Europe's Beating Cancer Plan: Joining Forces

31 January 2024



Ahead of World Cancer Day 2024, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, **Stella Kyriakides**, organised a high-level event to reflect on the progress made since the launch of [Europe's Beating Cancer Plan](#) in 2021. The main objective was to determine how the EU Cancer Plan is impacting the lives of all those touched by cancer. In her opening remarks, Commissioner Kyriakides set the tone, highlighting the progress made to date and the continued need for effective cancer care across the EU. She said that “**Equity in health is not negotiable**”, a sentiment which was echoed by many throughout the course of the event. Commissioner Kyriakides also gave an overview of the work being implemented in line with the EU Cancer Plan, including:

- Over 450 stakeholders collaborating on common projects.
- Approximately 600 million euros in EU4Health funding allocated to improving cancer care and treatment.
- Expansion of training programmes to 100 cancer centers in at least 15 Member States in the next year.
- Access to over 200,000 cancer image series for healthcare professionals on the Cancer Image Europe Platform, enabling more precise and faster diagnostics, treatments, and care tools for patients.

The event itself, entitled, “[Europe's Beating Cancer Plan: Joining Forces](#),” took place on January 31, 2024, at the Charlemagne Building in Brussels. It was attended by 420 delegates in person and nearly 7,000 online viewers. The agenda included speakers from institutions across Europe and beyond. **Ursula von der Leyen**, President of the European Commission, and **Roberta Metsola**, President of the European Parliament, both participated with video messages, pledging their commitment to achieving the goals set out in the EU Cancer Plan.



Next up, came powerful personal testimonials: **Oriana Sousa**, a patient advocate from the European Network of Youth Cancer Survivors, spoke about her own experience of diagnosis and treatment. She highlighted her struggles and welcomed the fact that there is now greater equity in cancer treatment across the EU. **Loucas Furlas**, Member of the European Parliament, shared his deeply personal story of how he lost his son to cancer - a catalyst which inspired him to raise awareness through the charitable organisations - HOPE and Little Heros.

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan: Joining forces to make a difference

Dr. Rob Pieters, Chief medical officer and co-CEO at the Princess Máxima Center for Pediatric oncology in Utrecht, and EU Horizon Cancer Mission Board Member, addressed **developments in children's cancer**. He explained that children involved in clinical

trials have a greater chance of survival and called for sustained investment in pediatric support. His remarks were followed by **Dr Ondrej Majek**, Scientific lead of the National Screening Centre at the Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic, who presented the need for **more knowledge exchange between countries** in Europe, including through a comprehensive EU wide cancer screening system. **Dr Luzia Travado**, Senior Psycho-oncologist at the Champalimaud Foundation of Portugal, outlined the role of **psychosocial oncology care for patients**: both during treatment and remission from the disease. The session concluded with an intervention from **Dr Tit Albreht**, Scientific Co-Ordinator at National Institute of Public Health of Slovenia, who spoke of how Comprehensive Cancer Centres - based in every country of the EU – are **bridging gaps in the expertise needed for personalised cancer treatment**.

Addressing disparities in cancer prevention, treatment and care emerged as a prominent theme throughout the afternoon. Commissioner **Stella Kyriakides** referenced a new report for the [EU Cancer Inequalities Registry](#), which addresses the latest trends in cancer incidence and mortality in the EU and reviews key cancer risk factors, cancer screening programmes and early diagnoses. This was a timely publication given the overarching World Cancer Day campaign to “Close the care gap”. Most notably, inequalities was the focus of a fireside chat between **Dr. Alberto Costa**, Scientific Advisor on strategies against cancer, and European Network of Youth Cancer Survivors representative, **Carina Schneider**, who emphasised the EU’s added value when **ironing out inequalities** and ensuring that everyone has access to preventative care, early diagnosis and expertise.

Towards the end of the day **Margaritis Schinas**, Vice-President of the European Commission, delivered a keynote address on how the EU Cancer Plan is contributing to **a treatment system that will be fair for all**. Discussions also covered the need to join forces on cancer globally, including the importance of knowledge exchange between the EU and the National Cancer Plan in the United States. In a video message, **Dr Monica M. Bertagnolli**, Director of the National Institutes of Health, United States, spoke of an aligned vision on both sides of the Atlantic. The new Commission proposal on vaccine-preventable cancers was welcomed by speakers, including **Dr Javier Padilla**, Secretary of State for Health, Spain, who also highlighted social inequities related to cancer and the need for affordable access to treatment. **Dr Hans Kluge**, Regional Director for Europe at the World Health Organization, highlighted the stark disparities in cancer care across the wider European region and said that the solution lies in close collaboration. The session concluded with a plea from **Dr Cary Adams**, Chief Executive Officer of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), to use World Cancer Day to highlight the valuable contributions from the day.

During the concluding remarks, **Frank Vandenbroucke**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health, Belgium, underlined that Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan is also making an impact beyond the field of cancer.

To conclude, guests enjoyed a performance by the **Sea of Change choir**, a group of Dublin-based women, many of whom are cancer survivors, and had the opportunity to explore the EU4Health programme exhibition of EU funded cancer projects.

