

Equity, excellence and innovation – modern cancer care for all

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan:

Eradicating inequalities within cancer care



On 1 February 2023, the European Commission and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union co-hosted a high-level, hybrid conference just ahead of World Cancer Day 2023. Eradicating inequalities within cancer care was the central focus of the event, which drew a crowd of over 100 in-person attendees and more than 2000 viewers online. Throughout the day, speakers shared personal experiences and presented the latest deliverables of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. The discourse revolved around three main topics: prevention, early detection, and the conditions for data-driven cancer care.

Overcoming cancer inequalities across the EU will be challenging. But I believe that, if we identify and understand where the disparities lie, our chances to succeed are far greater.

Stella Kyriakides

In her keynote address, **Stella Kyriakides**, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, emphasised that cancer remains one of the most pressing health issues of our times. She added that with Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, as a key part of a strong European Health Union, **we must continue to work tirelessly to better understand, address, and reduce inequalities in cancer care.** In line with the publication of the first set of Country Cancer Profiles, Commissioner Kyriakides underlined that cancer is responsible for claiming one in four lives lost in the EU.

Co-host **Acko Ankarberg Johansson**, the Swedish Minister of Health Care, highlighted the importance of continued efforts to address gaps in the accessibility of cancer care across the EU. WHO Regional Director Europe, **Dr. Hans Kluge**, the Principal Deputy Director, of the US National Cancer Institute, **Dr. Douglas R Lowy** and the Spanish Minister of Health, **Carolina Darias San Sebastián**, echoed the need for joined-up efforts.

One of the most important tools in modernisation and ensuring cancer care in the EU is Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

Minister Ankarberg Johansson

Patient testimonials

Dr. Alberto Costa, Special Adviser to the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety on cancer policy, introduced **Ana Amariutei** and **Mia Rajalin**, who shared their personal stories of living with cancer. They called for a greater sense of unity and appropriate access to medical care for patients in Europe, regardless of gender, race, socio-economical status, sexual orientation, place of birth, residency or religious beliefs. The **Sea of Change Choir** – whose members have all been affected by cancer – performed the song "Don't Give Up".

Country Cancer Profiles

Among many important findings, these profiles highlight that many inequalities persist amongst and within countries. They also reveal that lung cancer remains by far the most common cause of death from cancer.

Identifying challenges and sharing best practices between Member States can help countries address cancer inequalities.

The second half of the conference was dedicated to three panels, which addressed:

- A comprehensive approach to cancer prevention – tackling cancer through precision health
- Innovative solutions as a tool for expanding early detections and eliminating inequalities
- Health data – a key to modern and equitable cancer care?

Speakers from across academia, research and public authorities shared insights into the local, national and European approaches to address inequalities within cancer care.



This included digital tools and preventative measures, the benefits and lessons from cancer screening as well as the potential for artificial intelligence and enhanced collaboration through EU initiatives, such as the European Cancer Imaging Initiative and the European Health Data Space.

Representatives from the European Cancer Organisation, the European Cancer Patient Coalition and the European Oncology Nursing Society participated remotely, asking pertinent questions to the panel.

The day concluded with interventions on key achievements and goals of the current Council presidency trio (Sweden, France and the Czech Republic) along with the most important issues moving forward.

