

- ***European Commission report on Council Recommendation on Cancer Screening***
- ***EU Health Ministers adopt Council Conclusions on Cancer***

## **EU Health Ministers adopt Council Conclusions on Cancer**

The EU Health Ministers adopted on **10 June 2008** [Council Conclusions on reducing the burden of cancer](#) at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) in Luxembourg.

While highlighting the cancer burden and the expected increase in cancer incidence in an ageing population, the Conclusions call for a patient-centered, comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to cancer control. They further point at the existing inequalities within and between Member States, e.g. with regard to cancer incidence and survival rates. As a key element, the Conclusions stress the importance of cancer registries and cancer control strategies, as well as the need for greater cooperation between care services at different stages of the cancer cycle.

Underlining prevention as the most effective long-term strategy to reduce the burden of cancer, the Conclusions reiterate the importance of healthy lifestyles and the reduction of occupational and environmental carcinogens.

The document also welcomes the involvement of civil society, in particular patient groups, in shaping cancer policies and developing services to better address patient needs.

Among other actions, the Conclusions invite **Member States** to:

- Develop and implement cancer strategies or plans;
- Continue the implementation of cancer screening programmes in line with the Council's Cancer Screening Recommendation (2003);
- Provide the best possible evidence-based treatment for cancer patients within the framework of national health priorities and financial resources;
- Ensure population-based cancer registration as an important tool for the development and monitoring of policies to prevent and treat cancer;
- Take advantage of existing financial mechanisms to improve cancer prevention and control and also exchange best practices in these two fields;

europacolon

Registered Company Number: 5314195

The Conclusions further invite the **European Commission** to:

- Present an EU Action Plan on Cancer addressing cancer control from prevention to palliative care;
- Facilitate the exchange of best practice and encourage cooperation in the evaluation, monitoring and assessment of health actions;
- Support Member States in the implementation of the Council's Cancer Screening Recommendation;
- Support the networking of cancer registries;
- Extend the knowledge of cancer, e.g. with regard to risk factors, early detection and treatment

The Member States and the Commission should also promote the empowerment of civil society.

Finally, Health Ministers encourage representatives of civil society to participate actively in raising awareness of cancer risk factors and of screening and prevention programmes. Moreover, civil society should contribute to the development and implementation of cancer strategies or plans.

At the Health Council meeting on 10 June, Slovenian Health Minister **Zofija Mazej Kukovič** outlined the main elements of the Conclusions, emphasising the growing cancer burden despite progress made in prevention and treatment to date. EU Health Commissioner **Androulla Vassiliou** reiterated that the Commission will put forward an EU Action Plan on Cancer in 2009, which will be accompanied by an impact assessment of the human, social and economic costs of cancer. She also said that much remains to be done to implement the Council's Screening Recommendation from 2003.

In the national speeches, national and/or regional cancer strategies and plans emerged as the most common topic of interest. For instance, Portugal called for cooperation between the Member States in developing national cancer strategies while Spain stressed that regions must have an input in European cancer strategies. The Health Ministers also outlined national screening and prevention policies, with an emphasis on lifestyle-related initiatives. Finally, they highlighted the importance of cooperation on research and exchange of best practices.

Endorsed by the Health Ministers of all Member States, the Council Conclusions on cancer reflect broad political support of further action to reduce the cancer burden and the existing cancer inequalities across Europe. Together with recent European Parliament initiatives on cancer, such as the Resolution on combating cancer in the enlarged EU, the Council Conclusions pave the way for a comprehensive EU Action Plan on cancer to be introduced by the Commission in 2009.

europacolon

Registered Company Number: 5314195

## European Commission report on Council Recommendation on Cancer Screening

The European Commission published on **11 June 2008** a [Report on the Council Recommendation on Cancer Screening](#). The report assesses the implementing status of the [Council Recommendation of 2 December 2003 on Cancer Screening](#) in the EU Member States.

The report is based on a written survey of the 27 Member States conducted by the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Consumers in the second half of 2007. This information is supplemented by information obtained directly from health authorities and screening programmes in the Member States. The report focuses specifically on screening for breast cancer, cervical cancer and colorectal cancer.

Please note that the report documents the planned activities in the EU Member States aimed at following through on the Council Recommendations, and does not provide a full impact assessment of the Council Recommendation on the implementation of breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening programmes in the EU.

In the preface, EU Health Commissioner **Androulla Vassiliou** highlights that the detection of cancer at earlier stages, when it is more responsive to less aggressive treatment, can reduce cancer mortality and improve the quality of life of European citizens who are suffering from cancer.

The report repeatedly stresses that, despite the broad consensus at the Community level and among the Member States on the importance of population-based screening, considerable effort will be required over the coming years to ensure successful implementation of current policies and overcome existing barriers.

Among other actions, the report highlights the need to:

- Provide appropriate professional, technical and scientific support to the Member States
- Expand the evidence-based screening programmes to improve the health of the population
- Increase exchange of information and collaboration between Member States
- Develop and pilot an EU-wide accreditation and certification scheme mandated by the Member States and based on EU quality assurance guidelines
- Ensure adequate resources for appropriate Community actions

Furthermore, the report highlights several examples of effective implementation of population-based cancer screening programmes in the European Union. They

europacolon

Registered Company Number: 5314195

include, for example, substantial decreases in breast cancer after the introduction of population-based screening in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands. In the UK and Finland, preliminary results on the rollout of **colorectal cancer screening** reflect the necessity of screening in the reduction in mortality from colorectal cancer.

For both breast cancer and cervical cancer, the results of the survey show great variation in the implementation of cancer screening between the EU Member States, e.g. the age of the target population and duration of screening intervals. For **colorectal cancer**, variation between Member States is most pronounced among the three cancer types with vast differences in screening methods, intervals between screening and age range of the target population among the EU Member States.

These results show that there is still substantial disparity between the Member States in the implementation of cancer screening. Based on the survey results, the report concludes that the successful preparation and completion of nationwide implementation process may require another ten years or more.

**END**