EU Action on Cancer

30 years, 10 facts
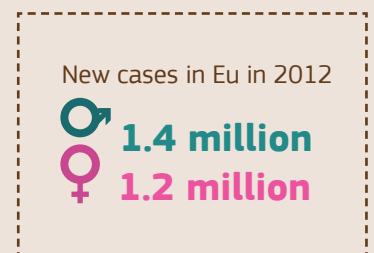
1. *2015 is the 30 year anniversary of EU action on cancer*

30 years

Thirty years ago in 1985 the heads of state of the countries of the European Community met in Milan and committed themselves to launching the first **«Europe against Cancer»** programme. Since then, actions taken at EU-level have helped to extend and save lives.

2. *Cancer is the second most common cause of death in the EU*

There were an estimated **1.4 million** new cases of cancer in men and **1.2 million** in women in the EU in 2012 (most recent data). In the same year, approximately **708 000 men** and **555 000 women** died from cancer. This makes cancer the most common cause of death in the EU after diseases of the circulatory system. And the figures are expected to rise due to Europe's ageing population.

New cases in Eu in 2012
⚲ **1.4 million**
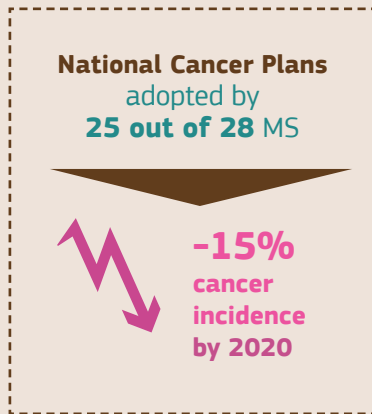♀ **1.2 million**

3. *One in three cancers is preventable*

We know that some cancers can be avoided by adopting healthier lifestyles, and outcomes greatly improved if cancer is detected early on. Arming people with this information is the aim of the **'European Code Against Cancer'**. The Code was first developed in 1987 and has been regularly updated ever since. The fourth edition was launched in 2014. Its **12 evidence-based recommendations** include "do not smoke …", "be physically active …" and "have a healthy diet …". The Code also includes recommendations for target groups for different types of cancer screening.

4. *Tackling risk factors is at the forefront of EU action on cancer*

65%
Smoking causes fatal lung cancer
50%
Smoking kills quit now
FILTER CIGARETTES

Addressing the risk factors is the Commission's first line of attack for reducing the burden of cancer. Actions include legislation on pesticides, air quality, and exposure to carcinogens at work. The ambitious EU tobacco control policy includes robust laws regulating **tobacco products** and banning advertising and sponsorship, and awareness raising campaigns such as the award winning **Ex-smokers are unstoppable**. Strategies and platforms for joint action on **alcohol** and **nutrition & physical activity** bring together EU countries and stakeholders including NGOs and industry to tackle these risk factors.
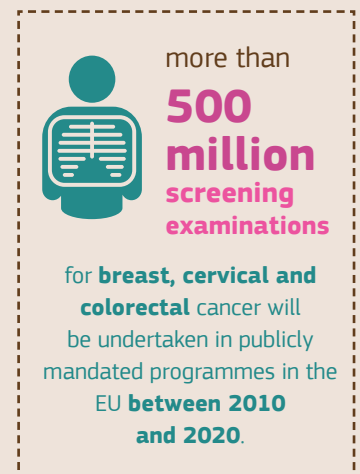
5. The EU aims to reduce cancer incidence by 15% by 2020

National Cancer Plans adopted by **25 out of 28** MS

−15% cancer incidence by 2020

This is the goal of The **European Partnership for Action Against Cancer (EPAAC)** Joint Action (2009-2013) which has helped to ensure that today 25 out of 28 Member States have adopted National Cancer Plans, compared with 17 in 2009. The **Comprehensive Cancer Control (CANCON)** Joint Action, launched in 2014, builds on the success of EPAAC and aims to deliver a European Guide on Quality Improvement in Cancer Control. By presenting evidence-based recommendations for all stages of cancer control and care, this guide should contribute to reduce inequalities in cancer between EU countries.

6. The EU promotes screening to detect cancer early

Quality screening gives patients the chance to receive timely and often life-saving treatment, through early diagnosis. If detected at an earlier stage, cancer is more responsive to less aggressive treatments. The **2003 Council Recommendation on cancer screening** calls on all EU countries to implement national, population-based screening programmes for **breast, cervical and colorectal cancer**, with appropriate quality assurance at all levels. As an aid to Member States, the Commission has produced a full **set of European Guidelines for quality assurance** for the screening of all three types of cancer.

more than **500 million screening examinations** for **breast, cervical and colorectal** cancer will be undertaken in publicly mandated programmes in the EU **between 2010 and 2020**.

7. A 'gold standard' in breast cancer care is in the pipeline

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women in the EU. The Commission's Joint Research Centre, is working towards a voluntary, evidence-based quality assurance scheme for breast cancer services. Clinical departments that adhere to this scheme will be recognised as the **'gold standard'** for screening, diagnosis, treatment and post-treatment of breast cancer. This project aims to establish a minimum set of quality requirements for breast cancer care across the EU based on a new edition of the **European Guidelines for Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis** which should be available in the coming years.

8. The EU has invested nearly € 1.5 billion on cancer research

During the past seven years, the EU has invested **nearly € 1.5 billion** in international collaborative research, frontier research, mobility programmes, public-private partnerships and coordination of national cancer research efforts. Over half of this budget - **€770 million** – is used for **'collaborative research projects'**, to find new ways to fight cancer and help patients. These projects help us better understand how various types of cancer develop, how they can be diagnosed earlier and treated more successfully.

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9. The EU supports data-based cancer policy

Reliable, comparable, high-quality data and indicators on cancer are essential to improve prevention programmes and control and care processes across the EU. Harmonised cancer data is also an invaluable resource for cancer epidemiology. The Joint Research Centre is spearheading the development of a harmonised **cancer information system for Europe** in collaboration with the European Network of Cancer Registries (ENCR), to generate a dynamic European monitoring tool to steer and support effective policies on cancer.

10. The EU has clear added value in tackling rare forms of cancer

Rare diseases (diseases affecting fewer than 5 people in 10 000) is an area where the EU adds value by bringing together scare knowledge and fragmented resources, maximising synergies and results. This is of particularly benefit to children, as many of the 40 000 children diagnosed with cancer every year in the EU have rare forms of the disease. Specific EU actions in this area include a **Joint Action on Rare Cancers** launched in 2015, and the establishment of **European Reference Networks**, of which some are expected to focus on rare tumours.

For more information:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/major_chronic_diseases/diseases/cancer/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/research/health/medical-research/cancer/index_en.html