

EUROPEAN SEMESTER MANIFESTO

“ WHERE you live
should NOT determine
IF you live”

OUR CALL TO ACTION

Acknowledging the striking **disparities** in cancer inequality and mortality between EU member states, we emphasise the **need** for a more **structured approach** to improve **patient outcomes** and eliminate inequalities across the board. Building on existing experiences such as the **European Semester process**, we support better **alignment** between stakeholders, adaptive pathway initiatives, and early **dialogue**.

CPE and CECOG jointly propose for the next EU term to:

1. Pilot the **inclusion** of **cancer** and **indicators** in the European Semester process.
2. Further develop the **Inequalities Registry**, in the aim to create a **European dashboard**, to be included in the European Semester pilot.

We are convinced that these two actions help to achieve the **goals** of Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan and the European Mission on Cancer and foster the **collaboration** between the **EU institutions** and the **Member States** for the benefit of cancer patients and their communities in Europe.

Ultimately, we jointly urge the **European Parliament**, the **European Commission**, and the **Member States** to tackle **inequalities** in cancer care in Europe and that this mandate **prioritises** positive cancer **outcomes** across the EU and **encourages** prospective **partners** to do the same.

It is no secret that, when it comes to cancer care, numerous **inequalities** exist across the EU. In fact, **discrepancies** can be clearly seen across the whole **cancer pathway** - **prevention, screening and early detection, diagnosis and treatment and survivorship care** - as the following examples illustrate:

1. Prevention

With only **Portugal** meeting the mark, many countries still lag well behind **Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan (EBCP)** target of vaccinating **90%** of their female population against **HPV**.² **Poland** has seen an **uptake in vaccination** recently, however their national target aims to vaccinate only **60%** of their female population.³

2. Screening & Early detection

A person’s **access** to quality **screening programmes** in the EU very much depends on their geographic **location**. This is evidenced by the disparity in **colorectal cancer** between **Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Romania**, where the screening **rate** averages at **5%**; and **Denmark**, where it reaches up to **76%**.²

3. Diagnosis & Treatment

In **Finland, Poland, or Romania**, only about **half of patients** with advanced non-small cell **lung cancer** receive cancer medicines, adhering to European **guidelines**, despite **reimbursement**. Conversely, in **Belgium and Portugal**, nearly **eight out of ten** patients have access to these medicines in line with guidelines.² Discrepancies between **Eastern and Western Europe** also manifest themselves when it comes to **diagnostic test** access, with fewer than **75%** of laboratories in **Eastern European** countries having access to **next-generation-sequencing** technologies.⁴

4. Survivorship care

Thus far, only **eight members** of the EU have adopted the cancer patient **anti-discrimination legislation** intitled “**The Right to be Forgotten**”. This means that a significant portion of EU cancer survivors still **lack fair access** to various financial and social products. When it comes to cancer, the **country** where a person is born can quite literally make the **difference** between life and death, and this is **unacceptable**. The countries highlighted above only serve as examples, and are not isolated incidents, these issues are present across the EU. **Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan (EBCP)** and associated initiatives acknowledge the problem of cancer disparities and recognise that many **underlying** issues can only be effectively addressed at the **member state** level. Therefore, the implementation of both the EBCP and National Cancer Control Plans (NCCPs) or similar policy frameworks is crucial to combat cancer and reduce inequalities.

Cancer Patients Europe (CPE), a pan-European **all cancer** type organisation, uniting cancer patients, carers, and survivors, envisions **reducing the burden** of cancer for all those affected by the disease across the European continent. Committed to **cooperation**, CPE is actively **partnering** with other stakeholders, further entrenching its commitment to ensuring that all cancer patients, no matter where they live in Europe, have **access** to the best and most **innovative treatments** in a timely manner. CPE, together with the **Central European Cooperative Oncology Group (CECOG)**, an association formed to further the performance of clinical trials and foster **medical education** to the benefit of cancer patients in Europe and beyond, outlines here forth their **manifesto**, proposing two **key actions** for the next EU term to improve cancer patients’ life and to reduce inequalities of cancer care in Europe:¹

- 1) Pilot the **inclusion** of **cancer** and **indicators** in the European Semester process.
- 2) Develop the **Inequalities Registry** further with the aim to create a European **dashboard** to be included in the European Semester pilot.

We are now collecting endorsements to the Manifesto. Please refer to the list below.

References

1. Zielinski, C., Thallinger, C., & Rödiger, A. (2023). “What’s measured gets done”: a call for a European semester for cancer to improve cancer outcomes in Central and Southeastern Europe. *Archives of Public Health*, 81(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13690-023-01165-5>
2. Pousette, A. and Hofmarcher, T (2024). *Tackling inequalities in cancer care in the European Union – IHE- The Swedish Institute for Health Economics*. <https://ihe.se/en/rapport/tackling-inequalities-in-cancer-care-in-the-european-union-2/>
3. Manxhuka, B. and Hofmarcher, T. (2024). *Launch of the Cancer Dashboard for Poland - IHE- The Swedish Institute for Health Economics*. <https://ihe.se/en/launch-of-the-cancer-dashboard-for-poland/>
4. Normanno, N., Apostolidis, K., Wolf, A., Dieri, R. A., Deans, Z. C., Fairley, J., Maas, J., Martinez, A., Moch, H., Nielsen, S. L., Pilz, T., Rouleau, E., Patton, S., & Williams, V. (2022, November 1). Access and quality of biomarker testing for precision oncology in Europe. *European Journal of Cancer*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejca.2022.09.005>

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