



On Equality  
in Beating  
Cancer

**Latvian Association of Oncology Patient  
Organizations “OnkoAlliance”**

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CEE Oncology Patient Organizations

participating in the European Oncology Patient Congress

Att.:

European Commission

European Parliament

Health ministries of all EU Member States

Mass media of EU Member States

**Open letter. Riga Congress: 10 steps to reduce inequalities in cancer care**

April 5th, 2022, Riga

On 18 and 19 March 2022, a special event in the field of oncology took place in Riga – the European Oncology Patient Congress “On Equality in Beating Cancer”. It was organized by the Latvian Association of Oncology Patient Organizations in cooperation with the Special Committee on Beating Cancer of the European Parliament (EP), engaging the leading patient organizations of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) from Romania, Greece, Estonia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Greece and lecturers, health care professionals, politicians, government officials, and representatives of the EP.

Participants of the congress agreed that the implementation of the EP Resolution "Strengthening Europe in the Fight against Cancer – towards a Comprehensive and Coordinated Strategy", as well as the principles of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan is critical and should be included in the national oncology guidelines (plans) of all Central and Eastern European countries.

To make the beating of disparities in cancer care a real European priority, members of the Riga Congress of Cancer Patients' Organizations are calling for ten steps to tackle cancer inequalities.

**1. Clear plans and adequate funding.** To develop at the level of the national governments of all EU Member States cancer beating plans, which corresponds to the EP's recommendations and ensures adequate and long-term funding for all implementation activities. The plans should foster the most significant outcomes for patients such as: effective long-term survival, quality-adjusted life year expectancy, preventing cancer recurrence and achieving long-term remission and, where possible, recovery.

**2. Improvement and monitoring of the Cancer Inequalities Registry.** To ensure that a National Cancer Registry is set up in each EU Member state along with the process that Cancer Inequalities Registry is updated at European and each Member State level by 2024 to identify and analyse the existing trends and differences. Through involvement of the patient organizations to establish supervisory commissions, which using registries' data monitor the progress of beating cancer plans, control the progress of beating cancer inequalities and rational use of fundings.

**3. Equal access to diagnostics, treatment, and the latest technologies.** To ensure that all EU Member States urgently define a reimbursement model; design clear, publicly available referral pathways by consistently following and regularly updating the screening, early detection, innovative treatment guidelines developed by associations of health-care professionals.

**4. Equality in access to medicines.** To ensure in all EU Member States equal and timely access to oncology medicines, including modern innovative and personalised therapy, by guaranteeing an equal number of reimbursed oncological medicines (molecules) and a reasonable time from registration to reimbursement, as well as an adequate funding.

**5. Facilitated access to cross-border health-care.** To improve pan-European quality standards for cancer management and clinical supervision by facilitating patients' cross-border access to cancer care professionals, including multidisciplinary cancer care team specialists, latest innovations, and clinical trials, as well as utilizing cross-border cooperation options provided by Digital Innovation Hubs, specialising in Healthcare Robotics.

**6. Cancer excellence centre in each Member State.** To facilitate the process of the establishment and accreditation of national cancer excellence centre in each EU Member State according to EC guidance, as well as to ensure the financial support where needed to establish and develop at least one centre in each Member State.

**7. Coordinated training of oncology specialists.** To provide at EU level for national oncology professionals (surgeons, chemoterapists, radiotherapists, and radiologists, etc.), as well as for other multidisciplinary cancer care team specialists the opportunities for the coordinated and supported training, internship, and continuing education, as well as experience, information exchange, and data sharing. To facilitate cross-border collaboration and effective use of European Reference Networks (ERNs) in patients' diagnostics and treatment.

**8. United cancer care policy across the EU.** To initiate a discussion on the united care of the EU oncology patients' – an introduction of a united policy in all EU Member States that would eliminate the degrading inequalities in cancer care, reduce its inefficiency, improve patient health outcomes and prognosis as well as ensure the financial sustainability of the high-quality cancer care.

**9. Special support for cancer patients in global crisis situations.** Despite the devastation caused by the war in Ukraine, despite the global crisis, we apply to EC to actively pursue the ongoing improvement of cancer patients' care across the EU and to provide special support to both Ukrainian and EU cancer patients in any crisis-situation such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

**10. "No" to corruption and vested interests.** To pay special attention both at EC and Member State level to the topic of vested interests and corruption, which weaken healthcare systems and threaten patients' lives.

We expect the EU institutions to continue keeping cancer care inequalities on the agenda and to take action to reduce them at EU level.

We expect national governments of Central and Eastern Europe countries to take consistent action to improve oncology care by providing adequate funding according to the needs of patients as it is provided in Western Europe countries. We believe that an integral part of cancer care is the dialogue between the state and patients, which is aimed at the continuous improvement and

development of the health care availability and quality, well-being and quality of life of cancer patients.

References:

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Kind regards,

Participants of the Congress "On Equality in Beating Cancer":

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