

# Making 'Early' our mission to beat cancer

Cancer patients have the best chance of becoming and remaining cancer-free when diagnosed and treated early

**E**very European is affected by cancer – directly or indirectly. Cancer remains the second leading cause of death globally, with over 3.7 million new cases each year and 1.7 million deaths in Europe alone – representing 20% of all deaths in the region in 2020.<sup>1</sup>

Cancer patients have the greatest chance of becoming and remaining cancer free if diagnosed and treated early. 98% of breast cancer patients will

survive for 5 years or more if detected at stage 1, compared to 26% at stage 4.<sup>2</sup>

“Recent innovation in liquid biopsies, precision oncology, personalized therapies, AI and genetics, among others, is enabling patients to live longer and better lives. To deliver on the promise of beating cancer ‘Early’ for all Europeans, we need to put best policy practices to work.” – Antonella Cardone, CEO, Cancer Patients Europe; Mission Early Advisory Group member.

## Mission Early research shows: all countries can do more!

Mission Early, the global policy initiative championing early cancer care, partnered with Bocconi University to assess how conducive OECD countries’ policy environments are for early cancer care. Our research shows: Denmark and the Netherlands are leading the European pack, but there is much work left to do.

A few practices stand out: a fully integrated approach to early cancer care with patients’ pathways going seamlessly from primary to secondary care and the centralization of treatment in specialized hospitals or cancer centers with multidisciplinary, multiprofessional teams.

However, all countries can do more to improve access to and availability of early cancer care. For example, even though the Netherlands has one of the most advanced policy environments for early cancer care, patients still cannot always access to innovative treatments.



Immediate actions include creating high-quality and transferable data collection infrastructure and integrating data into the EU Cancer Inequalities

# 98%

of breast cancer patients will survive for 5 years or more if detected at stage 1, compared with 26% at the most advanced stage

## What can be done in Europe?

To realize the full potential of early cancer care in Europe, all phases of the pathway (early detection, diagnosis, treatment) need to be ad-

ressed as well as horizontal issues. Immediate actions include creating high-quality and transferable data collection infrastructure and integrating data into the EU Cancer Inequalities

Registry. The European Commission and Parliament have a role to play in pushing for improved health literacy, including through the implementation of Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan. While Member States should fully implement the European Council recommendations on cancer screening, the European Commission should monitor progress and MEPs can help build bridges to educate national decision makers.

## Think ‘Early’ to beat cancer early

Not every country can or should adopt the same system. However, the bar is set – now concrete measures need to be taken. In this new mandate, policymakers should make ‘Early’ their mission to beat cancer.



## About Mission Early

Mission Early is the global policy initiative championing early cancer care. Our mission is to increase early cancer detection and treatment globally by bringing together organizations and individuals across sectors who share this ambition.

Mission Early currently receives guidance from a multi-stakeholder Advisory Group:



- Dr. Cary Adams, *Chief Executive Officer, Union for International Cancer Control*
- Dr. Nicoleta Antone, *Head of Breast Cancer Center, Institute of Oncology “Ion Chiricuta”*
- Antonella Cardone, *Chief Executive Officer, Cancer Patients Europe*
- Eduardo Pisani, *Chief Executive Officer, All. Can International*
- Alexander Roediger, *Associate Vice-President, Global Lead Oncology Policy, MSD*

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## References

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2. Cancer Research UK, Survival for breast cancer, accessed in January 2025. Based on NHS England data from people diagnosed in England between 2016 and 2020.