

29 June, 2021

Dear Member of the BECA Committee,

We are really delighted to have been able to contribute to the discussions you have had in BECA hearings and committee meetings over the past few months. Thank you for the initiative you have taken in driving forward some important and strategic directions for Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

In particular, we wanted to thank you for the chance to convey to the Committee the enormous opportunities that are currently present to achieve radical improvement in the early detection of prostate cancer across Europe in the context of nascent EU cancer policy initiatives such as Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and the EU Cancer Mission.

With an ageing population, prostate cancer is silently becoming an increasing healthcare burden in Europe. It is now the most frequent male cancer in Europe with important consequences for healthcare systems. Every year, approximately 450 000 European men are diagnosed with Prostate Cancer. Prostate cancer was the cause of death of 107 000 men in Europe in 2018 and the disease causes many emotional and social problems for patients and their families.

The promised review of the 2003 EU Council Recommendations on cancer screening has been welcomed across the cancer community, including the declared intent to examine the particular case for early detection strategies for prostate cancer to be included within these.

Uniting EU cancer policy initiatives towards shared goals

In the context of the draft report of the BECA Committee published on 24 June 2021, we urge MEPs to make further recommendations that will ensure that all initiatives of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan align and work towards the achievement of clear and tangible goals. This will maximise the success of the Cancer Plan and the EU Cancer Mission, and provide to European citizens clear signals of what has been achieved through united actions by Member States together.

In order to overcome the increasing trend of rising mortality rates from prostate cancer, we suggest that the following targets be implemented in the context of the EU's Beating Cancer Plan:

- By 2024 the European Commission should develop and publish new guidelines on risk stratified screening of prostate cancer
- By 2026 at least 5 EU member states should have incorporated these guidelines into their national cancer plans
- To achieve a 50% immediate reduction of overdiagnosis and overtreatment for those countries aligned to EU risk stratified guidelines
- By 2027, all EU member states to have put in place a clear strategy for risk stratified early detection of prostate cancer in all men turning 50 yrs old. (Please see the attached algorithm which gives an idea of what we mean by risk stratification in practice).

These targets will not be achieved by maintaining the status quo, but the EU has a number of strengths and opportunities to make this initiative a success. This programme will require coordination with other components of the Cancer Plan, such as the Comprehensive Cancer Centres and the Inter-specialty Training Scheme in order to make sure that there are centres of excellence in each country and that all specialists are well aligned to the new guidelines. The Inequalities Registry should also be invoked as a means of measuring progress towards agreed EU targets on cancer, such as those suggested above.

The early detection of prostate cancer will also benefit from the EU Cancer Imaging Initiative and the interaction with the EU Cancer Research mission as there are emerging data driven technologies such as AI which will assist radiologists with their work.

The EU4Health programme can also help deliver an EU wide information campaign on early detection of prostate cancer. It may be that this campaign could be part of a broader campaign targeted at men's health and/or men and cancer.

We look forward to continue working with you along with the European Commission and EU member states to ensure the EU Cancer Plan is a success, and to bring benefits for men and their families across the EU.

If you have time for a short call to clarify any of the issues raised in this letter, we would be very happy to arrange one at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Hein Van Poppel, Adjunct Secretary General, European Association of Urology

Andre Deschamps, Chair, Europa Uomo

Ken Mastris, President, European Cancer Patient Coalition

Prof. Monique Roobol, Principal Investigator, European Randomised Study on Prostate Cancer Screening