



Brussels, 25 May 2014

## **EUROPEAN WEEK AGAINST CANCER: ECL Calls for Strong Engagement with Policymakers**

This year, the European Week Against Cancer, 25-31 May, falls on a political hiatus during an election year. This is an ideal year for all non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and citizens to strongly engage with their new Members of Parliament (MPs) in their countries and with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) at the EU to ensure that cancer prevention and early detection is on their agenda.

All MEPs in the new legislature will be invited to support the MEPs Against Cancer (MAC) Election Manifesto with the goal to “reduce cancer incidence by promoting prevention, ensuring equitable access to high quality treatment and care, and ensuring a good quality of life for cancer patients and survivors.” The key areas of work in this Manifesto are Equality, Prevention, Research, Registration, Protection, Patients, Quality and Rare Cancers.<sup>1</sup>

Cancer is responsible for 1 in 5 deaths in the European Region. There are more than 3 million new cases annually. At 1.7 million deaths per year, cancer is the second most common cause of death and morbidity in Europe after cardiovascular diseases.<sup>2</sup> Morbidity and mortality rates are expected to increase, with Europe’s rapidly ageing population.

Political action is required if we are to curb these alarming statistics. Cancer is a highly preventable disease. Research has provided evidence that at least a third of all cancers are preventable. And with early detection, common cancers such as breast, colorectal and cervical cancer can be treated.

Politicians should be aware of the EU’s European Code Against Cancer, a set of evidence-based recommendations including not using tobacco, having a healthy weight, undertaking physical activity, having a diet rich in vegetables and fruits, moderating alcohol intake, avoiding excessive UV exposure, avoiding exposure to cancer-causing substances in the environment, participating in cervical, breast, and colorectal screening as well as in vaccination programmes.

We need policy makers to support actions for cancer prevention, such as effective tobacco control policies, “legislation, pricing, and other policies to promote healthy patterns of diet and physical activity”<sup>3</sup>, and actions to implement national, population-based screening programmes for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer which are in accordance with EU Council Recommendation on cancer screening principles, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mepsagainstcancer.eu>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe. <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases/cancer/cancer>

<sup>3</sup> World Cancer Research Fund, *Policy and Action for Cancer Prevention: Food, Nutrition, and Physical Activity: a Global Perspective*.

Policymakers should be informed on, and given suggestions on how they can support the Member States, Institutions and NGOs involved in the new EU Joint Action "Development of the European Guide on Quality Improvement in Comprehensive Cancer Control" (CANCON) 2014-2017<sup>4</sup> which was launched in March this year, after the previous EU Joint Action European Partnership Action Against Cancer (EPAAC)<sup>5</sup> ended in February. Engaging policymakers at this early stage of this Joint Action is important for a successful adoption of the final deliverable in 2015, an evidence-based European guide on quality improvement in comprehensive cancer control.

"This is an ideal time to invite new and returning politicians to support the efforts of cancer leagues and other NGOs in our cancer control efforts, at both the national and European level."

- Joan Kelly, ECL President

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.cancer.fi/@Bin/99005620/CanCon\\_Newsletter\\_1\\_2014.pdf](http://www.cancer.fi/@Bin/99005620/CanCon_Newsletter_1_2014.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.epaac.eu>