

Latest developments in cancer screening programmes in Europe

Is it time to revisit the Council Recommendation on Cancer Screening (2003)?

Permanent
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SUMMARY

On Tuesday 15 October, the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL) convened a roundtable in Brussels to inform policy makers about recent developments in cancer screening that may necessitate an update of the Annex of the Council Recommendation on cancer screening (2003).

Hosted by the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union, 38 participants were registered for the meeting including representatives from 16 permanent representations to the EU. Presentations were given by experts from the International Agency on Cancer Research (IARC), CPO Piemonte (WHO Collaborating Centre for cancer early detection), Finnish Cancer Registry and the Joint Research Centre (JRC).

Dr Partha Basu (IARC) gave an overview positive impact of the Council recommendation on cancer screening implementation in Europe. Building on this, Dr Antonio Ponti (CPO Piemonte) noted the developments and innovations in cancer screening in recent years, which could inform a potential update of the annex to the Council Recommendation. A commentary on the potential for updating the annex has been submitted to the International Journal on Cancer and is currently under review.

Dr Ahti Anttila (Finnish Cancer Registry) introduced the Innovative Partnership for Action against Cancer (iPAAC) joint action and its specific work on cancer screening. The joint action will, amongst other things, consider criteria for implementing risk-stratified screening and assess potential new programmes from the policy-making perspective. Dr Anttila highlighted the forthcoming meeting of the iPAAC joint action in Helsinki on 5 December 2019 as an opportunity to further explore these areas and contribute to the final deliverable of the iPAAC joint action: the 'Roadmap on Implementation and Sustainability of Cancer Control Actions.'

Finally, Dr Nadya Dimitrova and Dr Luciana Neamtiu (JRC) shared the knowledge gained to date during the development of evidence-based recommendations for breast cancer screening as part of the European Commission Initiative on Breast Cancer (ECIBC). Alongside demonstrating a practical impact of the value of the Council Recommendation, the ECIBC can provide timely intelligence into the continuous monitoring of cancer screening in Europe and for a potential update of the Council Recommendation annex.

In conclusion, significant progress has been made in recent years to implement population-based quality assured screening programmes. The Council Recommendation has had a significant impact in encouraging this positive development but, in light of innovation in the field, an update of the technical annex of the Recommendation would boost its value further. Ongoing initiatives such as the iPAAC joint and action and the ECIBC can provide valuable support to this objective.