

27 May 2020, Brussels

**RE: Letter of support for the European Code against Cancer**

This letter was sent to EU Health Minister and EU Health Attachés

Dear,

On the occasion of [European Week Against Cancer](#), taking place between 25 and 31 May each year, recognising that finding common solutions to addressing the cancer threat is at the top of the European political agenda in the 2019-2024 mandate, the [Association of European Cancer Leagues](#) (ECL) would like to call for the continuous update, maintenance and sustainability of the [European Code against Cancer](#) (ECAC) to boost cancer prevention across Europe.

ECL represents 29 national cancer leagues across 24 countries with a joint vision of a Europe free of cancers. Our members cover the full patient pathway, from prevention and early diagnosis to treatment and patient support. They and are the main source of information, resources and services for the public.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death, ill health and disability in many European countries. The number of new cancer cases in Europe (UN definition) is projected to increase from 4.2 million in 2018 to 5.2 million per year by 2040 - this corresponds to 100 million new cancer patients over the next 20-25 years. The economic burden of cancer exceeds €100 billion per year in the European Union.

Given the massive threat posed by cancer and the changing demographics of an aging population, only sustained investment in cancer prevention may counter these rising projections. It is estimated that around 40% of cancers could be avoided through implementation of primary prevention measures known to be effective, and further mortality can be reduced through screening and early detection of cancer. Most of this has been known for many years, if not decades, but has not resulted in effective cancer prevention.

We urge the European Commission and national governments to use the momentum around Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and uphold their commitment to improve the impact of primary and secondary prevention of cancer on the health of the European populations by:

- **Supporting the continuous update and revision of the 4th edition of the European Code against Cancer** - which lists the most successful evidence-based prevention measures - including its scientific evidence and dissemination strategies.

- Ensuring that national cancer plans and strategies include the prevention advice from the European Code against Cancer.
- Adopting and integrating evidence-based cancer prevention and health promotion practices, interventions, and policies into public health and routine health care settings, as demonstrated by implementation research.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information. We would be pleased to e-meet you to discuss this further.

Kind Regards,



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Dr. Sakari Karjalainen  
President, ECL



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Dr. Wendy Yared  
Director, ECL