



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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*Ion-Marcel CIOLACU
President of the Camera Deputaților
Palatul Parlamentului,
Strada Izvor nr.2-4, sect.5,
RO-050563 Bucuresti*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the proposal for a Council Recommendation on strengthening prevention through early detection: A new EU approach to cancer screening replacing Council Recommendation 2003/878/EC {COM(2022) 474 final}.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Camera Deputaților for the proposal. The new EU Cancer Screening Scheme, alongside the update of the Council Recommendation on cancer screening, are flagship initiatives of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan presented in 2021, which committed to tackle the entire disease pathway. Cancer screening is a key step in addressing the disease pathway in a comprehensive manner.

The Commission adopted its proposal on 20 September 2022. It was extensively debated and amended in the Council Working Party on Public Health, in which the Member States' governments are represented. The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council adopted the final text of the Council Recommendation on 9 December 2022¹.

The Commission considers that the newly adopted Council Recommendation represents a significant improvement compared to the Recommendation that it replaces. As a major achievement, the Council Recommendation includes lung, prostate and gastric cancers. These are added to breast, colorectal and cervical cancers, already covered by the replaced Recommendation. Furthermore, the new Recommendation maintains the Cancer Plan objective to offer breast, colorectal and cervical cancer screening to 90% of the eligible EU population.

¹ Council Recommendation of 9 December 2022 on strengthening prevention through early detection: A new EU approach on cancer screening replacing Council Recommendation 2003/878/EC, OJ C 473, 13.12.2022, p. 1.

Some of the points raised by the Camera Deputaţilor had been voiced in parallel by Member States in the Council Working Party and have been considered in the adopted Council Recommendation. These include references to additional preventive measures, and a strong focus on national responsibilities and capacities.

The Commission would like to note that on some aspects, it would have preferred the final text of the Council Recommendation to be more ambitious. However, it considers the outcome of the Council discussions to be a satisfactory and viable compromise.

Concerning further issues raised by the Camera Deputaţilor, the Commission agrees with the need to provide access to health data and imaging and has recently launched the European Cancer Imaging Initiative for this purpose. The Initiative would ensure that clinicians, researchers and innovators across Europe have access to a large set of cancer images and linked clinical data, thus supporting the objective of the future European Health Data Space².

Reducing inequalities, including when it comes to access to care in remote areas, is another commitment of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. One more flagship initiative is the European Cancer Inequalities Registry, launched in 2022 in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. In February 2023, the first set of country-specific reports, including one for Romania, were published³. The registry's data tool, as well as the reports, aim to identify trends, disparities and inequalities among Member States and regions, and therefore guide ventures for policy and funding.

Beyond these initiatives, the Commission has mobilised substantial funding under the EU4Health Programme to support Member States in the implementation of the newly adopted Council Recommendation and has provided EU-level coordination. With the EU4Health Annual Work Programmes 2021 and 2022, the Commission has already invested EUR 38.5 million. With the EU4Health Work Programme 2023, the Commission allocated a budget of EUR 31 million as direct grants to Member States' authorities to support the full implementation of cancer screening for breast, colorectal and cervical cancers. European guidelines and quality assurance schemes will provide additional guidance for implementation. They have already been updated and published for breast cancer; and are in progress for colorectal and cervical cancer. New guidelines will be developed for lung, prostate and gastric cancer. To support this, the Commission has earmarked another EUR 7.5 million under the EU4Health Work Programme 2023.

Other funding sources are available to support cancer-screening efforts in Member States, such as the Horizon Europe Mission on Cancer, cohesion policy instruments and the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Under the Technical Support Instrument, the Commission has provided support to Romania for the implementation of colorectal cancer screening from 2018 to 2021. Further, the Commission welcomes that Romania's Recovery and Resilience Plan includes actions to improve access to breast and cervical cancer screening.

² COM(2022) 197 final of 3.5.2022, proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Health Data Space.

³ <https://cancer-inequalities.jrc.ec.europa.eu/country-cancer-profiles>

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Camera Deputaților and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Stella Kyriakides
Member of the Commission*