



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
Public Health



LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG
Ministère de la Santé

Direction de la santé

High Level Event

“30 years of EU action against cancer”

Jointly organized by the European Commission and the Luxembourg Presidency

Luxembourg, Cercle Cité, 15 September 2015

Opening speech by minister Lydia Mutsch

Dear Commissioner,

Distinguished audience,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by saying how pleased I am to open - together with my colleague Commissioner Andriukaitis and the President of the Cancer group of the Members of EP, Mister Peterle - this high level event to celebrate “30 years of EU Action against Cancer”, and to welcome the European Commission Expert Group on Cancer Control for its third meeting in Luxembourg.

For 30 years now, Cancer has been a priority issue for EU public health policy.

In June 1985, in Milan, and in December 1985 in Luxembourg, the Heads of State and Government of the then twelve Member States of the European Community decided to launch the first “Europe Against Cancer” program, which became operational in 1987.

This initiative introduced an important new dimension, very close to the concerns of the citizens of Europe.

Even if the legal basis for action in the field of public health largely falls under the competences of Member States, it becomes more and more evident that there are areas where joint EU action can bring considerable added value in tackling major health challenges more effectively, namely through information sharing and exchange of best practice and expertise and thus helping to reduce existing inequalities among and inside Member States.

Luxembourg was right from the beginning a strong supporter of common EU action in the field of health and particularly in the fight against cancer.

This joint EU action and partnership approach can indeed help to avoid inefficient actions, duplication of efforts and will thus contribute to the better use of the limited resources available.

Despite the progress in the fight against the disease, cancer remains a key public health concern and an enormous burden on European societies. Cancer is the second most common cause of death in the European Union and this figure is expected to rise due to the ageing population.

Since 2010, cancer is the leading cause of death in men in Luxembourg, exceeding mortality by cardiovascular diseases, while in women cancer still remains the second most common cause.

As a small Member State, we specially acknowledge the great added value of EU level cooperation in the fight against cancer and we are very pleased that the Commission continues to support Member States in their efforts to reduce cancer incidence and mortality and promote the quality of life in cancer patients.

The “European Code against Cancer”, developed in 1987 by top cancer experts and regularly adapted based on latest scientific evidence with the support of the International Agency for Research on Cancer, is an important information and communication tool.

It is estimated that about 1/3 of cancers are avoidable by adopting healthier lifestyles and avoiding key risk factors. Horizontal action on major health determinants must therefore remain a priority, in the same way than interministerial action programs and strategies in the field of nutrition and physical activities, tobacco control and alcohol, as well as determined action addressing environmental factors such as exposure to carcinogenic and mutagenic substances and indoor and outdoor air quality.

We highly appreciate the European guidelines for population based screening programs for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer on the basis of the available evidence of effectiveness which are very helpful for the development and implementation of our national strategies.

Since 1992 we run a national screening program for breast cancer in women aged 50 to 69 years, following the European guidelines. Through this program, early detection could be increased from 9 to around 70% of the target group.

As actually some discussion concerning the opportunity and outcomes of these programs is going on, we are very eager to see the new edition of the European Guidelines for Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis to be developed by the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JCR), as well as the voluntary European pilot accreditation scheme for Breast Cancer Services.

Luxembourg also supports the development of guidelines for models of best practices in cancer related care and welcomes very much the new Joint Action CANCON and the European Guide on Quality Improvement in comprehensive Cancer Control.

I am happy to inform you that the Luxembourg government adopted in July 2014 a very comprehensive National Cancer Control Plan 2014-2018, whose ground has been laid out under my predecessor Mars Di Bartolomeo whom I have the pleasure to welcome today. This National Cancer Control Plan contains 73 different actions and covers the areas of Governance, health promotion, prevention and early detection, diagnostic, treatment, supportive care and rehabilitation, health resources, patient rights and research. This cancer plan was developed together with a wide range of actors, representatives of scientific and medical societies, healthcare workers, patient organizations, non-governmental organizations and national authorities. The plan will be monitored and evaluated on the basis of the indicators developed by the EUROCHIP Project and the data collected by our National Cancer Registry launched in 2013.

Dear Commissioner,

Distinguished audience,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to recall the overall theme of the Luxembourg Presidency “A Union for the Citizens” and a recent event which took place here in the same premises on 8 of July: “Making Access to Personalized Medicine a Reality for Patients”. This issue is also an important aspect in the field of cancer, and I hope that the main findings of this conference and the Council Conclusions to be adopted during the Council of Health ministers on 8 December 2015 will be a useful contribution to the fight against cancer and the benefit of the patients.

Finally, I thank the Commission and particularly DG SANTE, for the tremendous work done in the field of cancer up to now, together with so many dedicated experts, and I hope that you will continue these efforts with the same success.

I wish you all fruitful discussions and a successful conference!