

Report on Cancer Mission in Romania

From Cancer Plan to Action and Mission. Implementation of the cancer agenda in Romania

(Online event, 7th of February 2022)

“We must reach another level in cancer policies – find what patients and citizens need and work with them to address these needs”

Executive Summary

- It's essential to have a coherent approach between the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and the Cancer Mission in the implementation at the national level. “Plan and Mission – it is important to put these two words together”.
- The definition of the Mission concept is to find solutions to address challenges that citizens face in their daily lives. All the actions of the missions need to be designed with the input of the citizens. “We must bring another level – find what patients and citizens need and work with them to address these needs”.
- In this regard, a priority could be the creation of a citizen-centric prevention and early detection of cancer-focused living lab, which brings together experts, civil society, citizens, clinicians, researchers to foster innovation in oncology
- The establishment of an informal Cancer Mission group for Romania, which should become a contact point with the Cancer Mission and European Commission as well with local authorities, was identified as an immediate and concrete action to be implemented. Cancer Mission Romania group could catalyse the Competence Cancer Centre and could be involved in the application for future calls.
- The Romanian Recovery and Resilience Plan approved by EU Council Decision provides 5 million EUR for the creation of a unique Competence Center for Horizon Europe Cancer Mission with the aim to implement The Cancer Mission at national level in a coordinated manner. The Research, Innovation and Digitalisation Ministry should launch as soon as possible a competition regarding the

establishment of the Competence Cancer Centre associated to the Cancer Mission (as part of the Romanian Recovery and Resilience Plan).

The banner features the InoMed logo (Centre for Innovation in Medicine) on the left and the Romanian coat of arms with 'ROMANIA' on the right. A blue box at the top center contains the text 'Online event: February, 7, starting 10 AM CET'. The main title is 'From Cancer Plan to Action and Mission. Implementation of the Cancer Agenda in Romania'. Below the title is a 'Keynote speakers' section with four circular portraits. Each portrait is accompanied by a name in a blue box and a title below it. At the bottom, 'Media partners:' is followed by logos for 'RAPORTUL DE GARDĂ.ro' and 'SĂ DISCUTĂM ALTFEL DESPRE CANCER'.

Online event: February, 7, starting 10 AM CET

From Cancer Plan to Action and Mission.
Implementation of the Cancer Agenda in Romania

Keynote speakers

- Stefan Schreck**
Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE)
- Luciana Neamtii**
DG Joint Research Center
- Christine Chomienne**
Cancer Mission Phase I Vice-Chair
- Șerban Gheorghiu**
Cancer Mission Phase I Board Member

Media partners:

Full Report

On the 7th of February 2022, the Center for Innovation in Medicine, in partnership with the Health Committee of the Romanian Parliament, organized a high-level event focused on the opportunities to implement the cancer agenda in Romania. The event follows the launch of the Romanian Beating Cancer Plan, on January 19th, during an event hosted by the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis.

The discussions revolved around the research and innovation agenda of the Horizon Europe Cancer Mission, its coordination with the Europe's Cancer Beating Plan and opportunities for implementation at the National level. The objective of the event was to have an overview of different mechanisms and funding instruments for implementing the [Cancer Mission](#) recommendations in Romania and to discuss the broader Horizon Europe opportunities and synergies with the Romanian Recovery and Resilience Plan and Cohesion Funds as well as with other Multiannual Financial Framework programs.

The Mission on Cancer launched on 29 September 2021, together with the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan adopted on 3 February 2021, aims at improving the lives of more than 3 million people by 2030 through prevention, treatment and overall, for those affected by cancer, including their families, to live longer and better. Missions are a novel instrument in Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. The four Cancer Mission [objectives](#) include: understanding cancer, prevention and early detection, optimize diagnosis and treatment and support quality of life.

*“We have an implementation Roadmap for the EU Beating Cancer Plan in place, with clear milestones and a clear timeline, accessible to everyone. We are well on track, with **a solid governance mechanism, which allows a joint implementation of the Cancer Plan and Cancer Mission**. We have set up Member States groups in which National Health and Research Institutes cooperate, and **through the cancer stakeholder group** we work with the wider stakeholder community. This helps us **have a coherent approach between the Plan and the Mission in the implementation at the national level**. This also helps ensure **coherence between ambitious research goals and realistic policy implementation**. The Cancer Mission contributes to the Plan on the research and innovation components. There will be a strong boost on research, innovation, digitalization with a broad involvement in cancer management. The Plan and the Mission will influence policy, research, and funding in the years ahead. A substantial budget of 4 billion euros under several EU funding programs will help ensure our promises can be put into practice.” - **Stefan Schreck, Adviser for Stakeholder relations, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), Directorate C - Public health, the European Commission.***

Several initiatives have been established as part of the Cancer Mission. To deploy the scientific advances in understanding cancer biology, **the UNCAN** (European Initiative to **Understand Cancer**) initiative will be created by 2023. Prevention is the most cost-effective long-term cancer control strategy. In this field, the Commission envisages an action on implementation **research on cancer prevention**. In the area of **diagnosis and treatment**, the Commission envisages the implementation of clinical trials on treatments, using **personalised medicine approaches**, as well as actions to support the creation of **a Network of Comprehensive Cancer Infrastructures (CCIs)** with a focus on integrating the research dimension. In terms of quality of life, the Commission envisages to support the setting **up of the European Cancer Patient Digital Centre**.

The next level in the fight against cancer: find what patients and citizens need and work with them to address these needs

During the event, **Christine Chomienne**, Vice-Chair, Cancer Mission, Phase I, discussed the connection between the EU Beating Cancer Plan and Cancer Mission and how these initiatives can be reflected at the level of the member states:

*“Plan and Mission – it is important to put these two words together. It’s the new way that the EU Commission invited us to fight cancer, by leaning on the National Cancer Plan and the National Cancer Missions. The definition of the Mission concept is to find solutions to address challenges that citizens face in their daily lives. All the actions of the missions need to be designed with the input of the citizens. We can no longer fight cancer with what we – policymakers or scientists - believe to be important. **We must bring another level – find what patients and citizens need and work with them to address these needs”***

There are five interventions to be answered in the Cancer Mission, with the same importance: understand cancer, prevent the preventable, increase diagnosis and treatment and enhance quality of life. All these must be based on very strong **equity** principles. There are 13 recommendations on how to address these 5 interventions at the same time.

One of the thirteen recommendations is about creating a **European Cancer Patient Digital Centre** by 2023, where cancer patients and survivors can deposit and share their data for personalised care. Patient digital centers should also be implemented at all national levels. This represents **a tool for the patient to manage his own disease**: their test results, appointments, outcomes and information about the diseases, the networks he can join or financial aspects he might be concerned about (insurance for survivors). It is also important to provide the opportunity for the patient to share his data for different research projects that address his needs. **This needs to be also developed at national level, in the patient's language.**

“A key focus is on prevention. We must see what methods we must perform screening; we must work with citizens to make them understand the need for screening and change their behavior. We must ensure that survivors of cancer live the life of a citizen not of a patient. This involves another level of engagement.” - Christine Chomienne

It is crucial to have citizens engagement. At the beginning of the cancer pathway, citizens are crucial for prevention and screening. A relevant action in this context will be a high-level conference on civic engagement in EU Missions, organized on [March 21st, 2022](#) by The French Presidency of the Eu Council. During the event, a workshop will be dedicated to the Cancer Mission.

The Mission will also integrate care, research, as well as training and awareness activities in a structured and equitable manner through the creation of a network of Comprehensive Cancer Infrastructures by 2025. People want quality of care but also innovation. Comprehensive cancer infrastructures can connect cancer care with research centers and universities. All cancer centers should require excellence both for daily care as well as for innovation.

A Cancer Mission at the national level

It is important that the actions and recommendations in the Mission are adapted to the national realities and capabilities in the areas of research, early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer.

Șerban Ghiorghiu, Cancer Mission Phase I Board Member, mentioned that a **National Cancer Mission in Romania** can be implemented as a formal or an informal group. This is an opportunity to bring together the voices of those interested in making a positive impact in the lives of cancer patients. A priority, in his opinion, should be the **creation of a living lab**.

„If we just look at today's event it's obvious the extraordinary level of commitment and active involvement of all decision-makers. For me it is clear not only that it will have an impact at the national level, but I think Romania can become one of the most active countries in the fight against cancer at European level. For too long, efforts to make a change in oncology have been going on in parallel. I am passionate about the concept of living labs, which brings together experts, civil society, citizens, clinicians, researchers to foster innovation in oncology. Many of

Synergies with other existing EU programmes

The Mission is not only about research, but it also involved a holistic approach in many policy areas. For their successful implementation they will work in synergy and coordination with other missions, parts of Horizon Europe, as well as with other EU funding instruments and policies.

Annika Nowak, Head of Sector Cancer Mission secretariat, EC DG Research & Innovation, explained the synergies with other EU policies and initiatives, including national activities:

- **Initiatives that can help achieve the goals of the EU Mission on Cancer:** Horizon Europe partnerships, European Cancer Information System, Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, Zero Pollution Action Plan, HealthyLifestyles4all initiative, Research and Training Programme (Euratom), Pharmaceutical Strategy
- **Initiatives that can act as an enabler for the EU Mission on cancer:** European Health Data Space, Knowledge Centre on Cancer – KCC, EIT, European Universities Initiative
- **Initiatives that the EU Mission of Cancer are expected to serve –** AI Agenda, European Data Strategy, Digital transformation and skills, New European Bauhaus Initiative
- **Ongoing National activities** (eg. synergies with National Cancer Plans)

One of the interesting features of the Mission on Cancer is the joint governance. *“We want to make sure that all actions we are now implementing keep an integrated approach, foster dialogue with the member states as well as stakeholders and the EU Implementation Group. For the member states, joint governance means involvement of the Health and Research ministries, for stakeholders this means - all relevant stakeholders in cancer (including citizens, environmental groups) and for the implementation group should integrate all the relevant Commission departments. What we do at the EU Level should be reflected at the national/regional level.”* - Annika Nowak

Support from Horizon Europe and other funding programmes

- **Horizon Europe (2021-2027):** up to 10% of pillar II available to support 5 Missions. Horizon Europe is set to provide 378,2 million euros for the first 3 work programmes (2021-2023).
- **The EU4 Health Programme (2021-2027)** will fund many actions included in the EU Beating Cancer Plan, including activities proposed by the Cancer Mission. 1,25 billion until 2027;
- **Digital Europe Programme (2021-2027):** 250 million euros for cancer-related activities until 2027;
- **Erasmus+ programme, Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and European Institute of Innovation and Technology –** 500 million euro for projects in education, training, research on cancer, promotion of healthy lifestyles;
- **Technical support instrument** - technical expertise to support Member States in institutional, administrative and growth enhancing reforms. Ex. - **screening guidelines**;
- **Cohesion Funds** - support to health investments in infrastructure or training. Eg. building infrastructure for comprehensive cancer center;
- **Recovery and Resilience facility** - opportunity to make investments during the pandemic but also in the field of cancer.
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[The first Work Programme \(2021-2022\) of the Cancer Mission](#) was published in June, 2021. A new amendment includes three actions related to cancer on screening, early detection, quality of life:

- Develop new methods and technologies for cancer screening and early detection (closure 26.04.2022). A total of €60 million will be allocated for these projects.
- Develop and validate a set of quality of life and patient preference measures for cancer patients and survivors (closure 26.04.2022) - €11 million
- Better understanding of the impact of risk factors and health determinants on the development and progression of cancer (closure 26.04.2022) - €54 million

In her concluding remarks, **Annika Nowak**, emphasized the fact **that the Mission`s topics will stimulate networking and involve other disciplines and sectors and that citizen engagement is key for the Mission**. Applicants are expected to liaise with other EU-funded initiatives. Mission topics will include end-user engagement (eg. living labs). End users includes cancer centres, national and regional health authorities and services, local communities.

Relevant EU Beating Cancer Plan Flagships launched in the past year and the synergy with Cancer Mission

On June 30th, 2021, the European Commission launched the [Knowledge Centre on Cancer](#), the first Flagship action delivered under Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. The general vision of the Knowledge Centre on Cancer is to support the Plan and the Horizon Europe Mission on Cancer. It will map the latest evidence on cancer, provide healthcare guidelines and quality assurance schemes, as well as monitor and project trends in cancer incidence and mortality across the EU.

More recently, in the context of World Cancer Day 2022, the [Cancer Inequalities Registry](#), **another flagship initiative was launched** to identify trends and disparities between Member States and regions. It also sheds light on inequalities in cancer prevention and care due to gender, educational attainment and income level, as well as disparities between urban and rural areas. The Registry will guide investment and interventions at EU, national and regional level.

Further steps for Romania

Identify the Cancer Mission Board recommendations which can be adapted to the local realities and capabilities in terms of cancer research. The most important would be the one related to the living labs with a focus on citizen engagement in cancer prevention, early detection and screening

The Romanian Recovery and Resilience Plan was recently approved by EU Council Decision and provides 5 million EUR for a unique **Competence Center for Horizon Europe Cancer Mission** with the aim to implement The Cancer Mission at national level in a coordinated manner.

The Research, Innovation and Digitalisation Ministry should launch in Q3 2022 a competition regarding the establishment of the **Cancer Competency Centre** associated to the Cancer Mission (as part of the Romanian Recovery and Resilience Plan). The role of this Centre of Competence should be to help Romania implement the Cancer Mission recommendations and to become more competitive on future HE calls.

Following the event, another important step is the establishment of an informal Cancer Mission group for Romania, which is a contact point with the Cancer Mission and the group which can catalyse the Competency Centre Consortium and the application for future calls.

“Cancer is a priority of the current Presidency in the field of public health. The Launch of the Romanian National Beating Cancer Plan is our systematic response for the prevention, diagnostic and treatment of cancer as well as our commitment to reduce inequalities. We are at a critical point to make a difference and both time and money are of the essence. We must use the funding opportunities to incentivize the new policy measures to reduce the cancer burden. There are many funding initiatives available: Horizon Europe, EU4Health, The National Plan for Recovery and Resilience, Erasmus, cohesion funds, partnership loans to strengthen research and innovation, education, infrastructure, promotion of a healthy lifestyle.” – Prof. Dr. Diana Păun, Presidential Advisor for Health
