



PRESS RELEASE

Cancer screening saves lives. So what's stopping us?

Brussels, 13 February 2008.

MAC Members today joined together with the *Parliament Magazine* to shine a light on the current state of cancer screening in Europe. World Cancer Day on 4 February was a poignant reminder that Europe currently loses over 1 million citizens each year to cancer. Prevention of cancer through population based screening programmes is therefore one of the most effective strategies to stem Europe's cancer tide. The discussion focused on what progress has been made since the Council Recommendation on screening was adopted in 2003, what needed to be improved on a European scale, how our countries could be convinced to invest in screening programmes and how citizens could be motivated to present for screening? Tens of thousands of deaths could be prevented in the European Union each year by effective screening for cervical, breast and colorectal cancer. The EU is playing an increasingly strong role in ensuring that they are. Health Ministers adopted a **Council Recommendation in December 2003**, covering mammography, colorectal cancer screening and pap smears. The Portuguese Presidency's conference on "Health Strategies in Europe" presented data on the presence or absence of a national, regional or pilot scheme.

MEPs welcomed these developments. *"Estimates for mortality rate reduction from screening for both colorectal and breast cancer are around 20% and for cervical as much as 60%"* said **Alojz Peterle MEP**. *"It is so important that Member States put the necessary screening plans in place."* **Adamos Adamou MEP** was firm about the potential benefits of screening programmes. *"A recent survey suggested that only 8% of men and women take the colorectal cancer test. We must improve these figures. As an oncologist I see far too many advanced cancers and I have become an advocate for early detection of cancer by screening."*

"We in the European Parliament are in the process of adopting a Cancer Resolution that calls on all member states to implement the Council Recommendation on cancer screening of 2003." said MAC co-chair, **Liz Lynne MEP**. *"We hope that our discussions will highlight what more can and should be done and how we create more awareness for people to take part in screening programmes."*

Unfortunately, the Commission Report on cancer screening, due out by the end of 2007, was not finished in time for the event, which had been planned specifically as a follow up and discussion.

Lynn Faulds Wood, President of the European Cancer Patient Coalition, expressed her concern. *"We're so glad that Europe is sitting up and taking an interest in cancer screening. Cancer patients are waiting for this report. We know some countries are not doing so well, therefore it is important that we do not let this opportunity to save lives get away."*

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EDITOR'S NOTES

About MAC - MEPs Against Cancer

MEPs against Cancer is an all-party informal group of fifty-six MEPs committed to promoting action on cancer as an EU priority and harnessing European health policy to that end.

For more information please visit the MAC website:

www.mepsagainstcancer.org

To join MAC please contact the MAC Secretariat provided by the European Cancer Patient Coalition

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About the European Cancer Patient Coalition

ECPC was founded in 2003 with the aim of giving all cancer patients a voice in shaping the European Union's policies that impact on cancer care.

Cancer in Europe: Key facts and figures

- There are more than 2 million new cases and more than 1.1 million cancer deaths in EU each year
- Every day 5214 Europeans are diagnosed with cancer and 3185 die from their disease
- Lung cancer is the commonest form of cancer, followed closely by colorectal cancer
- Lung, colorectal and breast cancer account for two-fifths of the entire European cancer population
- Most of the other cancer are considered rare diseases according to the EU criteria - affecting not more than 5/10,000 people in the EU
- The number of Europeans with cancer will increase dramatically over the next 20 years

Key facts and figures about screening from Eurobarometer Survey:

Published September 2007

- Only 13% of European men took the Prostate Specific Antigen Tests *)
- Only 8% of all respondents took the colorectal cancer test
- 43% of all women underwent a manual breast examination
- 19% of Germans surveyed had a FOBT Colorectal Cancer Test over the year preceding the survey, compared to only 1% of Cypriots.
- 28% of Austrian men took the Prostate Specific Antigen Tests annually, compared to only 3% in Bulgaria and Romania *)
- 72% of Austrian women surveyed last year had had a breast examination, compared to 23% in Romania.
- 62% from Luxembourg had a cervical smear test, compared to only 7% in Cyprus

*) PSA testing is **not** included in the Council Recommendation of 2003, as currently the scientific evidence for nationwide programmes for PSA testing is lacking.