



Manifesto
for European Digital Health
and Cancer Care:
Translating Scientific Evidence
into Policy Impact

The European Union (EU) is navigating a phase of profound transformation, shaped by interconnected challenges, instabilities and mounting pressures on Europe's global competitiveness. In this complex landscape, policy priorities are evolving rapidly; yet one lesson is increasingly clear: health is not a secondary concern, but a foundational pillar of Europe's resilience, security, and long-term prosperity.

As Jean Monnet famously stated, "Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises." This insight is particularly relevant to health policy. Over the past decade, the EU has demonstrated its capacity to respond decisively to health crises, advancing initiatives such as joint procurement mechanisms and reinforced coordination in public health. However, Europe can no longer act solely in response to emergencies. The challenge now is to consolidate these advances into structural policies capable of delivering long-term societal impact.

Scientific research is central to this transformation. European programmes - including Horizon Europe, EU4Health, and related instruments - have generated a wealth of evidence, technological solutions, and innovative models.

Cancer exemplifies this dynamic and brings into sharp focus the broader stakes. It is a major public health priority in Europe, with approximately 2.7 million new diagnoses and 1.3 million deaths annually. At the same time, cancer care is undergoing a profound transformation: precision oncology, artificial intelligence, interoperable health data infrastructures, and early detection strategies are redefining prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. As such, cancer policies are a testing ground for aligning innovation, data, ethics, equity, and sustainability.

Importantly, cancer highlights the intrinsically multidisciplinary nature of health: effective policies require coordination across research, clinical practice, digital infrastructures, regulatory frameworks, and social policies. The lessons learned in oncology can and should inform policy frameworks across all areas of European healthcare innovation.

The political timing further amplifies urgency. Discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2028–34) and Framework Programme (FP10) for R&I will determine Europe's strategic priorities for the coming decade. Ensuring that health - and cancer in particular - remains central to Europe's agenda is not merely a sectoral concern; it is a decisive driver of collective European ambition and progress. Health underpins productivity and competitiveness: a society cannot prosper economically or industrially if its citizens are unwell and its healthcare systems are fragile. In this sense, public policies promoting health must be well-resourced, and strategically central as those aimed at economic competitiveness and industrial growth. Europe that addresses complexity recognises that health and productivity are inseparable: one cannot be maximised without the other.

Our core premise is both simple and ambitious: Europe produces excellent scientific evidence; yet evidence alone is insufficient. Its value depends on concrete political decisions to translate scientific results into policies, practices, and sustainable funding mechanisms across Member States.

Observations

We, the undersigned, note that:

1. The future of dedicated health programmes is at risk in the next budget cycle.

The next MFF 2028–2034 presents a pivotal moment for health policy. Emerging proposals to consolidate health programmes under broader competitiveness-oriented instruments create uncertainty regarding funding, prioritisation, and strategic coherence. Europe should maintain a distinct, ring-fenced health programme that ensures sustainable support for prevention, care, digital transformation, and patient-centred innovation. This is essential to avoid dilution of health priorities and to guarantee that scientific advances translate into tangible, system-wide benefits.

2. Precision oncology is a system efficiency lever, not a cost driver.

Advances in molecular diagnostics, genomics, and targeted therapies enable earlier diagnosis, better treatment stratification, and avoidance of ineffective interventions. When embedded in integrated care pathways, precision oncology improves outcomes while enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of health systems. Efficiency in cancer care is essential not only for optimising resource utilisation and system performance, but also for guaranteeing equitable access for all patients. Failing to scale these approaches at the European level represents a missed opportunity for both health equity and economic resilience.

3. Data fragmentation remains the main structural barrier to impact.

Despite substantial progress, cancer care and digital health innovation in Europe are still characterised by fragmented data environments, limited interoperability, uneven access to innovation, and persistent disparities both between and within Member States. Achieving a truly patient-centred digital transformation requires secure, interoperable, and trusted infrastructures, robust privacy safeguards, and transparent governance that fosters citizen trust. Artificial Intelligence must be deployed responsibly, with patients at the centre of design and decision-making processes, ensuring ethical, safe, and effective use across borders.

4. European cooperation mechanisms are delivering, but must be stabilised.

The launch of the EUnetCCC Joint Action in 2024 marked a decisive step towards operationalising a European network of Comprehensive Cancer Centres (CCCs), as envisaged by Europe's Beating Cancer Plan (EBCP). By defining common standards and certification pathways linking research, care, and training, EUnetCCC provides an operational backbone for implementing cancer strategies, reducing inequalities, expanding access to clinical trials, and accelerating uptake of innovation. Its long-term success depends on political commitment and structural continuity beyond pilot phases, transforming it into a permanent arm for European cancer initiatives.

5. Cancer policy is a test case for Europe's strategic ambition.

Cancer policy exemplifies the intersection of research, innovation, security, competitiveness, and social cohesion. Sustained investment in equitable, patient-centred, and digitally enabled cancer care is a prerequisite for a productive, resilient, and competitive Europe, particularly in the context of demographic change and fiscal pressures. Continuity of the EU Cancer Mission and the EBCP is critical to ensure that the significant progress achieved is not lost and that Europe retains its global leadership in cancer care and innovation.

Calls to Action

Therefore, we call on European and national policymakers to:

1. Secure a strong, visible, and ring-fenced place for health and cancer in FP10 and the MFF 2028–2034.

Guarantee the continuity, coherence, and adequate resourcing of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, the EU Cancer Mission, and related health programmes through dedicated, protected budgetary lines. Health and cancer must not be subsumed under broader competitiveness or innovation envelopes. Predictable and sustained investment is essential to maximise societal impact, enable structural transformation of health systems, and ensure measurable returns on public funding. The next Framework Programme must explicitly recognise health as a strategic pillar for Europe's resilience, productivity, and global leadership, acknowledging that robust health policy is inseparable from broader economic, social, and competitiveness objectives.

2. Invest in interoperable, secure, and patient-centred digital health ecosystems.

Prioritise European-level action to overcome fragmentation in health data infrastructures by advancing interoperability standards, robust cybersecurity frameworks, and trusted governance models for secondary use of data. Implementation should closely follow the insights and results generated by existing European projects and consultations, to maximise effective uptake of tools such as the EHDS and the AI Act, ensuring that innovation translates into measurable improvements in patient outcomes, equity, and health system efficiency. Ethical, legal, and patient-centred principles—including privacy protection, AI transparency, and citizen trust—must be fully embedded in all digital health initiatives.

3. Consolidate EUnetCCC as a permanent operational pillar of European cancer policy.

Support the transition of EUnetCCC from a time-limited Joint Action into a stable, long-term European infrastructure. A connected network of certified Comprehensive Cancer Centres is indispensable to align research, care, and training, operationalise EU cancer objectives, and reduce disparities across Member States. CCCs should function as the operational backbone of European cancer strategy, providing capacity to implement common standards, integrated care pathways, equitable access to clinical trials, and accelerated uptake of innovation.

4. Prioritize precision oncology as strategic system investments.

Precision oncology - including molecular diagnostics, genomics, biomarker-driven therapies, and AI-supported decision-making - transforms cancer care by enabling earlier, more accurate diagnoses, better treatment stratification, and avoidance of ineffective interventions. Integrated into National Cancer Control Plans and EU policy instruments, it improves patient outcomes, optimises resource use, and strengthens health system performance. Scaling these approaches across Europe is essential to reduce disparities in access to innovation, ensure equity, and maintain Europe's leadership in next-generation cancer care. Efficiency gains must go hand-in-hand with equitable, patient-centred delivery, making precision oncology a core strategic investment for sustainable, value-based cancer care.

5. Maintain the EU Cancer Mission as a strategic priority and safeguard a dedicated European health programme.

Ensure that the significant progress achieved under the EU Cancer Mission and Europe's Beating Cancer Plan is sustained, deepened, and structurally embedded in future policy frameworks. Political commitment and predictable funding are essential to preserve long-term impact in cancer prevention, early detection, treatment innovation, and survivorship support, including through research clusters and collaborative infrastructures that directly inform policy actions at European, national, and regional levels. The EU Cancer Mission must remain a long-term, mission-driven health strategy. This continuity will enhance the uptake of innovation, ensure measurable improvements in patient outcomes, and safeguard Europe's global leadership in cancer prevention and care.

Health is at the foundation of competitiveness: a society cannot innovate, grow, or thrive if its population is unwell. Europe's investment in health research and cancer care is therefore an investment in its economic and social resilience. At this pivotal moment, it is essential that the next MFF (2028–2034) and the FP10 health programme continue to prioritise and ring-fence funding for health and cancer research. Recognising the diversity of health systems and resources, commitments must remain adaptable to local contexts, guided by principles of equity, patient-centred innovation, accountability, and sustainability. Sustained political will and structured evidence-based policy mechanisms are key to ensuring that the progress achieved through European projects translates into long-term societal benefit.

Beyond funding lines and frameworks, it is in European projects that the added value of Europe truly materialises: these are the spaces where research, innovation, and policy converge; where diverse stakeholders across countries learn from each other and build shared solutions. The tangible societal and scientific impact of these projects is the concrete proof of what Europe can achieve when it acts together. Europe's projects are more than research: they are the living embodiment of the European ideal. They generate the evidence, the connections, and the shared knowledge that allow Europe to act as one, even across complex and diverse systems. By continuing to support and scale these initiatives, policymakers, healthcare providers, researchers, and patient organisations can ensure that Europe realises its promise: improving its citizens' lives.

Supporting Organisations



SERVIZIO SANITARIO REGIONALE
EMILIA-ROMAGNA
Istituto Romagnolo per lo Studio dei Tumori "Dino Amadori"
Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico

ISTITUT
ROMAGN
PER LO
DEI TUM
DINO AMADORI

