
Fight against cancer: EU Commission launches first phase of “Let's strive for more” plan

It was “1996, when I was diagnosed with breast cancer for the first time”: Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella Kyriakides, said this at the beginning of her speech as she took the floor at the Conference for the launch of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan in the European Parliament in Brussels this afternoon. “This plan is personal for me as I know it is personal for the 3.5 million people diagnosed with cancer in the EU every year”, the Commissioner stated. The first phase of the plan takes the form of a public consultation, opening today, aimed at addressing every stage of the disease: prevention, diagnosis, treatment, research, and social reintegration of the survivors. 40% of cancers are preventable today, but access to screening is unequal across Member States: “We all have the same right to health, but this is not yet guaranteed in all EU countries and for all citizens”, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said earlier on. The work programme, which will be developed by the end of the year, will start from the results of the consultation. “I hope that everyone - patients, doctors, family members, researchers, healthcare workers - will contribute to this process and share their experiences and knowledge”, Commissioner Kyriakides encouraged. She then concluded her speech by talking about her efforts to overcome her “third rendezvous with this disease”, a rare form of myeloma: “This is why I feel an overwhelming sense of responsibility”. According to data by the European Parliament, cancer is the second leading cause of mortality in Europe after cardiovascular diseases, and in a growing number of EU countries, it is the number one cause of death for people aged 45 to 64. Every nine seconds a new case of cancer is diagnosed in the EU. By 2035, the number of cancer cases could be doubled and an estimated 40% of the population will face cancer at some point in their lives.

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