

Strengthening Europe in the fight against cancer

During the February plenary session, Parliament is expected to debate the final report of its Special Committee on Beating Cancer, and vote on a series of recommendations, calling for specific policy measures in this crucial area of public health.

Background

In June 2020, the European Parliament approved the [establishment](#) of the Special Committee on Beating Cancer (BECA). BECA held a series of [public hearings](#) with high-level experts, set up an [exchange of views](#) with national parliaments and international organisations, and conducted a [public consultation](#), running from February to March 2021, on the impact of the pandemic on cancer care and research. In November 2021, a BECA [delegation](#) travelled to the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva (Switzerland), and then to Lyon (France) to meet experts, researchers and healthcare professionals at the International Agency for Research on Cancer ([IARC](#)) and at [CLARA](#), an oncology and cancer research cluster with a European dimension looking to accelerate research and innovation in the specific area of childhood, adolescent and rare cancers. BECA used its mandate to focus on ways to strengthen cancer prevention and control in health systems, examine the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the continuity of cancer care delivery, assess the need to address inequalities in cancer prevention and care across the EU and highlight the importance of the availability of quality data and evidence to underpin health policies.

EU action against cancer

As far back as [1985](#), the EU has been fighting cancer and investing in cancer [research](#), even though responsibility for health policies lies primarily with the Member States (Article 168 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#)). Cancer is the second most common cause of [death](#) in the EU, after heart disease. In February 2021, the European Commission adopted the '[Europe's Beating Cancer Plan](#)' to address cancer-related inequalities and help improve prevention and care. This plan forms part of the Commission's proposals for a strong [European health union](#).

European Parliament position

On 9 December 2021, BECA adopted its final [report](#) on 'strengthening Europe in the fight against cancer – towards a comprehensive and coordinated strategy'. The report's main [recommendations](#) include taking stronger EU action to address the key risk factors of cancer (including alcohol and tobacco consumption), extending screening schemes and launching an EU platform for national screening centres, facilitating cancer patients' access to cross-border health care and clinical trials, and developing European multi-centre clinical trials. The report also advocates extending the use of joint procurement procedures to manage cancer medicine shortages, and guaranteeing cancer survivors the 'right to be forgotten', so as to prevent discrimination and improve access to financial services. Calling for transparency throughout the pharmaceutical system (fair pricing and affordability) and equal access to innovative cancer treatments, the report notes that a holistic approach and multidisciplinary cancer research are fundamental to securing improvements in cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up care for survivors. Finally, the report advocates increased funding for research into the causes of cancer, action to boost the efficiency of preventive measures, more research into paediatric and rare cancers, and additional funding for the [European Reference Networks](#), and their integration into national health systems, while also building up the [Knowledge Centre on Cancer](#).

Own-initiative report: [2020/2267\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: BECA; Rapporteur: Véronique Trillet-Lenoir (Renew Europe, France).

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PE 698.902 – February 2022

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