

Press release

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Karliczek: Europe united against cancer

Trio Council Presidency partners Germany, Portugal and Slovenia sign a joint declaration on effective European cancer research

This Tuesday, the ministers responsible for research in Germany, Portugal and Slovenia signed the declaration “Europe: together against cancer”. The ministers came together at the conference on research policy entitled “Europe: Unite Against Cancer”, held under the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union, to discuss joint approaches to strengthening cancer research in Europe. Federal Research Minister Anja Karliczek explained:

“We have to work together in Europe in order to keep improving cancer patients’ prospects and quality of life – no country can succeed on its own in this endeavour. I am therefore delighted that we have been able to take an important step today by adopting the joint declaration on effective cancer research.

“Cancer patients throughout Europe should have equal access to the best state-of-the-art prevention, diagnostics, treatment and aftercare methods. The key to this is ensuring excellent European cancer research. Germany has therefore decided to increase its contribution to the European funding network TRANSCAN by €2 million to make a total of €5 million.

“At the same time, it is extremely important that patients are more directly involved in cancer research and can help shape research projects from the very beginning. This also means that it is time for the science community to open up and for a cultural change to take place that supports greater public participation. In order to support this important process, we will launch an initiative in cooperation with our Trio Council Presidency partners that will ensure that patient involvement in research becomes standard throughout Europe. With this, we want to strengthen European cancer research and take it to the next level.

“I am very happy that Portugal and Slovenia will continue to focus on these key issues during their presidencies. We are all confident that Europe will be more successful in the fight against cancer if we build on a shared network and especially if we work together with the patients.”

“Recently, the European Academy of Cancer Sciences (EACS), and several European organizations and cancer centres joined forces to define common

Office address

Kapelle-Ufer 1,
10117 Berlin

Postal address

11055 Berlin

Tel. +49 30 1857-5050

Fax +49 30 1857-5551

presse@bmbf.bund.de

www.bmbf.de

www.twitter.com/bmbf_bund

www.facebook.com/bmbf.de

www.instagram.com/bmbf.bund



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goals for the implementation of a mission-oriented approach to cancer in Horizon Europe, translational research covering the entire research continuum and representing all parts of the prevention, treatment and care pathways,” added Manuel Heitor, Portuguese Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education. “The integration of research with healthcare is important and requires Comprehensive Cancer Centres. Since the critical mass is a limitation when implementing personalized cancer medicine is the important goal, collaborations between such centres are fundamental for innovative developments. In other words, international collaboration between research centres should be strengthened.”

Minister Heitor has also mentioned that the aim of Europe must consider an impact on society at large by uniting countries to substantially reduce the enormous cancer burden in the European Union and improve the health-related quality of life of patients by promoting cost-effective, evidence-based best practices in cancer prevention, treatment and care. “Our goal should focus on achieving a 10-year cancer-specific survival rate for 75% of adult cancer patients by the year 2030 in the Member States. But it should also be our goal to ensure that not a single person or region in Europe is left behind.

“Portugal shares this ambition and calls for every single country in Europe to understand that this can only be achieved with more science using a comprehensive translational cancer research approach covering the entire cancer research, prevention-care range” added Minister Heitor.

Simona Kustec, Slovenian Minister for Education, Science and Sport stated: “Already during the EU Council Presidency in 2008, Slovenia dedicated one of its health priorities to fight against cancer, with a focus on cancer research. For this purpose, the first National Cancer Control Programme was established for the period 2010-2015, wherein a slower growth in cancer incidence was achieved, cancer mortality decreased for both genders and the survival rate of cancer patients in Slovenia increased compared to previous periods.

“The second National Cancer Control Programme defined strategic objectives for the period 2017-2021, including reduction of incidence, improvement of survival rates, and achievement of greater quality of life for cancer patients. These can be achieved only through the coordinated efforts of all segments of the healthcare system defined in the specific objectives for primary and secondary prevention, diagnostics and treatment, rehabilitation, palliative care, research, education, monitoring the burden of cancer and information technology.

“In 2020, one of the goals for fostering cancer research was achieved by expanding the Slovenian Cancer Registry from its basic data set to additional



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diagnostic and treatment variables in the so called clinical registries, making more data available for clinical research, whilst also enabling the monitoring of the cancer care quality.

“It is very important that, over the last decade, national cancer research funding has been consistent, moderately increasing, whilst researchers in the field have achieved globally comparable results.”

Background

Cancer is still one of the biggest challenges facing modern medicine and thus society as a whole. In Europe, more than 2.7 million people are diagnosed with cancer every year. To ensure that cancer patients have equal access to the best state-of-the-art healthcare, it is important to expand and connect all European cancer centres. The Trio Presidency comprising Germany, Portugal and Slovenia therefore places special emphasis on the significance of leading national cancer centres engaged in cross-border cooperation with the highest quality of research, patient care and teaching.

At the same time, patients are to be more directly involved in cancer research since the additional points of view and expertise from so many people can help researchers to focus on actual needs. To this end, the Trio Presidency aims to encourage and promote patient-centred cancer research as the standard throughout Europe so that no patient, regardless of which country she or he is from is left behind.

Germany will provide an additional €2 million to support the ERA-Net on Translational Cancer Research (TRANSCAN). This will serve to strengthen research into the highly innovative field of immunotherapy.

Further information

<https://www.dekade-gegen-krebs.de/en/index.html>

<https://www.bmbf.de/en/germany-s-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-european-union-2020-11935.html>