



European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



Speech by President von der Leyen at the event 'Ensuring Equal Access to All: Cancer in Women - Europe's Beating Cancer Plan'

Brussels, 2 February 2022

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
Colleagues and friends,

On World Cancer Day we all have a personal story to tell. About family, friends or about ourselves. A story of struggle, pain and resilience.

Today, we are joined by two survivors:

Ic  T th from the European Network of Gynaecological Cancer.

And Christiane Amanpour, CNN's chief international anchor.

We will hear their testimonials. And their powerful call for prevention, early diagnosis and equal access to care.

A very warm welcome from my side!

Every story is different. But in every story of cancer, there is a call to action. That is why we made the fight against cancer a priority of this Commission.

And one year ago we launched Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

A plan for prevention, more research and better care. Time to look at the progress made so far, and the next steps ahead.

Since last year, we have begun creating Comprehensive Cancer Centres and Networks in each Member State. By 2025, they will all be linked in the European Network of Cancer Centres. Its goal will be to level up cancer care across Member States and to improve patient mobility. Because everyone in our European Union should get the cancer treatment they need, especially for rare or complex conditions. This is our goal and we will not let up until we have achieved it.

Access to high-quality care is even more a priority today. For the fight against cancer, the pandemic was a setback. An estimated one hundred million cancer screening tests were not performed. Up to one in two people with cancer symptoms were not urgently referred to diagnosis. This means that an estimated one million cancer cases could right now be undiagnosed in Europe. And among patients who know they have cancer, one in five are still not receiving the surgical or chemotherapy treatment they urgently need. This is an incentive for us to make rapid progress. Together with our Member States, we work hard to reduce the backlog of cancer diagnosis and treatment. Because these are not just numbers. We are talking about those we love and about our own health.

In moving beyond the pandemic, we need to double down on prevention. So we are also announcing two new flagship actions.

First, on cervical cancer. Today we are setting the goal to vaccinate ninety percent of girls in the EU by 2030 against human papilloma virus. And we will significantly increase the vaccination of boys. We will support Member States with funds from the EU4Health programme and other instruments.

But we will also work with civil society. It is crucial that we spread the word: HPV is a serious risk, but we have the solution. And without HPV, we have a chance to eliminate cervical cancer. This would be an important milestone. It's within our reach. So let's move.

The second flagship action is the Cancer Inequality Registry. Because in this fight it is not only stamina that counts, but also fairness. It will identify trends, disparities and inequalities between Member States and regions so that we can better target our support. It is just not right that a woman living in one corner of Europe has a far higher chance of getting cervical or breast cancer than if she lived elsewhere in Europe.

So today, the Commission has launched the first stage of the Registry: the data tool. And by the end

of this year, we will publish the first country performance reports, of the EU27 plus Norway and Iceland. This performance data will be available to all and inform the priorities of next year's forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In just one year, we have made significant progress. Despite headwind.

Cancer is a personal story for all of us.

I would like to join Icó and Christiane in calling for prevention, early diagnosis and equal access to care.

This is the heart of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. With your support, we can realise our goals.

Thank you.

SPEECH/22/726

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