



Tackling Bladder Cancer in Europe

Introduction

Bladder cancer poses a significant public health challenge in Europe, ranking as the **5th most prevalent cancer** and the **4th most common in men in Europe**. Each year, **over 224,000 new cases** are diagnosed in Europe with **165,000 people diagnosed in the EU alone**, placing a significant impact on healthcare systems and society. It is estimated that **over 52,000 lives are lost annually** to this disease in the EU, with projections indicating a worrying bladder cancer **incidence increase to 219,000 by 2030**.

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World Bladder
Cancer Patient
COALITION





What is Bladder Cancer?

Bladder cancer is a condition that occurs in the **bladder, a small pouch in the lower abdomen that stores urine**. It arises when the normally well-organised **cells in the body start growing uncontrollably**, disrupting the orderly process of cell growth and division. This **can lead to the formation of a lump, or tumour**, typically beginning in the lining of the bladder.

Why it matters?

Healthcare burden

The economic toll of bladder cancer is equally concerning, **surpassing EUR 4.9 billion in costs across the European Union**. These costs encompass direct medical expenses and indirect costs related to productivity losses and the socioeconomic impact on affected individuals and their families.

Preventable risk factors

Tobacco smoking remains the primary risk factor for bladder cancer, accounting for around 50% of cases. Efforts to curb tobacco use and exposure must be intensified, alongside targeted initiatives to raise awareness about other risk factors, including occupational hazards and environmental carcinogens.

Need for innovation

Innovation in bladder cancer treatment offers hope for improved outcomes and quality of life for patients. Collaboration among national Health Technology Assessment (HTA) bodies, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and patient advocacy groups is paramount to ensure timely access to emerging therapies, particularly those in immuno-oncology. **Investments in prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, and research are essential** components of a comprehensive strategy to address the burden of bladder cancer.

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The solution

The **World Bladder Cancer Patient Coalition** and the **European Association of Urology** have authored a White Paper on Bladder Cancer, which offers community's **policy recommendations** that the EU can implement to take **decisive action** to decrease the impact of bladder cancer throughout Europe. These recommendations aim to **improve patient outcomes**, advance **public health initiatives** and **drive innovation**. They also aim to **drive stronger collaboration** between policy makers, healthcare professionals, researchers and patient advocates to enact **lasting positive change** for all people affected by bladder cancer.



What can you do as an MEP?



Raise awareness and advocate

Utilise your platform to actively highlight the critical need for early detection of bladder cancer. Engage in public speaking, utilise social media, and collaborate with health organisations to increase both public and policy awareness. Consider tabling a question to the European Commission on how they plan to address the early detection and treatment of bladder cancer.

Initiate legislative changes

Table legislative proposals aimed at recognising bladder cancer as an occupational disease, enforcing stronger tobacco control measures, and enhancing support for research and innovation in this field. Join relevant committees within the European Parliament, such as the Committee on Public Health (SANT), and work to make bladder cancer a priority issue.



Advocate for research funding

Advocate for the sustained funding for health under the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2027 – 2034. Dedicated EU funds towards bladder cancer research can foster advancements in treatment and early detection techniques. Present this advocacy in plenary sessions or through written questions to the European Commission, emphasising the potential for these funds to make a tangible difference in the fight against bladder cancer.

Strengthen EU collaboration

Encourage and facilitate collaboration among EU Member States to share research findings, timely diagnosis, treatment methods, and policies related to bladder cancer care. Join relevant cancer interest groups, such as MEPs Against Cancer (MAC) and raise policy issues related to bladder cancer in these forums. Call for streamlined EU-wide efforts, ensuring all Europeans have access to the best available care.



Support patient advocacy

Actively engage with bladder cancer patient advocacy groups and work to amplify their voices within the EU policymaking process. Advocate for policies that ensure access to the latest treatments and a patient-centric approach to care. This can include organising hearings with patient groups in the European Parliament or advocating for the inclusion of patient advocates in relevant health policy discussions.

10 Policy Recommendations

1 Improve legislation on Occupational Cancer:

Recognise the explicit link between certain chemicals and bladder cancer in occupational settings. Include bladder cancer in the list of occupational cancers in future revisions of the EU Carcinogens Directive.

2 Ensure implementation of minimum standards on tobacco use:

Review the Tobacco Products Directive and Tobacco Taxation Directive to ensure Europe's Beating Cancer Plan objective of achieving a tobacco-free generation by 2040. Introduce pictorial warnings on bladder cancer in the EU Tobacco Directive to complement existing measures aimed at reducing tobacco consumption.

3 Guarantee effective early detection:

Guarantee that the EU and Member States abide by the advice noted in the Council Recommendation on Cancer Screening to invest in optimising risk-based cancer screening and early diagnosis throughout the Union, including in developing effective early detection of bladder cancer for at-risk groups.

4 Facilitate funding for research:

Provide funding opportunities for research into unmet areas of bladder cancer therapies at both European and national levels, fostering innovation and advancing treatment options.

5 Ensure access to clinical trials:

Enable access to clinical trials as an option for discussion with physicians, allowing therapeutic decisions to be tailored based on individual patient needs. Reduce unnecessary bureaucracy of Clinical Trials.

6 Strengthen collaboration between EU and Member States:

Enhance collaboration between EU and Member States' health authorities to improve access to innovative treatments, recognising the value of incremental innovation in bladder cancer care. Robust implementation of HTA regulation provides a unique opportunity to achieve this.

7 Facilitate funding for early screening technology:

Support the development of reliable, risk-based technology for early-stage screening of bladder cancer through funding initiatives at EU and Member State levels.

8 Support patient groups in advocacy efforts:

Provide support to patient groups at European and national levels to advocate for greater awareness of bladder cancer in primary care settings and among the general public regarding symptoms and risk factors.

9 Address the gender gap in diagnosis and treatment:

Enhance training for healthcare professionals to address disparities in diagnosing and treating bladder cancer, ensuring equitable care for all patients.

10 Utilise European Health Data Space (EHDS):

Leverage the potential of the European Health Data Space (EHDS) to improve bladder cancer care through the development of electronic health records and standardised registries of patient-centred outcomes.

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White Paper on
Bladder Cancer

