



**Mission
Early**

March 2026

Mission Early's Call to Action for Better Early Cancer Care



Why we need a Call to Action

Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally. Yet cancer patients have the best chance of becoming and remaining cancer-free when diagnosed and treated early. For instance, 98% of breast cancer patients will survive for five or more years if diagnosed at the earliest stage, compared to just 26% at the most advanced stage¹. For lung cancer, 65% of patients will survive for five or more years if diagnosed at the earliest stage, as opposed to 5% at the most advanced².

Milestone policies—such as Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan (EBCP)—and guidelines—such as the European Council’s recommendations on cancer screening—are important stepping stones on the way to a future where every cancer patient is given the best chance to become and stay cancer-free. Yet more remains to be done in every country to increase early detection and early treatment of cancer³.

The focus on early cancer care—early prevention, detection, diagnosis and treatment—has the potential to bring existing Cancer Control Plans and other initiatives to a new level. National governments and international organisations around the world have a key role to play in facilitating consistent access to quality early cancer care for all.

This Call to Action builds on the recent World Cancer Declaration launched in 2025 by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and World Health Organisation (WHO), which reinforces global commitments to reduce the number of premature deaths and enhance the quality of life and survival rates of people living with cancer.

Importantly, this Call to Action complements the World Cancer Declaration by proposing specific policy recommendations for global, regional and national health authorities to adopt in their efforts to promote early cancer care.



1. Cancer Research UK, Survival for breast cancer, accessed July 2024.

2. Cancer Research UK, Survival for lung cancer, accessed July 2024.

3. In line with the terminology used in the WHO recommendations for delivering a comprehensive approach to cancer control, early cancer care can be defined as the combination of two major components: early detection (including education and screening, and early diagnosis) and early treatment.

Our Call to Action

We call on governments and policymakers in the global healthcare space to **fully embed effective and consistent early cancer care provisions into existing and forthcoming policy frameworks at global, regional and national level**, including in National Cancer Control Plans (NCCPs) and in EBCP.

We call on global, regional and national health authorities to observe the following policy recommendations:

Overarching recommendation

National Cancer Control Plans (NCCPs) should integrate early cancer care as focus topic, including dedicated sections outlining specific measures to advance “early”, such as the ones outlined in the following. In addition, progress should be measured regularly, ideally through institutionalized processes like the European Semester or national Health System reviews.

Screening and early detection

- > National health authorities should take immediate action to provide access to cancer screening and early detection in line with the relevant guidelines, for example, in the EU, the updated European Council recommendations on cancer screening.
- > Regional and global organisations with a stake in healthcare—such as the European Commission and the OECD—should regularly monitor and report on performance to promote progress and compliance. Such organisations should play a coordinating role to help their member countries update their national clinical guidelines in line with the latest standards and recommendations in screening and early detection.

Early diagnosis

- > Health authorities should regularly update clinical guidelines in line with the latest and best diagnostic innovations, for instance, the European Commission’s most recent tumour-specific guidelines.
- > Adherence should be ensured at country, regional and global level through the gathering of high-quality standardised data to monitor and assess cancer diagnosis practices, including through national and regional cancer registries, such as the European Network of Cancer Registries (ENCR) and the European Cancer Inequalities Registry (ECIR).

Early treatment

- > Health authorities should update clinical guidelines to include a specific timeframe for first treatment to start from diagnosis, and to ensure patients’ timely access to appointed centres of multi-disciplinary oncological excellence spanning the full cancer care pathway.
- > Availability of and time to access to early-stage treatments is not the same for all patients who would benefit from them. Stakeholders must work together to ensure approval and reimbursement processes adapt to new technologies, aligning patient benefit and health system sustainability.

Signatories

Originators:



New signatories:



Join the Call to Action

If you wish to show your support and contribute to advancing early cancer care for all, you can sign Mission Early's Call to Action and become an advocate of early cancer care.

About Mission Early

Mission Early is the global policy initiative championing early cancer care. Mission Early's vision is a future where more people survive a cancer diagnosis with the least consequences, because cancer is detected and treated as early as possible.

Our mission is to increase early cancer detection and treatment globally by bringing together organizations and individuals across sectors who share this ambition.

The initiative addresses early cancer detection including screening, referral and early diagnosis, and early treatment including timely and early-stage treatment. It does so by developing policy evidence, exchanging and disseminating best practice, as well as putting forward concrete recommendations for policy action to bring the highest possible standard of early cancer care to everyone.

Mission Early currently receives guidance from a multi-stakeholder Advisory Group, who contribute their expertise to oversee the activities.

Members of the Advisor Group include:

- > Dr. Cary Adams, Chief Executive Officer, Union for International Cancer Control
- > Dr. Nicoleta Antone, Head of Breast Cancer Center, Institute of Oncology "Ion Chiricuta"
- > Antonella Cardone, Chief Executive Officer, Cancer Patients Europe
- > Eduardo Pisani, Chief Executive Officer, All.Can International
- > Alexander Roediger, Associate Vice-President, Global Lead Oncology Policy, MSD

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