

Event Summary – EU’s Beating Cancer Plan: Closing the Gap in Cancer Care in Central Europe and the Baltics

Official Welcome

Oncology was a prominent focus during the Czech EU presidency, showcasing significant progress. Standards set at the EU level could provide a benchmark that nations could use.

- ▶ Comprehensive medical centres are being established in Prague and other regions, attracting investments to the country. The optimistic outlook underscores the nation’s commitment to advancing in oncology, striving to surpass regional averages and leveraging competition for improvement.
- ▶ The presence of European and national cancer plans, coupled with advancements in innovative therapies, contributes to a positive trajectory in the field.

Panel Discussion: EU’s Comprehensive Approach to Tackling Cancer: EU Mission of Cancer as an Effective Tool and Part of the EU Beating Cancer Plan, the Role of the European Parliament and the Current State of Implementation from the Perspective of Member States

Currently, a gap exists between countries in North and West Europe and countries in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the Baltics. Some of the reasons for the gap in cancer care across Europe can be associated with how cancer care is organised and the low participation of societies in screening programs.

- ▶ The Czech Republic has significantly decreased the country’s mortality rate from cancer, which can be explained by the improvement of its country care program and increased spending on oncology research. Yet, challenges remain regarding regions that are smaller in size and population, such as with the speed of diagnosis and treatment access.

- ▶ The EU Parliament’s Beating Cancer Committee (BECA) addresses cancer-related challenges, with some of its focus areas including addressing the challenges faced by individuals looking for care, making cancer treatment more accessible and affordable, and ensuring transparency of medicine pricing in the pharmaceutical industry.
- ▶ Patient organisations play a crucial role on the EU Parliament floor. Discussions with them are plentiful and necessary.



Presentation: GLOBSEC Health Readiness Index from a Cancer Care Perspective

Cancer, unlike the COVID-19 pandemic, lacks media coverage and immediacy, resulting in less interest from politicians and, consequently, less attention from healthcare systems. This is why the GLOBSEC Health Readiness Index was created – to be used as a tool for policymakers.

- ▶ In its 2022 version, the GLOBSEC Health Readiness Index finds that Nordic countries and Germany lead in readiness healthcare, while Central and Eastern European countries face more challenges.
- ▶ Looking ahead, Norway emerges as the overall best-prepared country, with Slovenia as the leading nation in Central and Eastern Europe. Conversely, Romania ranks lowest among countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

Panel Discussion: Can Multiple Myeloma Become a Chronic Cancer Disease or Even Be Cured When Treated in an Optimal Way?

Multiple Myeloma (MM) constitutes a rare cancer, representing 1.8% of all cancer types, with a median diagnosis age of 69 and a 5-year survival rate of approximately 58%. Despite its relatively straightforward diagnosis, significant delays in diagnosis occur due to its rarity and universal symptoms.

- ▶ While today's current cure fraction has increased from 15% to 30%, there is an aspiration for a future cure fraction of up to 50% within the next decade.
- ▶ Over the past decade, notable progress has been made in MM research, particularly in promising areas like immunotherapy, which has transitioned from research to clinical settings.
- ▶ Personalised treatment plans are essential, acknowledging the inadequacy of a one-size-fits-all approach. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve deep and durable remission, potentially leading to a cure, with critical points identified for success, including improved access to targeted therapies, enhanced diagnostic infrastructure, better patient care services, updated therapeutic guidelines, professional training, information dissemination, and the development of patient care support services.
- ▶ There are concerns about unequal access to medicine across Europe, with Western European countries typically having access to the latest licensed therapies that Central and Eastern European countries do not. Access to medicine and participation in clinical trials emerge as significant issues in the Central and Eastern European region.

Presentation: Is It Effective to Invest in Innovative Cancer Treatment? Research Study Results from the Field of Hematology Cancer Care

Economic losses stemming from lost productivity due to morbidity and premature deaths resulting from cancer constitute up to 60% of the overall economic burden associated with cancer in European Union countries.

- ▶ Short-term results suggest that long-term investment into the cancer field will be effective and bring benefits in terms of economic returns as well as health returns.
- ▶ There has been a decrease in the years of potential productive life lost due to MM since 2019, indicating positive trends. Furthermore, hospitalisation costs have fallen dramatically, experiencing a 32% reduction in 2022 compared to 2014.

Presentation: Multiple Myeloma in Central and Eastern Europe

Based on the latest data, Central and Eastern Europe have an age-standardised incidence rate above the global average. There was a 37% and 42% increase in age-standardised incidence rates between 1990 and 2019 in Central and Eastern Europe, respectively. This has been attributed to an ageing population, greater awareness of the diseases, and higher diagnosis rates.

- ▶ The awareness of MM, both among doctors and patients, remains low, with 51% of individuals waiting over three months before seeking medical help for their symptoms.
- ▶ Over 3,000 clinical trials have been conducted in myeloma treatment over the past two decades, but only 6% of them included patients from Central and Eastern Europe.
- ▶ Delays in diagnosis cause patients with myeloma to present more severe symptoms and complications, which then results in significant morbidity to patients and significant costs to patients and the healthcare system.



Presentation: MijelomCRO's Vision for Multiple Myeloma Patient Care Across CEE

At a crucial juncture in MM treatment marked by significant advances, some patients now stand the chance of being considered cured.

- ▶ Highlighting the significance of early diagnosis for enhanced prognosis, the presentation envisions a future in which every patient in the EU has equitable and timely access to optimal MM treatment, care, and participation in clinical trials. Yet, there remains a substantial task in tackling and overcoming misconceptions about MM.