

## **CANCON Joint Action – an overview**



The CANCON Joint Action was a three-year project launched by the European Commission that pooled the best expertise and information on cancer control in the EU area. Its aim was to improve efforts and results in combatting cancer, and boost the scope for real progress in cancer prevention, detection, treatment, and follow-up.

Cancer is the second most common cause of death in the EU and imposes a massive strain on societies and health care. Given current rates of cancer, it is expected that 1 in 3 men and 1 in 4 women in the European Union will be directly affected by cancer before reaching 75 years of age.

There is therefore a pressing need to develop and improve the ways we tackle cancer. CANCON's aim was to harness the efforts of the different EU member states in cancer control and make the best practices they offer available so that health care in all countries is better attuned to dealing with cancer.

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## IMPROVING CANCER CONTROL

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The aim of the work CANCON generated is to contribute to improving overall cancer control in EU member states by furthering the development of Comprehensive Cancer Control Networks. The themes of CANCON were concerned the use of quality based cancer screening programmes, better integration of cancer care, community-based cancer care, and concerted efforts in the different aspects of survivorship (such as quality of life, rehabilitation and palliative care).

CANCON created a strategic Guide for tackling these issues, the *European Guide on Quality Improvement in Comprehensive Cancer Control*. CANCON also established a Member State Platform for EU countries for sharing knowledge and experiences and presenting the most important topics of cancer control. Special **Policy Papers** were written up on five key cancer control topics. These are mainly targeted at policy-makers at EU and national level, and to help better locate cancer control in countries' planning.

CANCON's work embraced a huge array of national and European regional organisations and institutions. Their inputs created the content of CANCON's Guide and Policy Papers, about which more below. In order to organise these inputs as effectively as possible, the different institutions and organisations taking part in CANCON were involved in partnership arrangements – *associated partners* and *collaborating partners*.





CANCON involved hundreds of cancer experts working in 25 countries and 126 partner organisations. The specially selected associated partners were contractually assigned to the project. They included 27 national organisations involved in cancer control from 18 countries.

CANCON's external network of collaborating partners, which interested organisations were free to join throughout the CANCON process, included national organisations plus all the main European regional players concerned with cancer control. Members of this network met in an annual stakeholders' forum.

CANCON arranged the work for producing the Guide and Policy Papers, and for running the whole project, through nine 'work packages'. Three of them were crosscutting in nature, and they dealt with issues of coordination, dissemination, and evaluation in relation to the remaining six work packages, which were core topics. These dealt with

- **Coordination work on the Guide**, its methodology, content and production;
- **Member State Platform**, for sharing knowledge and experiences, identifying common approaches, and identifying future problems and scope for research;
- **Integrated cancer control**, to come up with proposals for organizing comprehensive cancer services and care in any given area and so reduce inequalities (Comprehensive Cancer Control Networks);
- **Community-level cancer care**, to improve the early detection and startup of treatment of cancer, and more consistent continued care for cancer patients and survivors, increase cancer awareness among younger populations at risk of cancer, strengthen collaboration among facilities such as hospitals and outpatient services;
- **Survivorship and rehabilitation** to make proposals for developing a European framework for high-quality cancer survivorship care and rehabilitation that could be promoted at EU level;
- **Screening** to propose standards for good practices in the planning, running, management and assessment of population-based cancer screening as part of national cancer control policies.





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## THE GUIDE

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The topics of the last four of these work package titles are the key parts of the major achievement of the CANCON process: the 188-page *European Guide on Quality Improvement in Comprehensive Cancer Control*. The Guide is a highly useable strategic tool for policy makers and cancer organisation/agency leaders to use to improve cancer care in their national contexts, drawing on the best information and ideas from across the EU.

All the dimensions of cancer care require an integrated approach in order to more successfully deal with cancer. The need for this is to a great extent due to the rising costs of cancer diagnosis and treatment, large because of technological advances and the development of drugs. The Guide contains recommendations, grouped into its four core topics (Screening, Comprehensive Cancer Control Networks, Community-level cancer care, and Cancer survivorship and rehabilitation).

The Guide contains 62 recommendations, spread across the four core topics. Some of the recommendations contain common threads. For instance, three of the core topics – Comprehensive Cancer Control Networks, Community-level cancer care, and Cancer survivorship and rehabilitation – highlight patient-centred issues. Recommendations for cancer survivorship and rehabilitation and for community-level cancer care stress the importance of self-management and the patient pathway. Recommendations on integrated cancer control are centered on the need to make access for patients more equitable. Similarly, we find that issues of service delivery and multidisciplinary and interprofessional activity – the need to work in more coordinated and collaborative ways – crop up in quite a few contexts in the recommendations.

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## POLICY PAPERS

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The other set of 'deliverables' that CANCON produced are the Policy Papers for decision-makers. This was the result of the work of the Member State Platform working package, and the topics of the five Policy Papers. The platform was designed to enable representatives of the EU member states to present policy proposals.

### **The Policy Papers produced are:**

- **Public Health** Genomics in Cancer
- **National Cancer Control Programmes** (NCCPs) / Cancer Documents in Europe
- **Enhancing the Value of Cancer Care** Through a More Appropriate Use of Healthcare Interventions
- **Tackling Social Inequalities** in Cancer Prevention and Control for the European Population
- **An Impact Evaluation System** to Assess Prevention Outcomes

The Guide and Policy Papers were launched at CANCON's closing conference of CANCON, held in Malta, 14–15 February 2017, attended by over 220 participants.

Throughout the CANCON Joint Action there were regular evaluation reports produced, drawing mainly on surveys and interviews, to assess the state of the work in process.

CANCON also made full use of social media, and ran the website [www.cancercontrol.eu](http://www.cancercontrol.eu), which posted news alerts and general information on the participants and content of the initiative. CANCON also issued 33 newsletters.

CANCON sets a good basis for developing the tools of cancer control across Europe. The next phase will be to harness both innovation and sustainability in cancer control. Member states need to make good use of CANCON's findings at national level. With coordinated collaboration the next joint action will further strengthen CANCON's recommendations.



