



## ESMO Statement

### 71st session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, 13-15 September 2021 Agenda item 6: European Immunization Agenda 2030: building better health for tomorrow

Honourable Chair, Esteemed Delegates,

The [European Society for Medical Oncology \(ESMO\)](#) is a global network of more than 25,000 cancer professionals from over 160 countries. ESMO's core mission is to improve the quality of cancer care, from prevention and diagnosis all the way to palliative care and patient follow-up. It is to educate – doctors, cancer patients and the general public – on the best practices and latest advances in oncology and to promote equal access to optimal cancer care for all patients.

ESMO welcomes the European Immunization Agenda 2030 as important and timely, as cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide and immunization is a key component of cancer prevention. It can help reduce the burden of some cancers through vaccines targeting cancer-causing infections. GLOBOCAN 2020 estimates show that the four pathogens that contribute most to the global cancer burden are helicobacter pylori, human papillomavirus (HPV), hepatitis B virus (HBV), and hepatitis C virus (HCV), which together caused more than 90% of infection-related cancers worldwide.

ESMO has the following comments related to the document's stated strategic priorities:

**Strategic Priority 1 – Primary health care and universal health coverage:** National immunization plans should specify setting, as well as achieving, national vaccination targets for HPV and HBV, including those in the World Health Assembly Resolution on a Global Strategy to Accelerate the Elimination of Cervical Cancer, a Resolution supported by ESMO. Additionally, it should be mandatory for countries to collect data for monitoring of vaccine-preventable diseases through population and disease/immunization-based registries. The registries should leverage digital technologies to ensure data collection is accurate, comprehensive, and interoperable within and across countries. This data should support universal health coverage planning, sustainable vaccine-preventable disease surveillance systems, and measuring health policy effectiveness.

**Strategic Priority 3 – Coverage and equity:** For the safety and administration of new vaccines, such as those for COVID-19, we suggest the National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups leverage the technical expertise of Non-State Actors and other stakeholders when appropriate. For example, patients with cancer were largely excluded from the pivotal trials of the COVID-19 vaccines being tested. Thus, ESMO as a scientific society developed [10 statements clarifying the impact of COVID-19 vaccination on patients with cancer](#) and reinforced the message by developing a strong '[ESMO Call to Action](#)' which was endorsed by over 50 professional and patient organisations.



The aims of the Call to Action were to provide clarity to Member States while developing their national vaccination strategies and to reinforce the importance of vaccinating patients with cancer despite them not being included in the clinical trials. Our request to the Member States is to consider to:

1. **Vaccinate all cancer patients** in line with the WHO principles and objectives aiming to reduce deaths and disease burden. Patients with active disease or receiving anticancer treatment deserve an additional priority in case of limitations only.
2. **Diligently collect data** via suitable studies and registries to monitor the effects of vaccines in the vulnerable population, including patients with cancer and their immune response.
3. **Educate and instil confidence** among the public and patients in receiving the vaccines and provide them with up-to-date information in lay language.

**Strategic Priority 7 – Research and innovation:** Objectives and actions to support research on immunization policy and strategy should be expanded to include support for research into new vaccine development, with the aim of developing innovative vaccines that, for example, could eradicate cancer-causing pathogens.

Thank you.