



## Feedback from ESMO to the Call for Evidence on the Joint European Degree

Representing more than 35,000 oncology professionals from over 172 countries, the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) welcomes the European Union's (EU) initiative to establish a joint European Degree.

Robust medical education and training as well as career development opportunities are essential for retaining Europe's oncology workforce, and ultimately maintain and improve the quality of care provided to patients with cancer. High-quality and easily accessible education is also key for tackling the current healthcare workforce crisis in Europe as it will, in the longer term, help address staff shortages. The joint European Degree, if designed and implemented well, may contribute to achieving improved medical education for young oncologists.

As such, ESMO considers it important that the following issues are addressed in the joint European Degree package:

- **1. Seamless recognition across the EU:** To avoid the creation of new barriers impacting the cross-border recognition of higher educational degrees and academic qualifications within the EU, and to maximise the impact of joint degree programmes, the joint European Degree should be recognised automatically and in an aligned and equal manner in all EU Member States;
- **2. Accessibility:** It is vital that the joint European Degree contributes to improving the accessibility to medical education for all EU citizens, regardless of their country of origin or socio-economic background. As such, only joint degree programmes that are easily accessible and do not impose severe financial burdens on students should be awarded with the joint European Degree;
- **3. Addressing the healthcare workforce crisis:** Challenges related to staff shortages, as well as the wellbeing and work-life balance of medical doctors, impact the efforts of healthcare professionals - including medical oncologists - to deliver care to their patients. The joint European Degree should as such be designed and implemented in conjunction with complementary EU action aimed at preventing work-related psychosocial risks and burnouts;
- **4. Disparities in resources:** The current differences and disparities amongst educational institutions in different EU Member States may constitute a barrier affecting the successful implementation of the joint European Degree. The establishment of the joint European Degree should as such be complemented by additional EU action aimed at reducing disparities in available resources and quality of teaching across EU countries;
- **5. Uniform implementation:** ESMO has noted that the proposed measures, i.e. the foreseen Communication and proposals for two Council Recommendations, are of a non-legislative nature and not directly binding on the EU Member States. It is therefore important that all EU countries commit to



implementing the joint European Degree in a harmonious manner across the EU and avoid unnecessary fragmentation that could, unintentionally, negate the expected benefits of the initiative.

ESMO stands ready to collaborate with the EU institutions on the development of the proposals and offers to mobilise its expert groups and network of medical oncologists to support the design of a robust and successful joint European Degree.

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