



ESMO STATEMENT ON EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION ON COMBATING CANCER IN AN ENLARGED EUROPEAN UNION

The European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) welcomes the fact that Europe's policy makers have made cancer a European Union priority. On April 10, **Members of the European Parliament** (MEPs) adopted a statement on combating cancer in an enlarged EU which **called for the recognition of medical oncology as a speciality at the EU level** and stated clearly that European action can make a difference in ensuring better access to treatment and care across Europe. ESMO wishes to thank the many MEPs it has met for listening to its concerns and pledges to be active in Brussels to ensure the voice of medical oncologists continues to be heard.

The statement, adopted by an overwhelming majority of MEPs, highlighted the fact that every year 3.2 million citizens are diagnosed with cancer but that this burden is not spread equally across Europe. It made over 40 recommendations to policy makers over what actions the EU could take. Key among these was a recommendation, introduced by Cypriot MEP and ESMO member Dr Adamos Adamou, that "the Commission and Member States recognise medical oncology as a medical speciality and make provision for lifelong learning for medical oncologists in accordance with agreed guidelines". ESMO was particularly pleased that new Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou judged the recognition of medical oncology "very necessary" and pledged to "exert influence" on encouraging Member States to back it. We urge Member States to pay heed to the Commissioner's call.

Among the other priorities in the statement¹, the following provisions support ESMO's political activities and objectives at EU level:

- **comprehensive approach to cancer prevention** with a specific focus on the main pillars of prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment;
- greater use by Member States of **multidisciplinary oncology teams** and improved training of oncologists and other healthcare professionals;
- deployment of European funds to **create and fund European reference networks for rare and difficult to treat cancers**, in order to pool resources and expertise;
- establishment of an **EU Cancer Task Force** composed of members of the institutions and possibly third party experts to meet on a regular basis to exchange best practice
- **increased funding** of cancer research
- specific solutions for academic research and the conduct of **clinical trials** on medicinal products for human use

ESMO has been increasingly active in putting forward its position on these points directly to EU policy makers and is pleased that this is reflected in the parliamentary statement. It is crucial that we continue to put forward the position of medical oncologists and the needs of cancer patients to influence the development of future EU policy. To this end, ESMO is organising two high profile EU events in the coming months. On 14 October, the policy debate will take place in the European Parliament on the occasion of the Brussels-launch of our survey on medical oncology status in Europe – MOSES III. The discussion will feature three panel discussions on relevant aspects of the survey results that will effect the development of EU policy: the work of multidisciplinary teams; the need for effective training to ensure safe treatment; and the need to ensure consistent cancer care across borders.

¹ The resolution can be accessed here <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0121+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

On 6 November, in line with its commitment to educate and guarantee the best possible treatment to all cancer patients, ESMO will host an event on rare tumours which will also contribute to the debate. This meeting is a significant expression of ESMO's efforts on rare diseases representing collectively one-fourth of all cancer cases. ESMO is active in this field to guarantee people with rare diseases have the same right to receive proper treatment as all other patients.

This ESMO Conference aims at placing rare tumours on the EU policy agenda alongside and with the same profile as rare diseases. The Conference will address the challenges of treating rare tumours, raise awareness about specific issues and adopt recommendations. It demonstrates that ESMO is treating all types of cancer with equal importance.

We wish to thank MEPs for their recognition of the key role played by medical oncology in Europe. We have been and will continue to be active in driving the cancer debate forward through ESMO's presence in Brussels. The next 12 months will be critical to the development of future EU cancer policy. Through outreach to policy makers and our involvement in a number of key events, ESMO will ensure the voice of medical oncologists continues to be heard in Brussels at every opportunity.

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