eCAN
Enhancing digital capabilities of cancer centres in Europe

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eCAN Plus Joint Action kicks off

The new Joint Action aims to make the benefits of digital health accessible to all citizens, patients, and healthcare professionals in order to enhance cancer prevention and care across Europe. This initiative, framed within the EU4Health Programme and Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, will run until 2029.

The Joint Action 'Enhancing the Digital Capabilities of Cancer Centres in Europe to Improve Prevention and Care' (**JA eCAN Plus**) has been presented at the Royal Library of Belgium with almost **140 attendees in person and 70 online.** Over the course of four years, this EU4Health Programme project will involve **23 European countries and 81 partners** from public health institutes, universities, hospitals, cancer centres and patient associations. These actors will work together to improve eHealth, telemedicine and remote monitoring systems, and to enhance access to and exchange of health data in existing and future cancer centres.

At the Kick-Off Meeting, the different Work Packages (WPs) presented their work plans for the first year, along with their **main objectives and outputs**. There will be nine WPs in eCAN Plus: (WP1 - Coordination, WP2 - Communication, WP3 - Evaluation, WP4 - Sustainability, WP5 - Promoting Cancer Prevention and Care through a Comprehensive Digital Health Literacy Program, WP6 - Collaborative Clinical Decision-Making in Diagnostics, Treatment and Care across Cancer Centres, WP7 - Capacity Building for Telemedicine, WP8 - Capacity Building for Effective Telemonitoring and Patient Follow-up & WP9 - Reimbursement of Digital Health Tools in the Field of Cancer in EU Member States)

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Objectives of eCAN Plus Joint Action

This project addresses the need for Europe-wide sharing of health data in the context of cancer care, building on the priorities and recommendations developed by the **eCAN** Joint Action (2022-2024). The previous JA identified various challenges related to interoperability, legal and ethical standards, governance, cybersecurity, technical requirements and compliance with personal data protection regulations. These issues have led to disparities between countries in terms of how health data is used for research and decision-making.

In response to these challenges, eCAN Plus specific objectives are:

- **Implementing a comprehensive training programme** for the development of digital skills.
- **Enhancing digital collaboration** within and between cancer centres.
- **Implementing clinical applications of telemedicine tools** in different setting of cancer care.
- **Bolstering preparedness** for the **European Health Data Space**'s implementation.

Additionally, this JA will develop a framework to test and pilot the safe and secure integration of digital tools such as telemedicine applications, complying with all EU regulations (e.g. the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Medical Device Regulation (MDR), and the European Health Data Space (**EHDS**) Regulation), in order to improve the use of these tools for treating cancer patients.

Synergies with other EU projects will also be established in various areas, such as the integration of teleconsultation and telemonitoring, the improvement of health data exchange and literacy along with the promotion of digital health.

Europe's response to current projections on cancer

Cancer is the second leading cause of mortality in the EU, after cardiovascular disease. Its prevention and control would benefit most citizens, since cancer shares common risk factors with other non-communicable diseases. However, across Europe, the likelihood of receiving a timely cancer diagnosis and surviving the disease varies considerably due to inequalities in preventive policies, access to advanced diagnostics and treatments and experienced care. Without strong action, **cancer incidence in Europe is expected to increase by a fifth in 2040,** translating into more than 5 million new cases each year.

In an effort to tackle the disease, the European Commission launched Europe's Beating Cancer Plan (**EBCP**) in 2021, a policy-driven initiative that supports Member States in addressing every stage of the disease, from prevention and early detection to diagnosis and treatment. **JA eCAN Plus will support EBCP's objective of ensuring high standards in cancer care across the EU.**

Alongside the EBCP, the Commission is working to digitally transform healthcare systems to improve the accessibility and quality of care through the European Digital Strategy. Cancer care is one of the disease areas that will benefit most from this transformation.

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