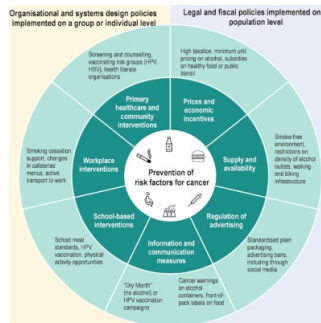


Europe Confronts Growing Cancer Crisis and Inequalities



Cancer poses a significant threat to public health in Europe, with an estimated 2.78 million new cases reported in 2022 across the European Union Member States, Iceland, and Norway. This alarming figure translates to approximately five new cancer diagnoses every minute. Disturbingly, projections indicate that by 2035, cancer will become the leading cause of death in Europe.

From insights to policies: The Call for Action

The latest report, drawing on data from the 2023 EU Country Cancer Profiles and the European Cancer Inequalities Registry, stresses the urgent need for robust policies and targeted interventions to combat cancer. Key focus areas include addressing preventable risk factors and enhancing the accessibility of screening and early diagnosis to counteract concerning cancer trends and inequalities.

Mortality disparities among EU countries and genders

While there has been a 10% reduction in cancer mortality across the EU27 from 2010 to 2022, mortality rates still remain distressingly high, representing 22.5% of all deaths. Moreover, disparities persist, with Central and Eastern European countries experiencing higher mortality rates compared to their Western and Nordic counterparts. Notably, men face a significantly higher risk of mortality, with mortality rates almost 70% higher than those for women.

Cancer risk factors target lower socioeconomic backgrounds

Unhealthy lifestyles, metabolic risks, and poor environmental conditions contribute to over 40% of the cancer burden in Europe. Tobacco emerges as the leading risk factor for cancer-related deaths, followed closely by alcohol consumption, unhealthy diet, and occupational hazards. These risk factors disproportionately affect individuals with lower socioeconomic backgrounds, exacerbating existing inequalities in cancer outcomes.

Preventive medicine now needed more than ever

Despite the imperative for prevention, only a small fraction of total health spending—5.1% in the EU27 in 2021—is allocated to preventive measures. To reverse alarming cancer trends and inequalities, a comprehensive approach to prevention is essential, encompassing fiscal policies, regulatory measures, health education, and community engagement.

Screening Disparities: participation sometimes lagging behind

While screening for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancers is effective in early detection, participation rates vary significantly across Europe. Addressing disparities in screening rates, particularly among vulnerable groups with lower education and income levels, requires targeted awareness campaigns and innovative delivery models.

Access to Treatment: A Growing Concern

Ensuring access to cancer treatments presents another challenge, with marked variability in public coverage across EU countries. As oncology medication prices soar, countries are exploring new strategies to improve affordability and accessibility. Moreover, the shortage of healthcare professionals, including GPs, oncologists, nurses, and radiologists, poses a formidable obstacle to delivering quality cancer care. To address workforce shortages, countries are adopting diverse solutions such as increasing training capacity and introducing financial incentives.

Urgent action is needed to confront the growing cancer crisis and inequalities in Europe. Investment in comprehensive prevention policies, widespread screening, and early diagnosis initiatives will be crucial in mitigating the burden of cancer. Embracing inclusive approaches that prioritise vulnerable groups will be paramount in achieving equitable cancer outcomes across the continent. This necessitates not only enhanced funding but also the establishment of quality cancer registries to inform evidence-based interventions and monitor progress effectively.

Source & Image Credit: [OCDE](#)

Published on : Tue, 6 Feb 2024