

*By Martin Seychell, Deputy Director-General for Consumers and Health, European Commission*

Cancer - we hear about it almost every day on the news, at work or in discussions with family and friends. Given the incidence rates prevailing nowadays in the European Union, one in three men and one in four women could be directly affected by cancer in the first 75 years of their lives. Cancer is the second biggest cause of death after heart diseases in the European Union. Every year, it claims over one and a half million lives and changes the destiny of another 2.5 million citizens diagnosed with it. With the population ageing, the cancer death toll is set to increase even further.

As Deputy Director-General for Consumers and Health, my objective is to tackle cancer on all fronts. On the one hand, by boosting research and cooperation, we can ensure that efficient treatments are developed to treat cancer patients across the EU. On the other hand, by raising awareness about cancer prevention our ambitious goal is to reduce new cancer cases by 15% by 2020.

Cancer has been at the heart of EU policies since 1985 when the Commission and the then 12 Member States launched the "Europe against Cancer" programme and the first "European Code against Cancer". The Code is currently being updated on the basis of the latest scientific findings. Its purpose is to help all citizens adopt healthy lifestyles and to attend early screenings once they reach a certain age.

We all have a part to play in meeting this huge challenge. It starts with each and every-one of us choosing the path of prevention and early cancer detection. Today, I wish to call on all citizens, so that they take control over their lives by adopting healthy lifestyles, and by undergoing potentially life-saving screenings once they reach a critical age.

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