

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002497/24
to the Commission
Ioan-Rareş Bogdan (PPE)
(12 November 2024)**

Subject: EU support and guidance for Member States in assisting cancer patients and survivors with job retention and reintegration

Cancer affects millions of citizens across the EU every year, impacting not only the lives of patients, but also those of their families, communities and colleagues.

While the EU has made commendable strides in healthcare and social welfare, there is a clear need for stronger measures that support job retention and reintegration for cancer survivors.

Cancer patients and survivors face challenges when returning to work, with notable obstacles including the lack of structured support for work reintegration, insufficient flexible working options and a scarcity of appropriate workplace accommodations.

Without targeted assistance, these obstacles not only hinder recovery and rehabilitation, but also add to the social and financial strain on patients, their families and ultimately, the wider economy.

1. How does the Commission intend to support Member States in developing or expanding tailored programmes for the reintegration of cancer patients, including vocational counselling, occupational therapy and rehabilitation services?
2. Will it consider establishing EU-wide standards or guidelines to ensure that cancer survivors receive the support necessary to return to the workforce?
3. Will it advocate for uniform policies that support the right to request flexible working hours, remote work and other arrangements to accommodate medical needs?

Submitted: 12.11.2024

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on behalf of the European Commission
(14 January 2025)**

Under Europe's Beating Cancer Plan ⁽¹⁾, the Commission has conducted a study on job retention and return to work for cancer patients and survivors ⁽²⁾, which was published in October 2024.

The study maps policies and frameworks in EU Member States and countries of the European Economic Area (EEA) and of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and has identified remaining gaps and challenges as well as best practices.

Additionally, it includes recommendations to be followed up at local, national and EU level. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) contributed to the study, building on previous research on rehabilitation and return-to-work instruments and practices.

Besides the recommendations stemming from the above-mentioned study, EU-OSHA's project 'Rehabilitation and return to work after cancer — instruments and practices' explores the occupational safety and health challenges that employers and employees face when workers return to work after a diagnosis of cancer.

A report ⁽³⁾ on this matter published by EU-OSHA provides national examples of successful instruments and practices that help prevent long-term sickness absence and unemployment.

The Commission will continue to disseminate the findings of the study on job retention and return to work for cancer patients and survivors, including to the cancer sub-group under the Expert Group on Public Health. ⁽⁴⁾

The good practices identified and recommendations developed in the study include flexible working arrangements.

⁽¹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/european-health-union/cancer-plan-europe_en

⁽²⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/publication-detail/-/publication/b6dd313d-8528-11ef-a67d-01aa75ed71a1>

⁽³⁾ <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/rehabilitation-and-return-work-after-cancer-instruments-and-practices>

⁽⁴⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases/expert-group-public-health_en