

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000711/25
to the Commission
Tomislav Sokol (PPE)
(17 February 2025)**

Subject: Effective gastric cancer screening in the EU

Gastric cancer is the sixth most diagnosed cancer in Europe, with 136 000 new cases diagnosed annually and 52 085 deaths per year in the EU. The disease disproportionately affects eastern and central Europe, which has the second-highest incidence rates worldwide behind eastern Asia. The 2022 Council Recommendation ⁽¹⁾ calls for the establishment of gastric cancer screening programmes in high-prevalence countries. However, no gastric cancer screening programmes have been organised in the EU to date.

Given the foregoing:

1. How does the Commission plan to encourage and support Member States in implementing the 2022 Council Recommendation?
2. Will the Commission support the Member States concerned in developing national screening programmes for gastric cancer?
3. What steps is the Commission taking to promote the development and adoption of non-invasive screening methods, such as biomarker-based blood tests, to improve patient compliance and accessibility of gastric cancer screening?

Submitted: 17.2.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(31 March 2025)**

The 2022 Council Recommendation on cancer screening ⁽¹⁾ states that screen-and-treat strategies for the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*, responsible for around 89% of all gastric cancers, should be considered in countries or regions with high gastric cancer incidence and death rates. Such pilot studies are considered necessary before population-based screening programmes can be implemented.

The Commission has been providing funding through the EU4Health Programme to the projects EUROHELICAN ⁽²⁾ and TOGAS ⁽³⁾.

They aim to help policymakers across the EU to incorporate gastric cancer screening into their healthcare priorities and balance effectiveness, feasibility and acceptability with potential adverse long-term effects.

Additionally, through the Joint Action EUCanScreen ⁽⁴⁾, a pilot study will look into the feasibility of integrating gastric cancer screening into colorectal cancer screening programmes.

The EU4Health-funded project CAN.HEAL ⁽⁵⁾ is focusing on the implementation of genomics and personalised medicine in clinical practice, including non-invasive screening methods, such as next-generation sequencing and liquid biopsy.

The Horizon Europe ⁽⁶⁾ EU Mission: ‘Cancer’ ⁽⁷⁾ and the European partnership on Personalised Medicine ⁽⁸⁾ drive research into the development and uptake of as well as access to screening and early detection technologies in national healthcare systems.

Both initiatives will cooperate with the Joint Action on Personalised Cancer Medicine which is expected to be launched in the second half of 2025.

¹ Council Recommendation of 9 December 2022 on strengthening prevention through early detection: A new EU approach on cancer screening replacing Council Recommendation 2003/878/EC, OJ C 473, 13.12.2022, p. 1.

⁽¹⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2022.473.01.0001.01.ENG

⁽²⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases/cancer/europes-beating-cancer-plan-eu4health-financed-projects/projects/eurohelican_en

⁽³⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases/cancer/europes-beating-cancer-plan-eu4health-financed-projects/projects/togas_en

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.dypede.gr/eucanscreen/>

⁽⁵⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases/cancer/europes-beating-cancer-plan-eu4health-financed-projects/projects/canheal_en

⁽⁶⁾ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

⁽⁷⁾ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/eu-mission-cancer_en

⁽⁸⁾ <https://www.eppermed.eu/>

The latter Joint Action will also build on OncNGS ⁽⁹⁾, Instand NGS4P ⁽¹⁰⁾, and other Horizon Europe-funded collaborative projects, which develop and address uptake of genomics and personalised medicine.

⁽⁹⁾ <https://oncngs.eu/>; Focuses on research into affordable solutions to provide next generation sequencing tests for all solid tumours.
⁽¹⁰⁾ <https://www.instandngs4p.eu/>