

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001302/25**  
**to the Commission**  
**Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)**  
(27 March 2025)

*Subject:* Diagnostic delays in Trapani and alignment with Europe's Beating Cancer Plan

The tragic case of a cancer patient in Trapani who had to wait eight months for the results of a histological examination, by which point their cancer had metastasised, revealed a profound crisis in healthcare management in the region. The subsequent investigation found that thousands of patients face delays in medical tests, which are essential for the early diagnosis of diseases such as cancer. In particular, 160 cases of cancer failed to be diagnosed in time due to lack of specialists. In 2024 and 2025, the provincial health authority of Trapani recorded 1 405 and 1 908 examinations with no referrals respectively.

The European Union, through its recommendation on strengthening cancer prevention and early detection, supports the implementation of appropriate and timely screening programmes. Europe's Beating Cancer Plan aims to reduce inequalities in access to diagnostic and therapeutic care by promoting coordinated action to prevent tragic cases like the one in Sicily.

In view of the above:

1. Could the Commission help to address the causes of the serious diagnostic delays, such as in Sicily, in connection with the objectives of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and the recommendation <sup>(1)</sup>? If so, how?
2. What EU funds are currently allocated to the Region of Sicily, and what could be done to improve diagnostic infrastructure and reduce delays in histological examination results?

Submitted: 27.3.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission**  
(3 July 2025)

1. In accordance with Article 168(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Union action shall respect the responsibilities of the Member States for the organisation and delivery of health services and medical care <sup>(1)</sup>. Several actions under the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan can support the improvement of cancer diagnosis and care. The EU Network of Comprehensive Cancer Centres, to be launched in the fourth quarter of 2025, will for instance connect structures delivering high-quality cancer care across Europe to help reach patients regardless of where they live. Furthermore, the 2021 Council Recommendation on screening and the Cancer Plan refer to the development of cancer quality assurance schemes providing measurable indicators to assess and improve the quality of cancer services (i.e. screening, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up care). The first scheme on breast cancer has been finalised. Colorectal, lung, prostate, cervical and gastric schemes are expected between 2026 and 2030.

2. Within the Regional Programme Sicily 2021-2027, an indicative amount of EUR 59,7 million from the European Regional Development Fund is allocated to investments in the field of public health. Among other interventions, the programme supports the modernisation of diagnostic infrastructure. According to the information available to the Commission, the managing authority of the Programme is currently finalising the selection of the projects to be financed.

Moreover, the National Programme Health Equity 2021-2027 has allocated 17% of its budget (EUR 104.9 million) to support local healthcare services in Sicily. Funding covers the improvement of equipment including cancer screening centres, accessibility and the resilience of healthcare systems.

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<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:FULL>.