

AESGP reply to European Commission Roadmap Beating Cancer Plan

AESGP congratulates the European Commission for the focus given on Cancer and on the established roadmap. AESGP agrees that this stringent healthcare problem needs particular overarching solutions and a transversal collaboration across Member States and different levels of care.

AESGP welcomes the division of the European Beating Cancer Plan into 4 main areas: prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and care. However, AESGP feels that instead of just phases in a timeline, these areas should be considered in **consecutive cycles**, that follow the person with disease and multi morbidities, as well as considers cancer a high-relapsing risk disease. It is, thus, important to consider secondary and tertiary prevention tools that can minimize the impacts and consequences of cancer.

AESGP is particularly focused on the self-care products and services that are common healthcare tools for both disease prevention and helping patients to cope with: other cancer co-morbidities or temporary symptoms; side effects of established oncological therapies.

AESGP believes that "**health literacy**" and "**citizen empowerment**" are absent from the roadmap but play a decisive role in healthy lifestyles and behaviours. People with strong health literacy skills enjoy better health and well-being, while those with weaker skills tend to engage in riskier behaviour. Good health literacy skills allow an individual to interpret given information on health and disease, to select and find good sources of health information and to understand when it is poor or misleading. Moreover, it empowers people to decide when to practice self-care to manage common symptoms and when professional care should be sought. Measures targeting the lack of health literacy at a broader level should also be proposed, as it significantly drains human and financial resources in the health system.

Each person will need to play their part in the success of the plan, which means that long-lasting behavioural change will have to be operated through **education**, which AESGP also deems to be omitted on the Roadmap. Educational efforts by both general educators and health professionals will need to target (1) healthy citizens for prevention, (2) self-management in cancer patients with an optimal therapeutic adherence, and (3) survivors to keep post-cancer measures and monitoring, to prevent and early detect reversions of the disease.

Also, the self-care industry is committed to provide effective, quality and safe products that will help people in the healthcare continuum. Long-established and innovative self-care solutions are available, side by side, for people to use and for health professionals to advise, aiming at:

- preventing shortcomings of diets and providing balanced nutrient range (e.g. food supplements like vitamins and minerals; dietary fibres to improve gut health)
- protecting from environmental risk factors (e.g. minerals like potassium iodide in nuclear radiation risk areas)
- modifying risk behaviours (e.g. tobacco cessation products like nicotine gums)
- managing some symptoms associated to cancer (e.g. medicines such as pain relievers)
- side effects of oncological therapy (e.g. medicines such as gastro-intestinal tract regulators)
- delaying or impeding tumour recurrence (e.g. vitamin D in melanoma, or aspirin in colon cancer)

AESGP feels that objectives of prevention, treatment and patient care should also consider **further research in the area of non-prescription medicines (NPMs) and food supplements**, for two main reasons: (i) several NPMs active principles have shown recent evidence of anticancer benefits; (ii) also, prevention and combination treatment with NPMs and food supplements might achieve higher efficacy, better adherence and better outcomes. While, **repurposing** medicines still faces scientific, financial and regulatory hurdles, **combination** only needs scientific backing that could potentially translate into better results.

