

# EU stumps up 4 billion euros in fight against cancer

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European Union Commissioner for Health Stella Kyriakides, right, and European Commissioner for Promoting our European Way of Life Margaritis Schinas, center, address a media conference at EU headquarters in Brussels, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021. The EU on Wednesday proposed a four-billion-euro (4.8 billion US dollar) plan aimed at improving the fight against cancer as the coronavirus pandemic tends to delay diagnoses and access to treatment across the 27-nation bloc. (Kenzo Tribouillard, Pool via AP)

The European Commission on Wednesday unveiled a four-billion-euro (\$4.8-billion) plan to prevent, treat and research cancer in the EU as part of a bigger project for an integrated health policy.

Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides, launching the "Beating Cancer Plan" on the eve of World Cancer Day, said the goal was to ensure EU citizens have the same chances of survival no matter which member state they live in.

She said it is "unacceptable that today we have different access to prevention programmes across the EU, different rates for early diagnosis, early detection, treatment and of course survival".

The plan aims to reduce smoking, alcohol consumption and pollution over the coming years and to promote a healthy lifestyle to reduce the 40 percent of cancer cases that are preventable.

It also sets a goal of vaccinating 90 percent of girls in the European Union against the human papillomaviruses that can cause cervical cancer.

And it will support increased screening of breast, cervical and colorectal cancers and look at extending those to prostate, lung and gastric cancers.

The European Commission said there are 2.7 million people diagnosed with cancer in the EU annually, and 1.3 million deaths.

Across Europe, there are 12 million cancer survivors, living with varying degrees of need.



European Commissioner for Promoting our European Way of Life Margaritis Schinas, speaks during a media conference at EU headquarters in Brussels, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021. The EU on Wednesday proposed a four-billion-euro (4.8 billion US dollar) plan aimed at improving the fight against cancer as the coronavirus pandemic tends to delay diagnoses and access to treatment across the 27-nation bloc. (Kenzo Tribouillard, Pool via AP)

## Wine won't be labelled 'toxic'

While health is the responsibility of each of the 27 member states making up the European Union, the commission has used the coronavirus pandemic to set about taking on a greater role in coordinating health issues.

To deal with health emergencies, EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen is talking about setting up public-private schemes under a European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority.

Her vice president Margaritis Schinas, who is also the EU commissioner for the "European way of life", said of the targeting of alcohol consumption in the cancer plan: "Certainly the European Union will not ban wine, and we will not label wine as toxic—this will not happen."

Instead, Kyriakides said, the bloc will look at "excise rules for alcohol and tobacco" and leave the issue of consumption to "science".

A Brussels-based lobby group promoting non-intensive farming, Compassion in World Farming, hailed the part of the EU's plan promoting a plant-based diet over one in red and processed meats that increases the risk of bowel and stomach cancer.

That was a "confident step in the right direction," it said, calling for reduced consumption "of ALL animal products".

Another group, the European Cancer Patient Coalition, said that, while it was "thrilled" with the plan, "it is equally important to ensure the effective implementation".

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