



Brussels, 18 January 2021

Dear Mr Ryan

In anticipation of the launch of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, and as outlined during our meeting with you on 29 October, we would like to highlight that cardiovascular diseases are by far the most frequent comorbidity of cancer and as such should find a space in the Plan.

Cancer and cardiovascular diseases are closely interconnected. Heart disease is a frequent side effect of cancer treatment, and accounts for 57% of all cancer comorbidities.

Cardiovascular adverse effects of anti-cancer treatment often limit the ability to treat cancer patients and there is growing concern that they may lead to premature morbidity and death among cancer survivors.

Additionally, patients suffering from cancer may have cardiovascular risk factors and/or a pre-existing cardiovascular disease, often concealed, enhancing the toxic effects of cancer treatments. For some cancers like breast, endometrial, prostate or thyroid cancer, around half of all patients will die from cardiovascular disease, not of cancer.

For these reasons, the European Cancer Organisation and the European Society of Cardiology call upon the European Commission to profile cancer comorbidities as a central component of the EU Cancer Plan and cardiovascular disease as the most frequent co-morbidity, as well as to involve the cardiovascular community in a constant dialogue for the delivery of the Plan.

In annex to this letter you will find:

- a set of our more specific recommendations for the Cancer Plan
- a slide deck with facts and figures on interconnections between cancer and cardiovascular disease

You may also want to [listen to the personal story of a breast cancer survivor](#) who developed severe heart failure due to the cardiotoxicity of her cancer treatment.

The Cancer Plan offers an outstanding opportunity for the EU to showcase the added value it brings in improving health of European citizens. However, a holistic approach on comorbidities is of paramount importance if EU wishes to achieve tangible results.

We truly hope you will read this letter with interest and we will remain available to support the Commission services in the implementation of the Plan in any way we can.

With kind regards,

Professor Stephan Achenbach
President
European Society of Cardiology

Dr Matti Aapro
President
European Cancer Organisation