



GE Healthcare



## Press Release

### Transforming Breast Cancer Together: A Call for Change

**Brussels, 04 April 2018** – MEPs Lieve Wierinck (ALDE), Elena Gentile (S&D) and Cristian Silviu Buşoi (EPP), representing the three main political groups in the European Parliament, together with key organisations active in this area, have launched a Call for Change to transform breast cancer care in the EU.

Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in women and European women's probability of developing breast cancer over a lifetime is approximately 1 in 8. In the advanced stages, breast cancer is incurable although treatable and the personal, social and working relationships of women suffering from the disease, at all stages, are deeply damaged.

Breast cancer and advanced breast cancer remain a serious threat to women, families and European society.

“Women diagnosed with breast cancer experience a traumatic event which has devastating repercussions on all the aspects of their life” said MEP Lieve Wierinck, “from social activities, to professional career and personal relationships, women’s quality of life is strongly impacted when they have to fight against the associated depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, loss of appetite, lack of interest in life, pain and fatigue”.

This powerful statement thus calls on EU institutions, EU Member States’ authorities and all relevant stakeholders to invest more in breast cancer prevention, treatment and care in order to ensure that breast cancer is screened, diagnosed and treated in early stages and to significantly improve the quality of life and emotional well-being of patients and their families.

In this vein, the Call for Change issues nine policy recommendations which would significantly ameliorate cancer treatment and care in the EU. In particular, the important need for early screening is underlined, as detecting the disease early can strongly increase chances for survival and minimal disruption of the everyday life. MEP Elena Gentile affirms that “increasing screening rates for people below 50 years old and in areas where there is perhaps a misperception of the risks is crucial to fight breast cancer burden in Europe”.

Indeed, still today considerable disparities in screening and care persist in the EU with worrying discrepancies among and within countries. An “unacceptable situation” according to MEP Buşoi, which declares that “this call for change echoes the need to promote policies that ensure cancer care and resources prioritization, fighting inconsistencies and disparities across Europe in care delivery.”

The Call for Change is supported by Europa Donna – The European Breast Cancer Coalition, the European Cancer Patient Coalition, the European School of Oncology, GE Healthcare, Helsinn, Novartis Oncology, and Working With Cancer.

This call for change is part of the “String of Pearls on Breast Cancer” initiative that wants to reaffirm clear objectives to improve services for women in an area still of high unmet medical need, launched



GE Healthcare



following a successful event in the European Parliament on 8 November 2017. Any organisation committed to improve cancer care in Europe is welcome to join this common effort.

# Transforming Breast Cancer Together

## Call for Change

Following a successful event hosted by MEPs Elena Gentile and Lieve Wierinck in the European Parliament on 8 November 2017, a number of policy makers and organisations deeply committed to cancer care are coming together with the aim of improving breast cancer services in Europe.

Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in women. European women's probability of developing breast cancer over a lifetime is approximately 1 in 8.<sup>1</sup> In the advanced stages, breast cancer is incurable although treatable and the personal, social and working relationships of women suffering from the disease are deeply damaged.<sup>2</sup> However, much progress has been made on which we can build. Initiatives previously agreed by Members of the European Parliament include the breast cancer resolutions of [2003](#), [2006](#) as well as the EU Written Declarations on breast cancer of [2010](#) and [2015](#). At the request of the Council of the European Union the [ECIBC](#) (European Commission Initiative on Breast cancer) has now been set up by the European Commission and is currently working to establish new breast cancer guidelines for screening and diagnosis and a quality assurance scheme for all breast services in Europe. Today huge disparities in screening and care still persist in the EU with worrying discrepancies among and within countries. Breast cancer and advanced breast cancer thus remain a serious threat to women, families and European society.

With this **Call for Change** we want to increase the understanding of the daily realities of living with breast cancer in Europe and ensure policymaking reflects both the individual and the societal disease burden.

We hereby call on EU institutions, EU Member States' and all relevant stakeholders to:

1. **Invest in both primary and secondary prevention** to address risk factors and ensure breast cancer is screened, diagnosed and treated in early stages, where there is the greatest opportunity to ensure the best long-term survival;
2. Ensure **implementation of nationwide mammography screening programs conducted in accordance with the New European Guidelines being developed by the ECIBC** across Europe. See [Recommendations from European Breast Guidelines](#);
3. Ensure that all women diagnosed with breast cancer have access to **treatment in a specialist breast-unit (centre) by a multidisciplinary team including women with advanced and metastatic breast cancer**. Ongoing needs for care and psychosocial services for all women with breast cancer should be co-ordinated by the specialist breast unit. See [Written Declaration of 2015](#), [Manifesto on specialist breast units](#);
4. As part of cancer care, provide greater support to women who relapse and develop **advanced breast cancer** or receive their first diagnosis in the advanced setting, in line with the [ABC Global Charter](#) developed by the [ABC Global Alliance](#);
5. Maximise the opportunities for women to **flexibly return to work, look after their families and contribute to society** before, during and after treatment. To support this, **develop information, guidelines and examples of best practice for reference and use by employees with cancer, employers, carers, family members, and health professionals in all EU Member States**;

<sup>1</sup> <http://ecibc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/recommendations/>

<sup>2</sup> AIOM, AIRTUM «I numeri del Cancro 2016».



GE Healthcare



6. Support health professionals in **improving patient-centred communication**, notably by including a training course requirement on physician-to-patient communication in university curricula throughout Europe;
7. Ensure more attention is dedicated to **improving the quality of life and emotional well-being** of patients and their families, with a special attention for those with advanced disease and terminal conditions.
8. Put in place a harmonized breast cancer registry process in Europe for **collecting breast cancer data**, both for early breast cancer and metastatic breast cancer; it is crucial that all cancer registries collect data on staging at diagnosis and date/site of first relapse, as currently this is not consistently done. Ideally this should include data on patient quality of life wherever possible;
9. Maintain a favourable environment for the development of **innovative health technologies** for breast cancer patients.

This **Call for Change** is part of the **“String of Pearls on Breast Cancer” initiative** that wants to reaffirm clear objectives to improve services for women in an area still of high unmet need. Any organisation committed to improve cancer care in Europe is welcome to join this common effort.

Supported by:

**MEP Elena Gentile, MEP Lieve Wierinck and MEP Cristian Silviu Buşoi**

**Europa Donna – The European Breast Cancer Coalition**

**European Cancer Patient Coalition**

**European School of Oncology**

**GE Healthcare**

**Helsinn**

**Novartis**

**Working With Cancer**



GE Healthcare

