

Brussels, 11 July 2022

Honorable Commissioner,

We thank you for the time you were able to dedicate to speak to us on 1st of June in Rotterdam. During the meeting, we discussed several topics and we appreciate your openness about all of them. In our conversation, we stressed the importance of cancer research and we underlined the need to include more opportunities to fund and support activities to improve cancer-related research in the Work Programmes 2023-2024 of Horizon Europe.

This need was brought to our attention also by researchers working on a daily basis in this area and having trouble to find opportunities to increase the impact of their activities through Horizon Europe. We had the opportunity to meet representatives of excellent European institutions on cancer research and the discussion led us to the conviction that we need to do more to create favourable conditions for them to be more effective to cooperate, spread and catalyse the benefits of their research.

In these first years of implementation of Horizon Europe, the multiannual work programmes for health (Cluster 1) contained very few calls for proposals dedicated to intensify collaborative research in cancer. There is the need to change this trend and include a special focus on cancer research into the next 2023-2024 work programmes. Research activities are seeds for innovative and technological advancements in therapies. We should not miss the opportunity of addressing properly the needs deriving from the research community.

Moreover, Horizon Europe cannot address by itself all aspects of cancer research. Therefore, we call on you to ensure that the Programme funds research in which Europe is a global frontrunner and where there is clear European added value to the support. One example is cell-based interceptive medicine. Europe is leading the world in this field and it will make incredible contributions to preventing cancer as well as developing better treatments. The LifeTime consortium developed a solid research agenda for this, which was meant to be turned into a FET Flagship, but so far your services oppose providing funding for this. At the same time, the US is pulling hard on the researchers to move their activities. This would be an immense loss for Europe. Not only would we lose scientific knowledge, we would also miss out on reaping the benefits (both in terms of health and economic growth) that we can expect from this innovative field. A solid approach to funding cancer research cannot allow such promising science to leave Europe.

In our meeting, we also cited the Mission on Cancer, which is a promising initiative, but it can be even more effective. Procedures are very lengthy and project selection

unpredictable due to the novelty of portfolio management, there is no clarity on which activities might benefit from its support and once again, the Mission should focus more on improving pure cancer research activities.

Synergies are of the essence. There is a fundamental lack of understanding among stakeholders on how to amplify the benefits of combining the opportunities between funds of different nature, between the different Work Programmes, calls for proposals and in general within the whole spectrum of initiatives deriving from Horizon Europe (Missions, Joint Undertakings, European Institute of Technology, European Innovation Council). Now that the Commission published the guidelines to implement these synergies, we invite you to enhance them also for cancer research specifically, in particular in relation to the combined effect of using the Structural and Investment Funds in a more strategic way.

Finally yet importantly, we want to stress the need for the Joint Undertakings to remain open and increase attractiveness for universities and research organisations. Horizon Europe partnerships can be very beneficial to increase the impact of the results of collaborative research and the strategic research and innovation agenda of the relevant JUs should collect inputs from researchers in the field, in a more efficient and persistent way.

We conclude stressing also the need to increase attention to reduce administrative burden for beneficiaries. Simplifying their life when applying to the different opportunities of Union's programmes is very important to liberate energies, time and resources to increase impact of the research activities.

We are certainly at your disposal to continue the conversation we have started and we hope we can remain connected to make sure that a special focus on cancer research is made in the next programmes of activities of Horizon Europe, the Cancer Mission, the relevant partnerships and all the appropriate initiatives.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Best regards,

Maria da Graça Carvalho MEP

Christian Ehler MEP