Cancer, Security & Resilience: A European agenda for preparedness and response

Protecting cancer care against emerging threats and ensuring continuity through crises

Cancer & Security

Protecting cancer care from evolving security threats

Armed conflict & crises



1 in 12

people diagnosed with cancer globally live in crisis-affected settings

Cybersecurity



309

significant cybersecurity incidents targeting the EU's healthcare sector in 2023, making it one of Europe's sectors most affected by cyber threats

Misinformation & disinformation



24%

of HPV vaccine-related tweets analysed contained misinformation

Sources: (IARC, 2026; European Commission, 2025; Kornides et al., 2022)

Cancer & Resilience

Keeping cancer care running through crises and beyond

COVID-19



100m

cancer screening tests not performed across Europe during the pandemic

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)



1 in 2

cancer patient deaths are linked to infections or sepsis

Cancer medicine supply chains



1 in 5

medicines classified as critical in the EU are used to treat cancer

Sources: (European Cancer Organisation, 2021; Cancer Patients Europe, 2026; Association of European Cancer Leagues, 2026)

FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

Protecting cancer care and health services is an integral part of European security and resilience planning.

Resilient cancer care is a European preparedness priority. Safeguarding continuity of cancer care and health services should be a cornerstone consideration of Europe's resilience agenda.

Recommendations for action

To strengthen the security and resilience of cancer care across Europe, six priorities should guide concrete action at EU and Member State level:

1. Strengthen the protection of cancer care and health services in the face of armed conflict by:

- ensuring independent investigations and accountability for unlawful attacks on healthcare (UN SCR 2286),
- systematically integrating cancer care into humanitarian planning, directing Global Europe funding towards the recovery of conflict-affected health systems, and
- supporting access to cancer care for displaced patients through harmonised EU protection, cross-border solidarity mechanisms and measures to address practical barriers to early detection, diagnosis and treatment.

2. Make Europe's cancer services more resilient to cyberattacks by:

- ensuring that the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) provides tailored guidance and technical assistance to cancer centres,
- integrating cancer-specific cybersecurity needs into National Cancer Control Plans and national cybersecurity strategies, and
- securing dedicated EU funding for healthcare cybersecurity under the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework, including through the European Competitiveness Fund's Digital Leadership window.

3. Step up Europe's fight against health misinformation and disinformation by:

- fully implementing the 2024 EU Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers,
- systematically integrating measures to counter misinformation and disinformation into National Cancer Control Plans, and
- strengthening the capacity of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) to monitor and respond to health-related information threats, including foreign information manipulation and interference.

4. Make continuity of cancer care a cornerstone of Europe's preparedness and resilience agenda by:

- developing cancer-specific preparedness guidance,
- monitoring service disruptions and conducting stress tests, while strengthening workforce resilience through a dedicated EU action plan on oncology workforce planning, recruitment and retention, and
- mapping critical shortages through the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), establishing safe staffing standards and facilitating the cross-border mobilisation of the oncology workforce.

5. Address antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and its impact on cancer care by:

- encouraging all Member States to include AMR considerations in their National Cancer Control Plans, recognising the particular vulnerabilities of cancer patients, and strengthening patient and professional involvement, and
- developing cancer-specific guidance, standards and indicators covering infection prevention and control, antimicrobial stewardship, surveillance and rapid diagnostics.

6. Secure access to essential cancer medicines by:

- strengthening EMA-led monitoring and EU-wide visibility of stocks to anticipate shortages,
- using the Critical Medicines Act, Strategic Projects and public procurement requirements to incentivise additional suppliers and manufacturing capacity, and
- establishing common EU criteria for which medicines should be stockpiled, appropriate stock levels, and mechanisms for cross-border sharing and redistribution.

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Explore the full analysis and recommendations from the European Cancer Organisation's Emergencies & Crises Network.



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