

NATIONAL CANCER POLICY

FROM VISION TO ACTION



NATIONAL **CANCER** POLICY: FROM VISION TO ACTION

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European Parliament Offices



*For the third consecutive year, the Hellenic Association of Pharmaceutical Companies (SFEE) and its Oncology Platform held a conference dedicated to promoting a holistic approach to cancer care. This year's event, titled "National Cancer Policy: From Vision to Action," brought together key stakeholders who unanimously underscored the urgent need for cross-sector collaboration and interdisciplinary strategies. The goal is to enable Greece to develop and implement a comprehensive Action Plan for the effective prevention, management and treatment of cancer. This annual meeting has fostered an informal alliance between the state and key stakeholders, reaffirming their **commitment to dialogue, cooperation, and consensus in addressing not only cancer but broader healthcare challenges as well.***

During his remarks, the Minister of Health committed that this discussion **should be taken at an interministerial level, under the guidance of the Prime Minister, making clear that tackling** cancer is a priority across all areas of government policy, not just the Ministry of Health.

Participants highlighted the critical role of a robust legislative framework in promoting cancer-related policies (G. Stylios), along with **the need for a detailed roadmap to guarantee their implementation.** They stressed the necessity of defining clear objectives, timelines, and resource allocation to ensure the successful execution of these policies (K. Souliotis, N. Dedes).

A significant announcement was made by the Minister regarding **the immediate reimbursement of biomarkers**, facilitated through the es-

establishment of a dedicated budget within EOPYY. This initiative reflects the significance of collaboration between the scientific community and decision-makers in designing policies that, over time, improve citizens' access to appropriate cancer treatments while simultaneously generating savings for the healthcare system, as evidenced in the study of Professor K. Athanasakis.

The Minister underlined the need for **Greece's digital modernization** in tackling healthcare challenges such as cancer. A commitment was made to the immediate implementation of the National Cancer Registry, which in conjunction with the Therapeutic Oncology and Hematology Protocols, will enable comprehensive monitoring of oncology and hematology patients. These interventions respond to long-standing requests from the medical community and patient associations (Z. Saridaki, E. Kourea, G. Kapetanakis). A key issue raised in the discussion was the development of appropriate mechanisms **to ensure timely and equitable access for the population to innovation**, whether in the diagnostic or therapeutic phases of cancer care. Equally important was the evaluation and broader **integration of generics and biosimilars** in cancer treatment (G. Vasilopoulos).

At the European level, the necessity of a holistic approach to cancer is highlighted by the European Commission's "Europe's Beating Cancer Plan¹." This initiative prioritizes equal access for all patients to prevention programs, early diagnosis, innovative treatments, and the benefits of personalized medicine. In parallel, the European Parliament's decision **to establish a distinct Public Health Committee** demonstrates the significance of strengthening institutional frameworks in the face of emerging health threats² (N. Papandreou).

Greece has made considerable progress in the fight against cancer. Initiatives such as early diagnosis programs for breast and colorectal cancer, the introduction of evidence-based therapeutic protocols, and the development of cancer registries are noteworthy. However, particular attention is needed in policies targeting early diagnosis and treatment of pediatric cancer (D. Doganis, D. Boumpas), early detection of high-mortality cancers such as lung cancer (E. Zervas), and the **field of palliative care**. On this front, the Minister announced plans to establish a specialized unit for palliative care in collaboration with the Hellenic Anti-Cancer Society.

Fighting cancer is a collective responsibility: one that calls upon all sectors of society. By setting the common goal of addressing this public health threat, all stakeholders—the scientific and medical community, policymakers, and the pharmaceutical industry—can work together to create the necessary conditions for its successful realization.

Participants

- **Kostas Athanasakis** – Professor, University of West Attica
- **Giorgos Vasilopoulos** – Professor of Internal Medicine - Hematology, University of Thessaly; President, Hellenic Society of Hematology
- **Adonis Georgiadis** – Minister of Health
- **Nikos Dedes** – Secretary General, Hellenic Patients Association
- **Dimitris Doganis** – Pediatric Oncologist, NHS Director of Oncology Department, Athens Children's Hospital "Pan. & Aglaia Kyriakou"; Secretary General, Hellenic Society of Pediatric Hematology-Oncology (EPAO)
- **Eleftherios Zervas** – Pulmonologist, NHS Director, 7th Pulmonology Clinic and Asthma Center, "Sotiria" General Hospital for Chest Diseases; Treasurer, Hellenic Thoracic Society; Coordinator, Lung Cancer Working Group
- **Giorgos Kapetanakis** – President, Hellenic Cancer Federation
- **Eleni Kourea** – Professor of Pathological Anatomy, Medical Department, School of Health Sciences, University of Patras; President, Hellenic Society of Pathology
- **Dimitris Boumpas** – Professor of Internal Medicine - Rheumatology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA); Director, 4th Internal Medicine Clinic, Head of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology Unit, "Attikon" University Hospital; President, Central Health Council (KESY)
- **Olympios Papadimitriou** – President, Hellenic Association of Pharmaceutical Companies (SFEE)
- **Nikos Papandreou** – MEP, PASOK; Member, Standing Committee on Public Health (SANT), European Parliament
- **Zenia Saridaki** – Medical Oncologist, Director of the 1st Oncology Clinic at Metropolitan Hospital, Athens; Scientific Head of the Oncology Department "Asklepios Diagnosis," Heraklion, Crete; President, Hellenic Society of Medical Oncology
- **Kyriakos Souliotis** – Professor, University of the Peloponnese
- **Giorgos Stylios** – President, Social Affairs Committee
- **Moderator: Apostolos Manggiriadis**
- Journalist, ERT

¹ European Commission, 2021, "Europe's Beating Cancer Plan"

² <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230210IPR74714/parliament-sets-up-new-public-health-subcommittee>



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From the SFEE Oncology Platform

