



## **European Commission's Consultation on EU's next long-term budget (MFF) Response of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Action on Networks of Expertise (JANE-2)**

### **Request for earmarked investment in EU health networks on cancer**

On behalf of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Action on Networks of Expertise on cancer (JANE-2), we welcome the European Commission's consultation on EU's next long-term budget (MFF). We are writing this response to request the European Commission as well as the Member States to clearly earmark funds for EU supported health networks focusing on cancer. We understand that health is a national competence, however with the way diseases are evolving, increasing in complexity and transcending borders – it becomes important to establish ways in which health can be safeguarded at the supranational level (outside the area of serious cross-border threats and other exceptions): via EU health networks.

**Why cancer?** In the 2014 – 2019 legislature, the European Union, under the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive, created European Reference Networks (ERNs) – 4 of which are focusing on rare cancers. In the last EU legislature, 2019 – 2024, the EU created and funded Horizon Europe's Mission on Cancer as well as Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. In the current EU legislature, the EU is funding crucial Joint Actions stemming from Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, or mutual priorities of both the EU as well as the European countries, taking certain projects forward – so that they become a part of national health systems, via the EU4Health Programme.

One of these projects is JANE-2, a Joint Action that will create 7 transversal EU health networks on cancer that will function at EU and national level. Knowing that cancer is an area that has served as a pilot for testing many EU health policies, we feel that EU health networks on cancer (ERNs, JANE-2's 7 Networks of Expertise as well as the infrastructure created by the Joint Action European Network on Comprehensive Cancer Centres – EUnetCCC) can serve as a pilot for collaboration on health at EU and national levels.

In this legislature, the EU and the Member States have already invested 40.5 million Euros in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Action on Networks of Expertise (JANE-2), and approximately 90 million in EUnetCCC. This funding is valid for 4 years – until the networks of expertise will be built and functional, and the EUnetCCC infrastructure is ready, – by 2028. It is important to note that, for JANE-2, the 40.5 million Euros have been allocated to build seven transversal Networks of Expertise (NoE) on cancer. Thus, over the 4 years, each NoE will receive approximately 1.45 million per year to build a network that will be functional at both EU and national levels.

Furthermore, since the creation of the ERNs in 2017, the EU has also invested funds to ensure access to health services for patients with rare cancers and rare diseases under the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive. However, it is important to note that the funding that has been allocated to the ERNs as well as JANE-2's seven Networks of Expertise – is only enough to allow them to function. For example – the ERN on Rare Adult Solid Cancers (EURACAN) received approximately 3.2 million Euros for 4 years or approximately 800,000 Euros per year. Given that the ERN has 10 subdomains, that money covers the work of the 10 subdomains of EURACAN. Thus, post-division, each domain only has around 80,000 Euros per year to function – which is the bare minimum. Any projects that are arising from the work of this health network are unfortunately not able to be funded.

The lack of stable funding, even for the ERNs, has therefore affected and, in many cases, impeded the delivery of care for people with cancer.

As the abovementioned are all EU health networks – they function at both EU and national levels. However, in order to ensure that they function, Member States and the EU need to allocate funds for their sustainability: especially for the new networks (i.e., JANE-2's 7 Networks of Expertise on cancer) that will affect the entire health care delivery pathway – at both EU levels and national levels.



**What is JANE-2?** JANE-2 is an ambitious Joint Action, stemming from Europe's Beating Cancer Plan with the aim to create seven new Networks of Expertise in the area of oncology focusing on: 1) complex and poor prognosis cancers; 2) palliative care; 3) survivorship; 4) personalised primary and secondary cancer prevention; 5) omics technologies; 6) hi-tech medical resources; 7) adolescents and young adults with cancer.

**Who is involved?** JANE-2 represents 121 partners (national representatives and competent authorities) from 29 European countries.

**Duration of JANE-2:** 4 years (November 01, 2024 – October 31, 2028)

**What are EU Health Networks:** Health networks may be defined as networks involving a form of regular collaboration, at a distance, amongst healthcare professionals focusing on items pertaining to the mission of the network. To date, health networking at the EU level has only been attempted via the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive, through the creation of European Reference Networks (ERNs) focusing on rare diseases and rare cancers. Building on the ERN model, the 2nd Joint Action on Networks of Expertise (JANE-2) will be shaping seven new transversal health networks in oncology, that will transform the way cancer care will be delivered at EU level. These Networks of Expertise (NoE) will be the first of their kind as they will focus on transversal aspects of the disease (as opposed to the ERNs that were focusing on a specific disease). In addition to JANE-2, a parallel Joint Action is working towards the creation of a European Network of Comprehensive Cancer Centres (CCCs) that will aim to ensure timely and qualitative care provision to cancer patients - EUnetCCC.

**The impact of JANE-2:** JANE-2 is a visionary Joint Action, stemming from Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. Given that it is a joint action, or a mutual priority of both the EU and the European countries involved, especially as health is a national competence – this area of focus – EU health networks on cancer – becomes crucial. As it is an investment of the EU and the Member States.

These Networks of Expertise will be the first of their kind and will aim to provide the highest standard of care within the EU - to its citizens and inhabitants – in the area of oncology. They can also serve as a pilot for new disease areas or delivering care in general.

Additionally, the Networks of Expertise, which will be networks focusing on the cooperation of health institutions and providers, will also actively involve patient organizations. The aim of incorporating these organizations in the NoEs is not only to sensitize and educate patients regarding the different issues covered by the NoEs, but as a commitment to foster open dialogue with them, gather their feedback and implement new solutions as well as promote policies that would really make a difference in their lives.

Thus, the 121 partners of JANE-2 will work together over the next 4 years (2028) to create 7 transversal Networks of Expertise focusing on cancer. These networks will be functional at both EU and national levels.

**Why is this important for the EU?** The European Union (EU) is working towards cementing an EU Health Union. Currently, this Health Union has been tested in the context of serious cross-border threats (i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic) and to an extent via the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive (i.e., the ERNs on rare diseases and rare cancers). The collaboration between Member States and the European Commission has shown us the benefits of cooperation at supranational level. However, in order to have a strong supranational collaboration in an area that is a national competence, health, Member States and the European Union need to pilot their collaboration in specific areas pertaining to health and healthcare, outside the area of serious cross-border threats and other exceptions.

JANE-2's seven new Networks of Expertise in oncology, to be built over the next four years, based on the cooperation of national authorities and key stakeholders from 29 European countries, may provide a concrete example in the context of the EU Health Union. These seven networks become all the more important, especially considering the existing disparities and unequal access to cancer services, and innovation gaps, faced by health systems within the EU itself.





Thus, they may provide a solution towards decreasing disparities concerning access to cancer services, and reducing innovation gaps, at EU and national levels, by harmonizing services focusing on the seven topical areas of the networks: 1) complex and poor prognosis cancers; 2) palliative care; 3) survivorship; 4) personalised primary and secondary cancer prevention; 5) omics technologies; 6) hi-tech medical resources; 7) adolescents and young adults with cancer.

However, for them to be sustainable and functional at EU and national levels, the EU needs to ensure that it allocates funds at EU and national levels.

**Rationale for investment in EU health networks focusing on cancer:** The EU has already invested millions of Euros in JANE-2, EUnetCCC as well as the 4 ERNs on cancer – or EU health networks focusing on cancer. Cancer has been a pilot to test health networking, or collaboration at EU and national levels – in health.

JANE-2's seven Networks of Expertise will become functional at EU and national levels by 2028 – which is coinciding with the timeline of the new MFF.

In order to make these networks a reality, and EU's investment in health networking a success, as well as focus on decreasing disparities across health systems – it is imperative that the EU considers this area as essential and earmarks funds for the functioning of these EU health networks – focusing on cancer as a pilot.

### **Rationale for continued investment under Single Market, Innovation and Digital: Research and Innovation**

In her vision for the next European Commission, President Von der Leyen highlighted that, “we need to put research and innovation at the heart of our economy”. This vision, and political guideline, needs to be reflected in the budget allocated for research and innovation, especially in the context of the two funding instruments: Horizon Europe and Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL).

We understand that funding under the MFF can be readjusted, taking into account the priorities of the European Union. We faced this threat when we experienced COVID-19, and we know that in the future there may be a possibility of additional areas (outside the area of pandemics), which may have a similar impact. However, when it comes to research and innovation, especially in healthcare, we cannot afford to receive funding cuts. We hope that in the new cycle of the MFF, there will be a continued focus on research and innovation, especially in the context of healthcare and cancer.

Additionally, JANE-2 and its seven Networks of Expertise, and especially the two networks focusing on omics technologies and hi-tech medical resources (and its 7 subdomains: innovative radiotherapy, physical methods of ablation, nuclear medicine, cellular therapies, ex-vivo testing of agents, innovative surgery, radiomics), will require sustained support from the Horizon Europe and Digital Europe Programmes.

Research and Innovation is a key pillar to continue making progress against cancer. It should continue to be a key European priority, and funding should not be de-prioritized.

### **Request to take into consideration within the new MFF:**

*We urge the European Commission to earmark funds for the sustainability of EU health networks on cancer - the 7 Networks of Expertise stemming from JANE-2, EUnetCCC infrastructure, and the European Reference Networks.*

*We request the European Commission to earmark funds for projects stemming from the 7 Networks of Expertise on cancer and the 4 European Reference Networks focusing on cancer.*

*We urge the European Commission to not de-prioritize funding for programmes such as Horizon Europe and Digital Europe and to allocate appropriate funds in line with Europe's ambition of “putting research and innovation at the heart of our economy”.*



We request the European Commission to consider these requests, as these EU Health Networks will be the future of delivering health care. Cancer will be used as a pilot to test collaboration via EU health networks. These EU Health Networks on cancer may pave the way for how health care will be dealt with across other disease areas as well: providing the best possible care to those in need.

However, the future will only become a reality, if these networks will be supported financially at both EU and national levels.

More information:

**JANE – Policy Document:** <https://jane-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/JANE-Policy-Document.pdf>

**JANE- Green Paper –** <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2059702924018970>

**Website:** <https://jane-2.eu/>

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