ECL
Association of European Cancer Leagues

Cancer Society of Finland

CEO Roundtable

28 October 2026

Hosted by the Cancer Society of Finland



Cancer is on track to become the leading cause of death in Europe by 2035

Agenda

09:00 - 09:15

Brief recap of ECL's past year (successes and learning opportunities) and priorities for the coming year

09:15 - 09:55

Interactive session: member engagement
→ reviewing current engagement, challenges and discussing ways to optimise and improve engagement of all ECL members, sharing expectations and ideas

09:55 - 10:05

Coffee break

10:05 - 10:45

Interactive session: youth ambassador strategy
→ reviewing current status of youth ambassadors, sharing expectations and ideas, how to make most use of their presence, should the program go beyond prevention or not,...

10:45 - 11:25

Interactive session: funding strategy
→ what ECL has done and tried, other potential routes with pro's and con's, how to handle competing members in same country, sharing ideas and advice,...

11:30 - 12:00

Lunch

12:00 - 12:40

Interactive session: AI, cancer care & ECL
→ current views on AI & cancer care, sharing experiences and local initiatives, brainstorming on EU intitutional priorities and ECL potential viewpoints, expertise, and future strategy...

12:40 - 13:00

Conclusions, miscellaneous updates & closing remarks

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Highlights 2026

Advancing in the fight against cancer

- **Cancer prevention**: promoting ECL views at a **public hearing** in the European Parliament on **lifestyle, prevention and equity**, in the **meeting with the Commissioner for Health** on **tobacco control** under EWAC and sending **Youth Ambassadors** delegation to **ECToH 2026** in Milan.

- **Access to medicines**: shaping the **Critical Medicines Act** and the **European Biotech Act** to improve cancer patients' **access to safe, effective, high-quality and affordable medicinal products**, including advanced therapies and biosimilars.

- **Patient support:** Published **ECL's position paper** and submitted a joint response to the **European Commission's consultation** on the **Right to be Forgotten**, advocating for a European framework ensuring access to financial services for cancer survivors; organised a **MAC event** at the European Parliament and a Return to Work session at **ECToH**.

- **Communications**: supporting the events above, organising the 2026 European Week Against Cancer and launching a more modern brand (website, logo and narrative).

Proposals 2026 | Jan – Oct

Jan = x1 EU4Health Includes Leagues

Mar = x1 Erasmus+ Includes Leagues

Apr = x1 Horizon Europe (Cluster 1 – Health)
x1 Broad Reach Foundation (Grant)
x1 Fellowship

Oct = x1 Cost Action (pending)
x1 Service Contract for the EUCanScreen Toolkit

Q1
2 proposals

Q2
3 proposals

Q3
9 proposals

Q4
1 pending

Sept = x8 Cancer Mission – Horizon Europe

- x3 Earlier and more precise palliative care
- x2 Virtual Human Twins
- x1 Capacity building on cancer for Ukraine
- x1 AYA and mental health (in EDCP) Includes Leagues
- x1 QoL and older cancer Patients (Qualia65)

- x1 JRC Tender (as subcontractor) Includes Leagues

Proposals Submitted: 14

Proposals ongoing: 1 (End Oct)

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Priorities for 2027

Keep cancer on the political agenda

- Strong voice for tobacco and nicotine control
- Youth Ambassadors Program as added value to ECL's family
- Continuing to shape the European Biotech Act and ensure that the voice of cancer societies is heard

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Member engagement

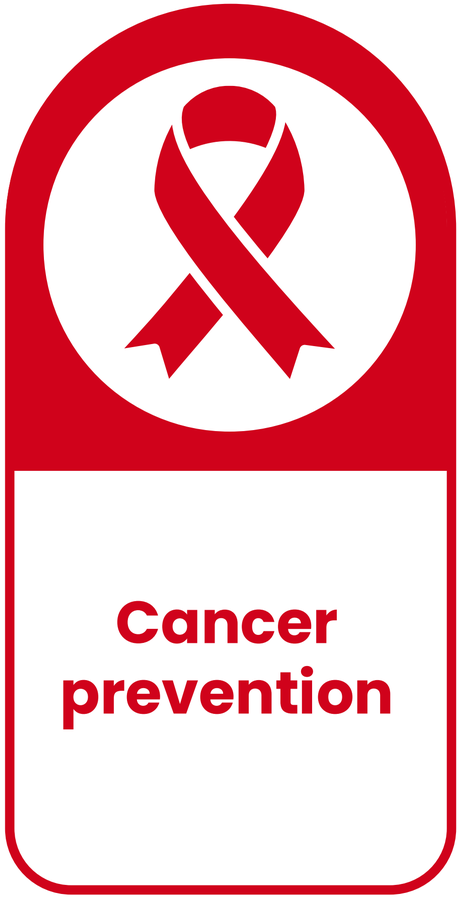
ECL's mission and key instruments

- 'Double loop' advocacy: **connecting** European with national level
- Bringing **ECL members together**: annual meetings, workshops, international events (e.g. EcToH 2026)
- **Communication**: campaigns involving members (e.g. EWAC)
- The **MEPs Against Cancer (MAC) Interest Group** provides information to MEPs and is the engine behind the next European legislative cycle.
- **Funded Projects** continue to add value to ECL and members

Discussion

Given the shifting EU political priorities and the uncertainty around future funding, how can we — as a network — better position cancer as a political priority at European level?

ECL works across the cancer continuum



Cancer prevention

Early detection





Access to medicines

Patient Support



ECL in a changing funding landscape

- **Less money for EU4Health actions**
  - Overall 1 billion cut in EU4Health budget from 2025 onwards.
  - More emphasis on cardiovascular diseases, less on cancer.
  - **No operational grants** for health NGOs (including ECL), but targeted action grants.

- **Unclear future for Europe's Beating Cancer Plan**
  - Absence of clear outcomes and timelines beyond 2024
  - 90% of planned activities were initiated
  - Cancer Mission asked for 'success stories' from ECL members

- **Multiannual Financial Framework proposal (2028 – 2034)**
  - Horizon Europe and health budgets together into one EU Competitiveness Fund.

Meetings with ECL members

- **Belgium:** Foundation against Cancer (February); KOTK (March)
- **Cyprus:** PASYKAF and Anti-Cancer Society (April)
- **Germany:** German Cancer Society (April)

- Video call with Cancer Focus **Northern Ireland (**April)
- Virtual **CEO Roundtable** seminars on the MFF (April, August)

- **Finland:** Cancer Society of Finland October 2026

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Youth Ambassador strategy

Quick reminder

- Since 2015, ECL YA programme is a well-established programme that brings together young advocates across Europe with the goal of advancing on cancer prevention by disseminating the **European Code Against Cancer** (ECAC).
- YA program under ECL's **Prevention and Early Detection** Working Group.
- 42 Youth Ambassadors (YA)
- **Coordinator**: Naida Salkovic (fomer YA)
- **Summer School** as main in-person activity.



State of the art

- [Video from the YA Coordinator, Naida Salkovic]

State of the art

- The program is not working as it used to
- Lack of **funding** for in-person Summer School; **motivation**; **leadership**, and **connection** to ECL's ecosystem.
- Lack of clear **added value**: what is in there for me?



- ECL believes in the potential of the program
- We are determinate to make it work, and worth it

Discussion: value proposition

- **Question: Where do you see the added value of the YA programme for your organisation? How could the program be part of your national strategy / functioning? (10’)**

Discussion: scope

- **Question: Should the program keep the focus only on prevention, or should the program expand to patients, survivors and/or treatment? Why? (10’)**

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Coffee break

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Funding strategy & ethical guidelines

ECL in a changing funding landscape

- **Operating grants for Health NGO's were re-introduced in EU4Heath work programme 2026**
  - €1.8M for eligible Health NGOs represents only 20% of the last funding in 2023
  - Meanwhile, NGOs with no industry funding had to downsize or close completely
  - Published finally in mid-October, the grant would influence only 2027
- **Current draft of Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-34) does not foresee a dedicated Health / Cancer budget**
  - No clarity about future of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan
  - Horizon Europe budget is being reduced in budget proposals
  - EU Cancer Mission will finish in 2030, with no published plan for continuation

ECL's financial situation

- **2023 -** €42.000 as profit (last year of EU4Health-funded operational grant)
- **2024 -** €350.000 as loss
- **2025 -** €156.000 as loss
- **2026 -** €151.000 expected profit
- **2027 -** €8.000 as profit (to be approved)

ECL 3rd party funding was discussed at last GA

- **Two decisions were taken:**
  1. Prioritise collaborations with philanthropies & foundations
  2. Work with ECL members to align with their funding & ethical guidelines for collaborating with commercial partners
- **Work with foundations**
  - ECL applied for grant from Broad Reach (US) / Tides Foundation on environmental carcinogens
  - Application was successful for a 1-year grant ($40K), with possibility for extension
  - First meeting with Brakeley Nordic (https://brakeleynordic.com/) to discuss workshop on fundraising
- **Work with companies – preparation of fundraising strategy & ethical guidelines**
  - Discussions with Danish Cancer Society on ethical guidelines
  - Ethics Committee Charter received from Israel cancer Society
  - Consulted ethical guidelines from other Health NGOs (CPE, EPHA)

Funding Strategy document

1. **Membership Fees** – establishing a stable, predictable revenue base and strengthening stakeholder engagement.
2. **Grants** – securing competitive funding for research, innovation, prevention programs, and policy initiatives.
3. **External Collaborations with Philanthropies and Commercial Companies** – expanding impact through strategic partnerships, multi-year commitments, and co-created initiatives.

Objectives

- **Ensure long-term financial sustainability** through diversified revenue streams.
- **Increase unrestricted funding** to support core operations and strategic initiatives.
- **Expand programmatic capacity** in prevention, early detection, patient support, and policy advocacy.
- **Strengthen partnerships** with institutions, philanthropies, and industry to accelerate innovation.
- **Enhance organizational credibility** through transparent governance and ethical collaboration frameworks.

Financial targets

Membership fees should contribute **40–50% of annual operational costs**. ECL's target is **€500.000** by year 3.

Grants should represent **30–40% of total annual funding**, depending on project cycles. ECL's target is **€350.000** by year 3.

External collaborations should contribute **10–20% of annual funding**, prioritizing multi-year agreements. ECL's target is **€150.000** by year 3. Collaborations with commercial actors will strictly follow ECL's 'Policy on Ethical Collaboration with Commercial Partners'.

External funding (I)

- **Commercial collaborations**
  - Corporate social responsibility (CSR) partnerships
  - Sponsorship of events, conferences, and educational programs
  - Innovation projects with biotech, pharma, and digital health companies
- **Ethical governance framework**
  - Clear partnership guidelines to prevent conflicts of interest
  - Transparent reporting of funding sources
  - Alignment with EU standards for NGO–industry collaborations
- **Engagement and outreach**
  - Partnership dossier outlining opportunities and impact
  - Targeted outreach to companies in healthcare, insurance, tech, and wellness
  - Recognition through awards, media visibility, and stakeholder events

External funding (II)

Governance & Compliance

Strong internal controls, ethical guidelines, and transparent reporting aligned with EU NGO standards: funding disclosure in transparency register, no industry influence on policy outputs, no conflict-of-interests with commercial partners, clear separation between EU- and industry funded activities, full disclose on website and annual report.

Risk Management

Annual Board review of funding distribution to avoid over-reliance on any single pillar or partner.

Proposal for an Ethical Board (AECC)

Inspired by AECC governance and funding structure.

- Suggestion to establish an Ethics and Compliance Committee composed of a small, diverse group of compliance experts from ECL member organisations.
- Committee could serve as a consultative and reference body for the Secretariat and advise the Board on ethical and compliance-related matters.
- These professionals already deal with similar challenges and responsibilities within their own organisations. They could therefore provide practical expertise to support ECL as it further develops its ethical framework and governance practices.

Red lines for ECL

- Direct funding **will not be accepted for a specific study** whose results are intended to **serve the direct commercial interest** of the donating company.
- Any transfer of funds or support from the industry will be conducted solely with the ECL secretariat as the legal and public body. It is prohibited to transfer funds, directly or indirectly, between a commercial company and a specific individual within the ECL network of members.
- No collaboration or initiative that could call into question the welfare of patients, or harm the professional and scientific **independence** of ECL and its representatives, will be approved.
- It is **prohibited** to maintain relationships, agreements, or affiliations with commercial entities that are **not transparent, not reported**, or lack appropriate disclosure, between ECL and its representatives and such entities.

Criteria for companies

Commercial partners must:

- Demonstrate compliance with EU regulations, ethical business conduct, and human-rights standards.
- Commit to ECL's transparency and conflict-of-interest requirements.
- Accept that ECL's scientific and policy independence is non-negotiable.
- Have no record of misleading health claims or practices that distort cancer-risk communication.
- Support equitable access to cancer prevention, early detection, and care.

Types of collaborations

- **Unconditional financial support** for ECL's mission-aligned activities.
- **Restricted project funding** on a certain topic (not product) where objectives are defined by ECL.
- **In-kind contributions** (e.g., technical expertise, data access) that do not compromise independence.
- **Joint initiatives** focused on public-interest outcomes, with ECL retaining editorial control.
- **Participation in multi-stakeholder platforms** where governance safeguards are in place.

ECL will **not** endorse commercial products or services under any circumstances. ECL does not intend to work with companies on therapies which are already on the market.

Companies to avoid

- **The tobacco industry** (including companies producing tobacco and/or nicotine products)
- **Oil and fossil fuels companies** that produce air pollutants and chemicals that may have cancer-causing effects.
- **Aviation and automotive industries** as they contribute to increased cancer risks due to air pollution and climate change.
- **Chemical and pesticide industries** that produce known or suspected carcinogenic properties. This category also includes pharmaceutical companies which produce pesticides.
- **The alcohol industry**.
- **Food industries** (sweet beverages and/or ultra-processed foods).
- **Companies that promise alternative cancer cures** for which there is no scientific evidence.

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AI & cancer care

Transforming the future of cancer care

- In **diagnostics**, AI enhances accuracy and enables **earlier detection**, often leading to less invasive and more cost-effective treatment options.

  AI-Powered Breast Cancer Detection: AI systems used in mammography screening can identify early signs of breast cancer with remarkable accuracy, often surpassing the capabilities of human radiologists.

- AI-driven **personalised treatment plans** can complement traditional approaches by offering more targeted and effective care, improving patient outcomes while also helping to reduce the financial burden on healthcare systems.



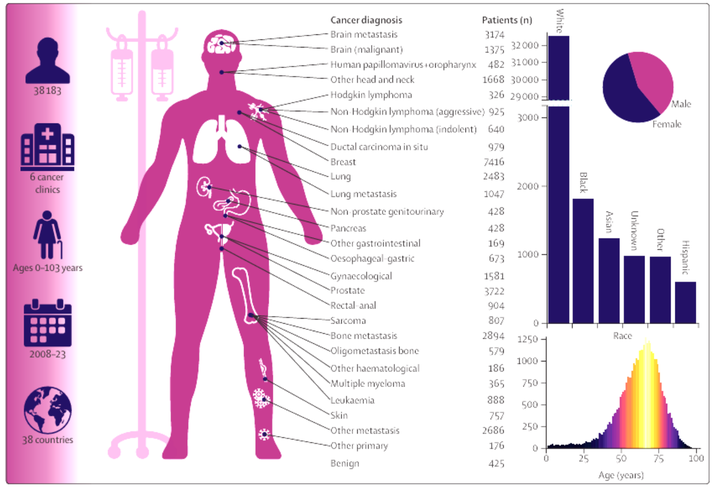
Source: https://developer.nvidia.com/blog/new-ai-breast-cancer-model-is-the-first-to-show-diagnostic-process/

AI tools & ethics

- AI predicts survival from a selfie (The Lancet Digital Health, Oct 2026) by estimating chances of dying from cancers

ARTICLES · Online first, 101056, October 19, 2026 · *Open Access*

Foundation artificial intelligence models for health recognition by use of face photographs (FAHR-Face): a model development and validation study



- Downsides of getting health advice from chatbots (Nature Health, Oct 2026), no records or reporting about harms and consequences

Perspective

The invisible risks of AI-generated health information

Companies approach ECL – example

- Contacted by Digital Health company to work with an AI agent for women's health
- Developed with support from the Croation Institute of Public Health & the Croation Ministry of Health
- Educational tool, probably more correct than using Chat GPT etc.
- Company proposes to develop tool with help/input from ECL members



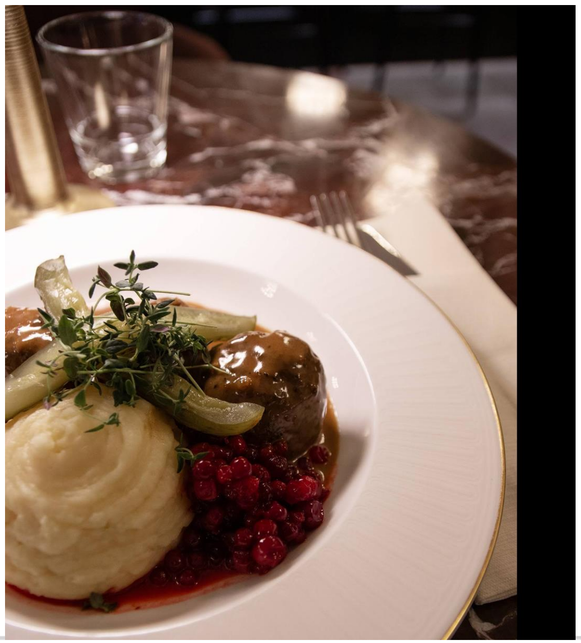
Discussion

- Is this topic of interest to your organisation?
- Do you engage in any AI related initiatives, projects?
- Would you be interested in getting connected with companies working on this?

Informal dinner - Wednesday

- **Wednesday, 19:00**
- **Ravintola Taulu (city centre)**





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Intensifying the fight against cancer, together

Contact Us

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ECL is registered in the EU Transparency Register: 19265592757-25