

## Managing cancer in the workplace: Cancer leagues encourage organisations across Europe to develop policies and procedures to support employees affected by cancer

*New Handbook from ECL to break the taboo surrounding cancer in the workplace*

Brussels, Belgium – **ECL is launching a new Handbook for employers illustrating how managers, supervisors and HR departments can best support their employees affected by cancer and minimise the impact of cancer (and other chronic diseases) on their organisations and everyone involved.**

Though cancer awareness has greatly increased in the last decades, managing cancer at work is still a taboo. **Around 1.6 million people of working age are diagnosed with cancer in Europe each year and cancer treatments are often accompanied by long periods of sickness absence.** Employers are therefore likely to face a situation when their employees or their loved ones are affected by cancer. From teachers to nurses, CEOs and hairdressers, **millions of cancer patients and survivors across the EU are being stigmatised and discriminated against at work. Cancer survivors, in fact, have a 1.4 times higher risk of unemployment compared to their healthy peers.**

“During the sick leave, I received very little attention from the company and contacts were very sparse. When I returned to work, I felt ignored and displaced. I was entrusted with the management of a new portfolio of clients with a much lower profile than I had managed before. This made me rethink my relationship with the workplace and I took the initiative to negotiate a retirement.” (Commercial manager, affected by cancer)



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“In addition to the detrimental effects that being out of work has on an individual’s well-being and finances, this situation has severe economic consequences for businesses and society as a whole. In fact, in 2009, working days lost as a result of cancer are estimated to have cost the European Union EUR 9.5 billion. Therefore, it is essential that companies implement effective strategies to help their employees get back to work following diagnosis of cancer.” said **Marine Cavet, Project Manager in the Prevention and Research Unit of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)**

The ECL Patient Support Working Group (PSWG) is focused on getting managers and HR professionals within organisations to tackle discriminatory behaviors by developing comprehensive ‘cancer in the workplace’ policies and procedures. Employers have misperceptions regarding cancer patients and survivors’ work abilities, productivity, reliability and the costs associated with their continued employment. Employees affected by cancer suffer from these misconceptions and the lack of effective communication with the management and HR.

This handbook seeks to meet the needs of all types of employers across Europe - from big corporations to SME and from NGOs to public administration as well as put a spotlight on issues of survivorship and quality of life.



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**Clara Rosàs, leader of the PSWG’s Cancer & Work sub-group and Managing Director at the Catalan Federation Against Cancer**

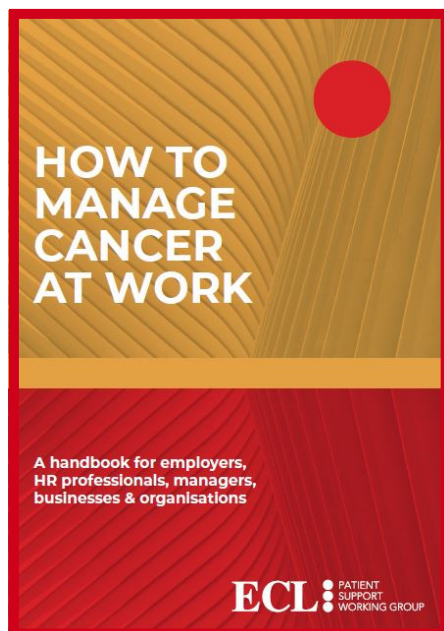
added: “Our new handbook provides tips and good practices to inspire companies and organisations to manage cancer in the workplace. Adopting a formal policy is a win-win for employers, employees affected by cancer, their colleagues, the management and their organisations as a whole. By formalising procedures, we can really trigger the mindset and cultural shift needed to address the barriers that people living with cancer and caregivers face in the workplace, retain knowledge and experience, cut business costs and create a truly inclusive work environment .”



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Welcoming the publication of the handbook, **Katie Gallagher, Senior Policy Adviser at the European Patients’ Forum (EPF)** commented, “EPF fully supports the ECL Patient Support Working Group’s Handbook ‘How to manage cancer at work’. If implemented well, this handbook has real potential to contribute to the creation of more supportive working environments, resulting in a hugely improved quality of life for cancer patients that minimises the negative financial impact of chronic ill health, the risk of social exclusion and positively contributes to their mental health.”

## NOTES FOR EDITORS



### Download the handbook:

[https://www.europeancancerleagues.org/wp-content/uploads/ECL\\_Cancer-at-Work\\_Handbook-for-Employers\\_2020\\_digital.pdf](https://www.europeancancerleagues.org/wp-content/uploads/ECL_Cancer-at-Work_Handbook-for-Employers_2020_digital.pdf)



### ABOUT THE ECL'S PATIENT SUPPORT WORKING GROUP

Since 2007, the ECL Patient Support Working Group (PSWG) connects cancer care experts who share knowledge and work together on developing best practice guides and informational materials to raise awareness and improve the quality of cancer care in Europe. The PSWG focuses on a wide range of matters, including access to insurance and financial services, return to work, caregiver support, sexuality and relationships issues, cancer rehabilitation and palliative care. PSWG members strive to make the patient voice heard in national and European decision-making.



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