



Return to Work: Presentation for Employers

Supporting Employees in the Workplace

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The Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL) is a non-profit, pan-European umbrella organisation of national and regional cancer societies. Located in Brussels, ECL provides an exclusive platform for members to collaborate with their international peers, primarily in the areas of cancer prevention, tobacco control, access to medicines and patient support, and creates opportunities to advocate for these issues at the EU level.

ECL's VISION: A Europe free of cancers

ECL's MISSION: To advocate for improved cancer control and care in Europe through facilitating collaboration between cancer leagues, and influencing EU and pan-European policies.

CANCER PREVENTION

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The cancer burden is projected to increase by 25% by 2030. It has been estimated that almost half of all deaths due to cancer in Europe could be avoided if everyone followed the 12 recommendations of the European Code against Cancer (ECAC).

ECL offers a unique platform for cancer leagues in Europe to exchange best practices, and benchmark cancer prevention strategies implementing the ECAC, by convening technical workshops, and organising study exchange visits for cancer leagues to learn first-hand from their peers.

TOBACCO CONTROL



Tobacco is the single most important risk factor for cancer, responsible for over 30% of cancer burden in Europe.

ECL joins efforts with other European and international partners to advocate for e.g. proper implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the Tobacco Products Directive, plain packaging, tax policies, tobacco free investment and the fight against illicit trade.

ACCESS TO MEDICINES



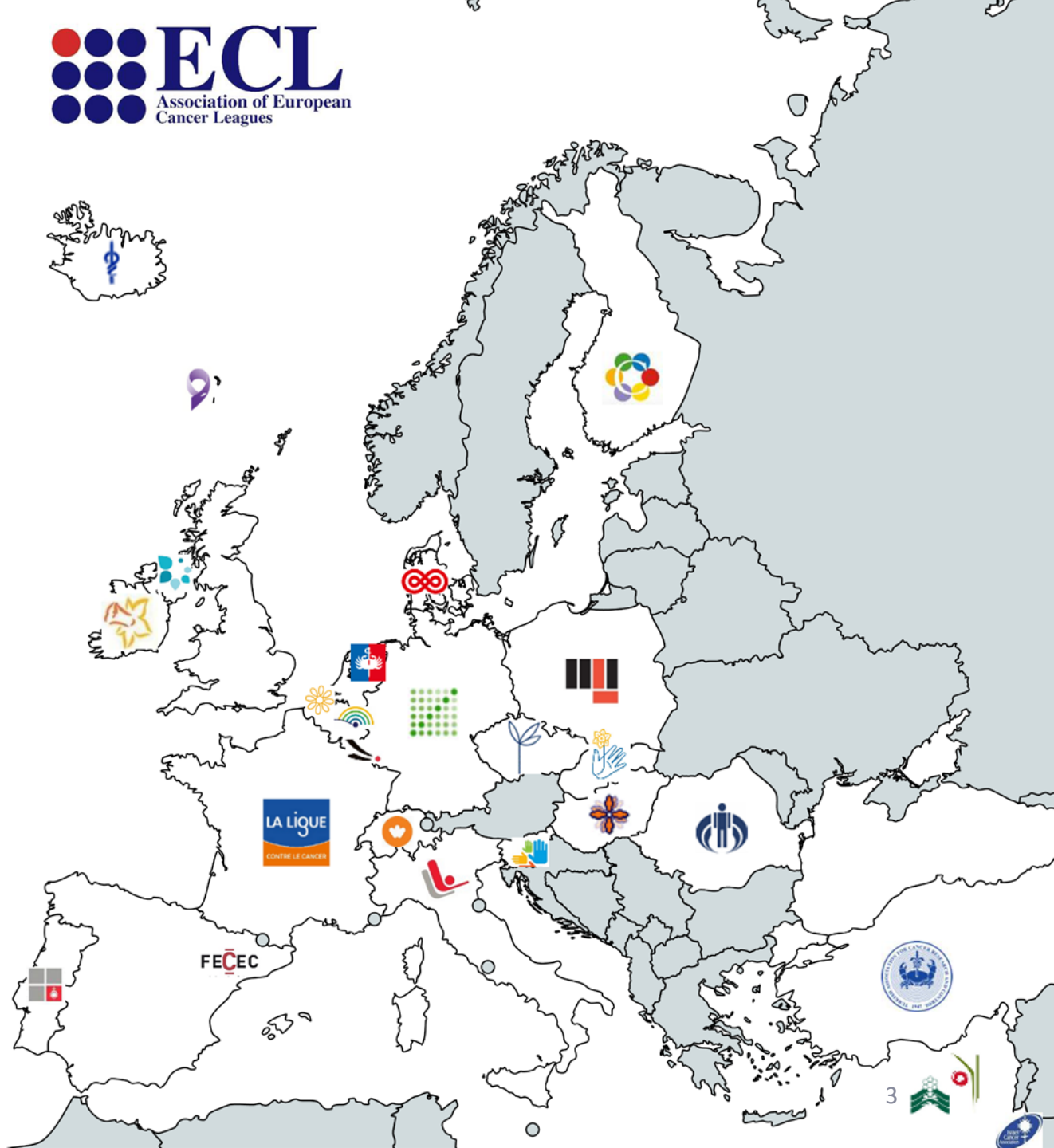
Established in 2016, the ECL Access to Medicines Task Force aims to make cancer medicines available for all cancer patients in Europe by insisting on accessibility, sustainability of healthcare systems and transparency of drug prices.

The Task Force strongly believes in the power of dialogue. We urge all stakeholders to push for improved innovative treatments, advancing both overall survival and the quality of life of cancer patients. Currently, 25 national/regional cancer leagues, representing over 450 million Europeans, have signed the Task Force's Declaration of Intent.

PATIENT SUPPORT



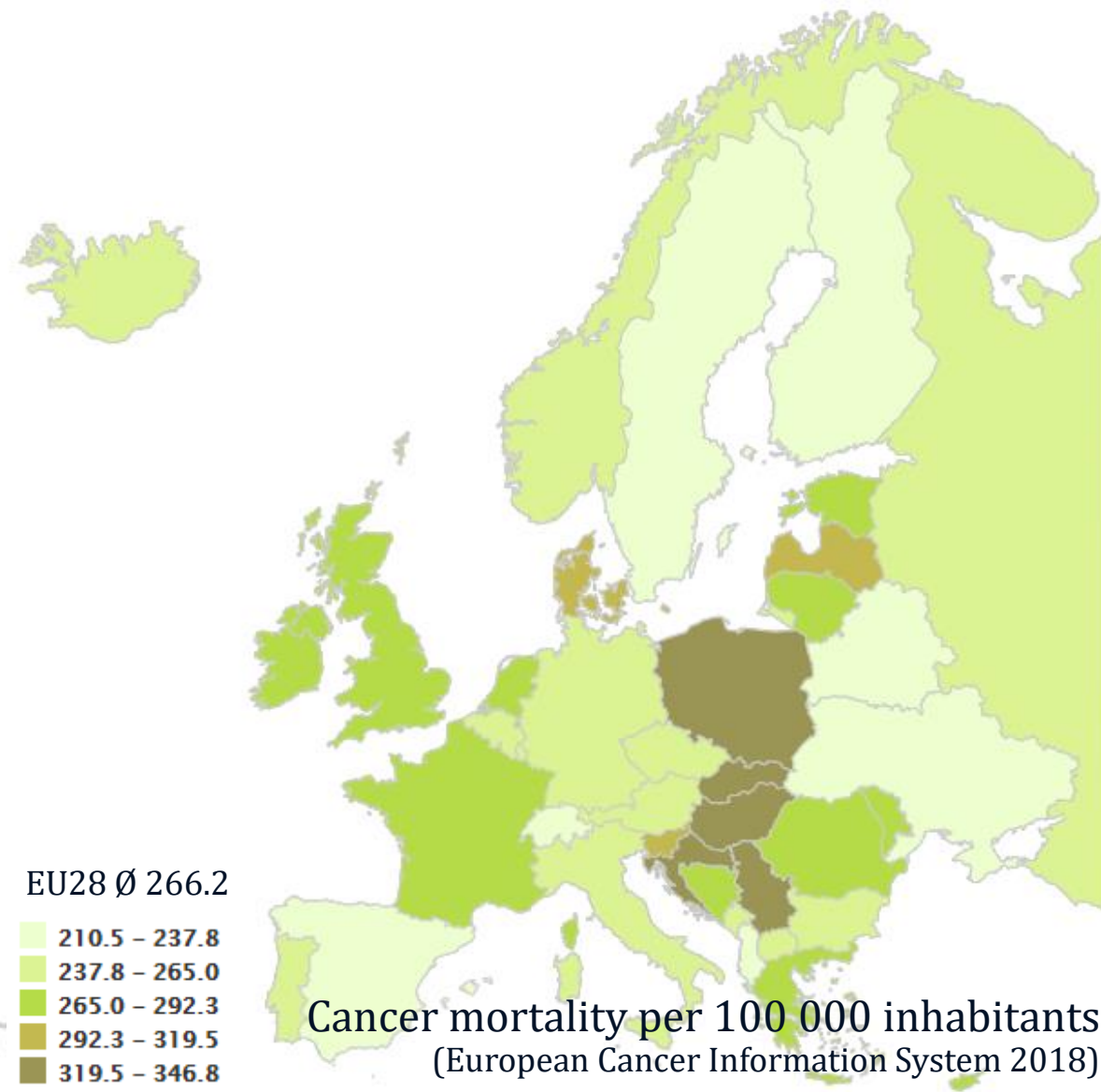
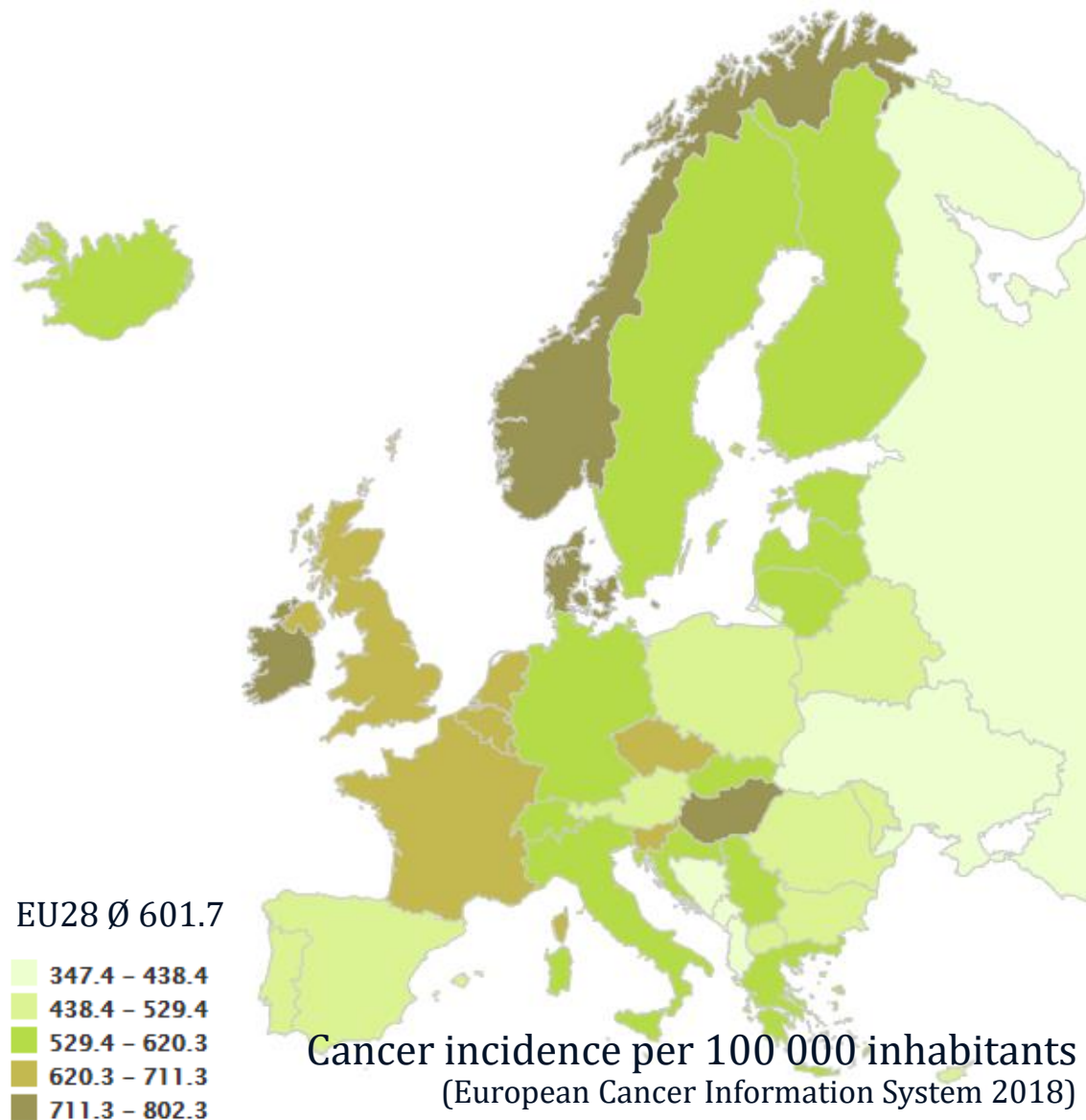
Since 2007 the ECL Patient Support Working Group (PSWG) connects cancer care experts who work together on topics such as access to insurance and financial services, return to work, caregiver support, cancer rehabilitation and palliative care. PSWG members share best practices, develop guidelines and other information sources to raise awareness and improve quality of care, and seek to empower the patient voice in national and European policy-making.



WHAT IS CANCER?

- Cancer is a group of diseases characterised by abnormal growth of cells.
- Cancer can affect any part of the body and there exist over 100 types of cancer.
- Cancer can sometimes spread to other parts of the body creating a secondary tumour or a metastasis.

Europe: 3.4 million new cases and 1.9 million deaths each year out of which 1.4 million are people in working age (Eurostat, 2018)



IMPACT ON CANCER PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

IMPACT OF THE DIAGNOSIS

- Physical
- Emotional
 - Emotional instability
 - Insecurity about remission or relapse
- Social
- Spiritual

TREATMENT TIME CONSUMPTION

- GP
- Test results and diagnosis
- Surgery/ Chemotherapy/ Radiotherapy



Employment difficulties after cancer diagnosis

GENERAL ISSUES

- Cancer is more and more becoming a chronic disease
- Of all chronic conditions, cancer has by far the highest prevalence of work loss and reduction in work functioning
- Average return to work rate = 64 % after 18 months
(Mehnert 2013)
- Chance of unemployment is 37% higher after cancer diagnosis (De Boer 2009)

ISSUES AT THE WORKPLACE

EMPLOYERS

- Communication struggle with employee diagnosed with cancer – myths, attitudes, excessive empathy and pity
- Do not understand the needs of patient to return to work (RTW) → necessary adjustment often not in place
- Employer shows little confidence in an employee with cancer
- Searching balance between company's and employee's needs

EMPLOYEES

- Feeling guilty about taking time off work
- Nervous about job security and promotion aspirations – uncertain future
- Affected communication with colleagues (embarrassment)
- Anxiety about treatment and its side effects
- Lack of personal confidence to work efficiently
- Financial concerns connected to diagnosis and treatment

Employee

Fear
Survival
Family
Chemotherapy
Cancer
Medical Bills
Treatment Plans
Multiple Opinions
Diagnosis
End of Life
Job Loss
Community
Pain





WORKERS' HEALTH IMPLICATIONS AND COSTS

I. Health and safety implications for workers affected by cancer

i. Effects of cancer and its treatment on health:

Psychological and cognitive symptoms

Physical symptoms: Fatigue

ii. Occupational implications:

Diminished work productivity

Work ability impairments and reduced functioning

II. Costs for workers, employers and society

i. Sick leave and no RTW:

Financial loss for the worker, the employer, and society

ii. Total economic loss to the European Union due to lost work days

as a result of cancer: €9.5 billion in 2009

Work rehabilitation after a diagnosis of cancer

- Multidisciplinary interventions are effective in enhancing return to work in cancer survivors
- Working together with different stakeholders including the worker, the employer, health care professionals and occupational rehabilitation experts is important





How can an employer help an employee with cancer diagnosis?



EMPLOYER'S APPROACH IS KEY

1. Do not postpone the RTW problem and deal with it as soon as possible
2. Support a good and fluid communication during the whole pathway
3. Be flexible on working conditions where possible



Simple solutions can make big difference, such as:

- ✓ Flexible and reduced working hours
- ✓ Working from home
- ✓ Additional work breaks
- ✓ Time off for medical appointments
- ✓ Sick and compassionate leave
- ✓ Suspension of working alone
- ✓ Alternative employment (change of post)
- ✓ Reallocation and prioritisation of work duties
- ✓ Temporary change of work area
- ✓ Training for new skills
- ✓ More convenient parking space
- ✓ Mentoring colleagues and choosing a cancer issues supervisor
- ✓ Avoiding excessive travel

Recommendations for employers specific to the cancer pathway

DIAGNOSIS

- Try to silence the office rumors when the news are not yet confirmed
- Set an appointment with the employee after the diagnosis in order to find out their needs and expectations.
 - Bring up the following topics: disease diagnosis, employee's intention to continue working, possible flexible solutions of work during and after the treatment, desired ways of communicating the diagnosis to the colleagues
- Accept that the arrangements are provisional at the moment and that there are still many doubts regarding the treatment and follow up
- Be supportive and tolerant to employee's uncertainty

Recommendations for employers specific to the cancer pathway

DURING THE TREATMENT

- Facilitate the link between the employee and the workplace
- Support fluid communication with the employee
- Be aware of the organization's limitations to give support to the employee (especially for SMEs)
- Be attentive to the reactions of the rest of the employees. Identify and manage their reactions so they are not an impediment for the proper functioning of the company
- If the employee wishes to work during the treatment, be flexible (slide 13)
- Respect employee's reactions to treatment
- Make clear that any call during the sick leave is only to find out about the condition without the intention to be a nuisance

Recommendations for employers specific to the cancer pathway

AFTER THE TREATMENT, RETURN TO WORK

- Anticipate employee's returns to work and set up an appointment in order to discuss:
 - Employee's expectations about RTW
 - Their current health condition, including physical and emotional state
- Take measures to prepare the employee's work environment:
 - Gradual return to work
 - Offer flexible solutions tailored to employee's needs (slide 13)
- Accept and be attentive to employee's cancer experience
- Establish frequent dialogue with the employee to review RTW measures

Recommendations for employers specific to the cancer pathway

WHEN RTW IS NOT POSSIBLE

- When it is the worker's decision
 - Give employee enough time to meet the RTW decision
 - Explain them all the consequences that the decision may entail
- When it is the employer's decision
 - Do the best you can in order for it to have the least possible impact on the rest of the organisation
 - Listen to the worker's opinion and let him say goodbye to the colleagues
 - To communicate your decision to the rest of organisation

THANK YOU!

