



# European Alliance for Personalised Medicine

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## Next EAPM events

**10 December 2020 9.00 CET – 12.50 CET**

'Lung Cancer & Early Diagnosis: The Evidence Exists for Lung Screening Guidelines in the EU' Brussels

**Tuesday, 23 February 2020:**

'Forward together with innovation: The why, what and how of tackling the Implementation Gap for healthcare in the EU' Portuguese Presidency of the EU, Brussels

*Greetings health colleagues, and welcome one and all to the penultimate newsletter of 2020 from the European Alliance for Personalised Medicine (EAPM), which neatly coincides with our upcoming lung cancer screening event on 10 December. Hopefully, you will have already decided to join us but, if not, EAPM will produce a report after the event. Here's the full [agenda](#), and register [here](#).*

### Lung-cancer screening and European Beating Cancer Plan

Lung cancer is the most commonly found cancer in men and in women is being represented by a "worrying rise" according to the World Health Organization. Some one billion people on the planet are regular smokers. And figures show that lung cancer causes almost 1.6 million deaths each year worldwide, representing almost one-fifth of all cancer deaths.

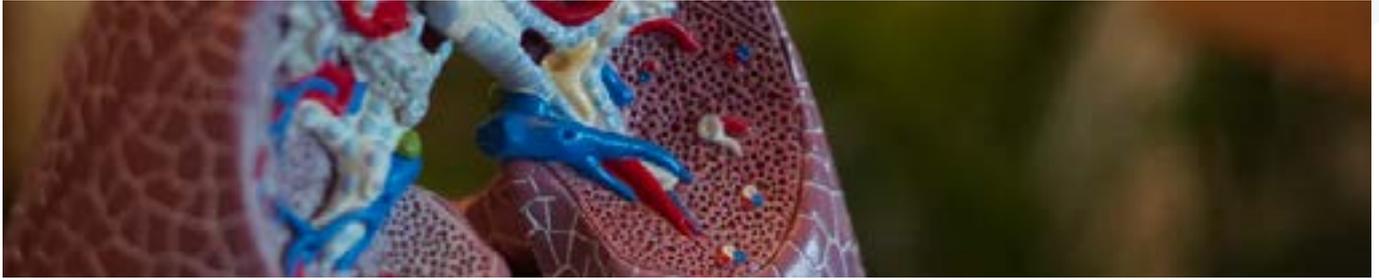
The European Respiratory Society and the European Society of Radiology (also a supporter of the event, as is the European Cancer Patient Coalition - ECPC), the societies have recommended screening for lung cancer under the following circumstances: "In comprehensive, quality-assured, longitudinal programmes within a clinical trial or in routine clinical practice at certified multidisciplinary medical centres."

#### A stage shift:

A stage-shift related to lung cancer screening will allow EU countries to reduce the cost of treatment given that treating early-stage lung cancer has half the cost of treatment at an advanced stage. The Alliance and its stakeholders realise that, among other elements, what is required in Europe is: continuous screening monitoring, with regular reports; assured consistency and enhanced quality of commented data for the screening reports; reference standards for quality and process indicators should be developed and adopted, On top of this, the integration of primary and secondary preventive strategies through comprehensive approaches is required.

All of the above will be discussed at the lung-cancer screening workshop, and it is envisaged that a coordinated plan will emerge, which will make its way to Commission policymakers and Member State health system chiefs.

## Expected outcomes



It is absolutely clear that it is necessary to formulate an EU Lung Screening strategy involving decision makers and regulators in the arena of public health, to enable the EU and Member States In order to provide a clear focus and to devote sufficient space to analysis, discussions during the conference will concentrate on how

- to assess and address obstacles to the integration of lung cancer screening guidelines into Europe's healthcare systems
- to identify best practices and their added value
- to outline the potential benefits of Lung Cancer Screening on public health and its impact on policy making

You can check out the agenda of the EAPM 10 December conference on lung-cancer screening [here](#), and register [here](#).

## Alzheimer's Disease (AD) health-care strategy



EAPM recently launched an academic publication with a multi-stakeholder perspective to tackle the issue of biomarkers entitled Piercing the Fog of Alzheimer's and Related Dementia. The paper is available [here](#). Alzheimer's disease (AD) and related dementia is one of the growing threats to the sustain- ability of health and care systems in developed countries, and efforts to find therapies have had scant success. The main reasons for this are lack of efficient therapy, which is linked to too late discovery of the disease itself. With this in mind, biomarkers are recognised as an element which can bring a major contribution to research, helping elucidate the disease and the search for treatments.

They are also playing an increasing role in early detection and timely diagnosis, which are considered the principal hopes of effective management in the absence of an effective drug. The current arsenal of biomarkers could already, if more widely deployed, provide an effective minimum service to patients and health systems. A concerted action by policy makers and stakeholders could drive progress in access to AD biomarker testing to provide an optimum service in the medium term.

This paper discusses how to improve the use of and access to biomarker testing in the detection and diagnosis of AD and other diseases featuring dementia, and how EU healthcare systems could benefit. It outlines the challenges, lists the achievements to date, and highlights the actions needed to allow bio-marker testing to deliver more fully on their potential in AD. The paper is available [here](#).

## Extra plenary session between Christmas and New Year's Eve

The European Parliament is preparing for an extra plenary session between Christmas and New Year's Eve to give its consent to a possible post-Brexit trade deal with the UK, according to several EU officials and diplomats. It is likely to be held on 28 December, to give EU governments the opportunity to have the very last say, as foreseen by the bloc's procedures, before the end of the UK's Brexit transition period on 31 December.

## Kyriakides presents pharma strategy in Parliament



On Thursday (26 November), access to safe and affordable medicines and supporting EU pharmaceutical innovation were debated in Parliament. Health and Food Safety Commissioner Stella Kyriakides presented the new Pharmaceutical Strategy as an important component of the new EU Health Union. Several MEPs highlighted the need for all EU citizens to have equal access to high-quality medicines. They emphasized the need to decrease the EU's dependence on imports of active pharmaceutical ingredients from non-EU countries, namely by increasing their production in Europe and supporting innovation in the EU pharmaceutical industry. The Commission has said that it wants to "work with the European Parliament and the Council towards the adoption of the Regulation on health technology assessment".

EPP MEP Peter Liese, while supportive of the Pharmaceutical Strategy, said, in an emailed statement: "The core of the current debate is how we can be less dependent on China and India when it comes to lifesaving pharmaceuticals. The coronavirus crisis has shown that the problem that has existed before is getting bigger and bigger."

Famously, the Scottish biologist Alexander Fleming accidentally discovered the anti-bacterial 'mould' penicillin in a petri dish in 1928. That came at the tail-end of the "roaring twenties", and led to a revolution in health care over subsequent decades. Now, a century later, thoughtful policymakers able to see the merits of incorporating personalised care and targeted therapies into the changes they are making in their own health-care systems could bring on a new age of the "roaring twenties".

Creating a structure and a climate in which personalised health care can realise its potential is a long-term exercise, but an approach that is one of the outcomes of COVID 19 is bearing fruit and can potentially tackle the many challenges ahead across the many health stakeholder groups.

## EU4Health programme call

Ahead of the trilogue negotiation process, public interest civil society organizations of the EU4Health Civil Society Alliance call on the national governments, European Parliament and the European Commission to make their best efforts during the upcoming, complex negotiations process, to ensure a well-resourced, well-designed and well-governed EU4Health Programme with meaningful involvement of civil society.

## EU Horizon Cancer Mission



Speaking to a session of the Parliament's cancer committee, Walter Ricciardi and Elisabete Weiderpass presented the 13 recommendations for action under the Horizon Europe's Cancer Mission. Every year, 3.5 million people in the EU are diagnosed with cancer, and 1.3 million die from it. Over 40% of cancer cases are preventable. Without reversing current trends, it could become the leading cause of death in the EU. Europe's beating cancer plan aims to reduce the cancer burden for patients, their families and health systems. It will address cancer related inequalities between and within member states with actions to support, coordinate and complement member states' efforts.

### Health research secures €508 million in Horizon 2020



Health research projects have been awarded €508 million for the final year of the Horizon 2020 programme, the Commission has announced. The 75 projects include the development of digital diagnostics and vaccines as well as work on cancer, antimicrobial resistance and infectious diseases. The projects will be carried out by participants from 58 countries, something that the Commission said indicates how Horizon 2020 is "open to the world".

### Advance funds for COVID-19 – Parliament seals its approval



On Tuesday (24 November), Parliament approved €823 million in EU aid in response to the coronavirus crisis in seven EU countries. The aid from the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) will be distributed in advance payments to Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, and Portugal in response to the major public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020.

## Member states call for EU co-ordination to stay in hands of member countries

Three EU countries have called for a more integrated crisis management response that stays in the hands of the Council of the European Union. The Netherlands, Sweden and Romania have indicated that the coronavirus pandemic presents a “window of opportunity” for EU countries to integrate their crisis responses, and the three countries argue that, as “democratically elected governments,” they are “responsible and accountable towards their voters and parliaments in ensuring the safety and security of their citizens”. “Therefore, the Member States bear the primary responsibility for crisis management,” the countries wrote in their paper which, published on 9 November, came two days before the Commission announced its suggestions for a European Health Union. The three countries do back a more co-ordinated approach, with a permanent crisis management system housed in the Council.

## EU must ease COVID-19 curbs slowly to avoid new wave, von der Leyen says

The European Union must only lift coronavirus restrictions slowly and gradually to avoid another wave of infections, the head of the bloc’s executive said. Ursula von der Leyen spoke after the 27 national leaders discussed stepping up joint testing efforts in the bloc, doling out vaccines and coordinating easing lockdowns as a second wave of the pandemic weighs on Europe.

She said: “We will make a proposal for a gradual and coordinated approach to lifting containment measures. This will be very important to avoid the risk of yet another wave.”

## EU to fund transfer of COVID-19 patients between countries



The European Union will finance the transfer of patients across borders within the bloc to prevent hospitals from getting overwhelmed as COVID-19 infections and hospitalisations spike in the continent. After a video conference of EU leaders to discuss the health crisis on Thursday (29 October), Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the EU executive had made available €220 million (\$260m) to move COVID-19 patients across borders. “The spread of the virus will overwhelm our healthcare systems if we do not act urgently,” she said. At the meeting, leaders agreed to better co-ordinate efforts to battle the virus as infections in Europe exceeded 10 million, making the continent again the epicentre of the pandemic. EU countries want to avoid divisions which dogged the 27-nation bloc at the beginning of the pandemic, when nations vied with each other to buy scarce medical equipment.

## Private Greek hospitals compelled to take COVID-19 patients

The Greek government took over two private hospitals in Thessaloniki on 19 November in which transmission of the coronavirus has been particularly widespread. The decision was reached after the private clinics failed to voluntarily provide 200 beds for COVID-19 patients despite appeals by the Health Ministry. Public hospitals in Thessaloniki and other parts of northern Greece have been struggling to cope with the influx of coronavirus patients, adding beds from other wards and setting up isolation tents after reaching their official capacities.

## Vaccine hope

News that the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine is effective and could have up to 90% efficacy has been met with widespread joy. “We expect COVID-19 vaccines to develop into a significant market as new products gain approval and begin to meet the high demand for protection from the disease,” according to a brief analysis by Fitch Solutions. It notes that with more products looking likely to pass regulatory hurdles, “these products will help to develop COVID-19 vaccines into a multi-billion-dollar commercial opportunity”.

## Key issues of COVID 19 among practicing clinicians

For practicing clinicians, it is fair to say that much has changed. With certain surgeries being cancelled to save space for the surge in admissions driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, many doctors are being forced to identify which patients really need to come in and who can be cared for just as well by telephone. So, will things ever go back to the way they were? Are there things we are doing now that will become part of the ‘new normal’?

The answer to the first question is almost surely no. The COVID-19 pandemic is going to be one of those dichotomous events that divides life into before and after. We live through them, learn from them, and adjust. Think about how casual airport security was before 9/11...or how simple it was to draw blood or start an intravenous line before HIV. As far as the second question is concerned, physicians are actively redesigning the way care is delivered to do what is best for patients during this time of crisis.

In just the same way that the world is hovering on the brink with COVID-19 and the Trump-Biden transition, with the stakes so high, getting it wrong this time round may spell disaster. Europe’s previous hesitancy over health-care reforms risks leading to an irremediable meltdown of health systems – and of Europeans’ health.

Certainly, in terms of health care, Europe is currently displaying the boldness that would enable it to grasp success from what looks like getting closer and closer to the jaws of failure. A clock is ticking as Europe tackles multiple challenges of the ever-rising demands for care, ever more fragile resources, and the manifest inequalities in opportunity, access and outcome across Europe’s countries, regions and social groups.

## MEPs call for urgent action on AMR

A group of MEPs, led by the S&D’s Tiemo Wölken, have called on the European Commission to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR) through the new Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe. The European Commission’s Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe aims to ensure Europe’s supply of safe and affordable medicines in order to meet patients’ needs and support the pharmaceutical industry to remain innovative.

## Pandemic fatigue

It is perhaps inevitable that after eight months of restrictions and lockdowns, with people’s lives globally being forced to change in order to fight the pandemic, that frustrations and fatigue with the status quo will come to the fore. In recent weeks, many countries have been reporting an increase in ‘pandemic fatigue’ – people are feeling demotivated about following recommended behaviours to protect themselves and others from the virus.

Finding effective ways to tackle this fatigue and reinvigorate public vigilance is a growing challenge as the crisis continues. Pandemic fatigue evolves gradually over time and is affected by the cultural, social, structural and legislative environment.

High-level public health experts from more than 30 countries and many partner organizations from the World Health Organization (WHO) European region connected remotely to search together the root causes of this phenomenon and share national experiences and plans.

At the request of European member states, WHO/Europe developed a framework of policy recommendations to guide governments in the planning and implementation of national and subnational strategies to bolster public support for COVID-19 prevention measures.

It includes 4 key strategies:

- Understand people: Collect and use evidence for targeted, tailored and effective policies, interventions and communication.
- Engage people as part of the solution.
- Help people to reduce risk while doing the things that make them happy. Acknowledge and address the hardship people experience, and the profound impact the pandemic has had on their lives.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said: “We have different situations in EU countries so it’s good that the handling of measures is in the hands of member states, but of course we need to co-ordinate.”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said: “A co-ordinated European approach is of great importance, especially for Germany as a country in the middle of Europe, it is important that the borders remain open.”

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said: “Close co-ordination between governments and the European Commission is essential to respond quickly and effectively to the new wave of COVID-19. The health response must go hand in hand with the economic one. Only a united Europe will overcome the crisis.”

## Protecting the health of European citizens



The proposals focus on revamping the existing legal framework for serious cross-border threats to health, as well as reinforcing the crisis preparedness and response role of key EU agencies such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA). President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen stated: “Our aim is to protect the health of all European citizens.

## Coronavirus scientist suggests ‘normal winter’ possible next year

Life could return to a pre-coronavirus status quo by the winter that begins a year from now, a co-developer of Pfizer’s vaccine candidate told the BBC. “If everything continues to go well, we will start to deliver the vaccine at the end of this year, beginning of next year,” Ugur Sahin, co-founder and chief executive of BioNTech, said on Sunday (15 November).

## Rare diseases – Coronavirus wreaks havoc



Some 84% of patients living with rare diseases have experienced disruptions in their regular care in Europe during the course of the pandemic, according to EURORDIS. Disruptions included rescheduled surgeries, postponed chemotherapies, and canceled diagnostic tests. And the pandemic has also taken a toll on patients' mental health, with six in 10 having their psychiatric visits interrupted.

### Sassoli calls for reform

The coronavirus pandemic must be a wake-up call for “the need of a profound re-foundation of the European project,” European Parliament President David Sassoli said recently in a State of Europe speech at an annual event organized by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Berlin. “The virus we are currently fighting actually exacerbates a whole series of deep fracture lines that have crossed the history of European integration in recent decades. Today they present themselves as challenges to which we are called to give urgent answers,” Sassoli said.

### Coronavirus: EU says economy must wait until 2023

The EU's economy grew faster than expected during the summer despite the shock of the coronavirus pandemic. With the second wave hitting Europe, however, the bloc's leaders say there will be no V-shaped recovery. As Europe wrestles with the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, EU Economic Affairs Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni said that renewed disruptions would “put the recovery on hold in the short term.”

### UK cancelled treatments



More than 3.5million people have had operations or treatment on the NHS cancelled during the first lockdown, a report has revealed. Widespread disruption to hospital services was felt hardest by the oldest and those in the worst health, according to leading economic think-tank the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Almost a quarter of those wanting to see their GPs said they were unable to, leading to worries over their long-term health. And three out of four needing community health and social care including dentists, counselling or personal care went without during the coronavirus peak. The report paints a bleak picture of routine health care during the first wave, just as England enters a second national lockdown.

## Commission steps up measures to control COVID-19 spread

The European Commission has announced it is launching additional measures to help control the spread of COVID-19 as the virus begins to resurge. As well as controlling the spread of COVID-19, the measures aim to better understand the virus' spread and the effectiveness of the response, increase well-targeted testing, bolster contact tracing, improve preparations for vaccination campaigns, and maintain access to essential supplies such as vaccination equipment, while keeping all goods moving in the single market and facilitating safe travel.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said: "The COVID-19 situation is very serious. We must step up our EU response. Today we are launching additional measures in our fight against the virus; from increasing access to fast testing and preparing vaccination campaigns to facilitate safe travel when necessary. I call on Member States to work closely together. Courageous steps taken now will help save lives and protect livelihoods. No member state will emerge safely from this pandemic until everyone does."

## Von der Leyen urges data share for cross-border COVID-19 treatment

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called on EU governments to share more data on intensive care capacity so COVID-19 patients can be transferred between member countries under a €220 million plan. "If we have more data-sharing on ICU capacity, and where it's lacking, we can increase cross-border patient care," von der Leyen told a news conference. We're making €220m available to finance a safe cross-border transfer of patients where it is needed," she said.

## Von der Leyen: EU could vaccinate 700M people against coronavirus

The EU could vaccinate 700 million people with large supplies of vaccines due to begin in April 2021, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has said today (29 October). Von der Leyen also reiterated her call for the harmonization of countries' vaccination plans. "There are many issues to be considered for an effective vaccine deployment," she said, pointing to questions around infrastructure, such as cold chains.

**And that is all for now, stay safe and well.**

## In the news

### **EAPM: How biomarker testing can pierce the fog of Alzheimer's and related dementia**

<https://www.eureporter.co/health/2020/11/27/eapm-how-biomarker-testing-can-pierce-the-fog-of-alzheimers-and-related-dementia/>

### **EAPM: Keeping tabs on lung cancer and Commission pharma strategy**

<https://www.eureporter.co/health/2020/11/24/eapm-keeping-tabs-on-lung-cancer-and-commission-pharma-strategy/>

### **Quality, quantity and the question of politics – EAPM Lung Cancer Screen-ing event, 10 December**

<https://www.eureporter.co/health/2020/11/20/quality-quantity-and-the-question-of-politics-eapm-lung-cancer-screening-event-10-december/>

### **EAPM: Tackling the many challenges across health stakeholder groups after COVID-19**

<https://www.eureporter.co/health/2020/11/17/eapm-tackling-the-many-challenges-across-health-stakeholder-groups-after-covid-19/>

**EAPM: How many chances has Europe got with health and COVID-19?**

<https://www.eureporter.co/health/2020/11/13/eapm-how-many-chances-has-europe-got-with-health-and-covid-19/>

**EAPM - Time for reform on health-care co-operation**

<https://www.eureporter.co/health/2020/11/10/eapm-time-for-reform-on-health-care-co-operation/>

**EAPM: Engaging with medical community about interpretations and consequences of COVID-19**

<https://www.eureporter.co/health/2020/11/06/eapm-engaging-with-medical-community-about-interpretations-and-consequences-of-covid-19/>

**EAPM: 'It Was Election Day Eve and All Through the House...**

<https://www.eureporter.co/health/2020/11/03/eapm-it-was-election-day-eve-and-all-through-the-house/>