

Mitigating the Social and Economic Impacts of Cancer through Policy: Panel discussion at European Health Forum Gastein 2022 aims to ignite a conversation based on Europe's Beating Cancer Plan

On September 29, MSD hosted a session at the European Health Forum, where two grantees from the MSD Oncology Policy Grants Program and other experts in the field engaged in a thought-provoking discussion on how the cost of cancer care is perceived across geographies and how Europe's Beating Cancer Plan provides an opportunity to improve health outcomes for cancer patients.

Colleagues from academia, patient advocacy, government and industry brought their perspectives on and expertise in the socioeconomic impact of cancer across settings, and discussed how joint EU action can overcome barriers to care, address health inequities and result in improved patient outcomes and quality of life in Europe and beyond.

BAD HOFGASTEIN, AUSTRIA, September 29, 2022 – Under the theme of the 25th anniversary of [European Health Forum Gastein](#) “A moonshot for a true European Health Union” and “building forward better”, panelists provided insights from their research and shared policy recommendations that seek to address the broader socioeconomic impact of cancer for patients, families, communities and society.

As the hallmark event for the MSD Oncology Policy Grants Program, this session invited Oliver Kessler (Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Institute for Business and Regional Economics IBR) and Dr. Clara Volinturi (Bucharest University of Economic Studies) to share their insights from their research in Switzerland and Romania. Facilitated by Dr. Panos Kanavos (London School of Economics), grantees were accompanied by Alexander Roediger (MSD), Stefan Schreck (DG Sante), and Dr. Bettina Ryll (Melanoma Patient Network Europe) to reflect on how Europe's Beating Cancer Plan can move us towards a Health Union and improve quality of and access to life-saving cancer prevention and treatment.

Dr. Panos Kanavos began the discussion by stating: “Despite significant progress in our understanding and treatment of oncology over the past decade, reducing the burden of cancer remains a key global policy priority. The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the power of collaboration and coordinated action in addressing global health needs. Similar approaches are needed in oncology as we aim to balance the need for innovative oncology therapies with equitable access to medicines across countries.”

Dr. Clara Colinturu provided an update on her research developing an economic model based on the value added in Romania of the active, healthy population and the negative impact cancer can have on societal economic output. Oliver Kessler provided perspectives from his work identifying the scientific basis of the social and economic value of cancer treatment in Switzerland. Both grantees reflected on how insights from their respective countries can be applied throughout the EU.

The discussion explored the ways in which the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan is a pivotal moment for the region to leverage policy advancements to keep patients at the center of cancer care, use tools to track progress against targets in things like access to treatment and understand where there are inequities to solve for. MSD's Alexander Roediger said: “At MSD, we're committed to keeping patients at the center of everything we do – we're excited about the

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan's emphasis on empowering patients to make well-rounded health decisions by improving health literacy.”

The full programme, outlining the difference sessions, speakers, and conference details, is available [here](#).

About European Health Forum Gastein

The European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) was founded in 1998 as a European health policy conference. It aims to provide a platform for all stakeholders from the fields of public health and beyond. Over the past decade, the EHFG has established itself as an indispensable institution in the scope of European health policy. It has made a decisive contribution to the development of guidelines and above all the cross-border exchange of experience, information, and cooperation. Leading experts traditionally participate in the annual conference held in the Gastein Valley in the Austrian Alps in late September/early October.