



## EONS Cancer Prevention Plan 2021-2023 ©

### Introduction and context

The World Health Organization<sup>1</sup> estimates that 30% to 50% of all cancer cases globally are preventable. The recently launched *Europe's Beating Cancer Plan*<sup>2</sup> states that around 40% of all cancer cases within the EU are preventable. Prevention has been proven to be more effective than cure and the most cost-efficient, long-term cancer control strategy. These facts call for action! Cancer prevention can be improved dramatically by raising awareness and addressing risk factors such as tobacco and alcohol consumption, lack of physical activity, obesity, unhealthy diet, extensive sun/sun bed exposure and exposure to pollution.

Health promotion involves modifying health behaviours and should also include recommendations like breastfeeding babies and taking part in cancer screening and vaccination programmes. Cancer risk factors are often impacted by socio-economic status, age and education. Inequalities in access to prevention measures and resources for screening and cancer care are adversely affecting, for example, elderly people, people with disabilities and underserved and/or unrepresented minority groups.

For individuals to engage in successful cancer prevention, they need to be better informed about both the risk factors and the evidence-based risk-reduction actions. Nurses are educated to inform and support people on health issues, which includes addressing health literacy<sup>3</sup>. Nurses can play an incredibly important role in cancer prevention, both in primary and secondary settings. As the largest group of health care providers (50%), nurses interact with people throughout their lifespan more than any other profession. This offers great opportunities to have an impact on people's health and to address the extensive problem of cancer-related health literacy,<sup>4</sup> which plays such an important role in adopting preventive behaviours.

Traditionally, cancer nurses have mostly been involved in secondary cancer prevention, mainly working with patients and families already affected by cancer

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<sup>1</sup> Preventing cancer. World Health Organization. Accessed December 22, 2020.

<https://www.who.int/activities/preventing-cancer>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_21\\_342](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_342)

<sup>3</sup> <https://cancernurse.eu/education/cancer-nursing-education-framework/>

<sup>4</sup> Measurement of Cancer Health Literacy and Identification of Patients with Limited Cancer Health Literacy. Dumenci et al. J Health Commun. 2014 ; 19(0 2): 205–224. doi:10.1080/10810730.2014.943377

(during treatment, follow-up and the survivorship phases)<sup>5</sup>. Here, cancer nurses have a unique role in educating patients and their family members/carers on cancer prevention and risk reduction strategies. However, cancer nurses are less frequently involved in primary prevention and intervening with the general public. Here, cancer nurses could have an even larger impact<sup>6</sup>. Health literacy has been described as an important factor influencing attendance of cancer screening programmes<sup>7</sup>. Cancer nurses could also have a very important role in training communities in self breast-, testicle- and skin examination and providing lifestyle advice in relation to genetic counselling. Improving nurses' knowledge and skills in cancer prevention will also play a decisive role in achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 (universal health coverage)<sup>8</sup>.

### **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan**

Cancer prevention is also one of the focus points in the recently launched Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. Improving access and understanding risk factors and health determinants are described as vital for improving outcomes. In this Plan, the EU promises actions to give people the information and tools they need to make healthier choices. Cooperation between health and social services and the community is an important part of the Plan. Nurses could impact not only patients and families already affected by cancer, but also the general public, thereby contributing to reducing the cancer burden across Europe.

### **European Code Against Cancer**

One of the more specific goals described in Europe's Beating Cancer Plan is raising awareness among the general public, so that at least 80% of EU citizens become aware of the European Code Against Cancer<sup>9</sup>. This Code is an initiative of the European Commission, developed by the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). The Code aims to inform people about actions they can take for themselves and their families to reduce their risk of cancer. It was also developed to guide health policies in cancer prevention. The Code includes 12 evidence-based recommendations and is available in 23 languages<sup>10</sup>.

### **European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS)**

The European Oncology Nursing Society<sup>11</sup>, is a non-profit, umbrella organisation providing leadership in all areas of cancer nursing, research, practice, education, communication, and advocacy. Our mission is to reduce the cancer burden and to ensure that all people affected by cancer benefit from the care of highly educated, well-informed and competent cancer nurses. Our members are either individual nurses or belong to one of our 32 national cancer nursing societies. In total, we have over 28 000 members. A number of world leading experts in different fields of cancer nursing have active roles

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<sup>5</sup> Karvinen K, Bruner B, Truant T. The teachable moment after cancer diagnosis: perceptions from oncology nurses. *Oncol Nurs Forum*. 2015;42(6):602-609 doi: 10.1188/15.ONF.602-609

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.who.int/health-topics/nursing#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/nursing#tab=tab_1)

<sup>7</sup> Health literacy and cancer screening: a systematic review. Oldach and Katz.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.globalgoals.org/>

<sup>9</sup> [https://cancer-code-europe.iarc.fr/index.php/sv/Patient Educ Couns](https://cancer-code-europe.iarc.fr/index.php/sv/Patient_Educ_Couns)  
. 2014 Feb;94(2):149-57. doi: 10.1016/j.pec.2013.10.001. Epub 2013 Oct 14

<sup>10</sup> [https://cancer-code-europe.iarc.fr/images/doc/1\\_12ways.pdf](https://cancer-code-europe.iarc.fr/images/doc/1_12ways.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://cancernurse.eu/>

within EONS. The organisation also works in close collaboration with many other leading cancer organisations (such as the European School of Oncology, the European Society for Medical Oncology, the European Cancer Organisation and patient advocacy groups) on both the national and international level. EONS therefore have a unique platform from which to develop, implement and evaluate a plan for cancer prevention.

### EONS Cancer Prevention Plan

There is no single universal solution for cancer prevention. Successful prevention requires a combination of individual preventive actions (by avoiding or reducing harmful exposures) as well as group actions (when exposure is eliminated or reduced by measures effective at the population level). Results from cancer prevention initiatives are dependent on a variety of factors and circumstances. Therefore, the EONS Cancer Prevention Plan (EOPP) includes several activities, all with the aim of raising awareness, building capacity, promoting health and addressing health literacy (for overview, see Figure 1 and 2). The goal is that all activities should be evidence-based, reliable and sustainable. These activities include campaigns, education and research aimed at the general public, people affected by cancer and healthcare professionals. Already existing EONS events, such as the European Cancer Nursing Day (ENCN) will be incorporated into the Plan, as well as a broader campaign aimed at the general public, undertaken in collaboration with other relevant collaborating partners. The Plan was launched in the May 2021 and will continue until December 2023.

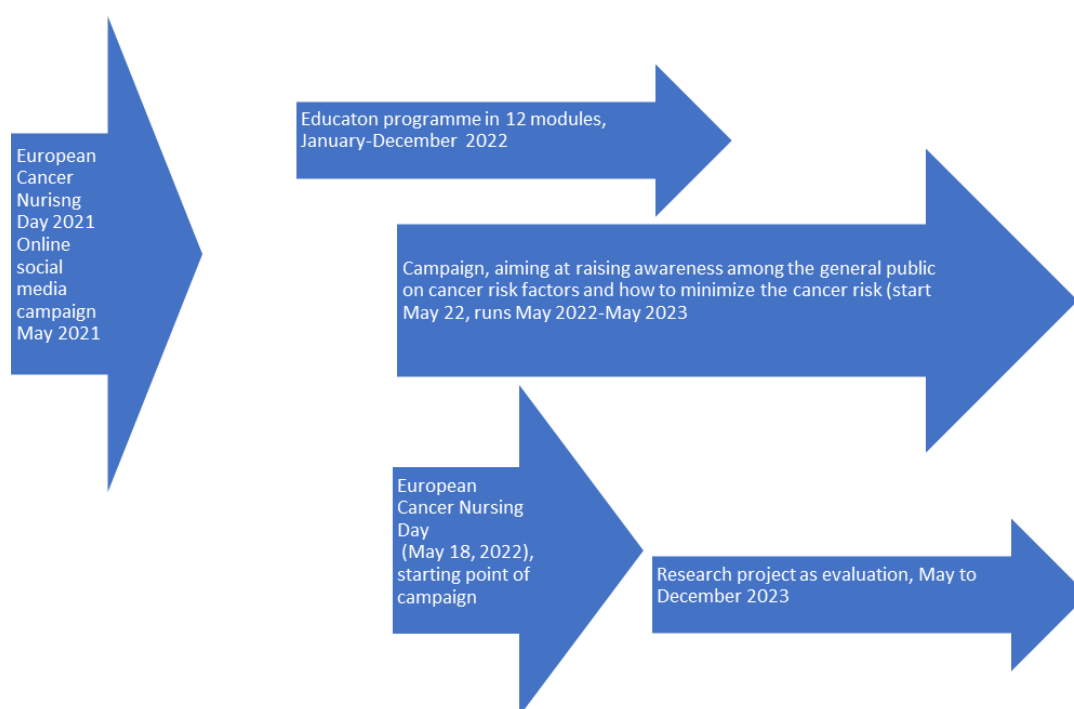


Figure 1. Overview of activities, including timeframes, for EONS Cancer Prevention Plan

The European Code Against Cancer acts as a framework for all planned activities within the Plan. EONS have a history of successful collaboration (eg. the RECaN project<sup>12</sup>) within the organisations' Working Groups (Communication, Advocacy, Research, Education, Young Cancer Nurses Network). All these groups will contribute their expertise to shape, disseminate and evaluate the ECCP. This will guarantee a broad expertise around factors known to impact health promotion and prevention, including multiple cultural and geographical perspectives.

### **European Cancer Nursing Day (ECND)**

On May 18 every year, EONS celebrate European Cancer Nursing Day (ECND). These events are all about recognising and celebrating the positive impact that cancer nursing has on reducing the cancer burden and improving the quality of cancer care across Europe. ECND focuses on a different theme each year, based on EONS' strategic plan<sup>13</sup>. These events have developed a high profile since they began in 2017 and are extremely effective and influential, across social media and on different regional, national and European levels, giving EONS a strong platform to communicate important messages and impact a variety of stakeholders. In previous years, the focus areas have been on education and safety in cancer care.

### **ECND 2021 – Cancer nurses' role in health promotion (primary and secondary prevention)**

The 2021 European Cancer Nursing Day (May 18) was the starting point for EONS' Cancer Prevention Plan. The focus was on cancer nurses' role in health promotion and cancer prevention. The event included well-attended online activities – including statements of support and speeches from European Commissioner for Health Stella Kyriakides, and Carolina Espina, from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) – raising awareness on primary and secondary cancer prevention and the nurses' role in this crucial area. Awards were given to outstanding European cancer nurses for their work in cancer prevention.

### **ECND 2022 on cancer prevention, targeting the general public**

The 2022 European Cancer Nursing Day, led by EONS Communication Working Group, will be the starting point of the cancer prevention campaign (described below). ECND22 will be used to raise awareness of the known cancer risk factors and recommended risk-reduction actions, followed by more focused activities in the following campaign.

### **Campaign on cancer prevention**

The campaign, led by EONS Advocacy Working Group, will include a variety of events (online and physical activities) for 12 months, starting in May 2022 with ECND22. These activities will be based on the 12 recommendations in the European Code Against Cancer. The campaign will include age-relevant activities focusing on one of these recommendations each month. The first activity will focus on smoking, still one of the most important risk-factors for cancer. Here, nurses could intervene in multiple ways and interventions could be adapted to the current situation in different countries and regions in Europe. Relevant stakeholders will be invited to collaborate.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://cancernurse.eu/cancernurse.eu/research/recan/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://cancernurse.eu/about-eons/strategy/>

In addition to lifestyle recommendations concerning tobacco and alcohol use, diet and physical activity, the European Code Against Cancer also includes recommendations related to vaccinations and cancer screening. These are areas where nurses could have an impact on regional, national and international levels. The campaign would include specific attention to cancer prevention for children, adolescents and young adults, and here EONS would seek to collaborate with relevant stakeholders and invite other organisations (for example ECL, ECO, ESO, ESMO, ISNCC, IARC, Coalition of healthcare workers against tobacco and nicotine products, IPAAC<sup>14</sup>, to support and/or co-arrange the event.

### **Educational activities**

The EONS Education Working Group is currently planning a variety of educational events, within the EONS Cancer Prevention Plan. EONS have a long history of offering high quality educational events for cancer nurses across wider Europe. For more than 10 years, well-attended and highly evaluated masterclasses in cancer nursing have been arranged, as well as conferences, research workshops and other educational activities. During the last year, EONS' online educational events have expanded, facilitating improved access to nurses across Europe (with subtitles and reading materials in different languages). The educational events are based on the EONS Cancer Nursing Education Framework, which will be revised in 2021-2022. Currently, an EONS College of Cancer Nursing is also being developed to further establish EONS' strong role in education. EONS is well placed to develop and conduct education programmes that could substantially increase cancer awareness and knowledge among all healthcare professionals and also patients, carers and the general public.

The ECPP includes an online programme for nurses across Europe. The programme includes a range of modules, with in-depth content based on each of the 12 recommendations within the European Code Against Cancer. The education programme would also cover health promotion principles and risk reduction strategies. Each module will include lectures by leading experts, discussions and Q and A. Innovative learning tools such as podcasts and apps may also be included. The education programme will be open to nurses in a variety of healthcare disciplines and settings. The online format would allow access to a large number of students, reaching out widely and offering flexibility for shift-working nurses to attend.

### **Research activities**

The EONS Research Working Group is currently planning research activities, within the EONS Cancer Prevention Plan. A recent evaluation<sup>15</sup>, including survey data from both the general public and professionals (within the field of cancer prevention) in 25 countries, concluded that whilst familiarity with the European Code Against Cancer among the general public is low, professionals frequently use it as a basis for informing population-level actions. However, there are no published data on if and how nurses are using the European Code Against Cancer in their work. One of the planned activities is a systematic review on nurse impact on cancer prevention. This Research group has frequently published cancer nursing research in high-impact journals, including systematic reviews.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ipaac.eu/>

<sup>15</sup> Ritchie et al. Evaluation of the impact of the European Code against Cancer on awareness and attitudes towards cancer prevention at the population and health promoters' levels. *Cancer Epidemiology* 71 (2021) 101898.

### Young cancer nurses

EONS have a very active and ambitious network of young cancer nurses ( $\leq 35$  years old). This group will be involved in all activities within the prevention plan but will also arrange cancer prevention activities specifically dedicated to this group (webinars, blogs, congresses). This group of nurses are important role models for colleagues and essential for guaranteeing that the activities within the ECPP are sustainable.

### Project organisation

A project organisation (Figure 2) has been formed, comprising a steering group, principle investigator and subgroups for the different activities in the Plan. A project investigator and co-project investigator will be appointed to lead the work. EONS will also appoint a project manager for administration and support. The fundraising will be led by EONS' Chief Operating Officer (COO) with support from other EONS team members, the Executive Board and the Working Group Chairs.

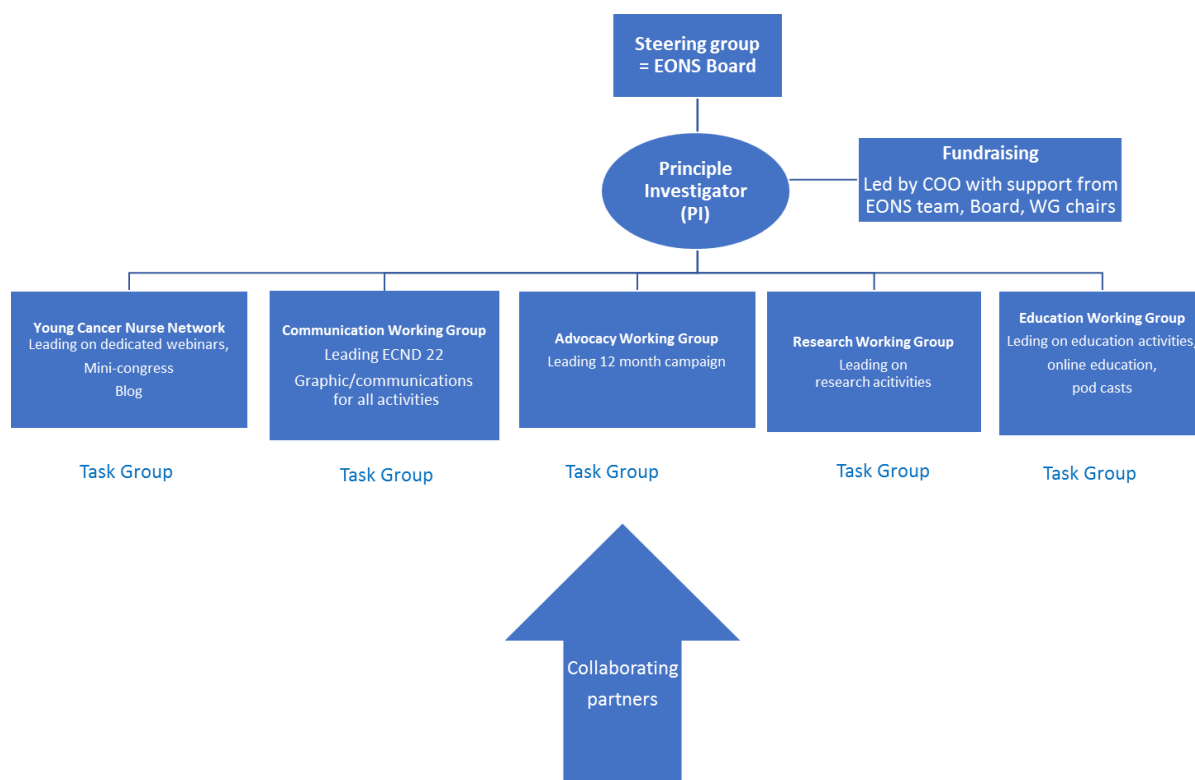


Figure 2. Project organisation for EONS Cancer Prevention Plan.

