

The European Cancer Organisation is making materials available to download in 30 different languages to help advocates across Europe lobby national governments to tackle the Covid-19 threat to cancer services in their own countries.

The European [Time to Act](#) campaign, first launched in April 2021, believes that one million cancer patients across Europe are currently undiagnosed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The first tranche of national campaigns took place in [Poland](#) on 22nd May, followed by [Italy](#) on 17th June, and [Spain](#) on 25th June. Discussions are now underway for initiatives in Romania, France, Cyprus, Portugal, Croatia, Ireland, UK, Slovakia, Czechia, and Slovenia.

“We are looking to urge the public, cancer patients, policy makers and cancer professionals to rally to ensure that Covid-19 doesn’t continue to undermine our fight against cancer. The scale of the problem is frightening,” says Mark Lawler, a Board member of the European Cancer Organisation, from Queen’s University, Belfast.

As part of the [Time to Act](#) campaign, the European Cancer Organisation commissioned data intelligence from the IQVIA Institute for Human Data Science to build a pan-European evidence base of the impact that Covid-19 has had on cancer patients, cancer professionals and cancer services. The research, which was published in the report ‘[Cancer Won’t Wait](#)’ (March 2021), revealed:

- Clinicians across Europe saw 1.5 million fewer cancer patients in the first year of the pandemic.
- An estimated 100 million cancer screening tests were not performed in Europe as a result of the pandemic.
- One million cancer patients could be undiagnosed.
- Treatment delays due to Covid-19 in 2020 affected one in two cancer patients in Europe, and continue to affect one in five.
- The pandemic has taken its toll on healthcare workers, with four in 10 feeling burnout and three in 10 reportedly showing signs of clinical depression.
- Due to fears of contracting Covid-19, patients are less likely to attend follow-up visits for early-stage cancer treatment.

The campaign consists of key messages to different groups, with messages for:

1. **Cancer patients and citizens:** “Don’t delay.” The campaign urges patients to (i) see their doctor if they have warning signs of cancer – bleeding when you go to the toilet, a lump in your breast, difficulty swallowing, unexpected weight loss or other cancer warning signs; (ii) keep screening and treatment appointments; and (iii) be reassured that cancer services are safe.
2. **For healthcare professionals:** “You are not alone.” Healthcare professionals are encouraged to share experiences, information and examples of what has worked and what has not during the Covid-19 pandemic, for the benefit of patients and the cancer community.
3. **For policy makers and health system leaders:** “Cancer must be at the top of the agenda.” This means that they must act now to address the cancer backlog, keep cancer services going and ensure they are free of Covid-19, all coordinated to help save lives.

Looking to the future, the Time to Act campaign believes Covid-19 offers the opportunity to ‘reimagine cancer services’, to build back better and smarter.

How you can help!

Elected officials who would like to add their voice to the ‘[Time To Act](#)’ calls can do so by contacting

[Paul Gasc](#), Special Projects Lead.

Health professionals, patients and members of the public are also encouraged to [contact their MEPs](#) to let them know about the [Time to Act](#) campaign and ask for their support.