

The European Society for Paediatric Oncology (SIOPE) and Childhood Cancer International - Europe (CCI-E), welcome the recent publication of the EU Commissions proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034. Building on the progress enabled by Europe's Beating Cancer Plan through the EU4Health Programme and the EU Cancer Mission as well as other Horizon pillars, sustained EU investment is essential to close persistent inequalities faced by childhood cancer patients in access to care, innovation, and survivorship support across Member States. The Health window of the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) and Horizon Europe hold particular potential to foster further life-saving progress while improving quality of life of survivors. More information on how these needs can be addressed is available [here](#).

European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) and Health

We call for **precise information and clarity on how the health policy window will be prioritised and adequately resourced** in the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF). To maintain the EU's efforts in building a strong European Health Union, an ongoing political and financial commitment to address health needs is essential. Moreover, **ensuring a continued spotlight on childhood cancer, a rare life-threatening disease, is an area of strategic relevance** for the ECF. The collaborative endeavours of the childhood cancer community, which have improved diagnosis and treatment through cross-border academic-driven research¹ and exchange of specialist expertise, are an example of an area where the EU can achieve meaningful results and support competitiveness, particularly in terms of closing the innovation gap. There is a strong **need to accelerate equitable access to standard-of-care treatment, childhood-cancer specific research and innovation capabilities, and services that address the long-term physical, cognitive, and psychosocial needs of survivors**. Ensuring timely and effective **access to cross-border healthcare** is essential, particularly when specialized treatments or clinical trials are unavailable in a patient's home country. Both a focus on fostering innovation and promoting societal well for vulnerable citizens, including children and adolescents with cancer, should be a foundation of a competitive Europe. Moreover, supporting civil society organisations through Operating Grants will also ensure that patients' and survivors' voices and lived experiences continue to shape EU health policy, and help bridge the gaps between and beyond EU borders.

Prof. Uta Dirksen, President SIOPE: "Persistent inequalities in childhood cancer care and survival across the EU demand urgent attention. By accelerating access to care, boosting research and innovation, and supporting the exchange of specialist expertise, we can begin to close the gaps and better serve the needs of children with cancer. The EU has a vital responsibility to build on the success of cross-border collaboration and ensure the health needs of vulnerable populations, including children with cancer, are fully integrated into its competitiveness agenda."

Anita Kienesberger, Chair of CCI Europe Committee: "Childhood cancer knows no borders — and neither should our response. Every child has the right to access comprehensive care - from diagnosis to treatment, psychosocial and palliative care, and survivorship care. The challenges we face in childhood cancer are challenges that no single country can face alone. This fact was acknowledged by the EU in the last MFF, when Childhood Cancer was put in the spotlight. This facilitated great progress, but we have not reached our goal: that in Europe no child affected by cancer is left behind. Therefore, we need the continued support of the EU: to unite efforts, close gaps between and beyond borders, and support patient organisations and professional societies to implement real change. The Next Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034

¹ Emmanuel Desandes and Daniel P. Stark, 'Epidemiology of Adolescents and Young Adults with Cancer in Europe', *Progress in Tumor Research* 43 (2016): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1159/000447037>.

must reflect these priorities — because no child should be left behind, no matter where they live."

Horizon Europe Programme

We welcome the increased funding proposed for the Horizon Europe programme and **we urge policymakers to take this opportunity to strengthen the EU's position as a leader in childhood cancer research globally and prioritise their efforts in an area where EU action is more effective than Member States acting alone.** Improving the growing gap between the USA and Europe in the funding of non-commercial cancer research is an important consideration for the EU's research and innovation strategy ². Childhood cancer academic clinical trials network, such as SIOPE's European Clinical Trial Groups, are an important forum to support this effort. In addition, within the future [Comprehensive Cancer Infrastructures](#) under the EU Mission on Cancer, the important specificities of childhood cancer should remain distinct. To ensure childhood cancer patients benefit from access to ongoing EU initiatives, the concept of specific **Comprehensive Childhood Cancer Infrastructures should be recognised and expanded upon within the European Reference Network for PaedCan (ERN PaedCan).** This would further enhance the capacity of ERN PaedCan to integrate research and innovation capabilities.

Prof. Gilles Vassal (Gustave Roussy & SIOPE Policy Lead): "The support by the EU to date in addressing childhood cancer shows that EU collaboration can yield impactful results. The MFF is an opportunity for the EU to continue pioneering initiatives that aim to ensure equal access to care, treatment and survival for all children with cancer regardless of where they live.

Supporting academic childhood cancer research networks to close the innovation gap and expanding Comprehensive Childhood Cancer Infrastructures within the European Reference Network for Paediatric Oncology can be the next step in this endeavour."

Dr. Michaela Willi (CCI Europe Committee Member & Leader of the R&I Pillar): "We need better access to investigational drugs for children with cancer. Such access can offer new treatment options when standard therapies have failed, provide the possibility of earlier use of cutting-edge therapies, and ultimately improve survival and quality of life. It also accelerates the development of much-needed therapies in areas where few options exist. The next MFF should therefore include dedicated funding to boost the development of treatments for rare diseases, including childhood cancers, where commercial incentives are limited but patient need is urgent."

SIOPE & CCI Europe remain committed to working with the EU institutions to highlight these key considerations. To ensure all children and young people with cancer in Europe have equal access to high-quality diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship care, childhood cancer must remain a priority in EU funding and policy frameworks. **The MFF 2028–2034 presents a crucial opportunity to reinforce the EU's leadership in paediatric oncology, drive innovation, and reduce inequalities—safeguarding the health and potential of future generations.**

To learn more about why keeping childhood cancer a priority in the next MFF is so crucial, join the Policy event at the European Parliament – info available [here](#).

² Eva M. Loucaides et al., 'Global Public and Philanthropic Investment in Childhood Cancer Research: Systematic Analysis of Research Funding, 2008–16', *The Lancet Oncology* 20, no. 12 (2019): e672–84, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045\(19\)30662-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(19)30662-X).