

Breast Cancer Inequalities in the



EUROPEAN UNION

In the past years, advancements were made in **breast cancer policy** through the launch of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and the European Parliament's Special Committee on Beating Cancer. Looking ahead, a European Women's health strategy, including a focus on breast cancer, **should be a priority of the new EU mandate**

TBCT welcomes the progress achieved especially on the extension of screening recommendations and **calls for continued policy action to address patient needs in the 2024-2029 legislature**

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Transforming Breast Cancer Together

Breast cancer mortality

In the EU,

374,800 WOMEN WERE DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER, RESULTING IN

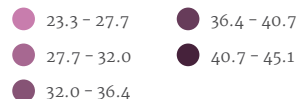
95,800 DEATHS IN 2022

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women in the European Union ¹

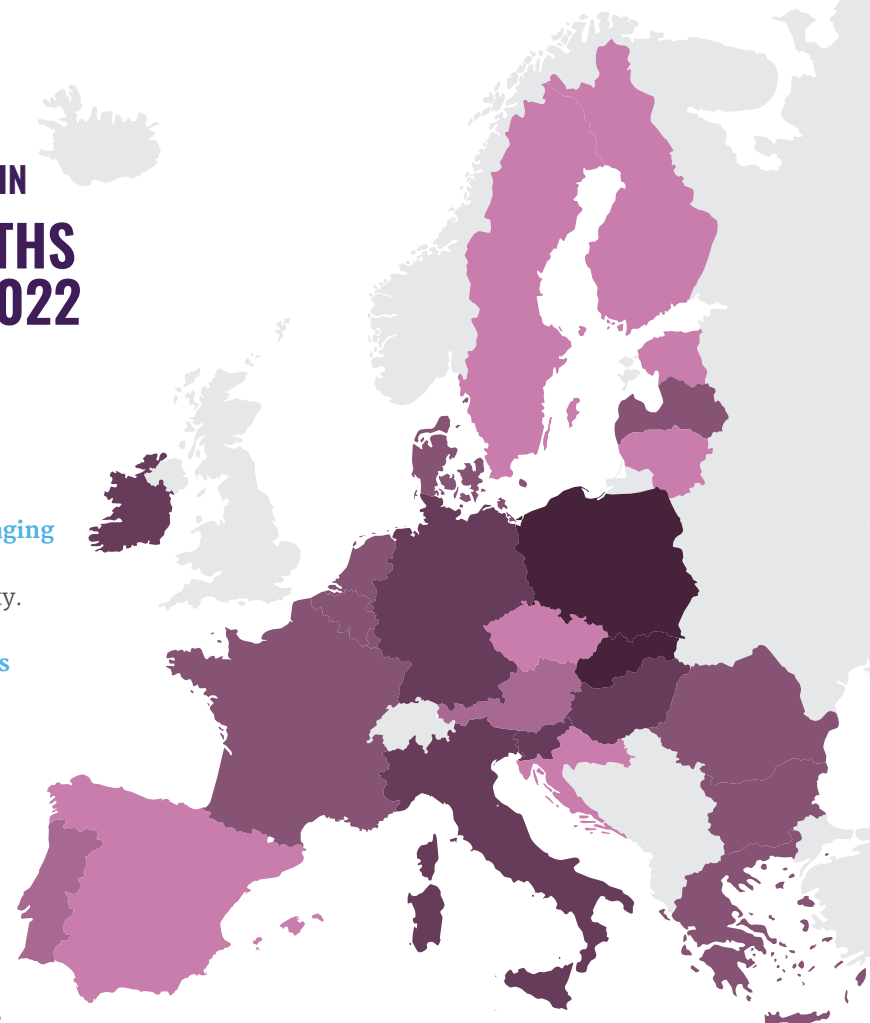
Treating breast cancer at an **early stage gives patients the best chance of managing the disease**, significantly reducing the burden on patients, families, and society. TBCT urges policymakers to **prioritise early detection and ensure equal access to timely and effective screening and treatment** across all Member States

Mortality

per 100,000 women



EU27, Women, Breast Cancer, All Ages, Age-Standardised Rate (European Standard Population) per 100,000 (2022) ¹



Did you know?

Did you know that the European Medicines Agency (EMA) continues to issue positive recommendations for new treatments for locally advanced and metastatic breast cancer? Despite ongoing innovation and the development of groundbreaking therapies, patients often face delays in accessing these life-saving treatments. These delays underscore the urgent need for the EU to create a more supportive environment that ensures timely access to new therapies

TBCT strongly advocates for **enhanced support to research and development and streamlined regulatory pathways** to ensure that innovative treatments are available to European patients without delay, including those living with metastatic and advanced breast cancer

The care journey



OF OVER 1.2 MILLION NEW CANCERS
DIAGNOSED IN WOMEN (2022),

29,4%

352,800 - 29,4% 194,148 (2022)

ARE BREAST CANCER DETECTED BOTH IN
THE EARLY AND ADVANCED STAGES ²

The journey to better outcomes for patients begins by ensuring that healthcare providers, policymakers, and the broader medical community have a **clear understanding of the diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment options for breast cancer at every stage**



In 2014, the European Commission launched the European Commission Initiative on Breast Cancer (ECIBC). Two working groups composed of physicians, epidemiologists, researchers, and patient representatives worked together to update the European breast cancer screening and diagnosis guidelines and the European quality assurance scheme, resulting in their 2022 review. The ECIBC initiative is crucial because it aims to standardise and improve breast cancer care across Europe, ensuring early detection, accurate diagnosis, and effective treatment. However, more can still be done to reduce the impact of breast cancer on women's lives across the EU ³

While staffing Comprehensive Cancer Centres (CCCs) across the EU is crucial, TBCT emphasises that these centres must be equipped with **sufficient, well-trained, and multi-disciplinary teams**. It is particularly important that CCCs adhere to **established quality standards and guidelines** to effectively address the unique needs of breast cancer patients, including those with advanced and metastatic breast cancer

Inequalities in breast cancer screening

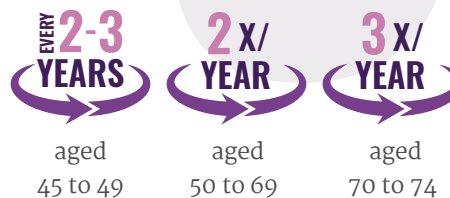


THE REVISED EUROPEAN
GUIDELINES ON BREAST CANCER
SCREENING SUGGEST **SCREENING**
FOR ALL WOMEN AGED

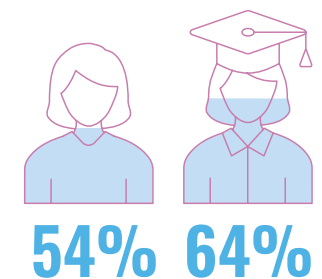
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Implementing Europe's Beating Cancer Plan initiatives across all Member States is essential, including the European Union Cancer Screening Scheme's goal of providing **screening across all Member States to 90% of eligible EU citizens** by 2025. Currently, most EU Member States are far from achieving this target ^{4,5}

RECOMMENDED SCREENING



In the European Union, 64% of **higher-educated women** are undergoing screenings compared to 54% of women who did not attend university ⁶



To address the inequalities in breast cancer screening, implementation of prevention strategies, and testing across the EU, TBCT strongly advocates for **policies that guarantee every patient access to high-quality care, regardless of location or socio-economic background**. It is crucial to implement measures that ensure equitable healthcare access, enabling all women benefit from **early detection and effective treatment**

Use of biomarker technologies in breast cancer



TWO TYPES OF GENE BIOMARKER TESTING ARE USED IN BREAST CANCER: GENETIC & GENOMIC

GENETIC

Genetic testing allows the identification of specific gene alterations and, therefore, informs patients of their high risk of developing breast cancer or their treatment options

TBCT calls for the launch of a **European Commission initiative** (e.g. a Communication) **on a comprehensive genetic & genomic testing strategy**

GENOMIC

Genomic biomarker testing is performed to determine the type of cancer and guide possible personalised treatments

To ensure that each breast cancer patient receives the right treatment at the right time, it is essential to **improve awareness, healthcare workforce understanding, infrastructure, funding and reimbursement of biomarker testing**. This is particularly critical for those living with metastatic disease



In the European Union, biomarker testing methods such as IHC and FISH and other genomic testing such as PCR, liquid biopsies, and NGS small, **are unequally accessible** among EU Member States, limiting patient access to the correct treatment ⁷

Access to treatment - rate of availability of oncology treatment

UP TO **526 DAYS**



Up to 526 days is the time patients in the EU **must wait to access an oncology treatment** after the central EU authorisation is granted ⁸

As of January 2023, **the European Medicines Agency has approved 46 oncology medicines**. However, these medicines do not automatically become available across all EU Member States. **On average, only 23 of these approved products are accessible in every Member State**

TBCT supports cutting red tape to **streamline the approval and adoption of new therapies to ensure equal patient access**

AVAILABILITY OF BIOMARKER TECHNIQUES ACROSS COUNTRIES ⁷

		Always	Usually	Occasionally	Research	Never
		IHC*	FISH** Lung_breast_ Gastric	PCR***	NGS**** Small	Liquid Biopsies
Western European Countries	Austria					
	Belgium					
	Cyprus					
	Denmark					
	Finland					
	France					
	Germany					
	Greece					
	Ireland					
	Italy					
	Luxembourg					
	Malta					
	Netherlands					
	Norway					
Portugal						
Spain						
Sweden						
Eastern European Countries	Bulgaria					
	Croatia					
	Czech Republic					
	Estonia					
	Hungary					
	Latvia					
	Lithuania					
	Poland					
	Romania					
	Slovakia					
Slovenia						

* IHC: Immunohistochemistry

*** PCR: polymerase chain reaction

** FISH: Fluorescence in situ hybridization

**** NGS: next-generation sequencing

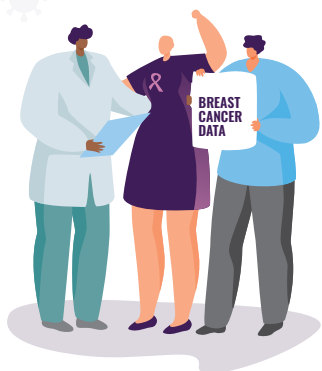
Metastatic Breast Cancer (MBC)



Metastatic Breast Cancer refers to an advanced stage of breast cancer where the disease spreads to another part of the body



COMPREHENSIVE DATA ON MBC IN THE EU IS SCARCE



Why does it matter? Registries are crucial for metastatic breast cancer patients as they provide vital data on treatments, outcomes, and survival rates, enabling a better understanding of the disease and guiding treatment decisions to improve patient care and outcomes⁹

TBCT calls on every Member State to have **harmonised breast cancer data collection, which includes metastatic and advanced breast cancer data as well as relapse**, across the European Union to facilitate research and improve knowledge and care

Health technology assessment studies reveal that the cost of treating MBC is at least **ten times higher** than that of early-stage breast cancer. Despite being incurable, MBC is treatable, with a median survival rate of 2-3 years



GIVEN THIS SIGNIFICANT BURDEN, INCREASING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF MBC AMONG POLICYMAKERS, HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS AND THE PUBLIC IS KEY

TBCT calls on the EU to **prioritise MBC in health policy by ensuring adequate funding for research, access to innovative treatments, and comprehensive support services** for those affected by the disease

1 / 11



WOMEN IN THE EU-27 WILL DEVELOP BREAST CANCER BEFORE THE AGE OF 74¹⁰

Transforming Breast Cancer Together (TBCT) is a unique multi-stakeholder group representing patient and healthcare professional organisations, experts, and industry whose mission is to place the needs of those living with breast cancer at the heart of European policymaking. Together we can improve outcomes for breast cancer patients, survivors, and their families

Breast cancer has an impact on everyone

www.tbct.eu

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References:

¹European Commission, Breast Cancer in the EU (2023) - factsheet / ²European Cancer Information System / ³European Commission Initiative on Breast Cancer / ⁴European Guidelines on Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis / ⁵Europa Donna / ⁶OECD Report – Beating Cancer Inequalities in the EU – p.35 / ⁷ESMO study on the availability and accessibility of biomolecular technologies in oncology in Europe – p.938 / ⁸EFPIA WAIT Patient Indicator – p.20 / ⁹ABC Global Alliance / ¹⁰Data from Europa Donna