

Breast Cancer Inequalities in the European Union



POLAND

In November 2023, the Polish government expanded their mammography and screening program to include women between 45 to 74 years old. This is encouraging news as early detection leads to better outcomes for patients ¹

TBCT supports implementing a national breast cancer screening program that aligns with the European Union's recommendations

TBCT
Transforming Breast
Cancer Together

Breast cancer mortality

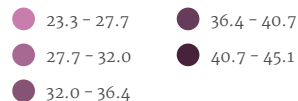
POLAND HAS THE FOURTH HIGHEST NUMBER OF BREAST CANCER DEATHS IN THE EU, AMOUNTING TO 16.2% OF CANCER MORTALITY ²

In Poland, it is estimated that

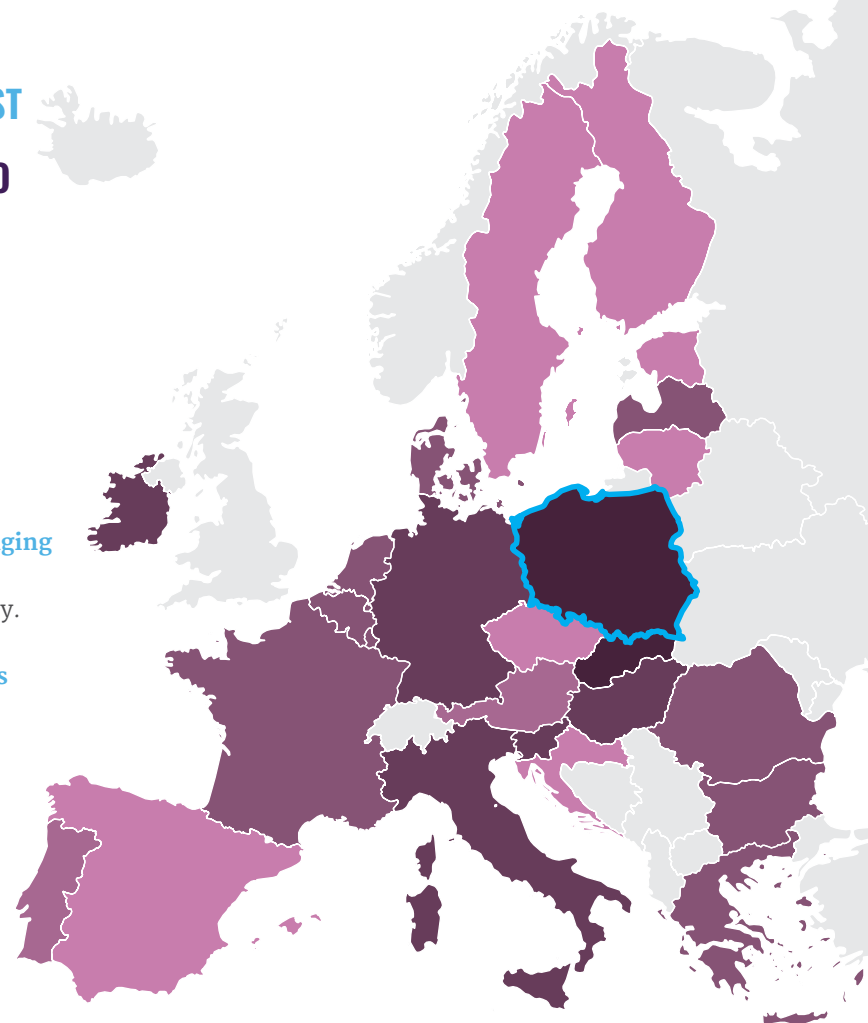
8,723 WOMEN DIED FROM BREAST CANCER IN 2022 ²

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) ³



Did you know?

Despite recent policy improvements, Poland continues to face a shortage of healthcare professionals and cancer care facilities. OECD data shows that Poland remains among the EU countries with the lowest mammogram availability, with only 10,260 mammograms per 1 million inhabitants ⁴

TBCT advocates to **strengthen the Comprehensive Cancer Centres initiative** to ensure holistic patient care across the cancer journey. TBCT urges the **development and deployment of innovative tools and instruments that empower Member States to establish quality-assured cancer centers**. These centres, aligned with the European standard, should **integrate translational research and clinical care** as part of a continuous quality improvement process

The care journey



OF OVER 95,977 NEW CANCERS
DIAGNOSED IN WOMEN (2022),

25%

23,994 - 25%

95,977 (2022)

ARE BREAST CANCER DETECTED BOTH IN
THE EARLY AND ADVANCED STAGES ⁵

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**



Poland has established Breast Cancer Units (BCUs) across the country, providing specialised care according to European guidelines. For instance, the Oncology Center in Krakow offers comprehensive breast cancer care, including surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and hormonal therapy. These BCUs follow a multidisciplinary approach involving oncologists, surgeons, pathologists, and nurses

While staffing Comprehensive Cancer Centres 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

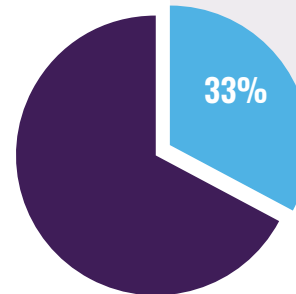
Inequalities in breast cancer screening



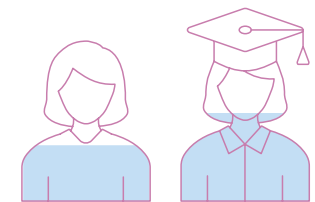
ONLY 33%

OF ELIGIBLE WOMEN IN
POLAND PARTICIPATED
IN A CANCER
SCREENING IN 2021 ⁶

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



Poland showed a **gap in screening coverage**, with 55% of higher-educated women undergoing screenings compared to only 35% of women who did not attend university ⁷



35% 55%

To address the significant 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 to 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



In Poland, although biomarker testing methods such as IHC and FISH **are usually available in routine clinical practice**, other genomic testing such as PCR, liquid biopsies and NGS small, **have a low availability**, limiting patient access to the correct treatment ⁸

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

Access to treatment - rate of availability of oncology treatment

UP TO **909** DAYS



... is the time patients in Poland **must wait** after the central EU authorisation to access an oncology treatment.⁹ **The European Union's average is 526 days**

As of January 2023, **of the 46 drugs approved by the European Medicines Agency, only 20 are fully publicly available** (listed in the reimbursement list)¹⁰

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 ⁸

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

* IHC: Immunohistochemistry

*** PCR: polymerase chain reaction

** FISH: Fluorescence in situ hybridization

**** NGS: next-generation sequencing

Metastatic Breast Cancer



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



NO STRUCTURED METASTATIC BREAST CANCER DATA IS AVAILABLE FOR POLAND



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 outcomes

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

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WOMEN IN THE EU-27 WILL DEVELOP BREAST CANCER BEFORE THE AGE OF 74 ¹¹

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:

¹ Euractiv (2023) / ² European Cancer Information System (2022) / ³ European Commission, Breast Cancer in the EU (2023) – factsheet / ⁴ Implementation of a population-based breast cancer prevention program in Poland before, during and after COVID-19 pandemic. Poland in comparison with other countries, NOWOTWORY Journal of Oncology (2023) – p. 125 / ⁵ European Cancer Information System / ⁶ Preventive cancer screenings – programme data (Eurostat) / ⁷ OECD – Beating Cancer Inequalities in the EU (2024) – p.36 / ⁸ ESMO study on the availability and accessibility of biomolecular technologies in oncology in Europe – p.938 / ⁹ EFPIA WAIT Patient Indicator – p.20 & 22 / ¹⁰ National registers authorised medicines / ¹¹ Data from Europa Donna