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A new EU approach on cancer screening – a big step forward

The European Respiratory Society and the European Lung Foundation applaud the European Commission for the proposal today for a Council Recommendation: “A new approach on Cancer Screening”. This is a big step forward towards early detection of cancers, especially in the fight against lung cancer. Screening saves lives. Introducing it for cancers such as lung cancer is key to improving prognosis, burden and costs of cancer – as it has become evident now in low dose CT screening for lung cancer.

However, we lament the fact that the draft recommendation provides many caveats and loopholes in a so called “step wise” approach that countries could use to delay or defer the introduction of screening. It is hoped that the Council will not seek to further water down this text. We need to keep in focus the fact that lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the world. In Europe 726,000 suffer with the disease and in 2019 alone [10.3 million healthy years of life were lost](#).

Commenting on the Commission proposal, President of the ERS Prof. Carlos Robalo said:

“If we are to take a ‘step wise approach’ to screening, they need to be big steps. We hope that [evidence-based medicine](#) and investment in health systems are the main drivers to implementation of lung cancer screening and bureaucratic hurdles embedded in this recommendation do not impede the introduction of this live saving measure”.

Chair of the European Lung Foundation, Kjeld Hansen added:

“Lung cancer screening could be a game changer for people all around Europe. Governments should follow the most ambitious approach possible to this draft Council recommendation - following the positive examples of Croatia and Poland or Australia and the US where lung cancer screening has already been rolled out nationally.”