Maltese Presidency on fairer pricing for cancer drugs

Over the last two days Malta hosted the Closing Conference on the European Guide on Quality Improvement in Comprehensive Cancer Control (CANCON), organised under the auspices of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

During his address at the conference, Minister for Health Chris Fearne spoke on the issue of cancer medicine pricing. New medicines were coming on the market at very high prices, putting healthcare systems across Europe under financial pressure. “In May a round table conference will be held in Malta that will discuss this issue together with the industry.” Minister Fearne also referred to the launch in March of a network of specialized centres across Europe for better access of expertise for patients with rare diseases.

The overarching aim of the CANCON project is the development and compilation of a European Guide that includes several recommendations that are aimed at improving the quality of comprehensive cancer control and contribute towards reducing the cancer burden in the European Union. The guide publication was launched at this conference and will provide a key strategic tool for government and policy-makers. The guide focuses on: Integrated Cancer Control, including the development and implementation of comprehensive cancer control networks; quality improvement in cancer after-care at the community level; survivorship, rehabilitation and governance organisation; and evaluation of cancer screening.

The Member States’ Platform of the Joint Action also developed a set of five policy papers that were published, presented and discussed during this conference. Other sessions were devoted to two forward-looking themes: ‘Implementation and Opportunities for Cancer Policy’ and ‘Challenges in Cancer Policy at EU level’. These sessions were aimed at setting the foundations for prospective plans aimed at shaping the future of cancer control in Europe.

Over one hundred and thirty experts from all over Europe attended and participated in the conference. They were joined by over sixty Maltese healthcare professionals and experts engaged in the delivery, planning and evaluation of cancer control services in Malta.