



RTD.03/AF  
**PER EMAIL ONLY**

[Christian.Leonard@sciensano.be](mailto:Christian.Leonard@sciensano.be)

Dear Mr Leonard,

On behalf of the European Commission's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors and on behalf of the European Commission, we would like to convey to you our gratitude and appreciation for the contribution made by members of the Working Group of Science Advice to Policy by European Academies (SAPEA) to the Scientific Opinion, "*Cancer screening in Europe*"<sup>1</sup>, which was published on 2 March 2022. Professor Marc Arbyn is one of the contributors of the SAPEA consortium's Evidence Review Report<sup>2</sup> informing the Opinion. This report was published on 2 March 2022 and underpins many of the recommendations in the Opinion of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, and in doing so strengthens the case for these to be taken into account by the College of European Commissioners in future policy making in this area.

Cancer is a leading cause of death in Europe, and its prevalence is set to increase with an ageing population. Cancer is an individual diagnosis that has a significant impact on patients, but it also severely affects the lives of their families and friends. The overall economic impact of cancer in Europe is estimated to exceed EUR 100 billion annually. Europe needs a whole-of-government approach that is patient-centric and maximises the potential of scientific discoveries and new technologies, strengthens cooperation and opportunities for EU added value, eradicates inequalities and delivers improved health outcomes for patients.

Reducing cancer and its consequences is a key priority for the European Commission, in particular for the European Health Union, as announced in the State of the Union 2020 address by President Ursula von der Leyen. One of the pillars of the European Health Union is Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, presented in February 2021. With new technologies, research and innovation as its starting point, the plan sets out a new EU approach to cancer prevention, treatment and care.

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<sup>1</sup> [Cancer screening in the European Union - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Cancer screening – SAPEA](#)

This Scientific Opinion will inform the upcoming Commission proposal to update the 2003 Council Recommendation on cancer screening to ensure that the latest available scientific evidence is reflected. The scientific advice also pinpoints the areas in which further research is required, and as such, may inform EU's Cancer Mission.

The participation of scientists of the SAPEA Working Group has been crucial for the independence, quality and relevance of the scientific advice provided. We are very grateful that they have participated voluntarily. We are aware that such work is not easily captured by traditional scientific/ academic metrics and impact criteria and that is also why we are keen to underline the vital importance of his participation. Recognition of this kind of work is very important, not only to remind the public and policy makers of the importance of scientific evidence for effective policy making, but also within the academic world to ensure that the best scientists continue to contribute to this process.

I hope you share these sentiments and that, as a result, you will continue to look favourably on the participation of your academic staff in such public service work.

Yours sincerely,



**Nicole Grobert**

Chair of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors  
Professor of Nanomaterials, University of Oxford



**Annabelle Ascher**

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