

Closing Remarks - Dr Françoise Meunier

High-Level Conference on Ending Financial Discrimination Against Cancer Survivors | 15 February 2024

Dear Cancer patients & survivors, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues and Friends,
At the end of this High-Level Conference on Ending Financial Discrimination Against Cancer Survivors, I wish to reflect on the discussions and insights we shared today. The journey through this conference has been both enlightening and emotionally charged, and I extend my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you – speakers and participants – for your contributions and for being here today.

As we have discussed today, the issue of financial discrimination remains an ordeal as it negatively impacts the reintegration of cancer survivors into society. There is, however, a solution to this, which we have outlined today: it is the creation of a European legal framework that enables all European cancer survivors to access financial services without prejudice once they are back to health.

When preparing this legal framework, we must consider the timelines. A cancer diagnosis puts things into perspective for patients and their loved ones. Suddenly, time takes a new dimension. This is why we must ensure that cancer survivors can return to “normal life” as soon as possible once considered to have won over the disease. From a medical standpoint, this happens 5 years after the end of treatment, and in absence of any sign of recurrence.

Time is of the essence for cancer survivors. Imagine a scenario where someone is diagnosed with cancer at the age of 40, but if the right to be forgotten only kicks in after 15 years, it means that the survivor will be at the age of 55. It is not at that age that you need a loans or a mortgage. A 15-year wait is too long and may lead to individuals losing access to loans or mortgages, highlighting a critical disparity that demands our immediate attention. We have examples of countries where the legislation follows shorter delays, and it works. As I like to say, let’s not reinvent the wheel. Let’s learn from the examples that we have and implement them for the benefit of all EU cancer survivors.

Following the discussions of today, we must ensure that the principles discussed here are not merely words on paper but actionable steps toward a future where every cancer survivor is

treated with dignity, equity, and the unequivocal right to be forgotten. I won't rest until cancer survivors are protected from unjustified financial discrimination.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Fonds Cancer for their continuous support to this initiative, the Royal Academies of Medicine for graciously hosting us in this grand palace, and the Belgian Presidency for their auspices over this significant event. Additionally, a special acknowledgement to my dedicated team at RPP Group, whose tireless efforts have been instrumental in the seamless organization of this conference.

Thank you for your dedication to this vital cause, and let us carry the momentum from this conference into the world, where real change begins.

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