



Newsletter – Issue No. 1
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Optimising Neuropsychological, Psychosocial and Nutritional Care in Paediatric Oncology Across Europe.



ON-COME at a Glance:

- ON-COME addresses persistent inequalities in access to psychosocial, neuropsychological and nutritional care for children and young people with cancer across Europe.
- Its mission is to create a unified, sustainable model of holistic care that can be adopted across Europe.
- Early implementation activities have begun, including the project kick-off meeting, the launch of service mapping activities (WP2) and the activation of stakeholder engagement and communication work (WP6).
- ON-COME combines clinical expertise, digital innovation and stakeholder co-design to support sustainable change in paediatric oncology practice.
- The project contributes concrete implementation evidence to EU priorities on child health, mental health, cancer care and health-system resilience.



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A New European Effort to Strengthen Holistic Child Cancer Care

ON-COME is a European project funded under the EU4Health Programme that seeks to address one of the most persistent gaps in paediatric oncology: the uneven provision of holistic **supportive care** for children, adolescents and young adults with cancer.

Across Europe, advances in medical treatment have significantly improved survival rates. However, the psychosocial, neuropsychological and nutritional consequences of cancer and its treatment remain insufficiently addressed within many healthcare systems. These challenges affect children during treatment and often continue into survivorship, influencing cognitive development, emotional well-being, family functioning and educational trajectories.

ON-COME responds to this reality by working towards the development and implementation of a **unified biopsychosocial model of care**, integrating psychosocial, neuropsychological and nutritional support into routine paediatric oncology pathways. The project brings together clinical centres, academic institutions, patient organisations and digital experts to support system-level change that is both evidence-based and implementable.

For comprehensive information on the project's mission, consortium and policy context, readers are invited to consult [the ON-COME website](#).



Why ON-COME Matters

Each year, more than 35,000 children in Europe are diagnosed with cancer at a stage of life marked by rapid cognitive, emotional and social development. While clinical protocols increasingly ensure survival, many children experience lasting effects related to attention, memory, emotional regulation, fatigue and nutritional status.

Families often describe the period after diagnosis, and particularly after treatment, as one marked by uncertainty. Questions about behavioural changes, learning difficulties, emotional distress and physical recovery frequently arise at a time when structured support may be limited or fragmented.

ON-COME was created in response to these lived realities. The project recognises that **holistic care** is essential to ensuring that children not only survive cancer, but regain stability, confidence and the ability to participate fully in education and social life.

A Europe Ready to Improve Childhood Cancer Care

Holistic supportive care is increasingly recognised as a defining component of high-quality paediatric oncology. Yet across Europe, the organisation and delivery of psychosocial, neuropsychological and nutritional services remain inconsistent.

In many settings, these services are delivered separately, depend on local resources or are unavailable altogether. Workforce shortages, lack of standardised pathways and limited use of digital tools further exacerbate disparities between centres and countries.

ON-COME addresses this fragmentation by focusing on **system-level integration**. Through a unified biopsychosocial framework, the project supports healthcare systems in strengthening coordination between services, improving continuity of care and embedding supportive care within existing clinical workflows.

Rather than acting as a policy statement, ON-COME is designed as an implementation project, translating recognised needs into practical, testable solutions.

What Makes ON-COME Unique?

ON-COME is distinguished by several defining characteristics:

- A targeted focus on **non-medical supportive care** within paediatric oncology



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- Integration of psychosocial, neuropsychological and nutritional services into a **single unified model**
- Application of a biopsychosocial framework across the full care pathway, from diagnosis to survivorship
- Strong emphasis on **capacity-building and twinning** between centres to reduce inequalities
- Co-design of tools, pathways and services with children, families and survivors
- Commitment to scalability, sustainability and real-world implementation

These elements position ON-COME as a practical mechanism for strengthening holistic care across Europe.

ON-COME Kick-Off Meeting – Rome, October 2025

The ON-COME kick-off meeting, held at Gemelli Hospital in Rome over two days in October 2025, marked the official launch of Europe's flagship initiative to improve supportive care for children with cancer. The meeting brought together partners from across Europe, providing a platform to present and discuss each work package, clarify tasks and responsibilities, and align strategies for the project's implementation.

Discussions emphasized that psychological distress, cognitive impacts, nutritional challenges, and family burdens are not marginal concerns: they shape every aspect of a child's cancer journey. Partners agreed on the urgent need for a harmonized, flexible model of holistic care that can be adapted to different national and regional contexts. Digital innovation emerged as a central enabler, allowing centres to better screen, follow, and support children, while workforce training and twinning between experienced and less-resourced centres were highlighted as key strategies to ensure the model's sustainability beyond the project's lifetime.

A particularly meaningful part of the kick-off was a guided visit to the pediatric oncology area of Gemelli Hospital, giving participants firsthand insight into the daily reality of children living with cancer, the technologies and equipment used, and the environment in which care is delivered. These moments sparked insightful conversations, strengthened collaboration, and reinforced the project's commitment to truly patient-centered care.

In addition to these discussions, interviews were recorded during the meeting to capture partner perspectives, and a professional photo gallery documents the event in detail. At the end of this newsletter, readers will find a selection of these images, highlighting both the meeting and the human side of ON-COME's mission.

Insights From Children and Families

Children tell us what the data alone cannot.

Engagement with children and families confirms that supportive care needs often remain unmet despite effective medical treatment. Families reported challenges related to emotional distress, behavioural changes, school reintegration and nutritional management.

Cognitive assessments may be delayed or unavailable, emotional support inconsistently offered and nutritional guidance left largely to families. These experiences are not treated as anecdotal, but as essential inputs shaping ON-COME's unified model.

By embedding lived experience into project design, ON-COME ensures that supportive care pathways respond to real-world needs.

Why This Matters Clinically

Psychological distress, cognitive impairment and nutritional instability can directly affect treatment adherence, recovery and long-term outcomes. These factors influence not only clinical trajectories but also educational attainment and social participation.

By integrating structured supportive care into routine practice, ON-COME supports more coordinated care delivery and improved outcomes for children and families, while also supporting professionals through clearer pathways and tools.

A Thematic Overview of ON-COME's Work

Designing a Unified Model of Care

ON-COME has initiated a comprehensive mapping of psychosocial, neuropsychological and nutritional services across participating countries (WP2). This includes workforce capacity, service organisation, digital readiness and patient experience.



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The findings will inform the development of a unified biopsychosocial care model that can be adapted across diverse healthcare systems while maintaining common standards.

Developing Digital Tools for Scalable Support

Digital innovation is a key enabler of ON-COME's approach. The project will develop tools to support screening, follow-up and communication between professionals, families and schools. These tools aim to strengthen continuity of care and support personalised interventions.

Training and Strengthening the Workforce

ON-COME will implement structured training activities to support multidisciplinary teams in delivering holistic care. Twinning between centres will facilitate knowledge exchange and reduce disparities in service provision.

Piloting Implementation Across Europe

The unified model will be piloted in real clinical settings to assess feasibility, adaptability and sustainability. Lessons learned will inform broader implementation beyond the project's duration.

Education and School Reintegration

ON-COME recognises education as a critical dimension of recovery. The project supports collaboration between healthcare teams, families and schools to ensure learning continuity and support social reintegration.

Measuring Progress and Impact

ON-COME will monitor outcomes related to child and family well-being, cognitive functioning, nutritional status, educational reintegration, workforce training and digital tool adoption. These indicators will inform future clinical guidance and policy discussions.

Voices From the Consortium and Families

"ON-COME allows Europe to place psychological, cognitive and nutritional support at the core of paediatric cancer care. Survival is not the only outcome, quality of life matters."

- Project Coordinator

"After treatment, we were suddenly alone with questions nobody prepared us for. ON-COME gives families hope that supportive care will finally be seen as essential."

- Parent of a childhood cancer survivor

From Implementation to Policy: Ensuring EU Relevance

ON-COME contributes to EU health priorities by translating policy objectives into practical care pathways. Through structured stakeholder engagement (WP6), the project connects clinical evidence, family perspectives and workforce needs with policy discussions at European and national levels.

Why ON-COME Matters for Brussels

The project provides policymakers with tangible outputs: a unified care model, digital tools and real-world implementation evidence. These outputs support EU discussions on mental health, child health, cancer survivorship and health-system resilience.

Work Underway and Next Steps for Early 2026

Since the project's kick-off meeting in Rome in October 2025, ON-COME has moved from planning to action. Below is an overview of what has already been achieved and the key activities that will shape the project's work in 2026:

- A strong and growing online presence: ON-COME has launched a dedicated, live website that provides a comprehensive overview of the project and will be regularly updated with new content and operational functionalities, with the aim of becoming an interactive platform for engagement with the public. In parallel, the project is active on LinkedIn, X, and YouTube, ensuring wide dissemination of its objectives, activities, and results.



- Service mapping activities underway (WP2): The mapping of existing psychosocial, nutritional, neuropsychological, and cognitive support services has officially begun and will represent a core pillar of ON-COME's work in 2026, helping to identify gaps, needs, and best practices across Europe.
- Stakeholder engagement being activated: ON-COME is putting in place a structured stakeholder engagement strategy, involving patients, healthcare professionals and policymakers to ensure that the project's development and implementation are informed by real-world experience and needs.

Conclusion: A Europe Where Children Can Thrive

ON-COME advances a clear ambition: ensuring that every child with cancer in Europe has access to integrated, holistic and sustainable supportive care. Through collaboration, implementation and equity-focused design, the project aims to deliver meaningful change for children and families.

Capturing Insights from ON-COME's Kick-Off Meeting

ON-COME officially launched with its kick-off meeting in Rome, bringing together partners and experts from across Europe to set the foundations of the project. To mark this important moment, interviews were conducted with participants throughout the meeting, capturing their perspectives, expectations, and reflections on ON-COME's objectives and future impact.

These conversations offer a valuable snapshot of the project at its very beginning, highlighting the diverse expertise involved and the shared commitment to improving care for young people with cancer. The interviews will soon be published on ON-COME's YouTube channel and shared across the project's social media platforms, providing the wider community with direct insight into the voices shaping ON-COME from the start.



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A Glimpse into ON-COME Kick-Off Meeting



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