

ECIBC

European Commission Initiative on Breast Cancer

A hub for the latest evidence-based guidance on breast cancer screening and care

The ECIBC is a European Commission initiative that has created and continuously updates:

- European Guidelines on Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis
- A collection of international guidelines on breast cancer care
- A European Quality Assurance Scheme for breast cancer services



Europa Donna representatives have been involved in the ECIBC since its inception. Europa Donna advocates relentlessly for the implementation of the ECIBC's independent, evidence-based guidance on breast screening, care and services.

What is the ECIBC?

The ECIBC was launched in 2015 under the auspices of the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (**DG SANTE**), whose mandate is to improve and protect public health in the European Union. The ECIBC also collaborates with countries beyond the EU. Two external expert groups have gathered regularly to steer content, assess the latest evidence and vote on recommendations to create the **European Guidelines on Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis** and the **European Quality Assurance (QA) Scheme** for breast cancer services. The ECIBC **web hub is updated regularly** and provides guidance for women and for healthcare providers.

What advocates need to know about the European Guidelines on Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis

The European Guidelines were developed by a highly skilled group of individuals with vast experience gleaned from **successful screening programmes** in different countries. These experts, including a patient representative from **Europa Donna**, used **the GRADE** approach (<https://www.gradeworkinggroup.org>), a widely recognised guideline development system. The European Guidelines, which are for **women of average breast cancer risk** and without symptoms, cover: screening ages, imaging techniques, organisation, communication, further assessment, staging, planning surgery, and considerations for treatment, such as the use of multigene testing, among other topics. They are available on the **ECIBC web hub** and are constantly updated as new evidence emerges.

Key points from the European Guidelines that are relevant for advocates

Population-based mammography screening should be provided for all women aged 45 to 74 years.

- For women aged **50 to 69 years**: every 2 years
- For women aged **45 to 49 years**: every 2 or 3 years
- For women aged **70 to 74**: every 3 years

Organised mammography screening programmes are strongly recommended for early detection of breast cancer in women without symptoms. Within these programmes:

- Screen mammograms should be read by **two separate reviewers**, who should each read between 3500 and 11,000 mammograms every year.
- Healthcare professionals should undergo **communications training**.
- Only healthcare professionals with **specialised training** should provide care for women undergoing screening, diagnosis or screening assessment.

Women should receive screening results in a timely manner.

- Women with a negative result – the most likely finding – should be informed by letter in **no later than 30 days**.
- Women needing further assessment should receive a **letter and a phone call** to be invited for further testing.
- Women with a positive screening result should be informed about their test result in a **timely and sensitive manner** and scheduled for further assessment as soon as possible.

Women aged 45 to 74 with dense breasts identified in previous screening rounds should have digital breast tomosynthesis.

- No tailored screening (eg, with ultrasound or magnetic resonance imaging) is generally suggested for women with **dense breast tissue**.

What advocates need to know about the European Quality Assurance Scheme for breast cancer services

The QA scheme has defined a common **set of quality and safety requirements** for breast cancer services (BCS) from screening to end-of-life care. Centres will be able to implement the requirements on a volunteer basis and those that are compliant will be able to **apply for certification**. Once the scheme is fully implemented, the aim is for women to be able to locate nearby BCS that meet the EU quality service requirements.

The QA scheme has been created by a **multidisciplinary development group**, including a patient representative from **Europa Donna**. This group has defined the 'care pathway' for breast cancer screening and care, the interventions and services to be offered, the **quality indicators** to be included and how the scheme can be implemented at a European level.

Development phases of the QA scheme

1. QA development group **compilation of the requirements** following the collection and rating of evidence-based requirements. Only those with a high rating are included.
2. The requirements are **tested for feasibility** in functioning breast cancer services and amended accordingly.
3. A **pilot run** of the certification process is held in collaboration with the European Co-operation for Accreditation involving volunteer breast cancer services, certification bodies and national accreditation bodies.
4. The QA scheme and manuals are **updated** based on the feasibility testing and pilot phases.
5. The QA scheme and certification is **formally launched**.

QA scheme manuals

A series of manuals has been developed for the feasibility testing of the QA scheme and for the certification pilot programme, and will be updated after their completion: **a scheme owner manual, breast cancer services manual, and a certification bodies manual**. These manuals contain a wealth of information for advocacy and are available on the ECIBC web hub.

Highlights from the breast cancer services manual

This manual contains requirements for breast cancer certification, breast centres, breast screening and general requirements. Some of these BCS requirements include:

- The **multidisciplinary healthcare professionals** for all BCS, their qualifications and training, and the volume of experience required per year (eg, radiographers at least 1000 mammograms)
- A **multidisciplinary case management meeting** held at least once a week to discuss all patients before they start treatment (including patients with metastatic disease), after their primary treatment, and when there is any change in treatment
- **Breast care nurse** consultations on diagnosis, and availability of two breast care nurses throughout the entire patient pathway
- A policy for routine measurement of **patient-reported outcomes** to measure the quality of life of women throughout the care pathway
- A written policy for informing women about the possibility of **fertility preservation**
- Protocols that adhere to current **Guidelines**, and other national or international guidelines for the full care pathway as defined in the QA scheme

A catalogue of international guidelines on breast cancer care

The ECIBC web hub includes a compilation of more than **165 national and international guidelines** that meet the ECIBC eligibility criteria and cover breast cancer treatment and rehabilitation, follow-up and survivorship, and palliative care to complement the European Guidelines.

Checking the ECIBC web hub for updates to the European Guidelines and for the status of the QA scheme process is recommended.

Why the ECIBC is important

The ECIBC provides the evidence-based requirements that national advocates can use in their countries in order to improve services and outcomes for women with breast cancer. **Europa Donna** seeks to raise awareness of the European Guidelines and the Quality Assurance and certification schemes and to ensure that they are implemented.

Where to find the latest updates and information on the ECIBC



For more on breast cancer advocacy and on the ECIBC



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