**PRESS RELEASE**

**Europe leading in number of oncology startups, although losing ground in fastest-growing cancer innovations**

*With nearly 1 500 entities, Europe hosts a larger number of cancer-related startups than the US, new EPO study finds*

**Munich, 3 February 2025 –** Cancer remains a major health threat in Europe, which accounts for nearly 25% of global cases and over 20% of deaths, despite having less than 10% of the world's population[[1]](#footnote-2). Technological advancements are improving survival rates, with European healthcare systems showcasing excellence in cancer prevention and patient care. Ahead of World Cancer Day, the European Patent Office (EPO) has published its second study on cancer-related technologies, which provides an in-depth analysis of the fastest growing technology fields including cellular immunotherapy (where the number of patent applications grew at an average annual rate of 37.5% between 2015 and 2021), gene therapy (+31%) and image analysis (+20%).

The report, *New frontiers in oncology,* shows that Europe is losing shares of patent applications in these high-growth areas of cancer innovation compared to the US and China, dropping on average 5 percentage points in the top three fastest-growing fields. However, it also finds that Europe is home to the highest number of oncology-related startups, with some 1 500 entities, compared to 1 325 in the US.

*"In light of Mario Draghi's report on the future of European competitiveness, the findings of this study serve as a wake-up call for Europe's oncology innovation system,”* said **EPO President António Campinos**. *“As cancer-fighting technologies rapidly evolve and move in unexpected directions, Europe must respond to keep its competitive edge in healthcare innovation and save lives. Europe’s vibrant oncology startups are a bright spot, but they need investment and support to scale-up their inventions.”*

**European startups stronger in early growth phases**

The study shows that among the EPO member states, the UK leads with 290 oncology-related startups, followed by France with 246 and Germany with 208. However, a sharp contrast emerges in growth stages: While Europe has morestartups in the seed and early growth phases, the US significantly outpaces Europe in scaling startups to the late-growth stage. Nearly 40% of US cancer-related startups have reached this advanced stage, compared to just 24% in the EU and under 27% in other EPO member states, highlighting the challenges that European startups face in scaling successfully.

**Research centres and universities play key role in cancer innovation**

Almost half of all patents from EU countries between 2010 and 2021 originated from universities, public research organisations or hospitals. Beyond direct patenting activity, over 12% of the EU’s cancer-related patent applications originated at research institutions but were filed by companies. In other EPO member states, research institutions contributed nearly 30% of all patents, with 6.4% filed by companies.

**Further information**

* [Full study](https://epo.org/trends-oncology?mtm_campaign=oncology&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press&mtm_group=Observatory)
* EPO’s [Observatory on Patents and Technology](https://www.epo.org/en/about-us/observatory-patents-and-technology?mtm_campaign=oncology&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press&mtm_group=Observatory)
* Search the EPO’s [Deep Tech Finder](https://datavisualisation.apps.epo.org/datav/public/dashboard-front) for oncology startups and their investors
* [Technologies combatting cancer](https://www.epo.org/en/news-events/in-focus/technologies-combatting-cancer?mtm_campaign=oncology&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press&mtm_group=Observatory) platform
* Spotlight on [cancer innovators](https://www.epo.org/en/news-events/in-focus/medical-technologies/cancer?mtm_campaign=oncology&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press&mtm_group=Observatory)

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**About the EPO**

With 6 300 staff members, the [European Patent Office (EPO)](http://www.epo.org/?mtm_campaign=oncology&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press&mtm_group=Observatory) is one of the largest public service institutions in Europe. Headquartered in Munich with offices in Berlin, Brussels, The Hague and Vienna, the EPO was founded with the aim of strengthening cooperation on patents in Europe. Through the EPO's centralised patent granting procedure, inventors are able to obtain high-quality patent protection in up to 45 countries, covering a market of some 700 million people. The EPO is also the world's leading authority in patent information and patent searching.

1. Ferlay et al., 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)