A 60-strong coalition of patient advocates, healthcare professionals and scientists from 20 European countries have come together to publish a blueprint for increasing cancer survival to 70 per cent by 2035 and achieve better quality of life for cancer survivors across Europe.

All of the group are members of the European Cancer Concord (ECC) - an equal partnership between patients and cancer experts - which launched the European Cancer Patient’s Bill of Rights (BoR) on World Cancer Day in 2014.

Professor Mark Lawler, from the Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology at Queen’s University Belfast and Vice President ECC, was the lead architect of the BoR and is first author of the current publication. This is the ECC’s first-ever paper on ‘Vision 70:35’, a European-wide Initiative which aims to tackle the global problem of cancer, advancing knowledge and saving lives.

Ambitious aims

The paper highlights that these ambitious aims will be achieved by working in collaboration across Europe and by identifying examples of best practice and embedding these in cancer care systems throughout Europe. It also states the importance of translating precision oncology research innovation - where a detailed understanding of the biology of cancer informs care pathways - into new diagnostics and therapeutics for the benefit of patients.

Professor Mark Lawler said: “Vision 70:35 emphasises the scale of our ambition. We believe that this target is achievable, provided we share best practice and promote innovation and research across European nations and regions. We must work together, we need to compete, not against each other, but against our common enemy – cancer.

“The challenge is to ensure that this vision is achieved in all European countries. This will require investment at European level, as was envisaged by European Health Ministers through the Vilnius Declaration, in order to ensure that all countries, not just the wealthy ones, achieve the 70:35 Vision, even in this time of economic austerity.”

Real benefits

President of ECC, Professor Peter Selby from the University of Leeds, said: “We believe that our Vision 70:35 can deliver real benefit for patients, if we work together in a collaborative way. The document is the product of the work of a large group of collaborators and ECC is partnering with many pan-European Organisations in order to achieve this ambitious target.”

Sharing best practice and implementing these findings across Europe will underpin improvements in cancer control and cancer care. However, in order to achieve the 70:35 Vision, it is also essential to increase the intensity of research and innovation in Europe and facilitate

the rapid translation of discovery science into clinical practice.

A key component of the vision is the importance of engaging all relevant stakeholders, with cancer patients and their carers working together with a wide range of healthcare and life science professionals, from primary care experts to molecular scientists.

Professor Ian Banks, Vice President of ECC and Chair of the Patient Advocacy Committee, said: “We are delighted to be publishing this initiative that has the potential to benefit so many patients in Europe. Involving all stakeholders, including primary care professionals, can significantly improve our chances of success.”