

# Croatian Oncology Research Network (CORN)



## COUNTRY

Croatia

## LOCATION

National

## PERIOD

November 2024  
– October 2025

## CATCHMENT AREA

National

## TARGET COVERAGE

National cancer care  
and research system

## OVERALL MATURITY CHANGE

From 16% to 46%  
(+30%)

## CORE PARTNERS

University Hospital Center Zagreb, University Hospital Center Sestre Milosrednice, University Hospital Center Split, University Hospital Center Rijeka, University Hospital Center Osijek, Clinical Hospital Dubrava, Clinical Hospital Merkur, Clinical Hospital Sv Duh, General Hospital Varaždin, General Hospital Slavonski Brod, General Hospital Pula, General Hospital Zadar, General Hospital Dubrovnik, Ruđer Bošković Institute, Institute for Medical Research and Occupational Health, Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, Croatian Institute of Public Health, Croatian Health Insurance Fund (CHIF), University School of Medicine Zagreb, University School of Medicine Rijeka, University School of Medicine Split, University School of Medicine Osijek, National Science Foundation, Coalition of Associations in Healthcare.

The CCI4EU Deep Dive in Croatia supported the development of a national Comprehensive Cancer Infrastructure (CCI) in response to major challenges in cancer care coordination, clinical research, and data integration.

The intervention focused on three priority areas identified through the CCI4EU Maturity Model – structure of the CCI, interfaces, and clinical research – with the aim of reducing fragmentation, strengthening national collaboration, and building a more integrated, research-driven and patient-centred cancer system. A major outcome of the intervention was the formal establishment of the Croatian Oncology Research Network (CORN), with its own statutes, governance, mission and action plan.

# Focus Areas



Structure of the CCI

Interfaces

Clinical Research

## Why This Deep Dive



Croatia faces a significant cancer burden, with incidence close to the EU average and important opportunities to further improve outcomes. The country has established strong foundations, including a National Cancer Plan 2020–2030, a national lung cancer screening programme, a cancer registry, and a comprehensive public healthcare system. Building on these assets, there is clear potential to further enhance coordination, strengthen integration between care and research, and expand clinical research capacity at national level. Opportunities were identified to further develop a formal national Comprehensive Cancer Infrastructure, reinforce collaboration between institutions, advance the implementation of clinical pathways, and improve the use and interoperability of data systems. The Deep Dive was therefore designed to support these developments, strengthen interfaces between care, research and public health actors, and further enhance the organisation and visibility of clinical research.

# Work Performed



Conducting SWOT analyses across the three priority domains

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Identifying and federating stakeholder institutions into a national oncology network

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Defining priority actions in cancer care, clinical research, and data management

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Establishing governance structures, statutes, mission and action plan for CORN

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Setting up working groups on the most actionable priority areas

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Supporting the development of Clinical Trial Units and standard procedures

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Advancing planning for centralised clinical trial data and national biobanking

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Supporting the development of clinical pathways for lung and colorectal cancer

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Providing expert guidance through 3 site visits and 14 structured teleconferences

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Facilitating best-practice sharing, interviews, workshops, and barrier-facilitator analyses

# Key Developments



Official establishment of the Croatian Oncology Research Network (CORN) as a national CCI

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Formal adoption of statutes, governance structure, mission and action plan for CORN

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Official recognition and support from the Ministry of Science and Education

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Federation of clinical, research, academic, public health and patient stakeholder institutions into one national network

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Creation of working groups on priority actions

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Strong progress in CCI structure, interfaces, patient pathways, and screening maturity

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Development of plans for Clinical Trial Units across major hospitals

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Advancement of a centralised approach to clinical trial and oncology data

# Key Developments



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Initiation of a national patient awareness approach for clinical trials

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Development of plans for a national biobanking framework

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Progress toward common clinical pathways for lung and colorectal cancer care

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Improvement in overall maturity from 16% to 46%



# Next Steps



The Deep Dive created a strong national foundation for a more coordinated cancer infrastructure, but continued implementation is needed to consolidate progress and advance maturity further. The future roadmap includes:

- Implementing the accreditation pathway for the 5 university cancer centres

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- Establishing and standardising Clinical Research Units across the network

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- Continuing development of a centralised national oncology data infrastructure aligned with the European Health Data Space

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- Developing and launching a national patient awareness campaign on clinical trials

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- Establishing a harmonised national biobank framework

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- Finalising and implementing standardised clinical pathways for lung and colorectal cancer care with digital integration

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- Strengthening collaboration between ministries, hospitals, research institutes and patient organisations through CORN governance and working groups