

North of Portugal Comprehensive Cancer Infrastructure (CCINP)



COUNTRY

Portugal

LOCATION

**Regional (Northern
Portugal – Porto, Braga,
Alto Ave, Gaia/Espinho)**

PERIOD

**November 2024
– October 2025**

CATCHMENT AREA

~3.7 million inhabitants

TARGET COVERAGE

**Entire Northern Region
population through the
national health service
(SNS)**

CORE PARTNERS

**IPO Porto (Porto.CCC),
ULS Alto Ave, ULS
Braga, ULS
Gaia/Espinho, i3S, Liga
Portuguesa Contra o
Cancro – Núcleo
Regional do Norte;
supported by DE-SNS,
PNDO/DGS, CCDR-N
and AICIB**

OVERALL MATURITY CHANGE

**From 26% to 51%
(+25%)**

The CCI4EU Deep Dive in the North of Portugal supported the establishment of the country's first Comprehensive Cancer Infrastructure (CCI), formalizing collaboration among IPO Porto, three Local Health Units, a research institute, and a patient advocacy organisation.

The intervention focused on three priority areas – Structure of the CCI, Interfaces, and Patient Pathway – with the aim of formalizing inter-institutional governance, operationalizing collaborative working groups, and designing a harmonized Precision Cancer Medicine (PCM) patient pathway for the region.

Focus Areas



Structure of the CCI

Interfaces

Patient Pathway

Why This Deep Dive



Portugal has embraced the goals of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan through its National Strategy to Fight Cancer, alongside the Horizon 2030 programme. The Northern Region, home to roughly 3.7 million people, records cancer incidence rates above the national average for several tumour types, and until this project it had no designated Comprehensive Cancer Infrastructure.

The CCI4EU project established the CCINP as the country's first CCI, anchored by IPO Porto together with three Local Health Units, the research institute i3S, and the patient advocacy organisation LPCC Norte. At baseline, the CCINP scored a Global Efficacy Score (GES) of just 26%, with the Structure of the CCI, Interfaces, and Patient Pathway domains at 10%, 0% and 0% respectively.

At the outset, the CCINP had strong foundations in clinical collaboration but had not yet formalized them: governance structures and a written cooperation agreement were still to be established, inter-institutional collaboration relied on informal arrangements rather than a shared framework, clinical trial capacity varied across institutions and had room to grow, and data collection and patient pathway protocols were not yet standardized. Patient involvement was also an emerging priority, with further work needed to embed it into governance and care design.

The Deep Dive was therefore designed to formalize inter-institutional governance, operationalize collaborative working groups across patient pathways, education, and research, and pilot a harmonized, patient-centred model of care built around Precision Cancer Medicine (PCM).

Work Performed



Conducting SWOT analyses of the Structure of the CCI and of the combined Patient Pathway/Interfaces domains

Defining SMART objectives and action plans across governance, interfaces, and patient pathway workstreams

Supporting the drafting and formalization of the CCINP Umbrella Master Agreement

Establishing three Interface Working Groups (IF-WGs): Patient Pathways, Education & Training, and Cancer Research & Innovation

Designing and piloting a harmonized Precision Cancer Medicine (PCM) patient pathway across partner institutions

Benchmarking clinical trial capacity, infrastructure, and workforce needs across ULS Alto Ave, ULS Braga, and ULS Gaia/Espinho

Creating the Patient Council of IPO Porto to embed patient involvement in governance and care design

Organizing capacity-building conferences (Warsaw, Brussels, Madrid), an International Forum on Precision Cancer Medicine, a Summer Academy on Precision Oncology, and a lung cancer training course

Supporting an observership exchange with Oslo University Hospital focused on early-phase trials and Molecular Tumor Board practices

Facilitating inter-institutional collaboration and communication through working-group meetings, follow-up videoconferences, and outreach/media engagement

Key Developments



Signature of the CCINP Umbrella Master Agreement on 18 September 2025, during the International Forum on Precision Cancer Medicine at IPO Porto

Formal establishment of the three Interface Working Groups, transitioning the CCINP from planning to active execution

Development and implementation of the harmonized PCM patient pathway, using the CCI4EU Modeler web tool

Creation of the Patient Council of IPO Porto – the first formal step embedding patient participation in governance

Launch of the multicentric Screen4CANCER project (liquid biopsy-based early cancer detection) as a joint research initiative

Sustained public visibility, with 15 distinct media reports following the Master Agreement signing

Global Efficacy Score (GES) rose from 26% to 51% (+25%), with the largest gains in Structure of the CCI (+55%), Interfaces (+33%), and Patient Pathway (+30%)

Broader progress beyond the three priority domains, including Clinical Research (+31%), Outcomes Research (+31%), Discovery & Translational Research (+11%), and Screening & Early Detection (+7%)

Next Steps



The Deep Dive established a strong strategic and organizational foundation, positioning the CCINP for full operationalization and regional expansion. The agreed roadmap includes:

- ➔ Finalizing and formalizing the CCINP governance body and rules of procedure, with representation from all partner institutions

- ➔ Developing a sustainable financial model and securing a dedicated regional budget and fiscal identity for the CCINP

- ➔ Expanding the PCM pathway and developing additional harmonized patient pathways, supported by a new Data Infrastructure working group

- ➔ Progressively integrating the remaining Local Health Units, private providers, and palliative care partners across the Northern Region

- ➔ Establishing two Comprehensive Cancer Care Networks (CCCNs), starting with lung and colorectal cancer

- ➔ Launching a joint annual education and training plan and deepening academic and research collaborations

- ➔ Defining measurable KPIs and conducting annual stakeholder reviews to track continued maturity growth and align with European CCI4EU standards