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Recent trends in incidence of five common cancers in 26 European countries since 1988: Analysis of the European Cancer Registry database

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KEYWORDS

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Abstract Background: Individual country- and cancer site-specific studies suggest that the age-adjusted incidence of many common cancers has increased in European populations over the past two decades. To quantify the extent of these trends and the recent burden of cancer, here we present a comprehensive overview of trends in population-based incidence of the five common cancers across Europe derived from a new web-based portal of the European cancer registries.

Methods: Data on incidence for cancers of the colon and rectum, prostate, breast, corpus uteri and stomach diagnosed from 1988 to 2008 were obtained from the European Cancer Registry (EUREG) database for cancer registries from 26 countries. Annual age-standardised incidence rates and average annual percentage changes were calculated.

Results: Incidence of four common cancers in eastern and central European countries (prostate, postmenopausal breast, corpus uteri and colorectum) started to approach levels in northern and western Europe, where rates were already high in the past but levelled off in some countries in recent years. Decreases in stomach cancer incidence were seen in all countries.

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Discussion: Increasing trends in incidence of the most common cancers, except stomach cancer, are bad news to public health but can largely be explained by well-known changes in society in the past decades. Thus, current and future efforts in primary cancer prevention should not only remain focussed on the further reduction of smoking but engage in the long-term efforts to retain healthy lifestyles, especially avoiding excess weight through balanced diets and regular physical exercise.

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1. Introduction

Cancer has emerged as a leading cause of morbidity and mortality in European populations [1]. This development has made population-based, accurate and near-term information on cancer occurrence extremely valuable in order to identify trends, and risk factors

driving those trends. Such data are also the foundation for adequate and purposeful cancer prevention, which needs to be continuously adapted according to the best available scientific evidence and knowledge [2]. Several initiatives at the European level have led to the formation of a network of cancer registries, allowing for comparisons across countries that provide insights into the

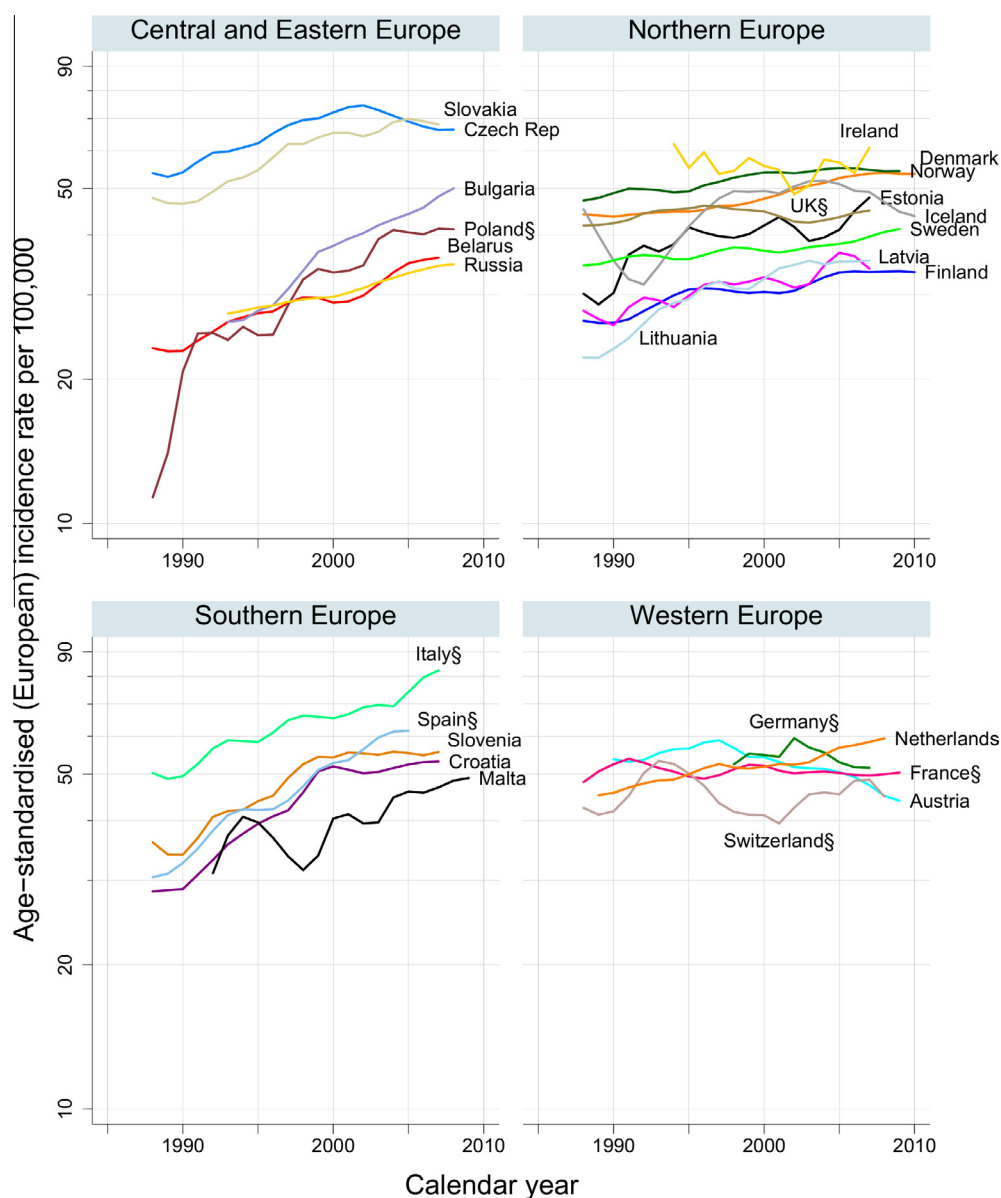


Fig. 1. Trends in colon cancer incidence in males by country and region, 1988–2008. §Regional registries.

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