

Shaping policies to improve lives

With more than half of 2021 behind us, UEG would like to take a look at the latest developments in our work in public and EU affairs. As you know, presenting scientific evidence to decision makers, to create a favourable policy environment for the improvement of digestive health, is the driver of our advocacy efforts.

Cancer-related advocacy

With cancer at the top of EU's health agenda, UEG's Public Affairs Committee (PAC) has been very active in the past months contributing to the cancer-related files of the European institutions and strengthening our collaboration with the European cancer care community.

We are very pleased to announce that in June we have become full members of the [European Cancer Organisation](#) (E.C.O.) Under the leadership of PAC Chair [Markus Peck-Radosavljevic](#), our partnership has already been fruitful, with UEG being represented in two high-level meetings organised by E.C.O. on [primary prevention](#) and on [early detection and screening](#). We have also contributed to their [Primary Prevention Hub](#) and have nominated permanent representatives in [Focused Topic Networks](#) to ensure GI perspectives are included in the various work streams.

Earlier this year, we were part of the [associated event](#) on cancer care of iPAAC Joint Action and the European Parliament Interest Group on Cancer, where PAC Member Monique van Leerdam highlighted the importance of tackling pancreatic cancer with priority at a round-table with MEPs and other stakeholders. Read the [report](#).

Participating in the co-designing process of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, the Commission's flagship initiative, has been a central focus of our cancer-related advocacy for the past year and we are happy to have our positions included in the [European Parliament's briefing on the Cancer Plan](#) (page 9). Moreover, the Cancer Mission within Horizon Europe will also represent an important milestone to advance the fight against digestive cancers. UEG's Research Committee closely monitors the work of the Cancer Mission Board and puts forward research priorities and gaps in digestive health.

2021 has also been marked by the long-awaited proposal of the European Commission to develop evidence-based guidelines for prevention, screening, and diagnosis of colorectal cancer, together with a quality assurance scheme covering. To achieve these two objectives, the European Commission will set up a [Working Group on Colorectal Cancer](#). We have five UEG experts who have applied for the working group and look forward to the official nominations in the following months.

The gut microbiome and food policy

With the EU's [Farm to Fork Strategy](#), a major advance in European food policymaking, nutrition and gut health have gained momentum. Bringing more understanding of the role of the gut microbiome and the importance of healthy nutrition is at the core of our advocacy work. We have, therefore, created the webinar series "Understanding the Human Microbiome" in collaboration with MEP Sarah Wiener. This year we held two webinars of the series, one focused on [obesity and liver disease](#) and the second one on [ultra-processed food](#).

Horizon Europe

The launch of the new [Horizon Europe programme](#) represents a huge funding opportunity for European researchers. To obtain the right funding for digestive health, we also need to advocate for our needs. UEG volunteers [Luigi Ricciardiello](#) and Patrick Michl met with representatives of the Innovative Health Initiative (IHI), the new public-private partnership in Health, in January to present the important research needs in pancreatic cancer. Stay tuned for an excellent article on this topic in the UEG Journal in August.



Reducing the Burden of Pancreatic Cancer: Challenges and the Need for Joint Action

Pancreatic cancer is predicted to be the **second leading cause of cancer death by 2030**. The disease has the lowest survival rate of all cancers in Europe, **responsible for over 95,000 EU deaths** per year.¹⁻³

Research challenges in pancreatic cancer:



Urgent actions needed for change:



Establishing and building partnerships

Good relations with EU's regulatory agencies and other governing bodies are key to raising the profile of digestive health. For this reason, we have built a long-standing interaction with the European Medicines Agency, where our representatives in the [Healthcare Professionals' Working Party](#), Aleksander Krag and [Markus Peck-Radosavljevic](#), advise on all matters of interest in relation to medicines.

This year has been particularly constructive in our relation with WHO European Office for NCDs as we have started collaborating on two projects which are currently under way: a

Manual for Brief Interventions in Primary Healthcare and a future Report on the Burden of Noncommunicable Diseases.

UEG is also engaged in the [Biomedical Alliance in Europe](#), having representatives in the executive bodies, but also in the topical taskforces. On In-Vitro Diagnostics, the taskforce has been following closely the implementation of the new regulation and underlined the [risks for diagnostic testings](#). On the Health Technology Assessment Regulation, after a strong mobilisation of the Alliance in the last years, the Council and Parliament finally reached a political agreement.

Each of our advocacy activities brings us closer to building a stronger bridge between the digestive health community and political actors and ensuring that the interests and needs of our community are voiced in all the relevant fora. With the increased prioritisation of public health at national and EU level, we are looking forward to securing more political attention and funding for digestive health.

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