

A photograph of a smiling woman with short blonde hair, wearing a green headscarf with a braided band and a light-colored button-down shirt. She is looking off to the side with a joyful expression. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green foliage and a blue sky.

Association of European Cancer Leagues

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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About the Association of European Cancer Leagues

The voice of national and regional cancer leagues in Europe

The Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL) is a non-profit umbrella organisation bringing together 35 national and regional cancer leagues, united in the fight against cancer.

ECL works across **the entire cancer continuum**:



Our vision is a Europe free of cancer.

Our mission is to advocate for improved cancer control and care in Europe by facilitating collaboration between cancer leagues and shaping EU and pan-European policies.



www.cancer.eu

Our members

Our members are trusted, non-profit cancer organisations providing the public with essential information, support and care. ECL's strength is in our members. Are you interested in joining our network? [Click here to find out more on how to become an ECL member.](#)

Belgium

[Foundation Against Cancer Belgium](#)
[Kom op tegen Kanker, the Belgian Cancer Society](#)

Croatia

[Croatian League Against Cancer](#)

Cyprus

[Cyprus Anti-Cancer Society](#)
[Cyprus Association of Cancer Patients and Friends](#)

Czech Republic

[League Against Cancer Prague](#)

Denmark

[Danish Cancer Society](#)

Estonia

[Estonian Cancer Society](#)

Faroe Islands

[Faroese Cancer Society](#)

Finland

[Cancer Society of Finland](#)

France

[French League Against Cancer](#)

Germany

[German Cancer Society](#)

Greece

[Hellenic Cancer Federation](#)
[Hellenic Cancer Society](#)

Hungary

[Hungarian League Against Cancer](#)

Iceland

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Ireland

[Irish Cancer Society](#)

Israel

[Israel Cancer Association](#)

Italy

[Italian League Against Cancer](#)

Luxembourg

[Cancer Foundation Luxembourg](#)

Malta

[Emanuele Cancer Research Foundation Malta](#)

The Netherlands

[Dutch Cancer Society](#)

Poland

[Polish Cancer League](#)

Portugal

[Portuguese League Against Cancer](#)

Romania

[Romanian Cancer Society](#)

Slovakia

[League Against Cancer Slovakia](#)

Slovenia

Association of Slovenian Cancer Societies

Spain

Spanish Association Against Cancer
Catalan Federation Against Cancer
Fundación ECO

Sweden

Swedish Cancer Society

Switzerland

Swiss Cancer League

Turkey

Turkish Association for Cancer Research and Control

United Kingdom

Cancer Research UK
Cancer Focus Northern Ireland



A message from the current ECL President

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to our former President, Ramon Reyes, for his outstanding leadership and dedication to ECL. His commitment has helped strengthen our organisation and laid a solid foundation for the work we continue today.

The ECL Board 2026 focuses on strengthening transparency and engagement with our members by sharing key updates and decisions. A central theme is the development of a clearer strategic direction. We want to develop ECL's strategic goals and define key performance indicators, ensuring we have a clear roadmap to guide our future work.

Advocacy remains a priority, with a strong emphasis on member engagement. ECL's strength lies in its members, and we aim to increase direct interaction with national societies. A virtual CEO meeting is being organised to discuss key EU-level health priorities, including the Multiannual Financial Framework, which will shape health funding in the years ahead.

The EU Projects Network, PRONET, continues to grow, with increasing interest from members and several project proposals underway despite a highly competitive environment. Our goal is to strengthen collaboration and secure new funding opportunities. Meanwhile, ECL's working groups and policy communications, such as the EU Policy Insights newsletter, keep members informed on important developments.

Financial sustainability is another key focus. We are advancing an external funding strategy, exploring partnerships, and encouraging members to identify potential funding opportunities. At the same time, we continue to advocate for the reinstatement of EU operating grants for health NGOs.

Finally, we are enhancing our communication through a new website, refreshed branding, and regular updates to members. Looking ahead, key events in 2026 will further strengthen collaboration across our network.



Juha Pekka Turunen,
President of ECL since
November 2025, Cancer
Society of Finland

A message from the past ECL President

As I look back on my time as President of the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL), I do so with gratitude. Serving this network of committed organisations has been both a privilege and a meaningful experience.

This year has been marked by both significant challenges and important progress. In a context of political uncertainty and financial constraints, ECL has demonstrated resilience, adaptability and unity. Together, we have worked to ensure that cancer remains a priority on the European political agenda, while strengthening the foundations of our organisation for the years ahead.

Beyond our external impact, we have undertaken a process of organisational development to improve our capacity to deliver results more effectively. A key milestone has been the reinforcement of ECL's governance, reflected in a stronger Board and a more coherent alignment between governance and operational management, enabling more agile decision-making. At the executive level, the transition to a new Executive Director has marked a turning point enhancing internal management and laying the foundations for a more efficient and sustainable organisation. In parallel, we have refined our strategic approach, concentrating on the areas where ECL can deliver the greatest added value.

A key element of our strategy has been our renewed focus on our members. Through a Member Engagement Plan and direct dialogue, we have consolidated what has always been ECL's greatest strength: a diverse, committed, and collaborative network. At the same time, we have taken important steps to deepen ECL's engagement with EU institutions, contributing to key policy discussions and ensuring that the voice of cancer patients continues to be heard.

From a financial perspective, and in a particularly challenging context, ECL has taken important steps to enhance its long-term sustainability, notably through the development of a comprehensive fundraising policy aimed at diversifying its funding sources while safeguarding its independence.

This mandate has therefore been about delivering results while building the foundations for a stronger and more resilient organisation, reflecting our shared ambition to further strengthen ECL's position as a key actor in cancer control in Europe.

None of this would have been possible without the unwavering commitment of the Board, the Secretariat, and our member leagues. Their collective efforts are the driving force behind ECL and, as former President, I remain deeply appreciative of their continued trust and support.



Ramón Reyes,
Former President of ECL,
Spanish Association Against
Cancer

A year in review: Highlights from 2025

1. A new chapter for ECL leadership

Welcoming a new ECL Executive Director

In May 2025, we were pleased to announce the appointment of **Dr Wolfgang Fecke** as ECL's new Executive Director. Wolfgang brings nearly 30 years of experience in life science research and drug discovery and will lead ECL into a new chapter in its mission to reduce the burden of cancer across Europe. His appointment marks a continued commitment to ECL's role at the forefront of Europe's fight against cancer.

"It is an honour to join the Association of European Cancer Leagues and lead an organisation so committed to improving the lives of those affected by cancer. While significant progress has been made, critical challenges in cancer prevention, treatment and care – especially for the most vulnerable – still remain. I look forward to building on ECL's powerful legacy and work together with our members, EU institutions and partners to further reduce Europe's cancer burden." – Wolfgang Fecke



Wolfgang has taken over the baton from Dr Wendy Yared, who led ECL for nearly two decades and played a central role in shaping its leadership and impact at the European level. We are truly grateful for Wendy's work and legacy over all those years.

Welcoming a new ECL President

Cancer societies from across Europe elected a new President and welcomed new voices to the Executive Board during the 45th Annual General Assembly of the Association of European Cancer Leagues, held on 13 November in Porto, Portugal.

We are delighted to introduce **Juha Pekka Turunen** from the Cancer Society of Finland as ECL's new President. A medical doctor specialised in clinical pathology with special competency in health administration, Juha Pekka serves as the General Secretary of both the Cancer Society of Finland and Cancer Foundation Finland. His leadership experience includes serving as the President of the Nordic Cancer Union between 2022 and 2023, and he is currently a member of the Steering Committee of the first national cancer strategy in Finland and Chair of the Noncommunicable Diseases Network of Finnish organisations. Together with ECL's Executive Director and the Executive Board, Juha Pekka Turunen will shape ECL's vision towards a Europe free of cancer.



Saying goodbye to ECL's outgoing President

The ECL Executive Director, secretariat and Board extend a heartfelt thank you to Ramón Reyes, President of the Spanish Association Against Cancer, and his team for their unwavering commitment and impactful leadership during his time as ECL's President during 2023 to 2025.

During his presidency, Ramón steered the Association through a period of change. Under his leadership, ECL appointed a new Executive Director, strengthened its overall governance structures, developed a new membership engagement plan, and reinforced its advocacy efforts. Thanks to his work, ECL has been able to make sure that cancer, and the implementation of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, remains a priority in the political agenda.



2. Preventing cancer before it starts

Cancer causes one in five deaths in the European Region. The good news? Over 40% of all cancer cases can be prevented. By tackling key risk factors like tobacco, alcohol, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, UV radiation, air pollution, and harmful chemicals, we can save countless lives. ECL does this by advocating for health-promoting policies addressing these risk factors while also promoting vaccination and screening as important cancer prevention measures.

Advocating for a Europe free of tobacco

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable cancer in Europe, responsible for over a quarter (27%) of all cancer cases. Despite progress in tobacco control over recent decades, the tobacco industry continues to oppose and obstruct effective public health policies at the EU level. At the same time, vaping is getting increasingly popular among children and teenagers yet remains largely unregulated.

All throughout the year, ECL continued to advocate for EU-wide tobacco control policies that help curb this harmful epidemic and pave the way for Europe's first tobacco-free generation. In 2025, we intensified our push for stronger cancer prevention by placing tobacco taxation – one of the most effective legislative tools to reduce tobacco consumption – at the heart of the EU health agenda.

Our advocacy efforts gained momentum in July, with an open letter to the EU Commissioner in charge of taxation calling on him to publish an ambitious proposal for the update of the Tobacco Taxation Directive without delay. In the same month, this action translated into action as the European Commission published its long-awaited proposal to update the Directive – an important milestone that ECL applauded as a key step towards Europe's first tobacco-free generation.

Action continued in September, when ECL and other key public health stakeholders met with the EU Health Commissioner (Olivér Várhelyi) and the EU Commissioner in charge of taxation (Wopke Hoekstra) to discuss the importance of protecting the most vulnerable – children, teenagers, and young people – with ambitious tobacco control action.



Other ECL actions on tobacco control included:

- A joint call from European health organisations for ambitious tobacco taxation policy (September 2025).
- An open letter from the Association of European Cancer Leagues and the European Cancer Organisation urging EU economic and finance ministers to endorse the proposal for a Tobacco Excise Duty Own Resources (TEDOR) and the revision of the Tobacco Taxation Directive (October 2025).
- A coordinated response to the EU public consultation on the proposed revision of the Tobacco Taxation Directive (November 2025).
- The attendance and active participation at the Eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) (November 2025)
- A coordinated response to the EU call for evidence on the revision of the Audiovisual Media Service Directive (December 2025).

Shifting the narrative on alcohol and cancer

Europe has the highest levels of alcohol consumption globally. And this is concerning: alcohol is a known carcinogen, and decades of robust science have linked drinking to at least seven types of cancer, however public awareness remains low.

In 2025, ECL set out to tackle the dangerous myth that only heavy drinkers are at risk of alcohol-related cancers. In May, we co-launched the European Health Alliance on Alcohol (EHAA), a new coalition of health organisations of experts aiming to reduce alcohol's impact on health, raise public awareness, and advocate for the implementation of proven, effective policies that save lives. ECL is proud to have been nominated to sit on the EHAA board, helping shape the coalition's strategic direction for the coming years.

In June, ECL co-organised a high-level workshop on alcohol and cancer in partnership with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and the French National Cancer Institute (INCa). Nearly 40 participants, including ECL members, health professionals, and people with lived experience, gathered in Paris for a focused, one-day exchange.

Other ECL actions on alcohol included:

- Together with the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) and the European Cancer Organisation, ECL spearheaded a new statement on alcohol and cancer from the European Health Alliance on Alcohol (EHAA) during Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October 2025).
- Also with the EHAA, ECL continued its calls on policymakers to safeguard public health in the EU Wine Package (September 2025 and December 2025).

EU Safe Hearts Plan: A golden opportunity to prevent Europe's biggest killers

Cardiovascular diseases share many overlapping roots with cancer, including tobacco use, alcohol consumption, and unhealthy diets. Together, they account for the majority of premature deaths across the EU each year.

With the expected launch of a new EU Safe Hearts Plan in late 2025, ECL and our members launched new calls on EU decision makers to ensure this new legislative tool tackles the common risk behind the two leading causes of death in Europe.

ECL actions on the EU Safe Hearts Plan included:

- A letter to the European Commission calling on policymakers to ensure the upcoming Plan is ambitious and fully aligned with Europe's ongoing efforts to prevent cancer (December 2025).
- A press statement welcoming the publication of the new Plan, while pointing out its lack of clear timelines and commitments (December 2025).

Protecting people's health from environmental cancer risks

In 2025, we strengthened our efforts to reduce exposure to environmental carcinogens like air pollution and hazardous chemicals, which can significantly increase cancer risk. A key focus was on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a large group of approximately 10,000 health-harming chemicals that are widely used for their non-stick and water-resistant properties.

Addressing the growing scientific and societal concerns around these so-called 'forever chemicals' and cancer, ECL published a new position paper during the European Week Against Cancer 2025 calling for a PFAS-free future. This was supported by a high-level webinar organised alongside the MEPs Against Cancer interest group to drive momentum for legislative change.

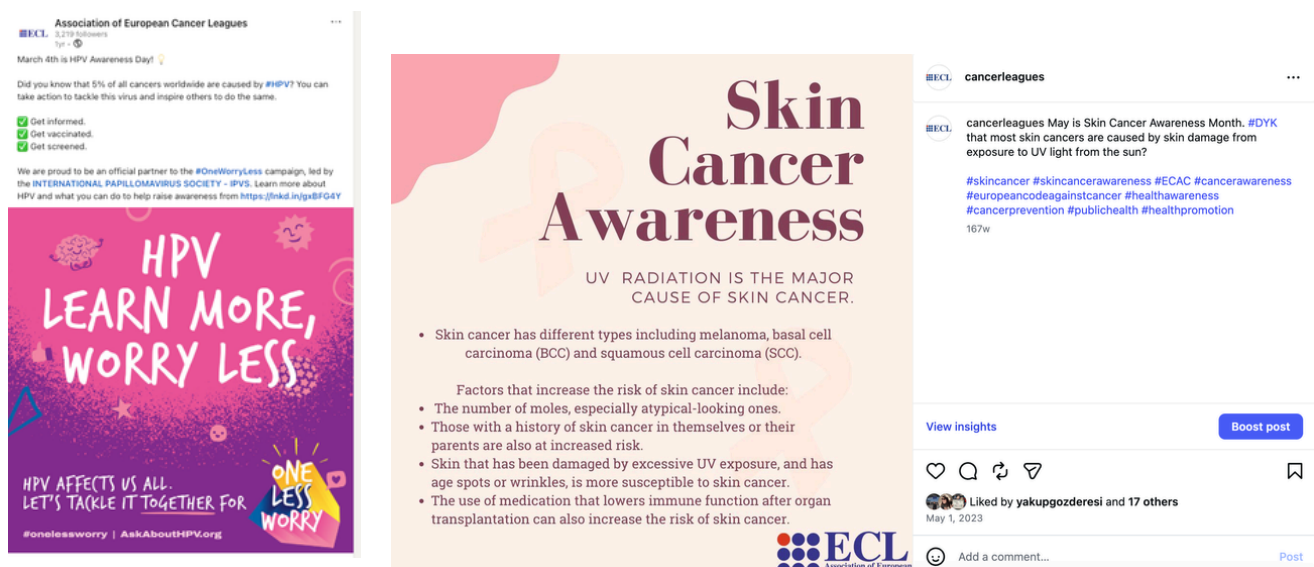
At the same time, we continued to raise attention to the need to address air pollution, the top environmental risk to health in Europe. In collaboration with the EU Healthy Air Coalition (EUHAC), we published new calls for the implementation of ambitious clean air legislation and helped launch a new infographic for Clean Air Day.

3. Eliminating cancer through early detection

Screening programmes can save lives, but inequalities persist across Europe. Patients who are diagnosed early have the best chance at effective treatment and long-term survival. Together with our members, we work to raise awareness and drive action to ensure equitable access to all.

Raising awareness on screening

Throughout 2025, ECL contributed to global awareness-raising initiatives by highlighting the importance of cancer screening. By equipping our members with the right tools and messages, we launched online campaigns during World Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, HPV Awareness Day, Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, and various other international days. In parallel, we continued to support dedicated projects aimed at strengthening and improving cancer screening programmes across Europe.



4. Making cancer treatment fair and accessible for all

Between 2020 and 2023, cancer patients in Germany had access to 54 out of 56 EU-authorized medicines. In Malta? Only 2.

Every patient deserves access to effective and affordable cancer medicines – no matter where they live. We promote equal access across Europe by advocating for fair pricing, promoting availability of life-saving treatments, and challenging inequalities in access to essential cancer care.

A win for equitable access: the EU Pharma Package

Unequal access to treatment remains one of Europe's most striking inequalities in cancer care. The high costs of innovative therapies often put them out of reach for countries with tighter health budgets, meaning that patients in some EU member states get timely access to medicines when they need them while others are left behind.

In 2025, our efforts to reduce such inequalities reached a critical milestone. As negotiations on the EU Pharma package, the first major reform of Europe's pharmaceutical legislation in two decades, entered its final phase, we intensified our advocacy efforts to keep patients' needs at the centre of the debate.

Throughout the year, we kept pressure on EU decision makers high by publishing joint recommendations and building strong support across the public health community. As the debate around the EU pharma reform increasingly shifted focus towards industrial competitiveness, we joined forces with non-profit health payers and consumer groups to urge governments to put health over profit.

To maintain momentum, ECL worked with the European Fair Pricing Network (EFPN) to publish a new policy paper in September, reinforcing the cancer community's key demands. This was followed by a joint statement supported by a wide range of health actors in October, zooming in on the need to harmonise the Hospital Exemption in the EU Pharma Package, as national laws hinder export and thus prevent equitable access to advanced therapies developed in public and non-profit settings. Additionally, ECL joined 16 other health and patients' organisations to call on EU decision makers to retain the original purpose of the Hospital Exemption for advanced therapy medicinal products.

Our efforts, spanning over 3 years of intense advocacy, came to fruition in December, as EU negotiators reached a long-awaited deal on the EU Pharma Package. European cancer leagues broadly welcomed the agreement as it opens doors to more equitable access to cancer medicines but emphasised that it does not go far enough to truly lower costs.

ECL will continue to monitor the implementation of the EU Pharma Package to ensure its potential translates into real benefits for patients across Europe.

Other ECL actions on the EU Pharma Package included a contribution to and endorsement of the Anticancer Fund paper on drug repurposing, an endorsement of Cancer Patients Europe and an EORTC paper on treatment optimisation.



“

“Treating cancer is impossible without timely access to safe and effective medicines.”

The Pharma Package is an important milestone to finally give patients across Europe fairer access to the vital drugs they desperately need, but it does not close all the gaps to further reduce costs.”

Toma Mikalauskaite
Policy Lead at the Association of European Cancer Leagues

ECL

Securing access to affordable cancer medicines through the Critical Medicines Act

One in five critical medicines on the European Union list is used to treat cancer, making any disruption in their supply an immediate threat to patients' lives.

In 2025, ECL continued to advocate for an ambitious Critical Medicines Act to prevent shortages, reduce costs, and ensure fair access to life-saving cancer drugs. In March, we welcomed the European Commission's proposal as an important step forward, particularly for its potential to improve the availability of and access to cancer drugs through collaborative procurement at the EU level.

As other EU institutions prepared their own position on the proposal, we published a position paper outlining our recommendations how they could improve the legislative text in September. Furthermore, we published voting recommendations for members of the European Parliament's public health committee ahead of the decision on their position.

Supporting efforts to strengthen biotechnology in the EU

In December 2025, the European Commission unveiled its plans for a Biotech Act to increase Europe's biotechnology potential by supporting the transition of innovative ideas from laboratory to market.

To support the preparation of the proposal, the Commission consulted stakeholders and the general public through a public consultation. In June, we responded to the call for evidence consultation. In addition, ECL responded to the public consultation in November highlighting the urgent need to improve access to cross-border clinical trials.

5. Empowering patients and survivors to live with and beyond cancer

People living with and after cancer are at the heart of what we do. With over 12 million cancer survivors in Europe, improving the quality of life for cancer patients, survivors and carers is a must.

ECL advocates for strong social protection and equal access to financial services across Europe, while offering resources to help individuals and their families navigate the physical, emotional, and practical challenges of cancer.

Putting a spotlight on the financial challenges faced by patients

Cancer doesn't just affect health; it often has a major impact on people's financial and social lives as well.

A landmark study funded by the European Fair Pricing Network, an initiative from ECL and several of its member organisations, revealed in June 2025 that cancer patients across Europe lose income, face additional out-of-pocket costs, and even avoid medical care due to financial stress following diagnosis. Adolescents and young adults are especially vulnerable.

Following the launch of the study, ECL called on EU and national policymakers to take all necessary steps to guarantee social, labour, and financial protections for cancer patients, including EU-wide standards to uphold the right to be forgotten in financial services and to support survivors wishing to return to work.

International Workers' Day 2025: Protecting patients and survivors in the workplace

More than 12 million cancer survivors are expected to live in Europe, and many of them hope to return to work. But finding a way back into the workplace is not always straightforward.

To mark International Workers' Day, ECL launched a new campaign to raise awareness about the real-world challenges faced by cancer patients and survivors wanting to return to work. By sharing the voices of survivors, patients, and experts from cancer societies, we shined a light on the effects cancer can have on patients in the workplace, and how employers can better support employees diagnosed with cancer.



At the same time, we co-organised a webinar with the MEPs Against Cancer interest group to explore the role of policymakers in the debate. The event featured voices from cancer survivors, the European Parliament and Commission, and national cancer leagues, and showcased inspiring examples of inclusive workplace practices across Europe.

Other ECL actions on patient support included:

- Development and distribution of a guidance document for ECL members on the transposition of the Consumer Credit Directive
- Submission of the Parliamentary question on the revision of the Mortgage Credit Directive to ensure cancer patients' access to financial services (see the Commission's answer here)

6. EU-funded projects: Bridging science and policy

ECL actively contributes to numerous EU-funded research and public health initiatives. In partnership with over 70 partners in 8 projects, we help ensure that the findings from such projects are translated into real-world impact. Our core contributions to these projects include stakeholder engagement, policy recommendations, strategic communications, and dissemination of results.

The current projects cover a wide range of topics, from improving the effectiveness and reach of primary cancer prevention programmes to supporting the implementation of sustainable, high-quality cancer screening across Europe. Within cancer screening, we focus in particular on improving cervical cancer screening for women in vulnerable situations, as well as in advancing risk-based personalised breast cancer screening. We also promote the European Code Against Cancer and digital health literacy, and support the development of cost-effective, home-based palliative care.

Zooming in on some 2025 highlights of our projects:



The BUMPER project (Boosting the Usability of the EU Mobile App for Cancer Prevention) officially concluded with a two-day wrap-up event in Brussels in April 2025. A new report outlining key lessons and strategic recommendations for promoting digital health literacy on cancer prevention was launched right before the event. ECL coordinated the entire project and celebrated this milestone alongside our members and the project consortium partners.

www.bumper.cancer.eu



The EUCanScreen project (European Joint Action on Cancer Screening) launched its Governmental Advisory Board (GAB) in May 2025, with ECL co-leading the establishment. This Board serves as a high-level platform bringing together political decision makers and funding authorities to strengthen commitment to the project's overarching goal: ensuring sustainable, high-quality cancer screening programmes across the EU and associated countries. All 29 participating countries in the Joint Action are represented within the GAB, and ECL will continue to co-lead and support the ongoing engagement of the board throughout the duration of the project.

www.dypede.gr/eucanscreen



The CBIG-SCREEN project addresses inequalities in cervical cancer screening across Europe by examining barriers faced by women in vulnerable situations, including those with a migration background, women living with HIV, and sex workers. In 2025, a key highlight was the final CBIG-SCREEN Roundtable held at the European Parliament, which brought together researchers, policymakers, healthcare professionals, civil society and community representatives to discuss evidence-based, inclusive approaches to screening and policy solutions for more equitable programme design. The event marked the successful conclusion of the project and supported the translation of research findings into actionable policy recommendations.

www.cbig-screen.eu



The MyPeBS project is a large EU-funded clinical study on personalised breast cancer screening, involving over 53,000 women across six countries. It compares standard screening with a risk-based approach tailored to individual risk profiles, with the aim of improving early detection while reducing unnecessary screening and overdiagnosis. In 2026, the project will enter its final year and ECL will continue its supporting role until final conclusion.

www.mypebs.eu



The PAINLESS project aims to adapt and implement a cost-effective, home-based neuromodulation intervention to reduce pain and improve the quality of life of cancer patients with chronic pain. Funded under Horizon Europe, the project brings together 19 partners across Europe. ECL contributes to communication and dissemination, including stakeholder engagement and outreach through its network. PAINLESS is also involved in the European Commission's Quality of Life, Patient-Centred Care Cluster, coordinated by EUonQoL, which brings together EU-funded projects to align efforts and develop joint policy recommendations. In 2026, ECL will continue supporting the project's dissemination activities and will organise an online stakeholder event as a step towards its final in-person event in Brussels later in the year.

www.palliativeprojects.eu/painless



The **PIECES project** aims to improve the reach and effectiveness of primary cancer prevention programmes by developing and testing the PCP Integrated Implementation Toolkit (PCP-IT). It is an innovative online, modular resource designed to help implementers select, adapt and plan prevention programmes tailored to local settings and population needs. With the project halfway through, implementation teams in Spain, the Netherlands, Albania, the United Kingdom, Italy, Ukraine, Germany and Ireland are currently applying the toolkit in diverse real-world contexts. ECL leads the development of policy-level recommendations and supports the long-term use and sustainability of PCP-IT. ECL coordinates the hosting and management of the toolkit.

PIECES also supports wider European collaboration through its involvement in the 'Prevention and Early Detection Cluster (Implementation Research)', which held its second annual meeting in October 2025 in Barcelona. The meeting brought together all six Cluster projects to share progress, align priorities and strengthen joint work, including a roundtable on translating prevention research into practical strategies with lasting impact.

www.pieces-project.eu

Of our eight ongoing projects, **three launched in the second half of 2025**, further expanding our work and impact to include bladder cancer and health literacy, to support adolescent and young adults (AYAs) with testicular cancer and survivorship, and personalised medicine. An overview:



In September 2025, we participated in **the BCLEAR project** kick-off meeting in Brussels, marking the launch of a three-year initiative setting out to improve public understanding of bladder cancer across Europe. In direct partnership with a European network of patient organisations, clinicians and public health experts, BCLEAR (Bladder Cancer Literacy for All) works to enhance awareness, understanding and shared decision-making in bladder cancer by helping people recognise symptoms earlier and access the right information and care.



In September 2025, ECL was present at **the Transcend-XR project** launch in Cork, Ireland. This collaborative project brings together 15 partners from 12 countries with the shared goal of improving the quality of life of adolescent and young adult (AYA) cancer survivors through a digital extended reality (XR) tool. ECL contributes by supporting communication and stakeholder engagement, while also helping to address the broader sociocultural and policy implications linked to the development of an innovative XR experience for testicular cancer survivors. Recognised as an important initiative in this field, TRANSCEND-XR is an active member of the Quality of Life (AYA) Cluster, supporting a coordinated European approach to improving QoL for adolescents and young adults with and beyond cancer.



In late November, ECL was present at the kick-off meeting for **the SPARC project** in Madrid. This three-year initiative seeks to transform cancer care through personalised medicine, by building a framework for implementation into real-world healthcare systems. ECL's contribution focuses on patient, citizen and stakeholder engagement, including leading patient empowerment activities, collecting best practices, and supporting dissemination, communication and policy outreach. Through SPARC, we aim to help strengthen collaboration across Europe and contribute to the development of improved policies and best practices that support better outcomes for patients and carers.

Lastly, in October 2025, **the ECL Projects Network (PRONET)** was launched. The platform aims to support our member leagues by creating networking opportunities, strengthening collaboration, sharing new project calls, information and experiences in the pursuit of new project funding opportunities.

7. Flagship initiatives in 2025

The European Week Against Cancer

The European Week Against Cancer is a flagship initiative from the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL), bringing together cancer leagues, health advocates, civil society, and policymakers to raise awareness about the importance of cancer prevention and care.

This week of action takes place between 25 and 31 May each year and concludes with World No Tobacco Day.

The 2025 edition of the European Week Against Cancer saw a wide array of webinars, events, and social media actions shining a light on the everyday challenges faced by those affected by cancer. Thanks to our collective efforts, we reached over 4.2 million people, with 9.6 thousand interactions online and 880 mentions on social media, amplifying our message across borders.



MEPs Against Cancer

ECL is proud to host the secretariat of the MEPs Against Cancer Interest Group. This unique group was founded in 2005 and unites members of the European Parliament from across the political spectrum and EU member states.

For two decades, MEPs Against Cancer have played a pivotal role in elevating cancer to the top of the EU political agenda. In 2025, the interest group and ECL celebrated 20 years of leadership in the fight against cancer with a high-level event in the European Parliament in Brussels.

During the event, the EU Health Commissioner, members of European Parliament, and leading voices from the wider cancer community looked back at two decades of the interest group. Highlighted key achievements included the support for the development of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, advocating for the creation of the EU Parliament's Special Committee on Beating Cancer, and backing the adoption of the 2022 Resolution to Beat Cancer, which charted a clear course for improved prevention, early detection, and equitable access to care across the EU.

"The impact of MEPs Against Cancer is evident. Through tireless advocacy, this group helped shape Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, secured strong language on cancer in the EU4Health programme and worked to ensure funding for the EU Cancer Mission. We have pushed for harmonised training of health professionals, equitable access to innovation and recognition of the psycho-social needs of patients and survivors. But our fight is far from over," said MEP Romana Jerković, Chair of MEPs Against Cancer.

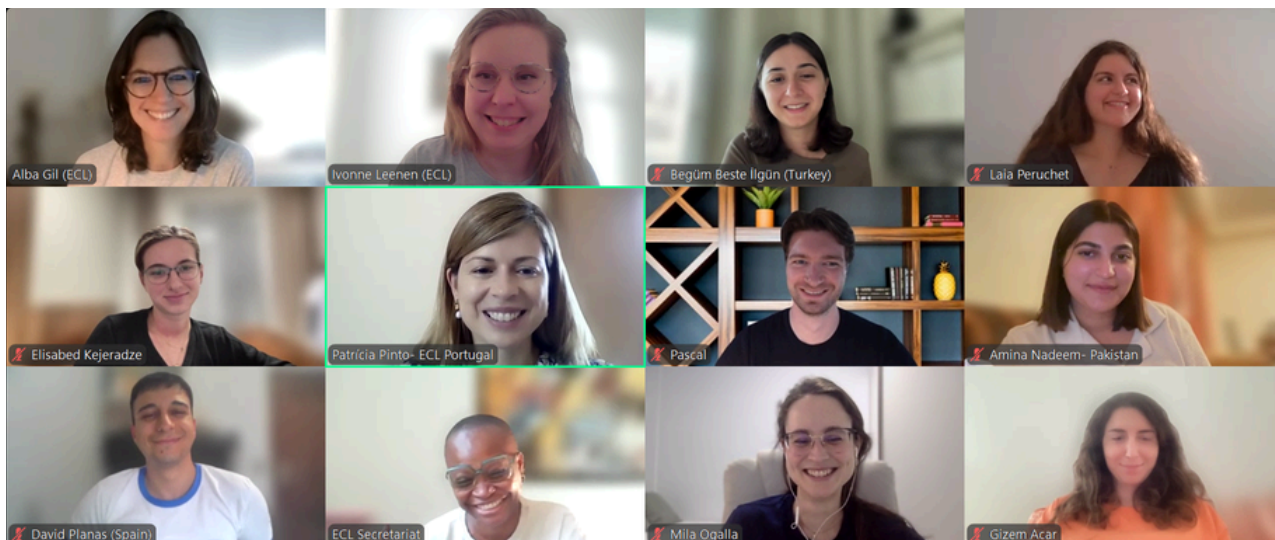


The ECL Youth Ambassadors Programme

The ECL Youth Ambassador Programme brings together an inspiring and dedicated community of young health advocates raising awareness about cancer prevention, using the European Code Against Cancer (ECAC). The programme was launched by ECL in 2015 and marked its 10-year anniversary in 2025. With seven new young people joining in 2025, the programme now counts 47 ECL Youth Ambassadors from almost 30 countries across Europe.



The highlight of the year came in September, when ambassadors gathered online for the annual Summer School. This year, the Summer School featured inspiring speakers from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Association (EFA), ECL member leagues from Italy, Spain and Portugal, as well as the ECL secretariat. Sessions covered the upcoming launch of the 5th edition of the European Code Against Cancer, the science behind communicating health messages, how to organise effective peer facilitation and training, and how to campaign online using the power of social media.



8. ECL Annual Meetings in 2025

ECL members gathered in Porto, Portugal on 12 – 14 November for the 45th edition of the ECL Annual Scientific Conference and General Assembly. This year's edition was kindly hosted by the Portuguese League Against Cancer (Liga Portuguesa Contra O Cancro).

The **ECL Annual Scientific Conference** is the main networking event for cancer leagues and prominent cancer advocates and experts from all over Europe. This 45th edition of the conference saw prominent speakers representing cancer leagues, international research agencies, medical experts, and cancer patients and survivors engage in thought-provoking discussions on key topics like the European Code Against Cancer, research to better cancer screening, and the importance of taking a patient-centred approach to cancer care.

During our Annual General Assembly, the Association's main decision-making body, ECL welcomed a new member organisation: **the Hellenic Cancer Society**. Founded in 1958, the Hellenic Cancer Society has been a driving force in the fight against cancer in Greece, offering essential support to cancer patients and families.



**HELLENIC
CANCER
SOCIETY**

With their arrival, ECL now brings together 35 national and regional cancer societies advocating for a Europe free of cancer.

Cancer societies also elected a new President and welcomed **new voices to the Executive Board**. We were delighted to introduce Juha Pekka Turunen (Cancer Society of Finland) as ECL's new President, and Lucia Aboud (Spanish Association Against Cancer) to the ECL Executive Board. Members also re-elected other members of the Board for a second mandate.



We are proud that the ECL Executive Board now brings together seven leaders from cancer societies across Europe, ensuring strong and forward-looking leadership in the years ahead.

Governance

The Executive Board

The Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL) is led by an Executive Board composed of representatives from our member organisations. This dedicated team is responsible for shaping ECL's strategic direction, driving organisational development, and strengthening relations with cancer leagues and other partners across Europe.

Board members serve on a voluntary basis and do not receive remuneration for their roles. They are elected by the General Assembly of member leagues. The current Board, including the ECL President, was elected in November 2025.

We extend our gratitude to Ramón Reyes, President of the Spanish Association Against Cancer, for his unwavering commitment and impactful leadership during his time as ECL President from 2023 to 2025.



Juha Pekka Turunen, President
Cancer Society of Finland



Daniela Giangreco, Vice President
Italian League Against Cancer



Marc Michils, Treasurer
Kom op Tegen Kanker,
the Belgian Cancer Society



Neda Ferencic Vrbancic
Croatia League Against Cancer



Lucia Aboud Oizerovich
Spanish Association Against
Cancer



Cristiana Fonseca
Portuguese League Against
Cancer



Dorine Manson
Dutch Cancer Society

The Secretariat

The ECL Secretariat is based in Brussels and is managed by the Executive Director. The ECL office serves as the main hub for communication among member organisations, leads advocacy efforts with EU institutions, coordinates workshops and events, and engages in EU-funded projects.

In 2025, ECL's team included seven full-time staff members and three consultants, working together to coordinate our efforts in Brussels and beyond.

- **Wolfgang Fecke** - Executive Director (since June 2025)
- **Wendy Yared** - Executive Director (until May 2025)
- **Geoffrey Furlonger** - Chief Operations Officer (until July 2025)

- **Roxana Albu** - Chief Scientific Officer (until January 2025)

- **Ivonne Leenen** - Communications Officer

- **Toma Mikalauskaite** - Policy Lead
- **Alba Gil** - Policy Officer
- **Nico Latteur** - Policy and Projects Officer (until May 2025)

- **Arianna Khatchadourian** - EU Project Manager
- **Helena Ros** - EU Projects Manager and Policy Officer
- **Michal Kubo** - EU Projects Manager

- **Florence Boivin** - HR Consultant
- **Melissa Amirkhizy** - Finance Consultant (since May 2025)

- **Patricia Pinto** - Youth Ambassadors Programme Coordinator (consultant position until December 2025)
- **Leyla Mehmetbeyli** - Youth Ambassadors Programme Deputy Coordinator (consultant position until February 2025)
- **Jane Okafor** - Youth Ambassadors Programme Coordinator (consultant position since May 2025)

We gratefully thank the team members who have since moved on from ECL: Wendy Yared, Roxana Albu, Geoffrey Furlonger, Nico Latteur, Leyla Mehmetbeyli, and Patricia Pinto.

Working groups

ECL member organisations work together on a range of key issues along the whole cancer continuum to provide the best possible support for people affected by cancer.

Cancer control experts within the ECL network participate in three dedicated working groups, where they regularly meet to share best practices, foster collaboration, and contribute to shaping ECL's advocacy outputs.



The **ECL Prevention and Early Detection Working Group** connects cancer control experts from cancer leagues to strengthen and coordinate prevention efforts across Europe. The group focuses on areas that significantly impact cancer risk, including tobacco use, alcohol consumption, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, air pollution, and exposure to harmful chemicals. In addition, the working group works to promote equitable access to vaccination and cancer screening programmes for all.

Through these collaborative efforts, the group aims to reduce the overall burden of cancer and protect public health across Europe.



The **ECL Access to Medicines Task Force** unites health advocates and researchers from cancer societies across Europe to ensure that all cancer patients have access to safe, effective, and affordable medicines and treatments.

The task force is committed to advancing such access by championing greater accessibility, availability, affordability, and transparency in the way medicines are developed and priced. These principles are key pillars for building sustainable and equitable healthcare systems across Europe.

The **ECL Patient Support Working Group (PSWG)** aims to improve the quality of life of those touched by cancer, including patients, survivors, and carers. The group advocates for fair access to financial services and encourages initiatives that support patients and survivors' return to work, rehabilitation, and supportive care.

By bringing together cancer care experts from cancer leagues across Europe, the PSWG serves as a collaborative hub for sharing best practices, developing guidelines, and creating resources that respond to the evolving needs of those impacted by cancer.

Who we work with

Our network

ECL is a proud member of several European and global non-profit organisations:



ECL is also a supporter of or stakeholder in the following organisations and initiatives:



Who we work with

ECL is an accredited stakeholder in a wide range of global and European governmental health initiatives, offering the expertise of our member leagues on cancer-related policies and programmes.



ECL is an accredited regional non-State actor with the WHO Regional Committee for Europe. Additionally, we are an official member of several initiatives from WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe):

- [The WHO/Europe Access to Novel Medicines Platform](#)
- [The WHO/Europe European Health Alliance on Alcohol](#)



ECL closely collaborates with and is a member of various EU stakeholder fora at the EU level:

- [European Commission's Critical Medicines Alliance](#)
- [European Commission's HTA Stakeholder Network](#)
- [European Medicine Agency's Patients and Consumers Working Party](#)
- [European Medicine Agency's Cancer Medicines Forum](#)

EU projects

ECL actively contributes to several EU-funded research and public health initiatives. In collaboration with over 70 partners – including cancer leagues, research institutes, public health organisations, university hospitals, and academic experts – we work to drive progress in cancer prevention and care across Europe.

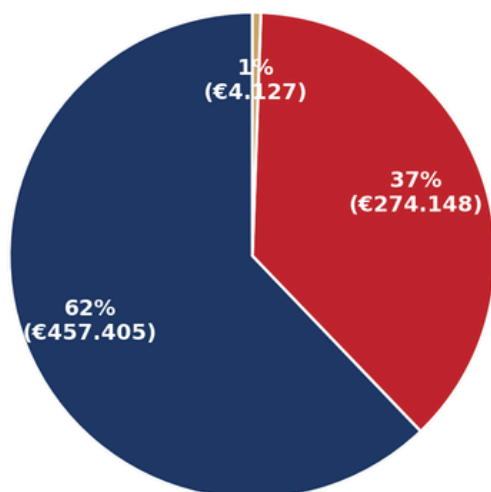
By using our strong network of partners and fostering connections between researchers, policymakers, and key stakeholders, we help to ensure that the findings from EU-funded projects are translated into real-world impact. Our core contributions to these projects include stakeholder engagement, policy recommendations, strategic communications, and dissemination of results.

Financial report

2025 marked the second consecutive year in which ECL did not receive its expected EU Commission operational grant, worth an estimated €500.000. An increased membership fee structure, introduced that year, began for the first time to meaningfully offset that loss: membership income reached €457.405. Income from EU-funded projects also came in above target, at €274.148. Altogether, ECL's actual income landed close to €26.000 above what had been budgeted.

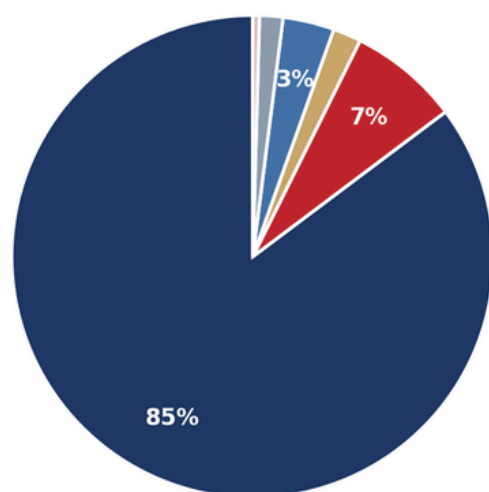
On the expenditure side, the secretariat trimmed overall costs by around €52.000 against budget, largely by scaling back in-person member meetings. Personnel costs came in higher than approved (€760.518), reflecting a longer-than-planned leadership transition, while event costs mainly covered the Annual Meeting in Porto. Net, ECL closed 2025 with a deficit of €156.460 – substantially smaller than the €233.977 shortfall approved at the last General Assembly, and absorbed by the association's reserves, which remain intact at €250.000.

Income — 2025
Total income: €735.680



- Membership fees
- EU-funded projects
- Reimbursements

Expenditure — 2025
Total expenditure: €892.140



- Personnel costs (€760.518)
- Operational costs (€66.085)
- Events (€16.858)
- EU-project expenditure (€30.724)
- Other services, subscriptions etc. (€14.017)
- Travel & information/comms (€3.938)

Financial report

ECL does not accept any support from the tobacco industry, or any other companies that produce products that are deemed harmful to health.

The Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL) was audited by an external, independent agency for the financial year 2025 (1 Jan 2025 to 31 Dec 2025).

Income	Actual 2025 (€)
Membership Income	457,405.00
EU Projects (all, combined)	274,148.00
Reimbursement	4,127.00
Fundraising	0.00
Total Income	735,680.00
Expenditure	Actual 2025 (€)
Personnel Costs	760,518.00
Operational Costs	66,085.00
Events	16,858.00
Travel Costs (staff, externals)	3,568.00
Information and Communications	370.00
Other Services, Subscriptions, Memberships etc.	14,017.00
Expenditure Linked to EU-funded Projects	30,724.00
Total Expenditure	892,140.00
Summary	Actual 2025 (€)
Total Income	735,680.00
Total Expenditure	892,140.00
Deficit	(156,460)
Approved (Budgeted) Deficit	(233,977)
Bank Social Fund and Reserves	250,000.00

The **Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)** is a non-profit umbrella organisation made up of 34 national and regional cancer leagues advocating for improved cancer control and care across Europe. Our vision is a Europe free of cancer.

 ECL@cancer.eu

 www.cancer.eu

 [@cancerleagues](https://twitter.com/cancerleagues)

 [Association of European
Cancer Leagues](https://www.linkedin.com/company/association-of-european-cancer-leagues)