



The past, present and future of the European Code against Cancer (ECAC)

It seems that hardly a week goes by without some media outlet reporting anxiously on the latest thing that has been linked to cancer. The average person would be forgiven for thinking that everything can cause cancer. Thankfully, far-sighted experts brought together by the European Commission four decades ago developed a **framework to inform the public of the key things they needed to know to prevent cancer.**

The **European Code against Cancer (ECAC)** informs people about actions they can take to reduce their cancer risk (bit.ly/EuropeanCancerCode). An initiative of the European Commission, the scientific basis for the ECAC is provided by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (WHO/IARC), marking it out as **the definitive tool for cancer prevention in Europe.**

The Past

Right from the start, **cancer leagues** have been the **early adopters** and **primary promoters** of the ECAC.

Leagues have used it to inform targeted communication to specific groups, develop health promotion interventions, and support policy recommendations at the governmental level. At the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL), all of **our cancer prevention work has been based on the evidence provided by each edition of ECAC.**

Since 2014, ECL has acted as ECAC's **custodian**, having invested considerable resources to support member leagues to use ECAC and apply its evidence to promote cancer prevention at the national and local levels. We have also empowered and trained dozens of Youth Ambassadors to disseminate ECAC amongst their peers and the wider public.

The Present

The current edition of ECAC consists of 12 **simple-to-understand messages** complemented by:

- **Fourteen scientific publications** describing the methodology to update ECAC and evidence for each message
- an extensive online **Q&A section**
- **Two sets** of self-paced, multilingual **e-learning modules** about ECAC (available in English and French and soon in German, Hungarian, Spanish and Polish)

We encourage everyone to make use of these free resources and complete the ECAC e-learning modules to **gain a certification as an ECAC promoter!**

The Future

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan demonstrates the commitment of the European Union to diminishing the negative impact of cancer on society. A key priority of the plan is the **commitment to update the ECAC.**

The future **5th edition** represents a golden opportunity to build on past successes by expanding the scope of ECAC to incorporate new tools and materials to aid implementation and dissemination. To do so, **a permanent mechanism to update the ECAC in the long term is needed.**

ECL is appealing for the establishment of a **robust governance model** for the ECAC and calls on all stakeholders to become active promoters.

So why not join cancer leagues, WHO/IARC and the EU institutions in amplifying ECAC and, together, we can step-up cancer prevention in Europe!