

## Workshop on the dissemination of the European Code Against Cancer (ECAC): summary report

22-23 September 2016, Lyon (France), International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)

### Background

On 22 and 23 September 2016, representatives from 8 cancer leagues plus additional representatives of national ministries of health, public health agencies and the European Commission met to discuss the current status of the dissemination of the European Code Against Cancer. The purpose of this workshop was for cancer leagues to provide a country-by-country update on the campaigns and initiatives launched since the revision of ECAC was published in October 2014.

The workshop also included important discussions on the evaluation of the impact of the European Code Against Cancer, cooperation with cancer screening programmes, and an introduction to the work and scope of IARC.

### Summary

#### **Welcome address and introduction**

Dr Joachim Schüz, Head of Section Environment and Radiation at IARC opened the workshop with a welcome address from. Dr Schüz paid tribute to all cancer leagues for their role in valorising the translations of the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the ECAC. Leagues were especially useful in helping to ensure the translations used language that is understandable for the general population.

Dr Schüz noted that the concept for the “questions and answers” section of the ECAC website arose from discussion of meetings with cancer leagues during the development of the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the ECAC. The “questions and answers” section has been very important as it allows the average person to find further information about the recommendations of the ECAC, and provides advice about what they can do to reduce their risk of cancer for both themselves and their families.

In conclusion, this workshop represents a timely occasion for IARC to catch up with cancer leagues, to discuss how to maintain and update elements of the ECAC, and consider issues for the future, such as evaluating its impact.

#### **Introduction to IARC – scope & work of the agency**

Dr Christopher P. Wild, Director of IARC, gave an historical overview of the development of IARC and provided a comprehensive introduction to the Agency’s work.

Primarily known for research, the scope of IARC’s work extends more broadly than basic research, to encompass, encompassing translational and implementation research, which is captured in the concept of “research-plus”.

In terms of cancer prevention, IARC harnesses the knowledge of basic science and fuses this with epidemiological data to support evidence-based prioritisation of cancer prevention. This allows IARC to evaluate prevention programmes and enhance their implementation.

IARC also generates and evaluates data, firstly through inter-disciplinary research, and secondly through the organisation of independent expert reviews, including: the IARC monographs; Handbooks for Cancer Prevention; and WHO Classification of tumours.

In concluding, Dr Wild noted that although cancer prevention is clearly essential, it is neglected in terms of prioritisation and resource allocation globally. This is despite the acknowledged fact that “no country can treat its way out of the cancer problem”. With this in mind, Dr Wild has recently proposed the creation of an alliance of European organisations focused on prevention, which would be named *Cancer Prevention Europe*. Cancer leagues are encouraged to explore how they could support this concept.



## Round-table discussion on the current status of ECAC dissemination

A round-table discussion was held to update participants on the current status of the dissemination of the European Code Against Cancer at the national and local levels across Europe. Representatives from 9 cancer leagues presented an update during the session. In addition, one update was provided by a representative of the Ministry of Health for Malta. To view a brief overview of these updates, please consult the annex.

Representatives of the cancer leagues and national ministries also paid special attention to particular challenges they have encountered whilst promoting the ECAC. Common issues have included: anti-vaccination campaigns; reduction in funding from national sources for campaigns and initiatives to promote the ECAC; and contrasting narratives on ECAC messages, such as in regards to drinking alcohol.

Following a discussion on the experiences of disseminating the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of ECAC, the following key points were made:

- There is a need to better understand how the general population reacts to the messages of the ECAC, and what the subsequent impact on their behaviour;
- A mechanism should be developed by which the Code is regularly updated on a small-scale. This is particularly important for updating the 'questions and answers' section of the ECAC website, which could require more regular updating to keep pace with evidence and emerging trends. Cancer leagues should play a key role in this process;
- The expert scientific committees which were convened to develop the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of ECAC should be kept together to support the process of renewing the evidence base for the ECAC. Cancer leagues should explore fostering closer links with the various experts in the dissemination of the ECAC;
- More examples on evidence-based interventions relating to the implementation

of ECAC messages should be gathered, evaluated and publicised in order to provide greater clarity on the ECAC messages can be translated into successful cancer prevention actions. In this respect, a close cooperation between cancer leagues and national authorities, in collaboration with the scientific experts such as IARC, is required.

## Cooperation with Cancer Screening programmes

The 12<sup>th</sup> message of the ECAC encourages participation in organised screening programmes, according to EU guidelines and the best quality international evidence for quality assurance.

To explore further this topic and how, potentially, screening programmes can be harnessed to promote the ECAC recommendations as a whole, Dr Nereo Segnan (Head of Unit for the Department of Cancer Screening at the Centre for Epidemiology and Cancer Prevention (Piedmont - Italy), and member of the scientific committee for the development 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the ECAC) presented an overview on complex field of organised cancer screening programmes.

The presentation covered 5 key areas:

- 1) how and why cancer screening is addressed in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition;
- 2) elaboration of the key terms for the organisation of organised cancer screening;
- 3) the state of the art of cancer screening in Europe;
- 4) possible areas for cooperation with cancer leagues in the promotion of cancer screening;
- 5) overview of how primary prevention can be addressed in cancer screening programmes.

In conclusion, Dr Segnan proposed a follow up workshop with relevant staff members of cancer leagues, plus wider stakeholders, to explore further these concepts and develop closer collaboration for systematically promoting the



ECAC through organised cancer screening programmes. Other topics can also be addressed during this meeting, and so agenda should be developed and agreed upon before the end of 2016.

### **Evaluating the impact of the European Code Against Cancer**

The second day of the workshop focused on evaluating the impact of the ECAC.

The first presentation, by David Ritchie (ECL), introduced the online public awareness survey commissioned by ECL in October 2015. The online survey was performed by YouGov in 5 European countries (Finland, France, Poland, Spain, and the UK). A representative sample of 6,109 people participated in survey.

Survey questions asked respondents about their opinions on cancer prevention and whether they had previously heard of the European Code Against Cancer. Combining the results for all 5 countries showed that 10% of respondents knew of the ECAC. This figure ranged from 17% in Poland, to just 1% in the UK. ECL will re-launch the survey in October 2017 in order to gauge whether the awareness of the Code has increased since the original survey.

Following a discussion on the presentation, workshop participants agreed that it was important to schedule a future meeting to look closer at the objectives of the follow up survey, and analyse whether a number of the questions from the original survey can be modified in order to derive more useful data on cancer prevention attitudes and behaviours.

Following this, Dr Alberto Lana Perez presented the experiences from evaluations of earlier editions of the ECAC. Dr Lana Perez's research group at the University of Oviedo is one of the few institutes to use the ECAC in scientific studies and evaluations.

The first evaluation was performed in 1990, shortly after the publication of the first edition of the ECAC. The objective of this study was to evaluate what is known and practiced of the European Code Against Cancer by students and teachers in Asturias region of Spain. A relationship was also found in females between knowledge and practice of the ECAC in relation to food intake, tobacco and alcohol consumption, and cancer. Overall, the findings indicated a lack of knowledge and practice of the Code, suggesting that greater dissemination of ECAC was required.

Evaluations of the later editions of the ECAC developed specific interventions to assess cancer-related behaviours. In 2005, an educational intervention was tested with primary health care nurses, who received training to provide information about the ECAC. This study found that engaging highly motivated healthcare providers could have a beneficial impact on the knowledge and adherence to the ECAC.

Dr Carolina Garcia Espina, staff scientist at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), presented a proposal for a pilot study to evaluate the impact of the ECAC via an educational intervention supplemented by SMS.

Dr Garcia explained that justification for the proposal by noting that almost 30 years since the publication of the first edition of the ECAC, and three subsequent updates later, it is still not well known among EU citizens, and even health professionals and cancer prevention and control scientists. Furthermore, previous editions of the ECAC have received little evaluation. Therefore, research on the impact of ECAC is very timely at this stage.

The pilot would propose different intervention methods for promoting the ECAC, and would supply follow up information by SMS (or the smartphone application "WhatsApp", if feasible). The pilot would have relevance for the work of cancer prevention professionals by studying effective and appropriate methods to implement



and disseminate cancer prevention strategies and tools.

Further information on the proposal will be sent amongst the wider contact list of ECL member leagues in order to provide further comments and input to the proposal, and begin the process of exploring a possible scale-up of the pilot.

### **Introduction to the IARC Monographs: example of red and processed meat classification**

The final session of the workshop was delivered by Dr Dana Loomis, Deputy Head of Section of IARC Monographs. IARC Monographs are a series of scientific reviews on the evaluation of carcinogenic risks to humans. The IARC Monographs identify environmental factors that can increase the risk of cancer in humans.

Dr Loomis gave a thorough overview of the development of the IARC Monographs, tracing the history of the initiative, through to a systematic explanation of the process followed by IARC during the production of the Monographs. The presentation placed a special emphasis on the recent classification of carcinogenic risk for red and processed meats, given their explicit reference in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of ECAC.

As cancer leagues are actively using the evidence provided by the IARC Monographs in their work, the presentation was important for demonstrating the extensive methods used to develop the Monographs. Future cooperation on this topic could extend to sharing experiences on how cancer leagues have communicated information conveyed by the Monographs, and how leagues have responded to media enquiries on this information.

### **Conclusions**

At the conclusion of the meeting a number of areas were identified for follow-up:

- To investigate provision for continuous update of the ECAC, focusing particularly on the “questions and answers” section of the ECAC website. This will involve direct cooperation between cancer leagues, the EC, IARC and the ECAC scientific expert groups;
- To develop an agenda for a workshop on cooperation with cancer screening programmes to be held by April 2017;
- To consult with cancer leagues on the objective of ECAC public awareness survey to be launched in October 2017;
- To disseminate information related to the proposed pilot study to evaluate the impact of ECAC.

The next workshop on the dissemination of the ECAC is scheduled for **13 February 2017**, in **Malta**.



**Annexe:**

- **Slovak League Against Cancer** – each year, the Slovakian league against cancer organises the national week against cancer in early October. The entirety of the Code is shared during the week, although the week itself focuses on one particular message as its theme.

A strong focus is placed on the educational environment for young people, with schools being used to distribute versions of the Code. Recent campaigns have emphasised physical activity message of ECAC, such as the ‘frog jump’ challenge, which used social media to generate interest for the campaign.

LINK: [www.zabakyzazdravie.sk](http://www.zabakyzazdravie.sk)

- **Irish Cancer Society** – the Irish Cancer Society has been actively promoting the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Code since October 2014. This included a specially designed infographic communicating the 12 messages of the ECAC, plus a video about ECAC which was shown in GP surgeries across Ireland. As well as creating specific communication aerials to promote the ECAC and its messages, ECAC provides the evidence-base for much of the society’s prevention work. ECAC is also directly incorporated into specific community health interventions, such as the ‘Fit for Life & Work’ programme, which specifically targets young unemployed men and women. This initiative includes a section dedicated to educating the participants about the European Code Against Cancer.

LINK: <https://www.cancer.ie/reduce-your-risk/healthy-lifestyle/europeancode>

- **Polish League Against Cancer** – ECAC has been actively promoted at the national level in Poland since the publication of the first edition. During this time, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Oncology Centre has been at the forefront of these activities. Several communication products were produced for the previous edition of ECAC. These versions targeted: the general public; health

professionals; and young people, for whom a special comic book series was created based on the messages of ECAC. Whilst no funding has yet been provided to update these materials in line with the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Code, dissemination of the latest edition has continued through the development of a dedicated website. The recently established Polish League Against Cancer has been active in promoting the ECAC, and has widely promoted ECL actions to publicise the ECAC. LINK: <http://www.kodekswalkizrakiem.pl/>

- **Portuguese League Against Cancer** – the league has a history of working in close collaboration with schools for its health promotion activities, which has developed into a specific cooperation to promote ECAC to school age children. As an illustration, the “Health Vox Pop” campaign was presented, demonstrating how social media and online videos can be used to educate and inform about the ECAC.

LINK:

<https://www.facebook.com/voxpodasaude.lpcc>;

<https://www.ligacontracancro.pt/paginas/defaulthe?url/vox-pop/>

- **Cancer Society of Finland** – the Cancer Society of Finland has created a dedicated website for the promotion of the ECAC in both Finnish and Swedish. The site is the central communications hub providing information on ECAC that is specific to the Finnish population. The society also has a number of separate websites related to individual messages of the Code and regularly publishes a widely distributed magazine that addresses issues related to the 12 messages of the Code.

LINK: <https://www.ilmansyopaa.fi/>

- **Danish Cancer Society** – the society has a strategic objective to develop specific goals for action in relation to the 12 messages of ECAC and have these adopted as national policy goals for cancer prevention. In



addition, the society implements a number of high-visibility public awareness and behavioural change campaigns designed to encourage the implementation of the ECAC recommendations in practice.

LINK:

<https://www.cancer.dk/cooludenroeg/om/>

- **Israel Cancer Association** – the association communicates the code differently according to target group. Younger, school-age children receive advice primarily on sun safety, which has formed a key part of the association's highly effective work to reduce skin cancer mortality dramatically over the past 25 years. Adolescents and young adults receive more of the messages of the Code, focusing on tobacco and physical activity in particular. Whereas the adult population is presented with a more comprehensive overview the ECAC messages.

LINK:

[http://en.cancer.org.il/template\\_e/publications.aspx?maincat=67](http://en.cancer.org.il/template_e/publications.aspx?maincat=67)

- **Cancer Focus Northern Ireland** – Cancer Focus has actively promoted the Code from the very first edition. In addition to specific educational campaigns on ECAC messages, Cancer Focus has placed a special emphasis on communicated ECAC to the political level, and has succeeded in ensuring that ECAC will be prominent in the cancer prevention strategy for Northern Ireland. Cancer Focus works with a variety of health professionals to promote the code, and is exploring possibilities to work with other professions outside of the health field, such as tattoo artists.

LINK: <https://cancerfocusni.org/cancer-prevention/mens-health/>;

<https://cancerfocusni.org/about-us/public-affairs/>

- **Ministry of Health, Malta** – ECAC is the basis of all the cancer prevention work that takes in Malta. For the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the ECAC, a special promotional document in Maltese

was produced and widely disseminated.

Research indicates that the Maltese population associates cancer with issues such as treatment and survivorship. Therefore, the ECAC is an increasingly vital tool educate the general public about cancer prevention and health promotion. Future work will focus on training health professionals to be able to implement this responsibility.

LINK:

<http://www.nationalcancerplatform.org.mt/>

- **Romanian Cancer Society** – in Romania, 45% of the population lives in rural area. Therefore, a one size-fits-all approach to cancer prevention is not possible. Specific activities have been implemented at the local and regional level to promote ECAC messages. Of particular importance has been the pilot cervical and breast cancer screening programmes, which led to the distribution of the ECAC to 25,000 recipients in rural communities. In terms of the national perspective, priority has been given to ensuring that ECAC is included in the national cancer control plan, which has recently been revised in 2016.

LINK: <http://srcro.weebly.com/>

