



# EUROPEAN CODE AGAINST CANCER WORKSHOP: PARTNERSHIPS FOR POLICY ACTION

22-24 MAY 2019, BELFAST AND DUBLIN

hosted by Cancer Focus Northern Ireland and Irish Cancer Society

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## Background

The European Code Against Cancer (ECAC) is an initiative of the European Commission to inform people about actions they can take for themselves or their families to reduce their risk of cancer. ECAC is comprised of 12 evidence-based recommendations, which the public can understand and follow without any special skills or advice.

Since 2015, the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL) has received core funding from the European Commission to support the dissemination of the latest version of the ECAC by encouraging the close cooperation of cancer leagues at the national and regional levels. One of the key activities to facilitate this cooperation has been the organisation of specialist workshops dedicated to the ECAC. These workshops aimed to connect peers to share experiences of communicating ECAC, identifying common barriers and discuss possible solutions to improve the dissemination of the ECAC.

Following the evaluation of the several successful workshops that were held between 2015-2018, the focus of the workshops for the next working period (2019-2021) will shift from discussing the communication of the ECAC towards using the European Code against Cancer as a tool for policy development. In this spirit, the aim of the workshops will be to act upon the footnote of the current edition of the European Code against Cancer: “The European Code Against Cancer focuses on actions that individual citizens can take to help prevent cancer. Successful cancer prevention requires these individual actions to be supported by governmental policies and actions.”

## Summary

The primary objective of the workshop was to kickstart the cooperation amongst cancer leagues in advocating for the governmental policies and actions needed to support the European Code against Cancer.

This workshop opened the discussion, amongst cancer leagues and invited partner organisations, about the policy dimension of the ECAC, building towards the agreement of regular position papers and policy statements endorsed by cancer leagues. As a guiding theme, the workshop focused on the partnerships required to achieve policy goals supporting the messages of the European Code against Cancer.

To inspire cancer leagues across Europe, the workshop drew on examples of national and local experiences from the two host cancer leagues: Cancer Focus Northern Ireland and the Irish Cancer Society. These examples focused on several areas of the ECAC: sun and UV safety; HPV vaccination and alcohol consumption, in addition to discussing the critical role National Cancer Control Plans play in developing cancer prevention policy.

Taking place during 22 – 24 May in both Belfast (22-23 May) and Dublin (24 May) this workshop presented a great opportunity to learn about the long-standing work to build on the ECAC to achieve ambitious public health objectives.



## Introduction

### **Roisin Foster – Cancer Focus Northern Ireland**

Chief Executive of Cancer Focus Northern Ireland, Roisin Foster, welcomed participants to Belfast and the headquarters of Cancer Focus.

Cancer Focus celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019 and so it is a great source of pride to welcome international colleagues for the workshop.



### **Kevin O'Hagan – Irish Cancer Society**

Cancer Prevention manager, Kevin O'Hagan, expressed the delight of the Irish Cancer Society to co-organise the workshop with Cancer Focus Northern Ireland.

The Society has many similarities to Cancer Focus in its priorities, which are at the heart of the workshop programme.



### **Gerry McElwee – Cancer Focus Northern Ireland**

Head of Cancer Prevention at Cancer Focus, Gerry McElwee, introduced the concept of partnerships for policy action as the guiding theme for the workshop programme.

Partnership working has been essential to the success achieved in cancer prevention on the island of Ireland. Such examples are explored across the breadth of the workshop programme.

Lastly, the importance of the ECAC was underscored noting that cancer Focus has adopted and promoted the ECAC since its inception in 1987.





Wednesday 22 May 2019

## UPDATE OF ECAC ACTIONS, POLICY FRAMEWORK AND CANCER PREVENTION EUROPE

Speakers: David Ritchie – ECL

Joachim Schüz – IARC

This session provided an update on ECL actions since December 2018 related to the European Code against Cancer, focusing on the results of the ECAC evaluation performed with cancer leagues. The outcomes of the evaluation will be used to inform the ECAC policy framework, which will outline the potential supportive policies and governmental actions for the implementation of the ECAC.

An update of recent activities by Cancer Prevention Europe was provided highlighting the way in which cancer leagues can be involved and support the workplan of Cancer Prevention Europe. A special mention was made of the 'Cancer Mission' for Europe, which is a new initiative to be funded by the European Union during the period of the next EU budget.

## ADDRESSING THE SUN & UV SAFETY MESSAGE OF ECAC - HOW PARTNERSHIP-WORKING CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Speakers: Marbeth Ferguson - Cancer Focus Northern Ireland

Louise Herron - Public Health Agency

Denise McCallion - Public Health Agency

Karen Oldham - Dept. of Health

Forging effective partnerships is critical to achieving success in any policy and advocacy objective. In the first example during the workshop of local practice and experience, this session considered the skin cancer strategy for Northern Ireland, examining the role partnership working continues to play.

Participants were invited to discuss their own experiences at a national or local level acting upon the ECAC message concerning sun and UV safety.





Thursday 23 May 2019

## PATTERNS OF SUNBED USE IN EUROPE

Speakers:       Brigitte Boonen – Euroskin  
                      Elise Logan – Mid and East Antrim Council  
                      Kevin O'Hagan - Irish Cancer Society

This session focused on the topic of sunbed use for cosmetic purposes focusing on the policy and regulatory measures attempted in Europe.

The specific national example from Belgium was presented as a case study in how to achieve effective public health regulation on sunbed use, highlighting the value of partnership working. This example was complimented by the experience from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, which led to a discussion on the lessons learnt from each presented example.

At the conclusion, participants were invited to consider possible complimentary working amongst cancer leagues.

## VISIT TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY'S ALL-PARTY GROUP ON CANCER

### SPECIAL PRESENTATION - INDOOR RADON MAPPING: AN ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Speaker:        Quentin Crowley – Trinity College Dublin

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas, which can accumulate indoors and result in an elevated risk of developing lung cancer. Globally, radon exposure is the second highest cause of lung cancer, resulting in tens of thousands deaths annually.

Encouraging individuals to find out about the levels of radon exposure in their home is one of the twelve messages of the European Code against Cancer. However, public awareness about radon and the steps to take to discover the radon levels in personal dwellings remains very low.

This presentation provided a brief introduction to the topic and an update on the latest methods in radon mapping with examples from Ireland and Europe. The link to national and regional governmental action was stressed by highlighting relevant legislation.



## INTRODUCTION TO THE ALL PARTY GROUP ON CANCER

Facilitator:      Roisin Foster - Cancer Focus Northern Ireland

Workshop participants were invited to engage with members and representatives of the Northern Ireland Assembly's All-Party Group on Cancer during a special meeting of the group.



This session covered the history, achievements and working practices of the group, providing inspiration for leagues to initiate similar concepts in their own jurisdictions.

Members and representatives of the group provided their own testimonials on their experience of working within the group, once again noting the value of collaborative, partnership working.



ECL acts as the secretariat of the MEPs (Member of the European Parliament) group against Cancer (MAC) and sees the All-Party group as an example of best practice.

Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences of working with policymakers and legislators and reflect upon the challenges and opportunities for translating the All-Party group to their own countries or regions.





Friday 24 May 2019

## HPV VACCINATION IN A CLIMATE OF VACCINE HESITANCY

Speaker: Yvonne Morrissey - HSE National Immunisation Office

One of the key priority areas of ECAC in recent years has been the establishing and maintaining vaccination programmes for HPV and Hepatitis B.

Several countries in Europe have experienced an alarming loss of confidence in vaccination programmes, not least regarding HPV, and have had to develop new approaches in multi-sectoral partnerships to respond to this issue and restore confidence in the programmes.

As previous ECAC workshops have discussed the communication strategies developed when addressing vaccine hesitancy, this session examined the broader context of assuring the quality of vaccination programmes in a context of decreasing confidence in vaccination as a public health good.

Focusing on HPV, this session enabled a discussion on critical issues for policy action such as the approval of gender-neutral programmes.

## ALCOHOL AND CANCER: FINDING THE APPROPRIATE POLICY MIX

Speaker: Sheila Gilheany - Alcohol Action Ireland

The ECAC issues a clear message that, in respect to cancer risk, there is no safe level of alcohol consumption. Feedback from previous ECAC workshops and related events have indicated that cancer leagues have experience difficulties in finding a suitable way to communicate and act upon the evidence of the link between alcohol consumption and cancer. Nevertheless, this remains a key topic and area for action at both the individual level and policy level.

This session presented the experiences of partners from the Republic of Ireland in advocating for governmental policies and actions designed to support individuals to act upon the recommendation of the ECAC.

Participants shared their experience from their respective countries to identify ways possible methods to overcome the frequent barriers encountered when addressing the topic of alcohol and cancer.





## NATIONAL CANCER CONTROL PLANS & ROLE OF CANCER PREVENTION

Speakers: Aine Lyng - National Cancer Control Programme, Republic of Ireland

Carolina Espina - IARC

The final session covered the issue of National Cancer Control Plans (NCCPs) as an essential tool and catalyst for policy action in cancer control. The example of the Republic of Ireland presented as a case study to facilitate a discussion on the comparable and diverging aspects of NCCPs in the countries and regions of the workshop participants.

An overview of the NCCPs in Europe and the extent to which they support or compliment the ECAC was explored, which demonstrated the heterogeneity across Europe.

## SMALL WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

At the conclusion of the workshop programme, participants were divided into several small working groups to discuss key points arising from the presentations during the final session on NCCPs.

Participants discussed the status of the cancer control plans in their countries and regions and noted the extent to which the ECAC is addressed. Participants noted the positive example of the cancer prevention network in Ireland and recognised this as a model of good practice in partnership working.

Whilst noting the importance of partnership working, participants also concluded that such collaborations require resources and commitment over time. Therefore, it would be useful for ECL to facilitate discussions on how to raise funds for cancer prevention and evaluate models for developing and delivering collaborative working to implement the ECAC messages.

Finally, general guidance for incorporating ECAC into national cancer control plans, based on the experience of successful examples, would be welcome.





## Links

European Code against Cancer	<a href="http://cancer-code-europe.iarc.fr">http://cancer-code-europe.iarc.fr</a>
Cancer Prevention Europe	<a href="https://cancerpreventioneurop.e.iarc.fr/">https://cancerpreventioneurop.e.iarc.fr/</a>
Cancer Mission for Europe	<a href="https://bit.ly/2Yv2ARq">https://bit.ly/2Yv2ARq</a>
Cancers attributable to UV radiation	<a href="https://gco.iarc.fr/causes/uv/home">https://gco.iarc.fr/causes/uv/home</a>
Scientific opinion on sunbed use	<a href="https://bit.ly/2YqdGXM">https://bit.ly/2YqdGXM</a>
Indoor radon concentration map	<a href="https://bit.ly/2JrROYD">https://bit.ly/2JrROYD</a>
HPV information centre	<a href="https://hpvcentre.net/index.php">https://hpvcentre.net/index.php</a>
<i>Draft</i> guidance on HPV vaccination for boys	<a href="https://bit.ly/2HI65E5">https://bit.ly/2HI65E5</a>
Alcohol and cancer	<a href="https://bit.ly/2RDU9o">https://bit.ly/2RDU9o</a>
NCCP portal	<a href="https://www.iccp-portal.org/map">https://www.iccp-portal.org/map</a>

### *Speakers' organisations*

Alcohol Action Ireland	<a href="http://alcoholireland.ie/">http://alcoholireland.ie/</a>
Association of European Cancer Leagues	<a href="http://www.cancer.eu">www.cancer.eu</a>
Cancer Focus Northern Ireland	<a href="https://cancerfocusni.org">https://cancerfocusni.org</a>
Department of Health (NI)	<a href="https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/">https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/</a>
Euroskin	<a href="https://www.euroskin.eu/en/">https://www.euroskin.eu/en/</a>
HSE National Immunisation Office	<a href="https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/">https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/</a>
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council	<a href="https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/">https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/</a>
International Agency for Research on Cancer	<a href="https://www.iarc.fr/">https://www.iarc.fr/</a>
Irish Cancer Society	<a href="https://www.cancer.ie/">https://www.cancer.ie/</a>
HSC Public Health Agency	<a href="https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/">https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/</a>
Trinity College Dublin	<a href="https://www.tcd.ie/">https://www.tcd.ie/</a>