

United European Gastroenterology Position Paper on Horizon Europe, Framework Programme 9

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UEG calls for focus on the bottom-up approach driven by fundamental research

- The European Research Council (ERC) (first pillar) won an increase of €3.5 billion, bringing it up to €16.6 billion from €13.1 billion under Horizon 2020. The ERC has been very successful, with more than 70% of funded projects making significant scientific breakthroughs.¹ A modest increase of €0.6 billion in Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) within the first pillar further supports fundamental research.
- We applaud the increase in the funding of the ERC and MSCA to secure a bottom-up approach driven by fundamental research. Such an approach is necessary to ensure that Europe stays at the forefront of future medical discoveries.
- A particular focus on life sciences within ERC and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions is essential. UEG urges for increased allocation to life sciences within these programmes.

UEG is calling for an increase in funding for health research under the second pillar

- Within the second pillar, funding collaborative research between academia and industry, the health research cluster has seen a slight increase of just €0.3 billion, amounting to €7.7 billion under the current proposal. While health has barely moved, research in food and natural resources saw an increase of about €6 billion, reaching a total of €10 billion under Horizon Europe. Clusters “Climate, energy and mobility” and “Digital and industry” amount to €15 billion each.
- We call for an increase in health research spending under the second pillar given the specific value of health for the well-being of society.

UEG calls for an increased focus on funding for chronic diseases with life long- impact & research into environmental health determinants resulting in chronicity,

- Chronic diseases cause lifelong suffering, reduce quality of life, and significantly lower workplace productivity. These diseases can often be recurring, and strike a patient at random intervals throughout his or her lifetime. Chronic diseases continue to ruin lives.
- Environmental factors and unhealthy lifestyles play an important role in the development of chronic diseases. For example, obesity and the harmful use of alcohol are giving rise to higher rates of chronic digestive disorders.

¹ ERC, <https://erc.europa.eu/projects-figures/facts-and-figures>

- Chronic liver disease is estimated to affect almost 30 million people in the EU.² Chronic digestive diseases carry a significant economic burden – for example, direct medical costs for the treatment of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is €35 billion per year³ and up to €5.6 billion for inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). The causes of IBD are not fully known, but genetic and environmental factors play a role².
- Although inflammatory bowel syndrome (IBS) is one of the most common diagnoses in gastroenterology, funding for IBS projects only represented 0.8% of the contributions by the EU in FP7 and 0.2% of contributions to date in Horizon 2020.⁴

UEG calls for a higher priority to be placed on digestive cancer within cancer research funding

- Digestive cancers are responsible for 28% of cancer-related deaths in the EU and over 590 000 digestive cancer cases are found annually. However, approximately half of all cancers are preventable and their significant burden could be reduced². Pancreatic cancer, for example, is under-researched compared to its disease burden in the EU⁵, even though it kills 90,000 European citizens every year and survival rates have not improved in the last 40 years. Research on pancreatic cancer receives less than 2% of all cancer research funding in Europe.⁶

UEG calls for increased funding in field of disruptive technologies in gastroenterology. There has been little progress made in endoscopes, for example, in the last 30 years.

UEG is a professional medical association combining scientific European societies concerned with digestive health. UEG promotes high-quality clinical care, scientific research and training. UEG supports research and cooperation in the field of gastroenterology & hepatology.

² Digestive Health Across Europe - Issues, Challenges and Inequalities, UEG 2018

³ The Survey of Digestive Health Across Europe, UEG 2014 <https://www.ueg.eu/research/white-book/>

⁴ Tomblom et al 2018 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253\(18\)30203-6/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253(18)30203-6/abstract)

⁵ Begum et al 2018 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959804918308189>

⁶ 10 things you need to know about pancreatic cancer <https://www.pancreaticcancereurope.eu/about-us/mission-and-history/about-pancreatic-cancer/>