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## United European Gastroenterology Position Paper Improving digestive health in Europe: Time to act

June 2018

Digestive diseases are responsible for around one million deaths each year in Europe across all ages. As the European population ages, the burden of digestive diseases will grow inevitably.

**UEG's mission at the EU level is:** to promote digestive health across Europe and mitigate the socio-economic burden of digestive diseases on Europe's society; to help advance the treatment and prevention of digestive diseases; to promote health literacy; and advocate for increased funding and other support from the EU to fight digestive diseases. UEG is promoting high-quality clinical care, scientific research and training,

### UEG's positions of relevance for EU policy work

**Digestive Cancers** are the leading cause of cancer-related death in Europe. The most common type of digestive cancer, colorectal cancer (CRC), can be effectively prevented and treated in early stages, while there are only very limited options for early diagnosis and effective treatment of pancreatic cancer (PC), which is on the rise in Europe and is the deadliest cancer worldwide.

UEG advocates for the implementation of standardised population-based screening programmes for CRC in all Member States as this is not the case yet. UEG calls for increased funding into PC research (receives less than 2% of overall cancer research funding). We advocate for equal access to prevention and treatment; improved quality and standards for cancer care across Europe.

**Balanced diet and nutrition** play an integral part in prevention and treatment of digestive diseases. UEG supports food reformulation efforts and promotion of diets based on scientific evidence. We urge EU policy makers to take action to protect Europe's minors (and adults) from consumption of alcohol and foods high in fat, sugar and salt through a number of actions, including prevention of aggressive marketing.

**Alcohol consumption** can lead to the development of digestive and liver diseases including digestive cancers. Given that Europe is the heaviest drinking region of the world, UEG is committed to help reduce alcohol related harm. UEG calls for the renewal of the EU Alcohol Strategy and regulatory approach on alcohol labelling as we strongly believe that any voluntary approach will be insufficient.

A number of chronic digestive conditions, such as **Inflammatory Bowel Diseases** (IBD), are not very well known and understood by broader public. UEG is thus determined to shed light on the prevention, treatment and the underlying causes of such conditions and to create understanding on how these conditions affects one's daily life. UEG is committed to accelerate the health literacy agenda in Europe.

*United European Gastroenterology is a professional non-profit organisation combining all the leading European societies concerned with digestive health.*