

My UEG Presidency: Providing opportunities for professionals to enhance their knowledge and skills and ultimately contribute to the improvement of digestive health

Becoming United European Gastroenterology (UEG) President, filled me with joy and I am also very happy to be the first woman in this position.

The next 2 years are particularly important for UEG, for several reasons. First, we launched in December 2021, the possibility for individual digestive healthcare professionals to connect with UEG even more closely than before, as myUEG Associates (<https://ueg.eu/myueg-community>). With My Connect, UEG's brand new networking feature, they can now also better network among each other, all in a safe and professional online setting only accessible to those within the myUEG Community.¹

In fact, we are a large group of healthcare professionals, with the common aim of improving digestive health. Since union gives strength, together we can be even stronger if interactivity and interconnection between the different specialties and National Societies increases. By individual talks and our communication campaigns in the next months we are eager to further demonstrate the opportunities and benefits of this program for our member societies and individuals. I dearly invite you all to follow and participate in these campaigns and encourage all your colleagues and friends to become a myUEG Associate.

Furthermore, we are now developing the new strategic plan 2023–2026, that will follow the 2019–2022 plan,² with opportunities of improvement, refining some crucial points in the benefit of the federation.

Hopefully, it will be the year of meeting together again in a face-to-face setting, something we are all longing for. Nevertheless, the lessons learned from the COVID pandemic should not be forgotten, and the understanding that many activities can be done virtually is something that has come to stay, in the benefit of the planet. It is also an important aim for UEG to go green and implement all measures that have an impact in reducing the climate changes. In fact, the digitalization of UEG had already started long before the pandemic, as well as the “green concept,” aiming UEG to be more eco-friendly, and we intend to follow that direction.

There are some aspects of UEG that are particularly dear to my heart, and I intend to strongly support:

- One, relates with the importance given to the younger, now designated as Young Gastroenterologist (GI) Associates. We can be helpful for them, while simultaneously they are a huge leading force in UEG, with the enthusiasm of youth. In fact, there are major advantages in becoming a Young GI Associate: there are many specific activities, it comes with no cost, and there is no country limitation. The Young Talent Group has been very active, since 2013, creating very interesting opportunities, mostly in what relates to career development and acquiring leadership capacities. It is of note, the recent creation of a new Career Development Program (<https://ueg.eu/p/220>) for myUEG Young GI Associates, that has been tailored specifically for the early stages of professional and academic careers. There are different topics, and in each topic/program there are different levels, including online resources, interactive sessions and a face-to-face meeting at UEG Week with the group and the experts to strengthen the relationship, discuss and network. The topics that will be taught this year are “Writing & publishing – How to write a good original article” and “Growing to be a leader – How to empower yourself and your team.”
- Another is the attention given to diversity, gender equality, and inclusion policies, in its many aspects.³ The creation of a task force has allowed very significant advances in this area. However, there is still much to be done, and one of the missions that UEG can contribute to, is the regular assessment of correct practices, either in hospital or university centers. It is important to implement the dissemination of the best practices in this regard, through our country representatives and our specialty societies.
- One of the great advantages of being a federation, is the outreach of our actions, and how influential we can be at a policy level. In this regard, our Public Affairs Committee has been doing through the years an excellent job, mostly through the actions at European

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Union (EU) level, creation of the Member of the European Parliament Digestive Health Group. These activities have all my support, but I believe that lobbying at a national level, through our National Societies, can further increase the influence of our actions.

- Regarding advancing research in digestive health, although a lot has been accomplished,⁴ we need to better support the application to EU grants. This is particularly true when we consider large consortiums that can be very much facilitated by our network of different specialties and different countries. The creation of a structure supporting the different steps of these applications would be particularly useful for applicants from less affluent countries, lacking these kinds of structures. Also benefiting from the network, the creation or amplification of large databases/registries for specific diseases could be very useful.
- Finally, although we are a European Federation, we feel committed to review our collaboration with other areas in the world, most importantly Africa where we see a benefit of sharing our knowledge and expertise.
- These next 2 years will be challenging, but also an excellent opportunity for improvement. In fact, we have a fantastic office, and an amazing group of volunteers, so I am sure we will achieve our aims. Nonetheless, I count on all of you to get involved and contribute, and this way I am sure we are going to grow in the right direction.

KEYWORDS

career development programme, gender equality, healthcare professionals, inclusion policies, UEG presidency

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Not Applicable.

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