



One team, one goal: Ending HPV cancers in Southeast Europe

Bucharest, 11 May – Eliminating cervical cancer and at least six other cancers caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV) requires everyone to play their part – and through popular sports, we’re bringing this message to a vast and varied audience.

It’s why today, in Bucharest, countries from Southeast Europe are huddling together, renewing their commitments to vaccination and screening, and updating their game plan on how to better implement both.

Organised by the [European Cancer Organisation \(ECO\)](#), in partnership with the [European Society of Gynaecological Oncology \(ESGO\)](#) and the [Romanian Football Federation](#), the meeting brings together participants from Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Serbia, among others, to address a shared public health challenge affecting young and old.

Across Southeast Europe, too many people are still not being reached by HPV vaccination and screening programmes. The result? Too many men and women suffering from avoidable cervical cancer, anal cancer, penile cancer, vulvar cancer, vaginal cancer, and head and neck cancers.

Over the last year, ECO and its partners have teamed up with countries in the region to help improve fragmented systems, limited coordination, and inequalities in access. Today’s event brings this work into sharp focus, combining national experiences with effective tactics to improve implementation Europe-wide.

The data illustrate the challenge. The HPV Prevention Policy Atlas Europe 2025 reveals a clear West–East divide across Southeast Europe. In the five countries highlighted at today’s event:

- Vaccination coverage for girls remains below 30% in Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and below 50% in Greece, well short of the 90% target set by the World Health Organization and Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan.
- Cervical cancer screening gaps further compound the problem: Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina lack organised, population-based programmes, and participation rates remain below 50%. Greece has taken initial steps with the recent introduction of an organised population-based programme.

Building on the [first joint Declaration for the Southeast Europe Region](#) launched in Sofia in January 2025, today’s gathering is introducing an updated and strengthened version. It reflects



lessons learned in the last year and highlights concrete tools to support countries in closing existing gaps. These tools include:

- The [HPV Prevention Policy Atlas Europe 2025](#) offers a comparative overview of vaccination and screening policies and implementation across Europe, identifying disparities in coverage and supporting accountability and evidence-based decision-making.
- The [ECO Good Practice Guide on HPV Vaccination](#) provides practical, evidence-based recommendations to strengthen vaccination programmes, focusing on policy integration, delivery systems, data, communication and equitable access.
- The ECO [Closing the Gaps](#) report on cervical cancer screening analyses the organisation and performance of screening programmes across Europe, identifying inequalities and outlining key actions to improve participation and outcomes.

Join us, together with policymakers, patient advocates, clinicians and researchers, for an eye-opening discussion on ways to implement HPV prevention in Southeast Europe and beyond.

[One Region. One Goal: Eliminating HPV-related cancers in Southeast Europe](#)

[Online Livestream Link](#)

11 May

13:30 - 19:30 EEST (12:30 - 18:30 CEST)

**Romanian Football Federation (FRF) Conference Facilities
Bucharest, Romania & Online**

‘HPV-related cancers can be prevented with the tools we have. The challenge now is ensuring they are implemented consistently across all countries. What we are seeing in Southeast Europe is a growing commitment to move from strategy to delivery, supported by stronger cooperation and practical solutions.’

Amil Družić, Vice-Chair of the ECO HPV and Hep B Action Network

‘Vaccination and screening are both essential to reducing the burden of HPV-related cancers. Strengthening these systems requires not only clinical expertise, but coordination, training and sustained investment to ensure that prevention reaches all eligible populations.’

Mihaela Grigore, Prevention HPV Lead at the European Society of Gynaecological Oncology (ESGO)

‘Football has a unique ability to reach people across generations, communities and backgrounds. By using the visibility and trust that sport brings, we can open conversations around HPV prevention in places where traditional health messaging does not always reach, and help turn awareness into action.’



Constantin-Florin Sari, Public Policy and Social Responsibility Manager at the Romanian Football Federation

'This meeting is an important opportunity to reflect on the progress made at national level, but also to recognise the challenges that remain. Turning plans into effective programmes requires sustained effort, coordination and the ability to adapt solutions to national contexts.'

Carmen Orban - Member, Health Committee of the Romanian SenateS

To arrange an interview with ECO policy experts about the Guide, please contact:

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About the European Cancer Organisation

The European Cancer Organisation (ECO) is the largest non-profit, multi-professional federation in Europe. It brings together hundreds of different professional societies and patient groups to advocate for more effective, efficient, and equitable cancer care.

More information available [here](#).

About the Romanian Football Federation

The Romanian Football Federation (Federația Română de Fotbal or FRF) is the independent governing body for football in Romania, founded in 1909 and headquartered in Bucharest. It is the largest sports organization in Romania with roughly 280 affiliated members and manages the national men's and women's teams, oversees major competitions like the Liga II, Liga III, and the Romanian Cup. FRF acts as a non-profit organization focused on promoting football throughout Romania, with a modern, strategic vision focused on social involvement, youth development, and enhancing the sport's infrastructure.

The Romanian Football Federation is a member of FIFA and UEFA and works closely with the umbrella organizations to develop the game within the country, including the establishment of the National Football Academy to advance sports education.

About the European Society of Gynaecological Oncology (ESGO)

The European Society of Gynaecological Oncology (ESGO) is a not-for-profit association established in 1983. ESGO's aim is to improve the health and well-being of women with gynaecological cancers through advocacy, prevention, research, excellence in care and education. Since its formation, ESGO has developed a strong infrastructure of 3000+ members



and a network of early-career doctors, patient advocacy groups, centres of excellence and a variety of research groups across Europe and globally.