A new strategic plan for UEG, 2019–2022: To reduce the burden of digestive diseases and improve digestive health

Every organization needs to take a careful and structured look into the future now and then. This “look into the future” is necessary to align current and future activities and gives officers, members, employees and everyone involved an opportunity to voice their ideas and ambitions. Such a process helps to set out the future course of the organization and determine shared goals for the coming years. United European Gastroenterology (UEG) has been busy throughout 2018 with this process, and I am proud of our new strategic plan 2019–2022, which was officially presented to the entire UEG community at the UEG Week 2018 in Vienna last October.

The new strategic plan was developed by first taking a very careful and detailed look at the previous strategic plan. We determined which aims and tasks had been fulfilled and in which areas more focus would be necessary. As we felt it to be important to have a broad base for the new strategic plan, we involved all professionals active inside UEG, such as in boards and committees, and we also involved all of our member societies from the start of this process. The mission and vision as well as the specific aims and tasks of the last strategic plan were presented to the above-mentioned groups, and feedback was collected in a structured manner. This proved to be a very rewarding exercise as many people took the time to clearly explain their ideas about UEG’s future course, often in great detail.

This feedback was extensively discussed in council and inside the UEG secretariat and led to a first draft. Major changes from the previous plan were that the new strategic plan would have to be more concise and should not go as deep into details on specific subjects as the previous plan had done. Furthermore, it seemed more logical to formulate our core values and organizational vitality in such a way that they would be applicable to everything UEG does before going into the strategic objectives of the six areas of activity of UEG. And it was finally decided that we would set objectives only for these six “strategic drivers” and after completion of the plan request the committee chairs to take these strategic objectives to their committees and use them for an activity plan for the next years.

After a few revisions of the draft strategic plan, a plenary meeting was held in June 2018 in Vienna to

prepare a prefinal version. For this meeting, organized by council, we invited the Young Talent Group, the chairs of all committees and task forces as well as the president or secretary general of each of our 17 European member societies. They all prepared by studying the prefinal draft and during a full day, the most challenging areas were each discussed after a brief introduction in a structured but open fashion. This turned out to be a very productive day with good discussions and shared conclusions and thereby became the basis for the definitive plan that was agreed on by council. We felt that the rather long and sometimes lengthy process has helped us all tremendously and are quite sure that UEG’s course for the next four years is crystal clear. The chairs of the committees are next in line to start preparing their specific goals for the coming years.

As outlined above, the mission and vision have been reformulated and the new vision of UEG is short and simple: to reduce the burden of digestive diseases and improve digestive health. Especially the addition of health in the vision is a significant change as it seemed logical and important to give prevention a more prominent place in our vision. The addition of health can also be politically valuable, as we are of course not looking at diseases only but all agree that prevention is the ultimate goal. Our core values include integrity, quality, diversity, independence, respect, accountability and transparency and are really the basis of everything we do and they apply to the work of committees, task forces, working groups, council and secretariat. Our core values also include that UEG will serve as an umbrella for our member societies and will communicate with patient organizations and with the public. Please do not hesitate to look at the full strategic plan or the concise version, both online, at ueg.eu/strategic-plan.

Now let’s have a quick look at our six strategic drivers: UEG Week, Education, Research, *UEG Journal*, Quality of Care and Public Affairs. Each of them has a number of strategic objectives and I will pick out the one or two that appeal to me most. For the UEG Week it is simple: We want to organize the best international multidisciplinary digestive health meeting in the world where quality and quantity (second in line) will

Figure 1. UEG Strategic Plan 2019-2022 – Overview.

Figure 2. UEG Strategic Plan 2019-2022 – Strategic Drivers.

The complete UEG Strategic Plan 2019-2022 can be downloaded here: ueg.eu/strategic-plan

increase. And during the week we will keep improving the postgraduate course, which reached an all-time high number of participants in 2018. In Education the biggest challenge may lie in the further development of digital training tools, and another strategic objective is to establish a European syllabus for all our education based on the Blue Book of the European Board of Gastroenterology and Hepatology (EBGH). The EBGH determines the educational goals for the training and certification of gastroenterologists, and cooperation with them will help our trainees to find everything necessary for their exams somewhere inside UEG in the future. As in the near future recertification for all practicing gastroenterologists may also be introduced, this is another area for UEG to serve the community.

The newly formed Research Committee will try to increase funding for digestive health research in cooperation with the Public Affairs Committee. And UEG will also support pan-European consortium forming by having grants for the start-up phase available. *UEG Journal* has made a good start in the past six years and under a new chief editor should make another step to reach a significant place in the ranking of journals in our field, with the ambition to place in the top 10 at the end of the four years of this strategic plan. Quality of Care was first introduced in the previous strategic plan and now has received a more prominent role inside UEG. Improving care and reducing health care inequalities across Europe is a very high goal and

this will not be an easy task. Nevertheless, in cooperation with our European specialty societies and our national member societies, we all felt we have an obligation in this area and it fits our responsibility. Number six and last in the row of pillars is Public Affairs. With our Brussels office and close coordination with our members, we want to coordinate the efforts to raise awareness for digestive health among policymakers and the public.

With 17 European specialist societies and 47 national societies as members, with a strong UEG Week visited by 13,000 people and a post-graduate teaching programme course with 3500 participants, with a vast online educational resource, with a complete online guideline portal, with a dedicated and promising *UEG Journal*, with a strong presence in Brussels, with a new ambitious Research Committee, and with a very active office, UEG is ready for the future. In the new strategic plan 2019–2022, we are proud to show you our plans for the future in more detail!

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