

Position statement on the relationship between the European Society of Gynaecologic Oncology and industry partners

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The need for ongoing training and education

An improved understanding of the biology of health and disease, including molecular and genetic processes, as well as recent innovations in technology, biomedical engineering, and informatics have provided physicians with powerful tools and methods for the prevention and management of disease. This in turn has improved the life expectancy and quality of life of patients with gynaecological cancer. However, the communication of these ongoing developments and innovations needs the continuous delivery of information, education, and training of healthcare professionals (HCPs) to ensure that care is delivered appropriately and efficiently in a cost-effective manner.

Within and beyond Europe there is significant heterogeneity in culture, lifestyle, funding and access to health care and clinical research. This can lead to disparities in accessing high quality training and delivering education to healthcare professionals. These may contribute to significant differences in morbidity and mortality from gynaecological cancers.

The relationship between the healthcare and pharmaceutical and technology industries

The pharmaceutical and technology industries play a major role in clinical and translational research,

the development of new and improved technology and medications often through collaboration with scientists, clinical academics, and practising physicians. Close co-operation is needed to ensure that there is a timely introduction of these innovative treatment options into practice. In many countries, in the absence of structural funding of continuing education of physicians, the industry supports training and education of HCPs and other relevant decision makers. However, the relationship between these parties is complex and subject to local regulations and laws.

Objective and content of this document

The objective of this document is to provide a blue print for opportunities to collaborate with the pharmaceutical and technology industries, so that HCPs can receive appropriate and unbiased educational information.

This position statement is based on the cooperation of the European Society of Gynaecological Oncology (ESGO), the European Network of Young Gynae Oncologists (ENYGO) and the European Network of Gynae Oncological Patient Advocacy Groups (ENGAGE) with those pharmaceutical/technology industries that respect and follow the **European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) Code**. National country codes will also influence how these cooperations are conducted.

The principles contained in this document apply to interactions between ESGO and ENYGO and the pharmaceutical and technology industries but can also be considered as largely applicable to interactions between ENGAGE and the above-mentioned industries with some notable differences.

Patient advocacy groups in fact cannot receive information that is tailored to a health professional audience, such as medical education or promotional material. However, they can receive disease-related material as well as press to allow them to learn about news and newsworthy information alongside the media. They have a critical role in providing advice and insight from the patient perspective.

Whilst this document outlines and discusses the different types of interactions ESGO may have with the pharmaceutical and technology industries, it does not replace or override the individual responsibilities of HCPs to declare and disclose their interactions with the industry, when required. ESGO is not responsible for the relationship of its members with industries. The first interaction with industry partners is the responsibility of ESGO president, who will discuss the aspects with ESGO Executive Committee and/or Chairs of respective ESGO Committees and/or ESGO industry relationship subgroup of Communication Committee (whatever is more appropriate in the specific case) and approve if in line with the guiding principles and content outlined in this document. In case of any doubt on alignment with the actual statement ESGO council will be involved.

Our productive interactions with industry should always strive to be patient-centric so that our work leads to benefits for people with gynaecological cancers.

Guiding principles for interactions between ESGO and the pharmaceutical and technology industries

The fundamental guiding principles that underpin all interactions (irrespective of their nature) between ESGO and the industry are set out below:

- ◇ **Independence:** each party should maintain their independence. There must be no actual or perceived influence on activities or materials without a clear description and declaration of involvement.
- ◇ **Purpose:** each party should be clear about the reason for and the planned goal of the interaction and the ultimate benefit for patients. This should be considered at the outset and throughout the lifecycle of each project.
- ◇ **Integrity:** each party should always act, and be seen to act, honestly and with integrity. At all times, interactions should be ethical and respectful.
- ◇ **Transparency:** each party should be open and honest about the purpose of the collaboration and be able to account publicly for the associated activities and any exchanges of funding. Any declined opportunities should be carefully communicated so that improvements and points for learning can be understood and implemented by both parties.

Specific requirements for interactions between ESGO and the pharmaceutical and technology industries

Written agreements must be executed prior to the implementation of each project, clearly setting out the obligations of both parties which should be carefully adhered to at all times, to ensure compliance with applicable Codes of Practice and legislation.

The specific nature of involvement by one or more industries in a project, should be made clear at the outset on all related project documentation.

Transfers of value are payments (cash or kind) to ESGO. These may be made directly by an industry or indirectly through a third party. Each year, industries are obliged to disclose such information publicly.

ESGO must respect the obligations that the industry has under their respective Code(s). In particular, whilst some innovative and patient-centric educational activities may appear to be in the best interests of patients and ESGO, certain restrictions are in place that may prevent the industry from being involved. Failure to do so may result in an industry being subject to sanctions for being in breach of the Code.

ESGO ways of working with the pharmaceutical and technology industries

This position statement outlines the general principles at the bases of the different ways in which ESGO can interact with pharmaceutical and technology industries (with some examples). These interactions are defined and grouped according to whether the industry proactively approaches ESGO, reacts to its requests, or collaborates with ESGO in a partnership.

I. Industry can proactively approach ESGO to:

- ◇ **Offer an educational grant to ESGO** in order to develop and provide ESGO speakers for an independent education event
 - *E.g. A webinar on proposed topic developed by ESGO with content subject to the approval of relevant ESGO committee. ESGO should have freedom of content and choice of presenters.*
- ◇ **Offer donations** (goods, services, or benefits-in-kind) to ESGO
 - *E.g. providing tools or software to be used during routine screening or treatment of patients with gynaecological cancers*
- ◇ **Offer sponsorship** at an ESGO event
 - *E.g. sponsorship of industry symposia at ESGO congress which are subject of approval of ESGO Programme Committee. If a company runs a symposia within an ESGO congress, travel and accommodation costs of the involved experts should be met by the company.*

◇ **Ask ESGO to facilitate educational activities sponsored by industry**

- *E.g. industry asks ESGO to identify ESGO members who are key opinion leaders in the respective field of the aimed educational event. These ESGO experts will act as individual HCPs and carry individual responsibility and need for declaration of conflict of interest for their relationship with the Industry (not ESGO responsibility).*

II. ESGO can proactively approach industry:

ESGO can approach industry to request financial and non-financial support for promoting ESGO education activities to clinicians, clinical researchers and for patient support programmes.

- *E.g. ESGO can approach industry for an educational grant in order to organise an independent surgical hands-on course.*

III. Industries can partner with ESGO:

- ◇ **In a partnership between ESGO and industry partners and/or stakeholders, collaborative projects are jointly developed for the sole purpose of patients' benefit and/or physicians' education.**

Such partnerships can involve collaboration with one or multiple industry partners and/or other stakeholders. The basic guiding principles as described above (independence, integrity, transparency, purpose) apply to ESGO-industry-stakeholder partnerships.

All partners involved (ESGO and/or industry partners and/or stakeholders) are jointly responsible for content. Thus, only consensual content can be included into jointly developed projects.

The intellectual Property (IP) for the projects arising from such partnerships is either with the ESGO or there is a joint IP of partners involved (as

determined in a signed agreement between ESGO and industry partners and/or stakeholders). Also, the legal provision of the respective countries needs be taken into account.

- *E.g. collaborative projects developed in a partnership include (not exclusively) e.g. educational events/materials/platforms or awareness campaigns.*

Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
ESGO	The European Society of Gynaecological Oncology is the leading European organisation for professionals involved in the prevention, treatment, care and research of gynaecological cancers. ESGO provides educational and scientific opportunities, including events, courses and networking for those working in the field of gynaecological cancer
ENYGO	The European Network of Young Gynaecological Oncologists) is an ESGO network involving fellows in training for gynaecological oncology and gynaecological oncologists younger than 40 years old across Europe. This document also applies to ENYGO.
ENGAGE	The European Network of Gynaecological Cancer Advocacy Groups is an ESGO network of patient advocacy groups representing all gynaecological cancers (particularly ovary, endometrial, cervix, vulva, and rare cancers). This document also applies to ENGAGE.
ENGOT	The European Network for Gynaecological Oncological Trial groups is a research network of ESGO that performs cooperative clinical trials. This area of work is not in the scope of this position paper.
EFPIA Code	EFPIA Code constitutes the collection of ethical rules for the Promotion of Medicinal Products to healthcare professionals (HCPs) and the interactions with HCPs, healthcare organisations (HCOs) and patients' organisations (POs), with the intent of guaranteeing that these activities are conducted while respecting the most stringent ethical principles of professionalism and responsibility.
Collaborative working/partnership	Any party can initiate partnership projects to deliver initiatives that ultimately lead to patients benefit. E.g. The joint development and delivery of awareness campaigns on best patients outcome when treated in dedicated gynaecological oncology centers.
Donations	Pharma can donate goods or services to ESGO, HCOs and POs that benefit patient care. E.g. The provision of software to be used in the treatment of patients.

Grants	Industry can provide funding towards ESGO, HCO or PO activities and materials that benefit patient care, under arm's length arrangements. E.g. Funding (and no other involvement) for the creation and dissemination of congress highlights newsletters.
Medical education	Information on human health or diseases or treatment.
Promotion	Any activity undertaken by a pharmaceutical industry or with its authority which promotes the administration, consumption, prescription, purchase, recommendation, sale, supply, or use of its medicines.
Sponsorships	Industry can contribute, financial or otherwise, in whole or in part, towards an activity (including an event/meeting or material) performed, organised, created etc by a HCO or PO E.g. contributions may include subsistence at a meeting.
Support	Pharma and technology industries can support the attendance of an individual HCP to an event organised or created by an industry or a HCO.
Transfer of value	Pharma and technology industries must disclose certain transfers of value, including those made to HCOs and POs.
Written agreements	These are required for all the interactions (e.g. grants, donations, engagement, sponsorship, support) and outline obligations of both parties according to Code(s) and legal requirements.