

Learning to care

Breaking down barriers to ensure access to healthcare for all



European School
of Oncology

Learning to care

Dear friends, donors, and advisors,

In 2024, our School concluded forty-two years of activity and began its journey toward an important milestone – its fiftieth anniversary. It is for this reason that we have already started working on a commemorative book, similar to one previously produced by the European Society of Pathology, in collaboration with Springer, our long-time publishing partner. The President of our Advisory Board, Professor Pavlidis, has already collected a substantial amount of material.

The year 2024 has seen us achieve many successes following our entry into the European Cancer Plan, which was launched and financed by the European Commission. This came after the long period of the Covid-19 pandemic, which took our attention away from many other healthcare issues. We contributed with our experience and creativity to almost all oncology training programs for doctors and nurses.

We were also finally able to reduce e-learning activities and videoconferencing-based teaching. We returned to meeting our students in

person – catering to their specific needs, which is a quality that has always defined us. The organisation, named ESO College, is growing steadily. For the first time, last November, we held free elections that identified eight representatives. They will manage strategic development topics for the School and will also be admitted, on a rotating basis, to our board meetings.

Thanks to the excellent work of the Venetian authorities, we were able to resume use of the university teaching premises on the island of San Servolo, a site we helped renovate many years ago. With the appointment of ESO Ambassadors, we have deepened our knowledge of European Countries while expanding our connections with Eastern and Southern areas of the continent.

We have strengthened our communication with our founding institution and have developed plans to streamline our governance. Looking ahead to the centenary of Umberto Veronesi's birth in 2025, we supported a film project about his life and his role as a great physician and founder of our School.

These pages provide the first analysis of our activities from a social impact perspective, clearly showing that in 2024 we have successfully achieved our goal: to increase the number of competent, well-trained, and dedicated doctors and nurses caring for cancer patients in Italy and across Europe.

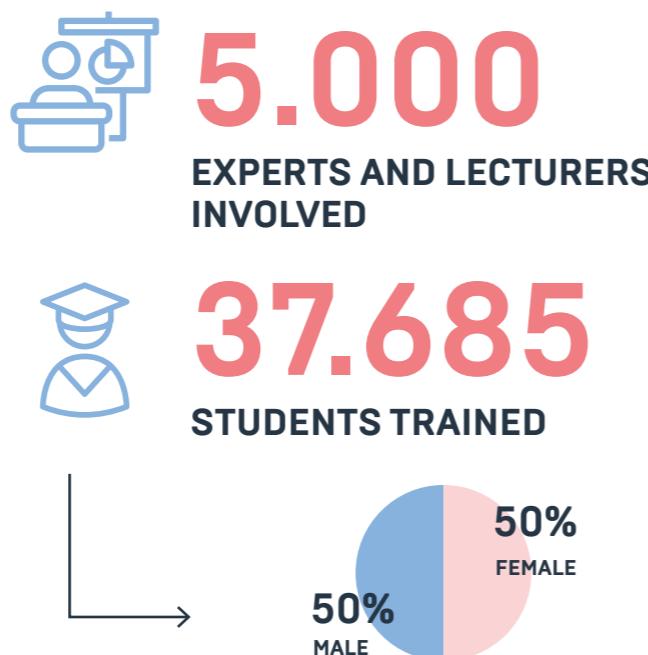


A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pavlidis".

ESO IN BRIEF

ESO since 1982

MORE THAN
2.500
TRAINING EVENTS HELD



OVER
€1,4
MILLION



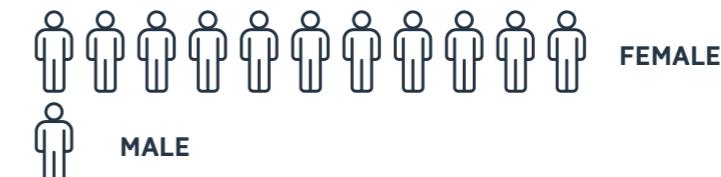
4
EUROPEAN GRANTS WON

→ **€ 892.000**
AWARDED IN TOTAL SCHOLARSHIP VALUE

ESO – the European School of Oncology – mobilises the best resources and expertise to provide multidisciplinary quality training, and independent training for health professionals seeking to specialise in and stay updated on topics in oncology.

ESO in 2024

12
WORKFORCE



443

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN ESO COLLEGE



46

AMBASSADORS REPRESENTING ESO IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES

OVER

4.700

HOURS OF TRAINING DELIVERED



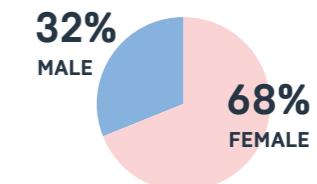
550

TEACHERS INVOLVED



482

STUDENTS TRAINED IN TOTAL





Contents

1

EDUCATION AS A LEVER FOR CHANGE

P. 8

Learning steps
An integrative approach

2

BEYOND BORDERS

P. 30

ESO College
ESO Ambassadors

3

FOUNDATION

P. 48

Umberto Veronesi's legacy
The pillars of this story

4

A GENUINE AND COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT

P. 54

Structure
Resources

Education as a Lever for Change



For over 40 years, ESO – European School of Oncology has been committed to the training of healthcare personnel: doctors and nurses involved in the care and assistance of cancer patients.

Training and care have always been deeply intertwined in the vision of the School – not only because one enables the other, but because both touch upon the sphere of human rights and are fundamental tools for building a more just and equitable society.

To guarantee every cancer patient the right to the best possible medical treatment, it is essential to ensure the right to the best training and continuing education for doctors and healthcare personnel.

For this reason, ESO adopted an international outlook and a strongly European vocation – rejecting geographical boundaries and instead striving to involve the best oncology experts and leaders from across the World. At the same time, ESO has always aimed to bring its educational offerings to so-called “peripheral” regions – countries and territories where students and aspiring doctors would otherwise find it difficult to pursue a successful career in oncology.

Over these four decades, through initiatives, events, and ongoing dedication to oncologists' training, the School has gradually shaped a

well-defined pathway. Step by step, course by course, this path guides doctors and nurses in their work of caring – from basic introductory teachings to advanced specialist knowledge.

This pathway, known as the **ESO Pathway**, is a structured journey built upon years of experience and activities. It's designed to be taken multiple times by oncologists, paediatricians, and oncology nurses who might not otherwise have access to similar training opportunities in their home countries.

Currently, the ESO Pathway consist of **7 educational steps**, each following a well-established learning format. While each course evolves and is updated annually to ensure continuous improvement, the organisational and instructional models are now well-tested and reliable.

Most ESO courses include a **first online phase**, accessible via the **ESO Distance Learning** platform and a **second in-person phase**, typically held over several days in immersive locations designed to foster learning and connection among participants.

ESO Distance Learning (formerly known as **e-ESO**) is the free digital platform supporting ESO's training initiatives. Launched in 2008, ESO Distance Learning was created to offer doctors and nurses remote training content available in various formats. Over time, the School has experimented with and offered different types of formats - from single 45-minute live sessions with international experts, to playlists with multiple pre-recorded sessions, and even podcasts.

Developed with the goal of extending the reach and impact of oncology education as much as possible, ESO Distance Learning proved to be an essential tool in **2020 during the pandemic**.

mic, when in-person training events could not be organized, yet the demand from doctors for training, support, and updates was high.

Today, ESO Distance Learning continues to serve as the **digital satellite of the ESO planet**, allowing participants to remotely access an initial theoretical and introductory part of a course. This first part typically ends with a questionnaire and the issuance of a certificate of participation, which then grants access to the second, in-person part of the course.

ESO Distance Learning also offers a **repository** accessible to all, containing key resources, slides, and content produced over the years.



ESO Educational Pathway

MEDICAL STUDENT COURSES

BASIC ONCOLOGY COURSES

MASTERCLASSES

CTC FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMMES

REFRESHER COURSES

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

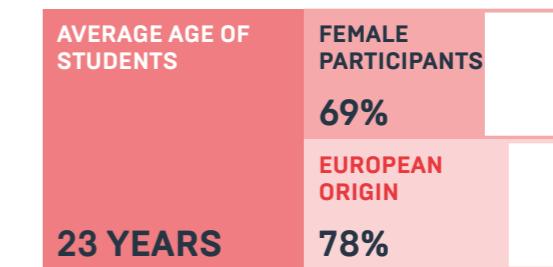
IMPROVING CANCER OUTCOMES AND LEADERSHIP COURSES

The ESO Pathway – Training Steps



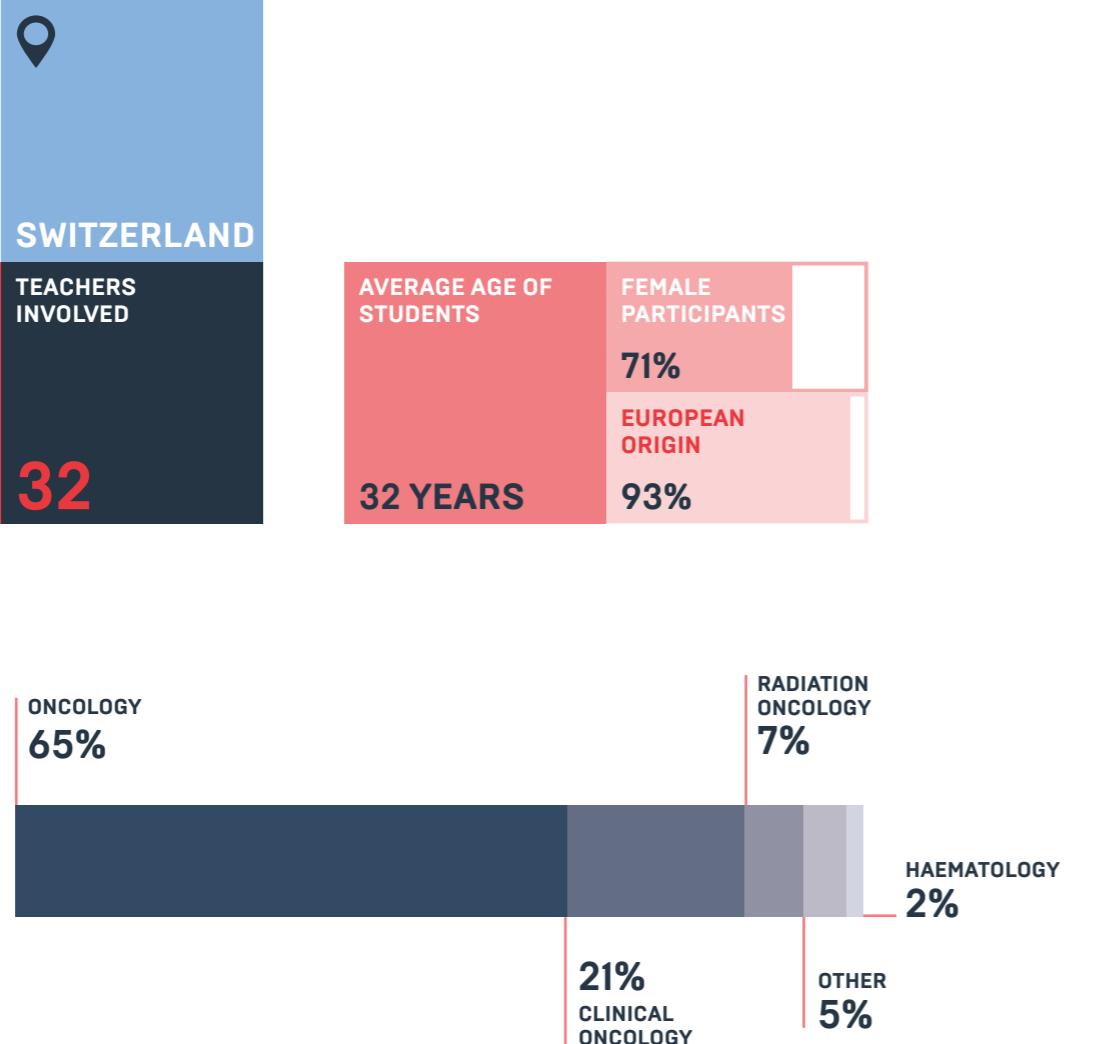
STEP 1 Medical Student Courses

AUDIENCE	Medical students in their final years.
OBJECTIVE	Help students choose their specialty by introducing them to oncology disciplines (medical, surgical, radiotherapy, pathology).
LEARNING FORMAT	5-day course with plenary sessions, clinical case presentations, and workshops covering topics like epidemiology, genetics, diagnosis, treatment principles, prevention, screening, and patient communication.
CERTIFICATION AND PARTNERSHIP	Participants receive ECTS credits from the University partnering with ESO and a participation certificate.



STEP 2**Basic Oncology Courses**

AUDIENCE	Medical graduates in the first 1–3 years of oncology specialisation.
OBJECTIVE	Provide a broad overview of oncology basics (epidemiology, genetics, surgery, pathology, radiology, paediatric oncology, clinical trials, supportive care, communication).
LEARNING FORMAT	Hybrid course organized in two parts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Around 10 pre-recorded online lessons, followed by an evaluation questionnaire and a learning test;• An in-person event lasting approximately two and a half days, featuring lectures by international and local faculty. At the end of the event, participants are asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire and a learning test.
CERTIFICATION AND PARTNERSHIP	Participants receive a certificate of attendance at the end of the course. The course is accredited with CME (Continuing Medical Education) credits by the ACOE (Accreditation Council of Oncology in Europe).

COURSES IN 2024**STEP 3****Masterclasses****3.1 – Masterclass in Clinical Oncology**

AUDIENCE	Doctors who have been working for 2–3 years in a clinic with oncology patients.
OBJECTIVE	To provide medical oncologists and radiation oncologists with an update on the treatment of solid tumors from a multidisciplinary perspective: breast, lung, gynaecological, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, and sarcomas.
LEARNING FORMAT	Hybrid format in two parts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 60 pre-recorded online lessons (totaling 20–25 hours) focusing on breast, lung, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, and gynecological cancers. Additional sessions cover head and neck cancer, sarcomas, rare tumors, and emerging approaches in oncology;• An in-person event lasting three and a half days, during which each participant presents a clinical case to the group and discusses it with attending experts. Interactive workshops are also included, covering various aspects of holistic patient care, usually held alongside a Masterclass in Oncology Nursing.
CERTIFICATION AND PARTNERSHIP	Participants receive a certificate of attendance at the end of the course. The course is accredited with CME (Continuing Medical Education) credits by the ACOE (Accreditation Council of Oncology in Europe).

3.2 – Masterclass in Paediatric Oncology

(promoted by ESO and SIOP Europe, the European Society for Paediatric Oncology)

AUDIENCE	Paediatric oncologists with 2–3 years of experience in oncology.
OBJECTIVE	To provide a multidisciplinary update on the treatment of pediatric tumors: bone tumors, central nervous system tumors, leukemia, lymphoma, neuroblastoma, rare tumors, soft tissue sarcomas, and Wilms tumor.
LEARNING FORMAT	Hybrid format in two parts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Around 60 pre-recorded online lessons (totaling 20–25 hours), focusing on breast, lung, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, and gynecological cancers, along with sessions on head and neck cancer, sarcomas, rare tumors, and emerging approaches in oncology;• A 2.5-day in-person event featuring lectures on clinical treatments, interactive communication workshops, clinical case presentations, and tumor board simulation sessions.
CERTIFICATION AND PARTNERSHIP	Participants receive a certificate of attendance at the end of the course. The course is accredited with CME (Continuing Medical Education) credits by the ACOE (Accreditation Council of Oncology in Europe).

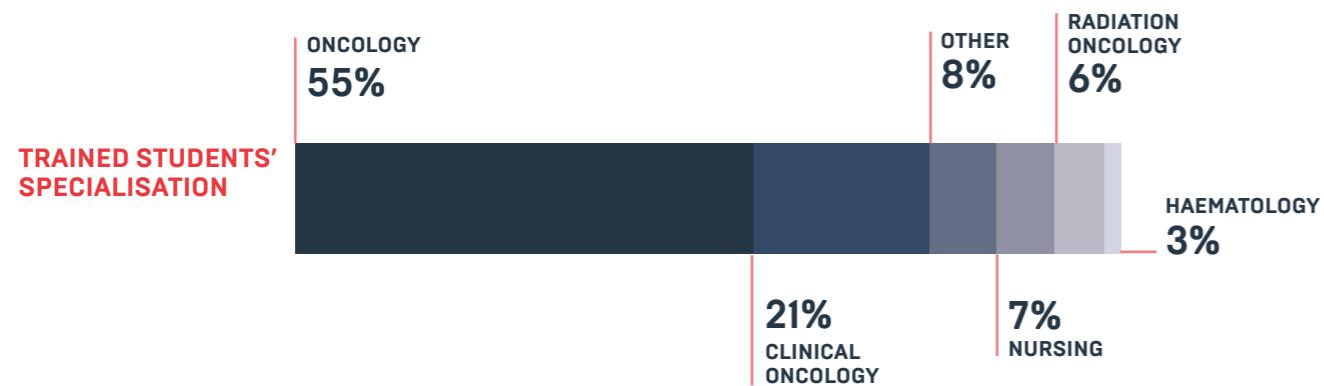
3.3 - Masterclass in Oncology Nursing

(promoted by ESO and EONS - European Oncology Nursing Society)

AUDIENCE	Nurses with at least 3–5 years of clinical nursing practice in oncology.
OBJECTIVE	To provide an update in oncology aimed at improving clinical knowledge and the management of oncology patients throughout all phases of their care journey.
LEARNING FORMAT	The course takes place over three and a half days. It is usually organized alongside one of the Masterclasses in Clinical Oncology, where the faculty also delivers lectures for nurses. This setup allows nurses to participate alongside doctors in workshops on topics such as communication, addressing issues like sexuality and intimacy with oncology patients, and daily tools for burnout prevention. Additionally, nurses have the opportunity to present their own case study to colleagues and faculty members.
CERTIFICATION AND PARTNERSHIP	The program is accredited by the European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS).

MASTERCLASS FOR DOCTORS IN 2024	TEACHERS INVOLVED	STUDENTS TRAINED	AVERAGE AGE OF STUDENTS	FEMALE PARTICIPANTS	EUROPEAN ORIGIN
2	102	116	30 YEARS	74%	88%

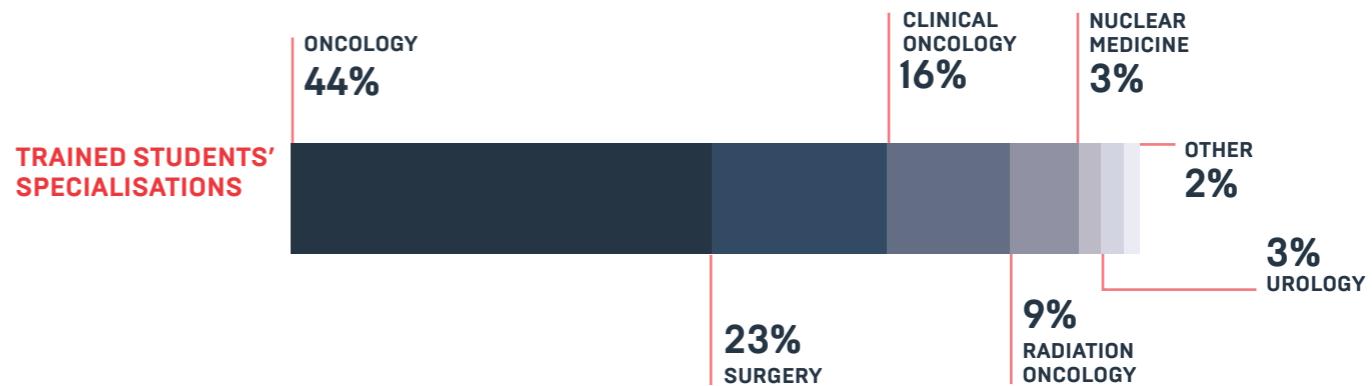
MASTERCLASS FOR NURSES IN 2024	TEACHERS INVOLVED	STUDENTS TRAINED	AVERAGE AGE OF STUDENTS	FEMALE PARTICIPANTS	EUROPEAN ORIGIN
1	10	30	40 YEARS	86%	100%



STEP 4 Refresher Courses

AUDIENCE	Oncology professionals with at least 2–3 years of clinical experience.
OBJECTIVE	Provide updates on specific cancer types (e.g., breast, prostate, colorectal, lung, gynaecological, sarcoma, melanoma).
LEARNING FORMAT	In-person event lasting one and a half days with educational lectures including updates and potential future directions on diagnostic and therapeutic approaches for a specific type of tumor (breast, prostate, colorectal, lung, gynecology, sarcoma, melanoma, etc.).
CERTIFICATION AND PARTNERSHIP	The update course has been accredited by the European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME) to provide the following CME activity to specialist physicians. The EACCME is an institution of the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS).

COURSES IN 2024	SLOVENIA TOPIC: PROSTATE CANCER	IRELAND TOPIC: MELANOMA SURGERY		
STUDENTS TRAINED	TEACHERS INVOLVED	AVERAGE AGE OF STUDENTS	FEMALE PARTICIPANTS	EUROPEAN ORIGIN
2	26	34 YEARS	70%	84%
57	26	34 YEARS	70%	84%



STEP 5

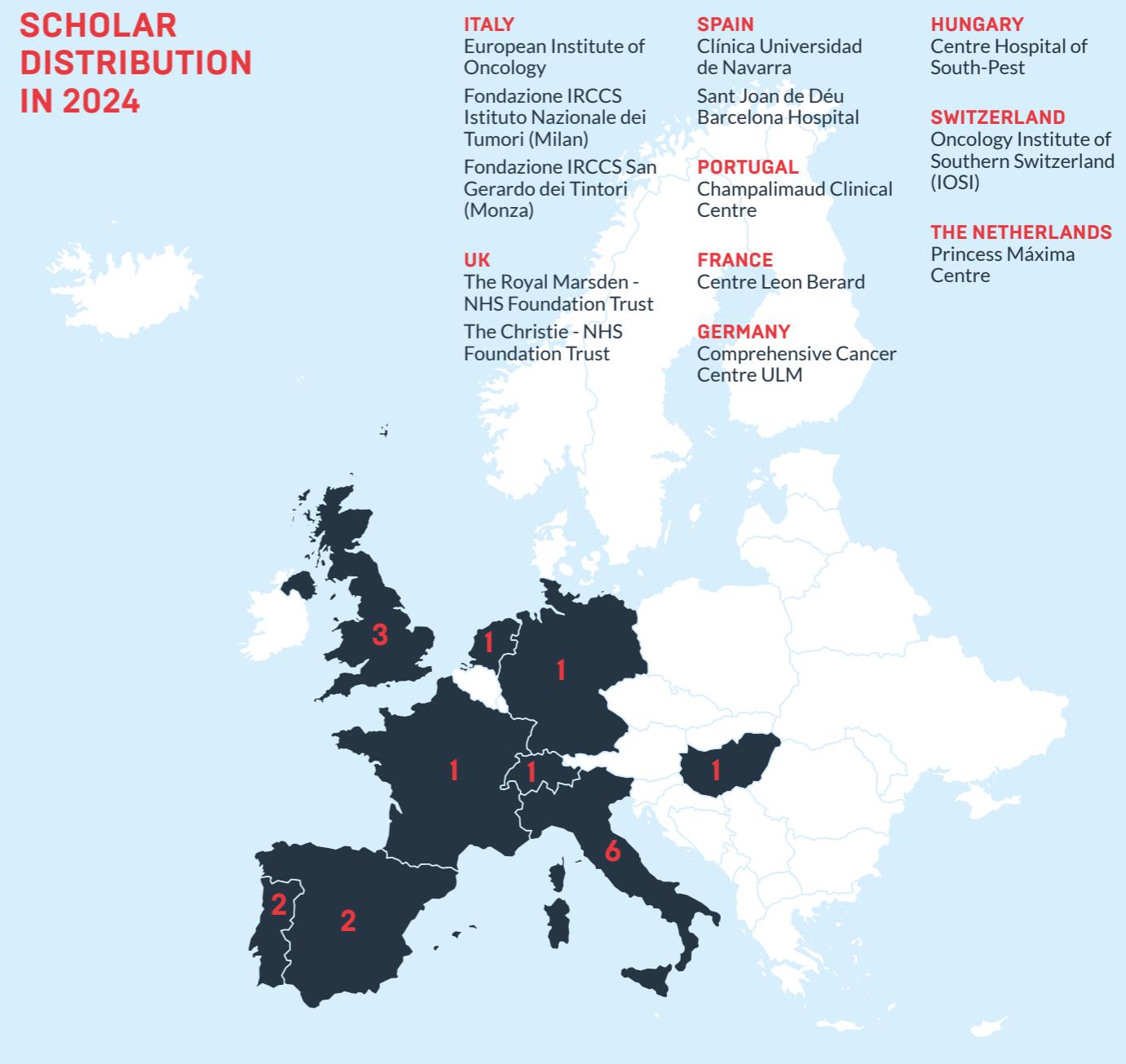
CTC Fellowship Programmes

AUDIENCE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Doctors who completed oncology specialisation within the past 5 years; Paediatric oncologists with previous ESO or SIOP Europe involvement (European Society for Paediatric Oncology); Oncology nurses with at least 2 years' experience;
OBJECTIVE	Enable doctors, paediatricians, and nurses to spend a short-term placement in top European Centres of Excellence to enhance their knowledge in a specific area of oncology.
LEARNING FORMAT	<p>Scholarships lasting one month for nurses and from 3 to 6 months for doctors and paediatricians in one of the 18 Centres affiliated with ESO across Europe.</p> <p>There are two types of scholarships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observership: the doctor/nurse cannot directly treat patients but only observe the work of colleagues; Residential: the doctor/nurse can directly treat patients.
DURATION AND PARTNERSHIP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> For doctors: The scholarship program is managed and funded by ESO in collaboration with one of the 18 affiliated Centres. For paediatric oncologists: ESO funds the scholarship and collects applications, but SIOP Europe handles the pre-selection of candidates who will then attend one of the 7 affiliated Centres. For oncology nurses: ESO funds the scholarship, applications are collected by EONS – the European Oncology Nursing Society, which also handles pre-selection. <p>There are 3 affiliated Centres of Excellence across Europe.</p>



SCHOLARSHIP OFFERED IN 2024	SCHOLARSHIP VALUE	SCHOLARSHIP VALUE SINCE 2013
18	€ 143.000	€ 1.412.540

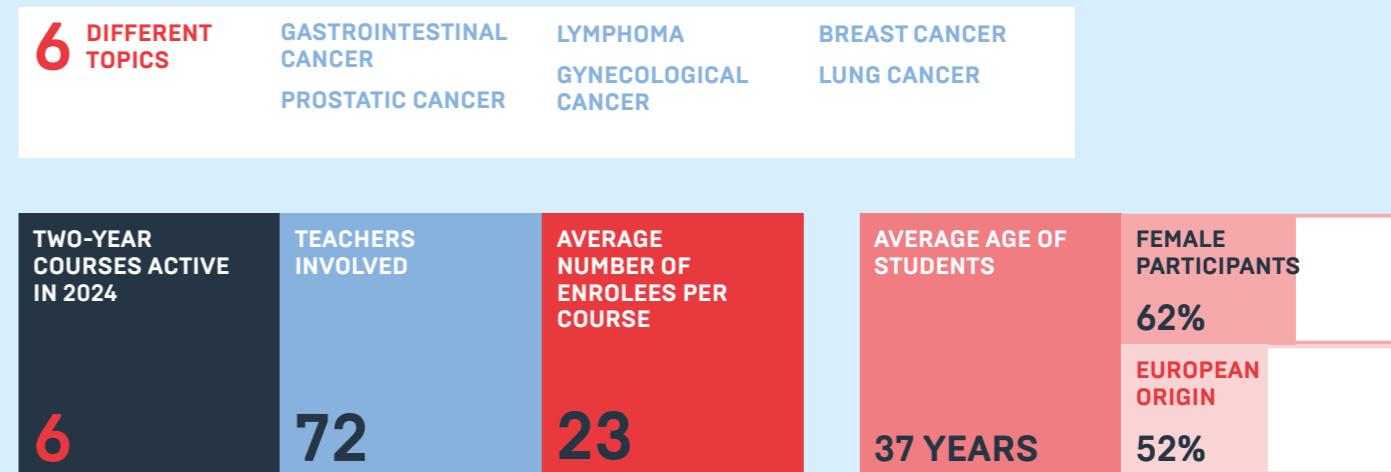
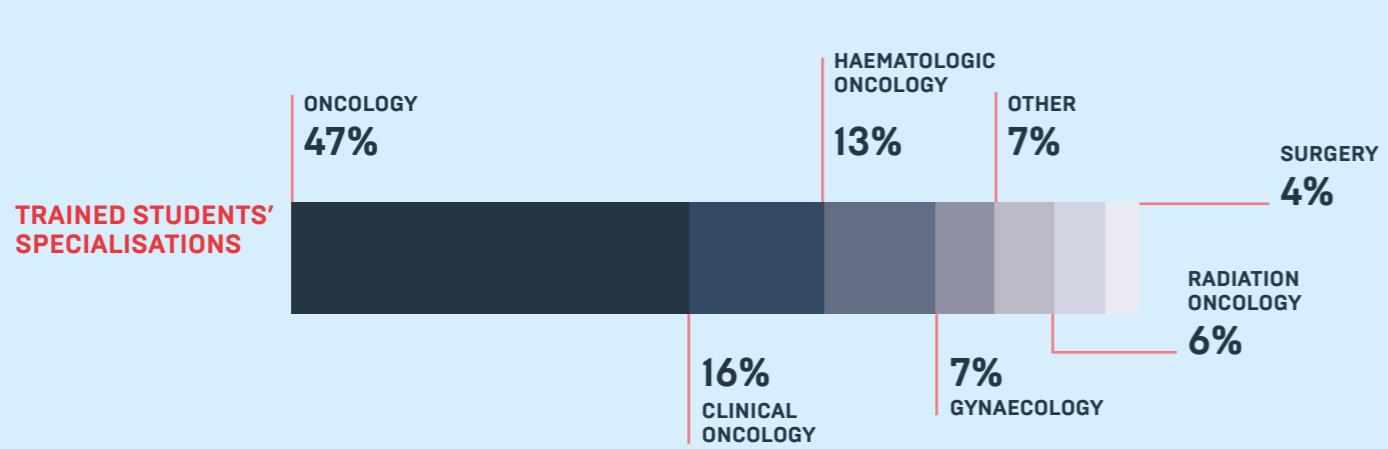
SCHOLAR DISTRIBUTION IN 2024



STEP 6

Postgraduate Programmes

AUDIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduates in Medicine (Specialist Degree) with at least 2 years of internship experience in a relevant institution; Graduates in Natural Sciences (Master's Degree) with at least 2 years of experience in the field of oncology.
OBJECTIVE	Enhance clinical and scientific competencies in managing patients with lymphoma, breast cancer, thoracic tumors, gastrointestinal cancers, prostate cancer, and gynaecological cancers.
LEARNING FORMAT	ESO's postgraduate programs are organized in collaboration with select European universities. They last 18 months (part-time), focus on a single type of tumor, and include both online modules and in-person seminars. Each course admits approximately 25 participants.
DURATION AND PARTNERSHIP	<p>ESO currently offers the following certificates in partnership with select European universities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificate of Competence in Lymphoma (CCL) – University of Ulm Certificate of Competence in Breast Cancer (CCB) – University of Ulm Certificate of Advanced Studies in Thoracic Malignancies (CAS-TM) – University of Freiburg (formerly called <i>Certificate of Advanced Studies in Lung Cancer</i> and organized with the University of Zurich) Certificate of Advanced Studies in Gastrointestinal Cancers (CAS-GI) – Università della Svizzera italiana Certificate of Advanced Studies in Prostate Cancer (CAS-Pr) – Università della Svizzera italiana Certificate of Advanced Studies in Gynecological Cancers (CAS-Gyn) – Università della Svizzera italiana



STEP 7

Improving Cancer Outcomes and Leadership Courses

AUDIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oncology professionals and healthcare managers mid-career; Representatives of patient organizations; Representatives from industry and regulatory bodies.
OBJECTIVE	Equip participants with skills in strategic planning, applied health research, team management, and strategies for managing and implementing change.
LEARNING FORMAT	Hybrid format in 2 parts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 5 hours of recorded online lectures; An in-person event lasting 2 and a half days with lectures and workshops on health policy, leadership, and management, along with group sessions focused on sharing cases and practices aimed at improving cancer management outcomes and patient care.
CERTIFICATION AND PARTNERSHIP	The course is accredited with CME (Continuing Medical Education) credits by ACOE (Accreditation Council of Oncology in Europe).
LATEST EDITION	
2022	POLAND
STUDENTS TRAINED	TEACHERS INVOLVED
41	18
AVERAGE AGE OF STUDENTS	
38 YEARS	
FEMALE PARTICIPANTS	
70%	
EUROPEAN ORIGIN	
83%	

A continuous and dedicated response to the demand for advanced education



As an organization committed to supporting oncologists, emerging professionals, and the clinical settings in which they operate, and consistent with its longstanding tradition of embracing innovation, ESO has progressively developed targeted educational initiatives that fall outside the previously described pathway yet effectively address the imperative to enhance

cancer care. These initiatives include the **Visiting Professorships** – specialized training sessions conducted by distinguished experts and leading authorities upon formal request from hospitals and treatment centres – as well as **Practical Surgical Training programs**, inaugurated in 2024, currently concentrated on breast cancer surgery.

Visiting Professorships

AUDIENCE	Oncology professionals (doctors, nurses, healthcare staff) working in hospitals or care centres that request on-site training.
OBJECTIVE	Enhance the clinical skills and expertise of oncology professionals and their teams on selected topics tailored to the hospital's context and needs.
LEARNING FORMAT	Upon receiving a formal request from a care centre to host a visiting professor with expertise in a designated subject area, the identifies the most appropriate distinguished expert. The educational event normally last one and a half days and takes place at the hospital facility.
CERTIFICATION AND PARTNERSHIP	At the end of the training event, participants are required to complete an evaluation form in order to receive a certificate of attendance. External accreditation is not provided for this type of event.

EVENTS HELD SINCE 2012	EVENTS HELD IN 2024	2 THEMATIC AREAS:	AVERAGE AGE OF STUDENTS
24	2	Novelties in the Treatment of Gastrointestinal Cancers Frontiers in Gynecological Oncology	44 YEARS
TEACHERS INVOLVED	STUDENTS TRAINED	KOSOVO	FEMALE PARTICIPANTS ORIGIN (KOSOVO) 99%
13	70		

Practical Surgical Training

PRACTICAL TRAINING IN BREAST SURGERY CONDUCTED IN	
2024	LONDON
STUDENTS TRAINED	TEACHERS INVOLVED
12	6

AUDIENCE	Surgeons with 2–3 years of experience in oncological surgery.
OBJECTIVE	Provide a comprehensive view of modern breast cancer surgery, its biological context and patterns of disease progression.
LEARNING FORMAT	Hybrid format in two parts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Pre-recorded online lectures covering procedures such as sentinel lymph node biopsy, axillary dissection, and removal of non-palpable lesions;An in-person event featuring high-level European experts on topics presented in the online lectures, followed by hands-on practical sessions using simulators, including: axillary sampling; dye injection; sentinel lymph node biopsy (SLNB) with blue dye; SLNB using Magtrace; axillary dissection; lumpectomy (palpable nodule); wire-guided lumpectomy; localization of occult lesions; de-epithelialization; batwing incision; skin flap creation; drain placement; mastectomy.
CERTIFICATION AND PARTNERSHIP	This innovative and recent educational opportunity is the result of a new partnership model established by ESO with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Imperial College London, responsible for the development of the simulators;Promeditec Innovation, which managed and supervised the customization of the simulators on behalf of ESO;Endomag, the provider of the localization probes used during the surgical procedures.

ESO Observatories

These ESO Observatories are ESO-hosted events held within international medical congresses, promoted and organised by the School's partner institutions. The aim of these "Observatories" is to provide attendees (typically doctors participating in the congress) with a general overview of the current state of the art, scenarios, and possible future developments related to a specific type of cancer. These are usually 90-minute sessions featuring a panel of

four experts (from surgery, medical oncology, radiotherapy, and pathology), along with a nurse and a patient advocate. In 2024, two Observatories were organised: One in April, on the topic of innovations in prostate cancer care, during a congress of the European Association of Urology (EAU); one in June, titled "Forecasts on Colorectal Cancer for the Next 12 Months", held during an ESMO (European Society for Medical Oncology) event.



An Integrative Approach



The quality of ESO's educational offering is ensured by the presence of an **Advisory Board**, composed of internationally renowned medical experts, which guides the School's work through a **three-year strategic plan** (see page 56), and by the efforts of the **Multidisciplinary Scientific Council (MSC)**, which supports and collaborates with the ESO team in shaping the overall strate-

gy and planning educational activities. In particular, the **Multidisciplinary Scientific Council (MSC)** – made up of specialists in various fields (medical oncology, surgery, radiotherapy, and pathology) – is responsible for **evaluating and overseeing the quality and integrity of ESO's educational programs and training pathways**.

Multidisciplinary Scientific Council (MSC)

The **Multidisciplinary Scientific Council (MSC)** of ESO is composed of a group of experts from various fields (surgery, radiotherapy, medical oncology, pathology), tasked with transparently monitoring and evaluating the content of the School's activities. Their evaluation focuses not only on scientific aspects but also on the **cross-disciplinary nature of the topics** and the **value of inclusivity** (regarding topics, regions, and gender).

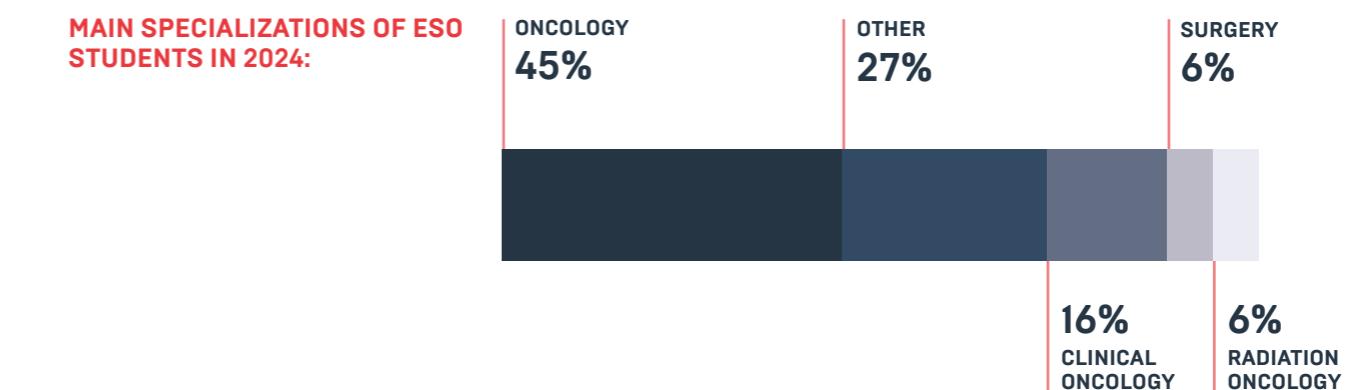
As an educational institution that views and practices training as a social lever for **equality and rights**, ESO considers it essential that its programs and activities be **accessible, balanced, and representative** of the diversity of topics, backgrounds of faculty and participants, and the needs of different geographic areas. Through scheduled meetings and sessions, the MSC oversees course programming, speaker panels, venue selection, and the methods of participant recruitment and engagement. The goal is to ensure the **highest quality standards** for all participants, based on the belief that the

fight against cancer and the care of patients requires a **multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach** that integrates scientific and clinical aspects with the **social and ethical dimensions of medicine**.

Current MSC Members:

- **Riccardo Audisio** – Professor of Surgery at the University of Gothenburg, Past President of ESSO
- **Barbara Jereczek Fossa** – Professor of Radiotherapy at the University of Milan, Head of Radiotherapy at the European Institute of Oncology, President-elect of ESTRO
- **Alessandra Curioni-Fontecedro** – Professor of Oncology at the University of Freiburg, Switzerland; Director of the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Thoracic Malignancies
- **Nicola Fusco** – Professor of Pathological Anatomy at the University of Milan; Head of Pathology at the University of Milan and at the European Institute of Oncology.

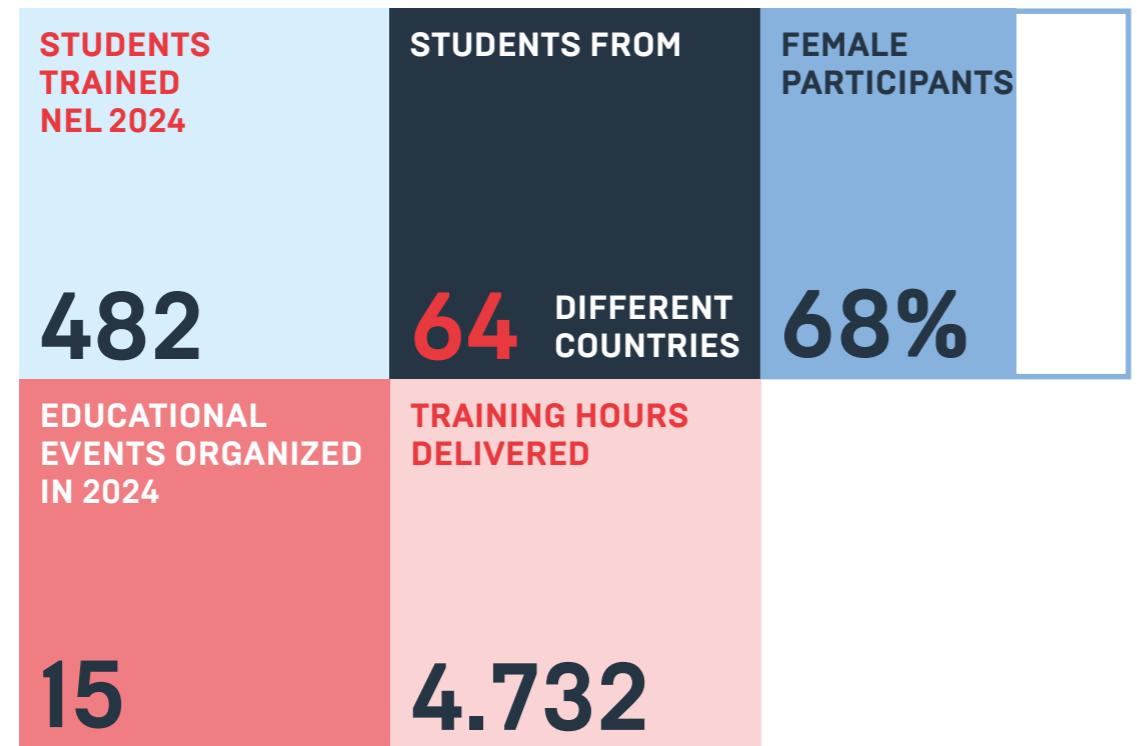
MAIN SPECIALIZATIONS OF ESO STUDENTS IN 2024:



The quality of ESO's courses and educational offerings is also guaranteed by the organisation's **complete independence from financial support or sponsorship from the pharmaceutical industry**. This autonomy, which the School staunchly defends, allows it to operate with **full freedom**, ensuring an **unbiased selection of topics and content**.

In particular, this independence has enabled ESO to focus on aspects of cancer care that are **less known or often overlooked** by pharmaceutical companies, yet are no less important. Addressing these topics is essential to **upholding the right to quality education and care**.

DATA FOR ALL COURSES 2024



Independence

ESO's revenues for 2024, detailed on page 59, come primarily from contributions received from the **Foundation for Oncology Training (FFO)**, from **European grants awarded**, and from income generated through **institutional activities**. It is particularly important to highlight that ESO **does not receive any donations from pharmaceutical companies**, which could otherwise influence the educational activities and their content.



100%
INDEPENDENT FROM
PHARMACEUTICAL
COMPANIES



Beyond borders



The international orientation constitutes a defining characteristic of the European School of Oncology, intrinsically tied to its institutional mission.

From its inception, the European School of Oncology (ESO) has pursued the goal of supporting the fight against cancer through education. Central to this objective has been a strong commitment to overcoming geographical and institutional barriers – mobilising the highest levels of expertise, delivering it where it is most needed, and fostering the global exchange of knowledge to enhance access to quality cancer care.

ESO has consistently focused its efforts within Europe, understood as a broader cultural and geographical entity. Its scope has extended beyond the boundaries of the European Union to include countries such as the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Norway, as well as reaching eastward to Kazakhstan and southward to Egypt, the Maghreb region, and Israel.

Guided by the vision of its founder, Umberto Veronesi, ESO was established with a distinctly European governance structure. In 1982, Alberto Costa was appointed Director

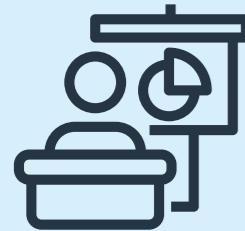
of the School and tasked with forming a European Scientific Committee to articulate ESO's mission and vision and to design its first educational programme. Responding to this call were prominent figures in oncology, including Michael Peckham (UK), Louis Denis (Belgium), Bob Pinedo (Netherlands), and Franco Cavalli (Switzerland). These individuals, united by their respect for Veronesi's work and their shared belief in the need for a collaborative European approach to oncology, laid the foundation for ESO's enduring ethos.

Over the past four decades, countless European medical professionals have contributed to ESO's initiatives, either through leadership roles or as voluntary educators and speakers. Their engagement has always been offered on a voluntary, unpaid basis, reflecting a shared commitment to a vision of medicine as a force for social advancement and the promotion of human rights.

BREAKING DOWN BOUNDARIES

FACULTY

FROM 1982



OVER

5.000

PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED

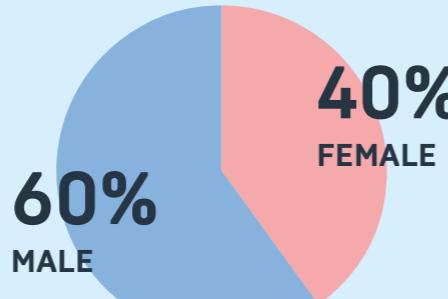
2024

COUNTRIES WHERE PROFESSIONALS OPERATE

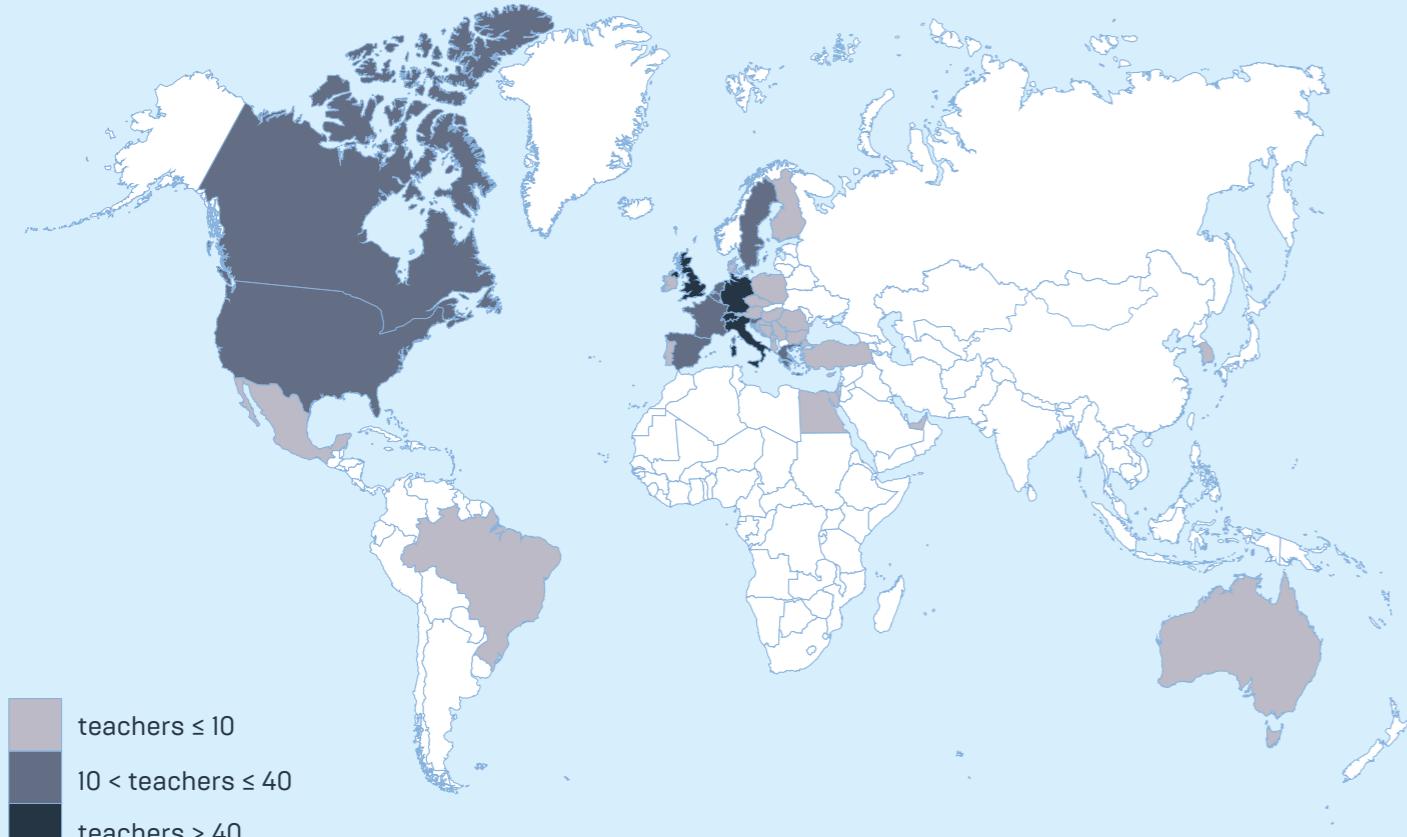
40

PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED AS FACULTY IN 2024

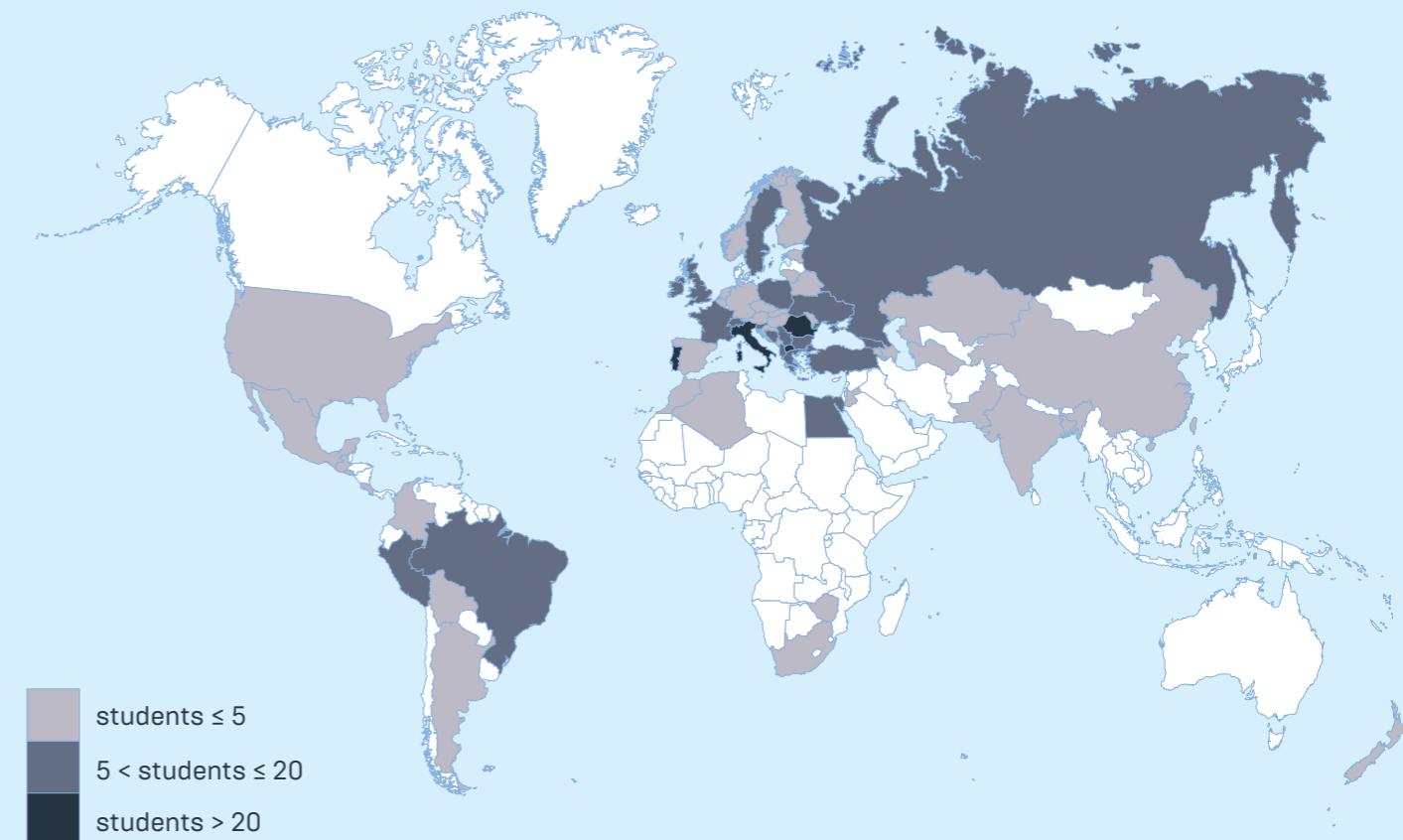
550



2024: FACULTY PROFESSIONAL FIELDS



2024: GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS OF STUDENT ORIGIN



Interview with Professor Dame Lesley Fallowfield

Professor Dame Lesley Fallowfield is a current member of ESO's Advisory Board, but her connection to the organisation dates back to its earliest days. "I first met Umberto Veronesi in 1984, when I was still a young researcher," she recalls. "ESO had just been founded, and I immediately embraced its mission."

What do you remember about that first encounter?

When I met Umberto Veronesi, Alberto Costa, and the other ESO founders, I was working as a breast cancer researcher. Although Veronesi was already a highly respected physician at the time, he showed a genuine interest in my work. He was always open, generous, and deeply appreciative of the contributions that even younger colleagues could make – traits that, among many others, made him truly exceptional. We also shared a commitment to a number of important causes, particularly the fight against smoking and opposition to war – values that bonded us early on.

What motivated you to support ESO's mission?

I was deeply inspired by ESO's holistic approach to care and its early adoption of a multidisciplinary model – principles that were far from mainstream in the medical field at the time. That forward-thinking vision resonated strongly with me.

Forty years on, where do you think ESO has made its greatest impact?

ESO's work has been significant from the outset, if only because of its commitment to offering free, accessible training – open to all, regardless of origin or background. Importantly, its independence from pharmaceutical companies ensures that it can address topics it deems important without external influence. These core values are what continue to engage professionals like myself, motivating us to contribute to ESO's activities.

What educational challenges does ESO face today?

ESO has always championed a form of medicine that is more patient-centred and humane. Today, it is crucial to support healthcare professionals – both early-career and experienced – in embracing this evolving role. Physicians are now expected to engage more deeply with patients, which brings new demands in terms of psychological insight and communication skills. ESO's role in preparing them for this shift is more relevant than ever.

As an expert in psycho-oncology, what topics do you address in ESO's courses and masterclasses?

One of the central themes in psycho-oncology is communication between physician and patient. Clear communication is essential, as it reflects the physician's knowledge and mastery of their field, while also building trust with the patient. Explaining risks, uncertainties, and treatment options in a simplified yet non-paternalistic way is a core medical skill – one that we emphasise greatly in ESO's training programmes.

In my sessions, I also focus heavily on the theme of *uncertainty*, which is an inherent aspect of both medicine and care. Every physician and healthcare professional must learn to navigate and manage uncertainty with awareness so that it does not become a source of anxiety or negatively affect the quality of care provided.



Lesley Fallowfield DBE, BSc, DPhil, FMedSci is Professor of Psycho-Oncology and Director of the Sussex Health Outcomes Research & Education in Cancer (SHORE-C) at Brighton & Sussex Medical School. Her research spans the development of Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) used in major international cancer trials, and the design of communication skills training for healthcare professionals addressing complex topics with patients – such as Phase I trials, metastatic disease, and genomic testing (see: shore-c.sussex.ac.uk).

Professor Fallowfield has received multiple research grants and is the author of over 500 papers, several book chapters, and three textbooks. She is an internationally recognised speaker on psychosocial oncology, quality of

life assessment, and communication in cancer care. She serves on numerous scientific and guideline committees globally. In recognition of her outstanding contributions to psycho-oncology, she was elected Fellow of the UK Academy of Medical Sciences in 2008 and named Dame Commander of the British Empire in 2016. In 2019, she received the ESO Umberto Veronesi Memorial Award and was made an Honorary Fellow of the Association of Cancer Physicians.

Interview with **Professor Eric Van Cutsem**

Professor Eric Van Cutsem is an internationally recognised leader in the care, treatment, and research of gastrointestinal cancers. For several years, he has served as a lecturer and speaker in ESO's training courses and is currently a member of the Advisory Board.

Professor, when did you first come into contact with ESO?

I became acquainted with ESO about twenty years ago when I was invited to teach at masterclasses, courses, and visiting professorship events.

What does training mean to you?

Training, like research, is an activity closely linked to patient care. In order to guarantee people the best possible treatments, it is necessary to carry out study and research activities and to continuously share knowledge and information among colleagues – and this is what training is all about.

What is the distinctive feature of the training offered by ESO?

ESO represents a great pool of opportunities both for young doctors and nurses who participate, as well as for the faculty members. I often engage in discussions with colleagues not only about the content of the lectures but also about the ways and methods of delivering them to the students. Over the years, the teaching and the courses have become increasingly interactive, allowing young doctors to present case studies and

discuss them with their peers and faculty. This level of exchange and collaboration is extremely productive and valuable for everyone, at every level!

What contribution does ESO make to the fight against cancer?

ESO has always been committed to reducing inequalities and disparities in cancer treatment, focusing its educational offerings particularly on students, young doctors, and nurses from disadvantaged countries and contexts. Becoming aware of the cases, issues, and conditions of patients in these contexts is very important for the entire international scientific community, as it enables a concrete reflection on how to improve care outcomes and treatments on a global scale.

In what way can ESO make a difference?

ESO's educational project has remained relevant over the years because it has consistently kept two key questions at the centre of its work: "How can one be a good multidisciplinary doctor?" and "What is the

best way to care for the patient?". Integrative and patient-centred care are two fundamental pillars for ensuring the right to healthcare and well-being.



Eric Van Cutsem, MD, PhD, is an Emeritus Professor at KU Leuven and University Hospitals Gasthuisberg in Belgium, where he served as Head of the Division of Digestive Oncology. He is a member of the Belgian Royal Academy of Medicine and President of the Belgian Foundation Against Cancer. In 2018, he received an honorary doctorate from the Medical University of Warsaw and has been the recipient of numerous international awards, including the ESMO Award in 2019. With over 740 publications indexed in PubMed and more than 120,000 citations (H-index 154), he ranks among the top 1% of the most-cited researchers worldwide in Clinical Medicine. His research focuses on gastrointestinal cancers (colorectal, gastric, pancreatic, biliary tract, oesophageal, and neuroendocrine tumours). He serves as a

consultant to industry on anticancer therapies and is a member of Independent Data Monitoring Committees for clinical trials. A global expert in gastrointestinal oncology, he provides international consulting and has been recognised among Belgium's Top Doctors (*Topdokters*). He co-founded and chairs the ESMO World Congress on Gastrointestinal Cancer and has served on the main boards of ESMO, ASCO, UEG, ENET, EORTC, ECO, ESDO, ESO, as well as patient advocacy groups such as EuropaColon and Digestive Cancers Europe. As of 2025, he is a member of the Scientific Council of the IARC/WHO. He has played a key role in colorectal cancer prevention policies in Belgium and has served on scientific advisory boards for leading cancer centres across Europe.



The focus on the centrality of the individual – their needs and rights – runs through all of ESO's activities and relates not only to patient care but also to the training of young physicians.

After years of activities and courses, in 2020 ESO decided to establish the ESO College as a space and tool to support the work and career development of individuals involved in oncology, as well as to promote the talent of young medical oncologists.

While ESO is the institution that plans, organises, and delivers the various educational activities included within the ESO pathway, the College can be described as the enabling platform that offers a range of additional tools, opportunities, and connections, open to all participants who wish to maintain an ongoing and consistent relationship with the organisation, even beyond the individual learning moments.

When a young medical oncologist is selected to participate in one of the courses included in the ESO pathway, they are automatically offered the opportunity to join the College (subject to a small membership fee of approximately €30–50 per year, depending on their country of origin).

By enrolling in the ESO College, young physicians gain access to various benefits and tools to support their careers: access to content and in-depth materials (such as a free subscription to the Health Science section of the ScienceDirect journal and access to the ESO College Library); networking tools and opportunities with other colleagues and College members as well as with the faculty (access to the ESO College Directory, the possibility to attend webinars and receive personalised online career development consultations from the School's team and staff, and the opportunity to apply for the Mentorship Programme, which provides

one year of remote support and virtual tutoring from a more experienced colleague); priority access to selection processes for certain ESO courses and training opportunities; discounts, benefits, and scholarships for paid educational initiatives (such as the Postgraduate Programme and other oncology-related courses, including external ones not organised by ESO).

These benefits are not all immediately available upon enrolment in the College but become accessible as students accumulate new credits. Credits are awarded by the School based on the level of participation, engagement, and involvement that young doctors demonstrate in educational and professional development activities (even external activities, as long as they are related to oncology).

According to this system, College students are classified into different "level classes," which in turn determine the types of benefits, support, and advantages they may access:

- Student Level = automatic entry level for all enrollees;
- Fellow Level = attainable upon accumulating at least 100 credits;
- Graduate Level = attainable upon accumulating at least 500 credits.

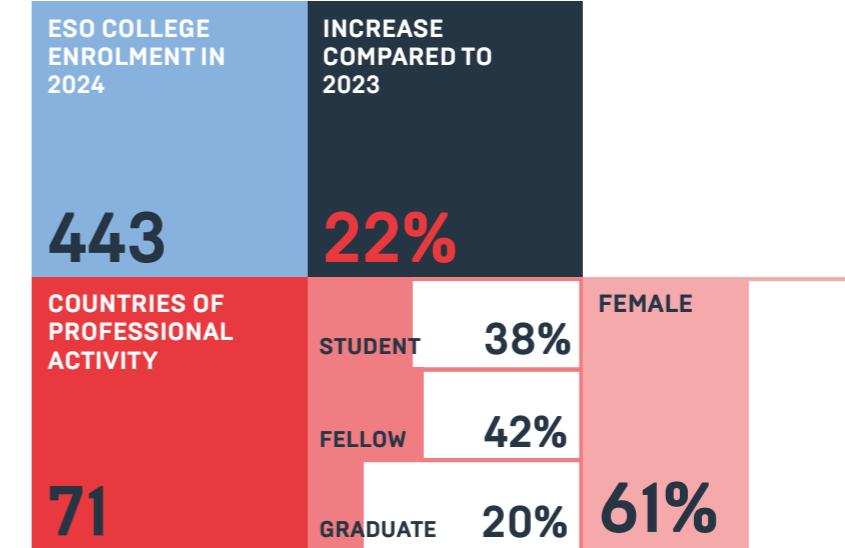
Through this "incremental benefits" membership system, ESO aims to encourage active participation and reward the proactive attitude and self-empowerment spirit that are fundamental drivers for a successful path of learning and personal growth.

The College Council

Starting in 2025, the College Council has been established – a body composed of 8 members elected at the end of 2024 – with the aim of enhancing the College's ability to identify and respond to the needs of its members. In particular, the Council is entrusted with the following tasks:

- **Governance** | assisting the ESO team in developing the strategy and structure of the College, building upon the current system and operations;

- **Development** | envisioning and planning new programs, resources, and initiatives;
- **Working Groups** | developing specific topics or areas of focus within the College;
- **International Convention** | contributing to the organisation of the first “ESO College Convention,” open to all members, which may be held in 2025 in Budapest;
- **Regional Networking Events** | designing and planning local events to foster the building of professional career networks.



THANKS FROM THE COMMUNITY

“Thank you for all the hard work you do to make ESO events a success. Your dedication and constant support do not go unnoticed, and I am truly grateful for everything you do for us.”

Diana – participant in the Melanoma Refresher Course

“On behalf of the entire group of graduates, I express our sincere gratitude for your exceptional guidance and support throughout the training program. From the moment we embarked on this postgraduate journey, you went above and beyond to ensure our academic success and personal growth. Your unwavering commitment to creating a stimulating and welcoming learning environment has been crucial in shaping us into the professionals we are today.”

Student Group from the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Prostate Cancer

“Thank you to ESO for the wonderful opportunity given to me at the beginning of this year. The course speakers were exceptional in highlighting the critical aspects of today's oncology.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the organisers for their efforts in creating such a positive atmosphere for all participants.”

Anonymous – from feedback questionnaire

“Most of the presentations were of a high standard and allowed for fruitful and stimulating discussions, just as a masterclass should. Thank you!”

Anonymous – from feedback questionnaire

ESO Ambassadors

43



A school co-created from the ground up

Alongside the founding of the College in 2020, the European School of Oncology began experimenting with the role of so-called ESO Ambassadors. These were selected from among physicians who had already participated in several of the School's activities and courses, and who had a strong network of contacts and digital presence – enabling them to act as "amplifiers" of ESO in their respective countries.

Over the years, this role has become more structured, and today there are over 40 Ambassadors across 33 different countries, both in and outside Europe. They are elected and selected from among the College members who have reached at least the level of Fellow and serve a two-year term (renewable). In return, they receive various benefits, including free College membership and 30 credits towards their membership status.

Ambassadors form a "network within the network" and maintain their connections through various channels – even simple and immediate ones such as WhatsApp groups. These allow doctors to collaborate not only on School-related activities but also on broader professional matters and shared work challenges. To support this network, ESO also commits to organising at least one in-person event per term (i.e., every two years), where Ambassadors can work together on ESO objectives and strengthen their ties.

The role of the Ambassadors is fundamental to the School – not only for promoting training activities and courses in their home and working countries, but more importantly, for listening to

and collecting needs, concerns, and suggestions from the field. This enables the School to co-design grassroots initiatives and courses that best address the challenges of different geographic and social contexts.

Thanks to the presence and outreach of the Ambassadors, ESO continues to grow its international mission and its identity as a *learning organisation* – inclusive, open, and participatory.

**ESO
AMBASSADORS
IN 2024**

46

**COUNTRIES
WHERE
AMBASSADORS
OPERATE**

33

FEMALE

67%

ESO LEARNING SOURCE

42

WHEN THE HUMAN FACTOR MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Interview with Professor Assia Konsoulova

There are many personal and professional stories that well represent what ESO is able to do for doctors eager to grow. One such story is that of Assia Konsoulova, now Head of the Medical Oncology Clinic at USHATO (University Specialised Hospital for Active Treatment of Oncology) in Sofia, Bulgaria, who came into contact with ESO over ten years ago. Professor Konsoulova's account of her career and her commitment to the fight against cancer is filled with moments and experiences involving ESO. Her first encounter with the School happened in 2011, during a masterclass in Dubrovnik, which she decided to attend in the early stages of her career:

"Attending that masterclass was very important for me – not only because of the prestige and expertise of the speakers involved, but also due to their human qualities. They were all very approachable and collaborative, which was a huge source of inspiration! Also, during that event, I met other colleagues from Bulgaria and other European countries with whom I've stayed in touch over the years."

What has your journey within ESO been like, and what level of involvement have you had?

What's unique about ESO is that it offers various levels of learning and involvement. Much depends on how much time, interest, and willingness each person wants to invest in the journey. Over the years, I've always tried to seize the opportunities that were presented to me and contribute wherever I could. The most significant experience I had thanks to ESO was the *Fellowship Programme*, which allowed me to spend six months at the Champalimaud Clinical Centre in Lisbon, Portugal. Becoming an ESO Ambassador was also an important milestone, as it still allows me to promote the School among young doctors in my country and to serve as a kind of mentor for them, just as others were for me in the past.

What did these training experiences mean to you?

Spending six months working abroad, in a country where I barely spoke the language, was very stimulating and opened my mind. I can honestly say that thanks to that experience – and other ESO initiatives I took part in – I strengthened my resilience as a

physician and my ability to focus on solutions rather than problems.

ESO also supported me greatly on both a practical and personal level: shortly after applying for the scholarship, I found out I was pregnant and feared I would have to give up this training opportunity. But ESO was understanding and allowed me to defer the scholarship by two years, which I eventually did.

What is the advantage for you today of being part of the ESO network?

The ESO network provides doctors – even after completing their formal studies – with tools, content, and resources for continued education. Furthermore, being part of the College for several years, I've been in contact with many colleagues from different countries around the world. Many of us have become friends and regularly exchange information and advice on work, clinical cases, and challenges we face. Being part of the ESO network also means being part of an international community of passionate and committed people. The atmosphere and spirit of the School are always warm, friendly, and genuine. The team and staff who work at ESO go the extra mile to make everyone feel included!

How do ESO's values manifest in your work today?

As Head of the Medical Oncology Clinic in Sofia, I combine clinical practice, research, and leadership in my role. I'm a firm believer in the multidisciplinary approach, and I'm proud to lead a cohesive and competent team where people are empowered and actively engaged in achieving our goals. I believe that teamwork, at all levels, is fundamental – along with continuous learning and the exchange between senior and junior professionals. That's the only way to guarantee excellence and improve patient care.



Dr. Assia Konsoulova holds certifications in Internal Medicine and Medical Oncology and defended a PhD thesis in Medical Oncology in 2016. With over 20 years of experience in clinical practice and research, she is currently the Head of the Medical Oncology Clinic at a major Bulgarian hospital – USHATO in Sofia. She is also an Associate Professor at the University of Burgas "Assen Zlatarov," Bulgaria. She is actively involved in several professional organisations, including the Bulgarian Joint Cancer Network (BJCN), the European School of Oncology (ESO), ESMO, ASCO, ESCO, and serves on the ethics committee of the Bulgarian Society of Young Oncologists. She is also President of the National Organisation *Women for Oncology – Bulgaria*, and a member of the Global Alliance. Her professional career began in Bulgaria, and she later worked and

specialised for several years at international oncology centres such as the Jules Bordet Institute in Brussels (Belgium), AKH in Vienna (Austria), and the Champalimaud Clinical Centre in Lisbon (Portugal). She has received various scholarships and grants, including from ESMO, ESO, ECCO, CECOG, and EU funding programs. She is the recipient of the 2016 national MORE-Darzalas award for outstanding achievements in Bulgarian clinical oncology, as well as the *Most Trusted Physicians in Bulgaria* recognition, which she has held for the past five years. Author of over 130 publications and scientific reports – most of them in peer-reviewed journals – she also serves as editor for *Frontiers in Oncology*, *Women's Health*, the ERS Oncology Congress, and the journal *Breath*. She is a nationally and internationally recognised speaker at oncology forums.

ESO AS A KIND OF “HEALTHY ADDICTION”

Interview with Dr. Miloš Grujić

Among the 8 new members elected to the College Council in December 2024 is Miloš Grujić, a radiation oncologist and Head of the Department of Radiation Oncology at the University Hospital of Kragujevac, Serbia. His appointment as a College Council member comes after a series of milestones and recognitions that reflect Dr. Grujić's commitment to and enthusiasm for ESO's activities.

What drives you to support ESO so strongly?

I often jokingly say that ESO has become a sort of “healthy addiction” for me. I deeply believe in advanced training as a means of improving patient care, and I want to support the School in its mission as a way of giving back the support and help I've received over the years.

How has the School helped you?

The lessons I've learned from ESO over the years have made me not only a better doctor, but also a better person – with a more open mindset, stronger management and leadership skills, and – no less important from my point of view – many more contacts and friends all over the world. These are colleagues I've met during various international events, and I stay in regular touch with them for both professional reasons and friendship.

When did your journey with ESO begin?

I discovered the School in 2019 thanks to some colleagues who told me about an ESO Masterclass in Croatia. I attended it and was thrilled – not only because of the high-level content and lectures, but especially for the very open and welcoming atmosphere that made me feel comfortable, even though at the time I didn't speak English very well.

How has your involvement evolved and grown over time?

That first masterclass I was lucky to attend gave me the motivation to keep going, to improve both my skills as an oncologist and my language proficiency, so that I could communicate more easily in English. Later, during the COVID years, I took part in many online training sessions through the ESO Distance Learning platform, and in 2021 I became an ESO Ambassador. I then received a scholarship for a postgraduate program on prostate cancer, and needless to say, that too was a key opportunity for my career, allowing me to attend seminars in Milan, Marseille, and Lugano. Thanks to ESO, I also benefited from a mentorship program under the guidance of Professor Barbara Jereczek Fossa, who has been a great inspiration to me and gave me the chance to get to know IEO (European Institute of Oncology) in Milan more closely. In May 2024, I received the title of Graduate within the ESO College.

What does being an ESO Ambassador mean to you?

Ambassadors act as a sort of “bridge” between the School and the medical community in their own country. I try not only to spread and share ESO opportunities through social media

and my communication channels, but above all, I strive to be a role model for younger colleagues – because I believe that embodying a certain way of being and practising medicine is the most effective and credible way to inspire and engage others.



Dr. Miloš Grujić is a radiation oncologist and Head of the “Subspecialty Cabinets” at the Centre for Radiation Oncology” Department at the University Clinical Centre of Kragujevac, Serbia. He earned his Medical Degree from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Kragujevac with an outstanding academic record, followed by a specialisation in radiation oncology at the Institute of Oncology and Radiology of Belgrade. Committed to lifelong learning, he is currently pursuing a PhD and has completed the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Prostate Cancer at the University of Italian Switzerland. His international experience includes a clinical observership at the European Institute of Oncology (IEO) in Milan. Dr. Grujić is actively involved in oncology research, with a particular focus on prostate

cancer, radiomics, and advancements in radiotherapy. He is the author of several peer-reviewed publications and has presented at international conferences. He serves as Co-Chair of ESO's Career Development Working Group and Vice-Chair of the European Cancer Organisation's Inequalities Network. Passionate about mentorship and education, he remains dedicated to advancing oncology science and improving patient care through collaboration and innovation.

3

Foundation



The history of the European School of Oncology is the story of many people who, upon meeting, shared a common vision and a mutual understanding of the values worth committing to – and at times fighting for – in both work and life.

The story begins over forty years ago with the meeting between Umberto Veronesi and Laudomia Del Drago.

The Roman princess had fallen ill with cancer and, once recovered, asked Professor Veronesi how she could repay him. Veronesi told her about his dream of creating a European training centre for oncology – a dream she embraced, deciding to also provide financial support for the creation of a nonprofit association called the European School of Oncology – ESO. It was 1982, and some of the most renowned oncologists in Europe immediately joined the founding of the School: English radiotherapist Michael Peckham, Belgian urologist Louis Denis, Dutch oncologist Bob Pinedo, and a leading figure in Swiss oncology, Franco Cavalli.

The vision that these luminaries shared with Umberto Veronesi was to create a unified European organisation for the education of cancer care professionals.

This was conceived as a response to the American strategy (the National Cancer Act), which – starting in the 1970s – had led the U.S. federal government to channel all investments and resources into a single federal research institute, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) based in Washington.

At the time, Euro-

pean countries did not have the political and administrative infrastructure to do the same – the European Commission was far weaker in terms of coordinating investments. Still, physicians across the “Old Continent” recognised the importance of organising and collaborating to drive progress in cancer research and treatment.

This was especially crucial considering that, until then, Europeans had contributed many of the world’s most important oncology advances:

- The British and French in developing new drugs
- The Italians, who discovered the most powerful anti-tumour drug for breast cancer (adriamycin) and introduced the concept of adjuvant chemotherapy (treatment given in addition to surgery), thanks to Gianni Bonadonna
- And, finally, the revolution in breast cancer surgery led by Umberto Veronesi, who in 1980 demonstrated the possibility of preserving the breast

The founding of the European School of Oncology in 1982 was therefore a concrete response to the need to “Europeanise” oncology. It was a credible initiative from the outset, thanks to Umberto Veronesi – a highly respected and internationally recognised figure who, at the time (1979–1984), was also leading the Italian National Research Council’s five-year plan “Control of Neoplastic Growth,” which invested nearly 200 billion lire in researcher training and the creation of new laboratories.

Thanks to his credibility, charisma, and ability to bring together ideas, projects, and people, Umberto Veronesi was not only the founder of the School but also the professional and human



figure who inspired its activities for more than forty years.

Much of this enduring impact is due to **Dr. Alberto Costa**, who has led ESO since its inception. At the time, he was Veronesi's assistant at the National Cancer Institute of Milan and was appointed as ESO's Director. He has carried forward the principles and values dear to Professor Veronesi – summed up perfectly in the organisation's motto: **Learning to Care**.

"As doctors, - says Costa, - we have always been aware that care is a central factor in managing and confronting illness. That is why, from the very beginning, we designed ESO's training courses to be open not only to physicians, but also to nurses and other care professionals."

To learn in order "to care" means placing the patient at the centre – as a person and an individual – with everything that entails: listening, recognising their needs, and acknowledging their subjectivity and cultural, gender, age, and language differences. Being able to see the person beyond the illness also automatically implies adopting a multidisciplinary approach, capable of identifying multiple, complementary solutions to a complex issue such as cancer. "Even today," Alberto Costa continues, "we are still recognised as being among the first to understand the importance of training multidisciplinary teams to fight cancer."

But ESO's activity has also proven to be pioneering and forward-thinking in another area: continuing medical education. In 1982, Italy's national program for Continuing Medical Education (ECM) did not yet exist – it would only begin in 2002 (thanks in part to Umberto Veronesi's commitment during his tenure as Minister of Health from 2000 to 2001). "A doctor who doesn't study is a doctor who doesn't treat," Professor Veronesi used to say. Inheriting this belief, ESO worked to expand its reach as much as possible, developing courses and activities tailored to all stages of a medical career – from university students to experienced physicians.

In ESO's DNA, there has always been a desire to break down boundaries – not only in the geographical sense, as Costa recalls ("At its founding in 1982, the School had the mission of bridging the gap between Western and Eastern Europe") – but also in a symbolic sense, standing for collaboration, openness, informality, and inclusiveness.

These values are rooted in the deeply and passionately pacifist spirit of Umberto Veronesi. Born as an open and inclusive space for meeting, learning, and exchanging ideas – first and foremost between people, and then among medical professionals – over more than 40 years of activity, the European School of Oncology has also become a place of cultural mediation, constantly seeking the best synthesis of skills, knowledge, and ideas capable of shaping the future.



"When I look to the future, - says Dr. Costa - my ambition is to help create a European approach to end-of-life care, bringing together the best practices currently in place across different countries in Europe."



Oncopedia

The online archive that documents the contribution of European medicine to the field of oncology

Oncopedia was launched in 2022 as an online archive collecting all scientific publications and contributions produced in Europe – the main area of interest and activity for ESO – with the ultimate goal of highlighting the commitment and role of the European medical and scientific community in the fight against cancer.

That said, Oncopedia does not exclude documentation of progress originating elsewhere, such as in the United States or other countries.

The platform, which is continuously updated, provides information on various types of cancer, treatments, socio-cultural aspects, prevention strategies, public health, biographies

of key figures, and descriptions of oncology hospitals, institutes, and organisations that have shaped the history of European oncology.

As of September 2024, more than 30 contributions had been published in the archive, with the goal of reaching 100 entries within a year.

In light of this progress, Oncopedia was officially launched during the annual Congress of the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) in Barcelona (September 13–17, 2024), and was also presented at the World Cancer Congress organised by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) held in Geneva (September 17–19, 2024).



THE PILLARS OF THIS STORY

1980s

FIRST RECOGNITION ARRIVES QUICKLY

- ESO begins its educational activities with the first training courses (the first Medical Oncology Course is held in 1984 in Italy, at the Castle of Pomario on Lake Como).
- In 1985, ESO is commissioned to write the *European Code Against Cancer* on behalf of the European Commission, which that same year had launched the "Europe Against Cancer" program. It was essentially a kind of ten-point guide for cancer prevention.

1990s

ESO'S COMMITMENT RESONATES AROUND THE WORLD

- These are the years when ESO's activities reach various parts of Europe and the world (including Egypt, Morocco, Romania, and Ireland), and language-specific programs and courses begin (for doctors and nurses who are native French, German, and Spanish speakers).
- Additionally, ESO contributes to supporting the creation of other organisations and associations committed to the fight against cancer (such as *Europa Donna*, a coalition of breast cancer advocacy groups).

EARLY 2000s

NOT JUST TRAINING, BUT ALSO OUTREACH

- ESO continues to bring its educational activities to various cities and countries around the world (Moscow, Malta, Cyprus, Slovenia, to name just a few). At the same time, through its representatives and network of physicians, it carries out lobbying efforts and promotes a broader oncology culture.
- This includes the founding of a scientific magazine titled *Cancer World*, as well as support for the establishment of a prostate cancer advocacy group, *Europa Uomo* (the counterpart to *Europa Donna*, created in the previous decade).

FROM 2010 TO 2020

A PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION

- During these years, the School develops several strategic initiatives that give shape, structure, and substance to the efforts carried out so far:
 - Accredited post-graduate programs are launched in collaboration with universities;
 - The first scholarships are introduced, enabling doctors to pursue training abroad thanks to ESO's network of affiliated centres and hospital clinics;
 - Finally, the ESO College is established as a dedicated body to cultivate the alumni network and promote continuous education among its members.

FROM 2020 TO TODAY

A DRIVE TOWARD INNOVATION

- In recent years, ESO's evolution and the strengthening of its mission have been significantly propelled by the introduction of new strategic and organisational functions:
 - The appointment of a new Executive Director, in office since 2023, who works alongside Alberto Costa (Chief Executive Officer) in coordinating the offices in Milan and Bellinzona;
 - The establishment of the Multidisciplinary Scientific Council (MSC), composed of experts in various fields (medical oncology, surgery, radiotherapy, and pathology), which evaluates and oversees the quality and relevance of the educational offering;
 - The recent decision to participate in European tenders and projects has also provided ESO with a stronger push toward financial independence and sustainability.

Genuine and Collective Commitment



Structure

At ESO, it is the people who truly make the difference – through their passion, energy, and expertise, which are applied every day to ensure high-quality training and the continual growth of an international community of oncology doctors and nurses.

The School's activities are carried out by two distinct entities: ESO and ESO Office, located respectively in Milan, Italy, and Bellinzona, Switzerland. Together, these offices have a total of 12 employees, the majority of whom are women of European origin, with an average age of 44 (detailed data provided below).

2 ENTITIES	EMPLOYEES	ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP	58%
 ESO (IN MILAN) AND ESO OFFICE (IN BELLINZONA)	12	SWISS CITIZENSHIP	33%
AVERAGE AGE OF EMPLOYEES	PERMANENT CONTRACTS	BRITISH CITIZENSHIP	8%
44 YEARS	92%	FEMALE EMPLOYEES (INCLUDING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR)	92%
	FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES		
	58%		

ESO also has an internal governance structure designed to ensure, among other things, a shared strategic vision, consistent management, performance monitoring, and the continuous improvement of its educational offering. Below is the **ESO organisational chart**, along with descriptions of the main decision-making bodies.

Decision-Making Bodies

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The **Board of Directors** is responsible for defining ESO's values, objectives, and strategies, as well as approving the budget and annual financial statements. The Board meets twice a year and, in 2024, was composed of 11 members, including ESO President Fedele Gubitosi, along with 3 external auditors responsible for auditing the financial statements.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The **Executive Committee** acts as a “bridge” between the decisions made by the Board of Directors and the ESO staff, in order to ensure that strategies and decisions are effectively implemented. This committee collaborates in the development of strategies, the identification of opportunities and challenges for improving ESO's services, and oversees budget compliance, expenditures, and financial planning to ensure operational continuity. The committee meets twice a year and, in 2024, was composed of four members: the President of ESO (Fedele Gubitosi), the CEO (Alberto Costa), the Executive Director (Rossella Blasi), and the President of ESOF (Carlo Maggini).

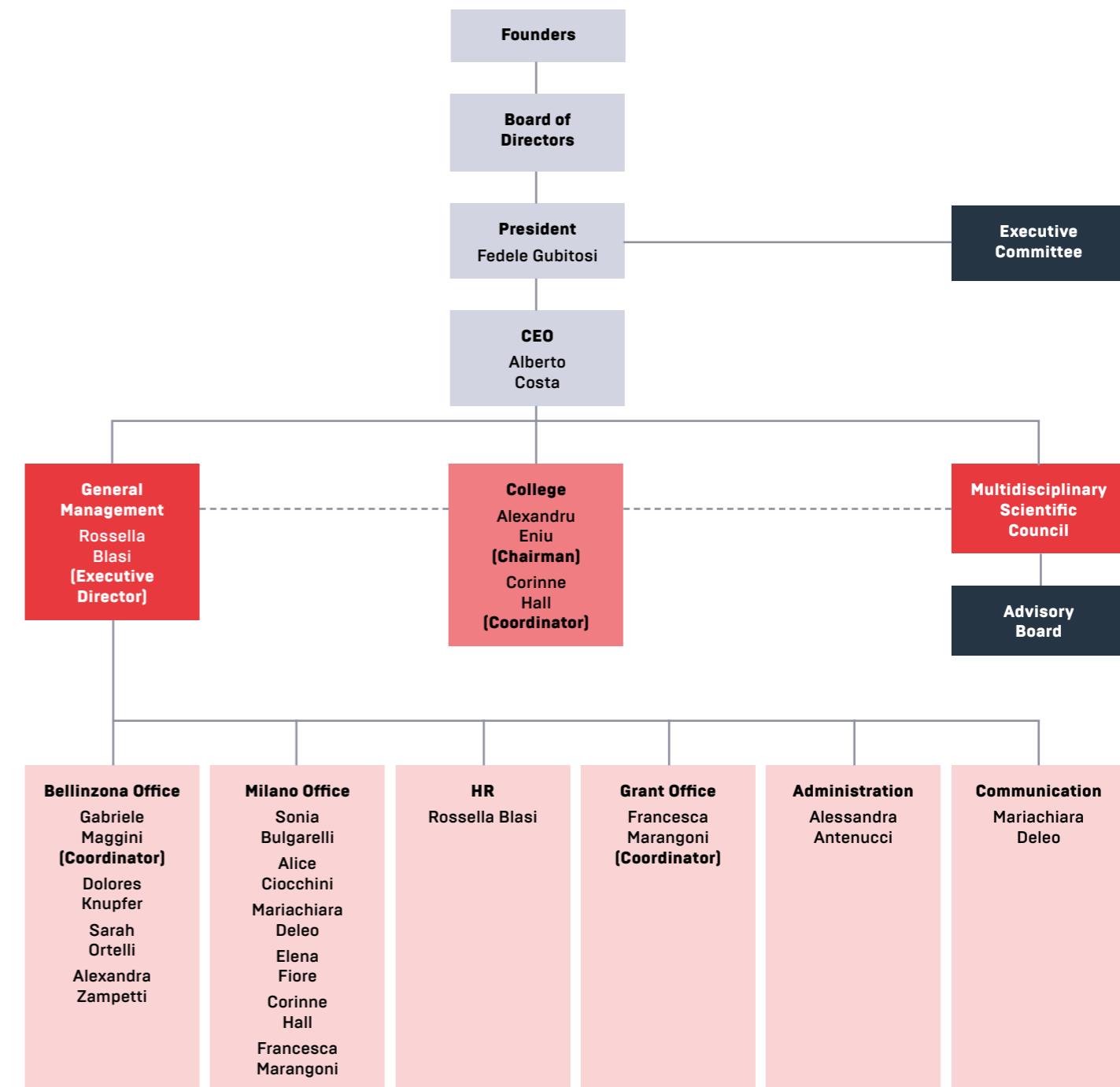
MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL (MSC)

In 2024, the Scientific Programme Committee was gradually replaced by the Multidisciplinary Scientific Council (MSC), which became officially active in 2025. The main objective of the MSC, as with the previous committee, is to assess, ensure, and oversee the validity of the educational offering and the quality of the training programs. To ensure a comprehensive and multidisciplinary perspective, ESO's Multidisciplinary Scientific Council (MSC) is composed of a group of experts from various fields (surgery, radiotherapy, medical oncology, pathology) tasked with transparently monitoring and evaluating the School's activities, and supporting the ESO team in implementing its strategy and planning the educational programs. The Multidisciplinary Scientific Council is scheduled to meet three times a year, starting in 2025, and is composed of four members (further details on page 27).

ADVISORY BOARD

The **Advisory Board** is responsible for approving the three-year strategic plan and contributing to the development and evolution of the training activities. It meets twice a year (once in person and once online), and in 2024 was composed of 14 members, including the Chair, Nicholas Pavlidis (Ioannina).

Organisational chart



Resources



For ESO, independence from the pharmaceutical industry is an absolutely key and crucial value in order to ensure the quality of its services. For this reason, since 2022, the School has been committed to participating in European projects in the field of medical/oncological research and training. Since 2022, ESO has secured four European Grants, obtaining funding totalling €892,000.

Thanks to the funds raised between 2023 and 2024, within the framework of three of the four European Projects (*Interact Europe*, *Interact Europe 100*, and *Comprehensive Cancer Infrastructure for the European Union - CCI4EU*), ESO was able to issue 447 training certificates to doctors, nurses, and other professionals, with additional participants expected to be trained in 2025.

There are also two foundations that have financially supported ESO since its inception: the *Fondazione per la Formazione Oncologica* (FFO) and the *ESO Foundation* (ESOF). The first was established in 1996 in Milan through the ini-

tiate of Professor Umberto Veronesi and the generous support of private donors. FFO is a non-profit organisation that supports all initiatives aimed at training physicians in oncology, particularly ESO's activities. The ESO Foundation, on the other hand, dates back to 1988 and was created thanks to the bequests of sisters Gigina and Nedda Necchi, who, through their significant endowment, sought to support and ensure the long-term continuity of the project launched in 1982 by Professor Umberto Veronesi and Princess Laudomia Del Drago. The Foundation's mandate is to provide the resources that allow ESO to develop initiatives aimed at enhancing the skills of healthcare professionals in the field of oncology, thereby accelerating the transfer of scientific advances into clinical practice.

Below are tables showing ESO's expenses and revenues for 2024, for both the Milan and Bellinzona offices. The revenue analysis for 2024 once again demonstrates ESO's complete independence from the pharmaceutical sector.

EUROPEAN GRANTS AWARDED	TOTAL FUNDS RAISED	FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE FROM PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES FOR ESO AND ESO OFFICE
4	€ 892.000	100%

ECONOMIC DATA		
Expenses 2024	ESO	ESO OFFICE
Distance learning, website, E-learning (*)	312.707,00 €	91.703,40 €
Advanced courses, conferences, scholarships, residential courses, masterclasses	437.632,00 €	520.780,11 €
Training programs abroad (*)	451.932,00 €	120.940,44 €
Activities of ESO foreign offices	-	-
Personnel costs	740.855,00 €	781.972,60 €
Administrative expenses and amortisations	774.016,00 €	382.850,87 €
Total Expenses 2024	2.717.142,00 €	1.898.247,42 €

(*) For ESO, includes EU-funded projects.

Revenues 2024	ESO	ESO OFFICE
Income from institutional activities	624.090,00 €	279.585,32 €
Contributions from ESOF (ESO Foundation)	-	1.594.898,25 €
Contributions from FFO (Fondazione per la Formazione Oncologica)	1.671.263,00 €	-
Contributions from third parties	67.428,00 €	20.832,43 €
European Grant contributions	348.199,00 €	-
Other income	6.162,00 €	2.931,42 €
Total Revenues 2024	2.717.142,00 €	1.898.247,42 €

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Learning to care

Prepared by:

Fedele Gubitosi
ESO President

Alberto Costa
ESO Chief Executive Officer

Rossella Blasi
ESO General Director

With the support of:

The School's staff and personnel

In collaboration with:

Giuditta Passini
Data analysis and KPI development

Martina Milani
Mira! – Positive impact communication
Editorial project, texts, interviews, and photos

Printed in April 2025



European School
of Oncology

Milan Office
via Turati, 29
20121 Milan - Italy

Bellinzona Office
via Vincenzo Vela, 6
6500 Bellinzona - Switzerland

eso@eso.net
eso.net