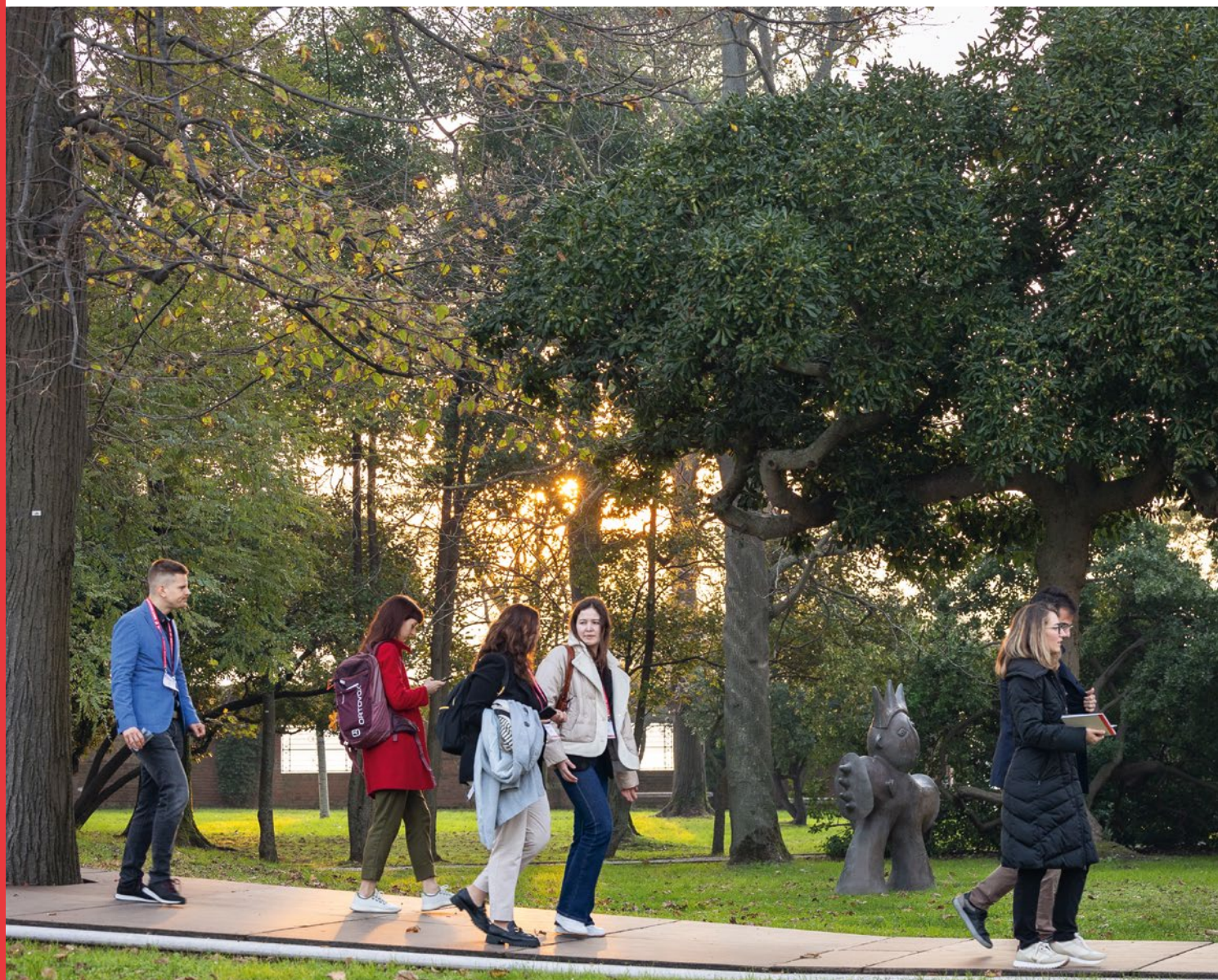


# Learning to care

A bridge between medicine, healthcare professionals and patients



European School  
of Oncology

# Learning to care

## Dear friends, donors and trustees,

As we look back at 2025, the **European School of Oncology (ESO)** has a renewed awareness of its role and is ambitious about contributing to the evolution of **oncology education and culture** in Europe and worldwide. The School is approaching its **fiftieth anniversary** in 2031, a milestone that represents more than a simple historic date. It is a moment to reflect on our ongoing process of **innovation and renewal**, and to strengthen our ability to **develop innovative training models** and interpret the evolving landscape of **contemporary medicine**.

The **European School of Oncology** has become a **flagship** of the Italian tradition in medical education. With **over 40,000 alumni** across Europe, it features regularly on the CVs of countless doctors and nurses treating cancer patients from Lisbon to Yerevan and from Gdańsk to Malta. The School has two key strengths: a **multidisciplinary approach** and the training in **empathetic care**. The former enables doctors, surgeons, radiologists, pathologists and nurses to work together, because cancer can no longer be treated by one specialist alone; the latter ensures we never forget that the patient is a person and that treating the body alone is not enough.

The most recent results confirm the **tangible impact** of this commitment. In 2025, the ESO trained **2,710 healthcare professionals** from **125 countries** through **22 training events**, delivering over **1,480 hours of training** and involving more than **550 international lecturers**. This demonstrates the School's ability to operate on a global scale while maintaining **quality, independence and relevance**.

In a healthcare context characterised by increasing scientific, technological and social complexity, ESO continues to promote a genuinely **multidisciplinary** approach to oncology, based on the integration of **research, clinical practice, prevention** and a **person-centred approach**. This approach is given concrete expression in the **ESO Educational Pathway**, a structured programme comprising **seven progressive levels** that supports doctors and nurses throughout their professional development.

The motto, **'Learning to Care'**, is now more relevant than ever as the guiding principle of our work. It is a timely reminder of the importance of combining **scientific excellence** with **human responsibility, innovation with active listening, and technical expertise** with an **ethical vision**. From this perspective, training is not just about transmitting knowledge. It is also about fostering an **international community** of professionals who recognise their impact on patients' lives.

In this context, we have also strengthened our **international presence** significantly. In 2025, ESO consolidated its collaboration with the network of **Italian embassies** by directly promoting educational and scientific initiatives in high-profile institutional settings. Educational programmes were implemented **in collaboration with the Italian diplomatic missions in Zagreb, Belgrade, Luxembourg and Sofia**, creating concrete opportunities for dialogue with local medical and scientific communities and contributing to the dissemination of **shared models of multidisciplinary training in oncology**.

These initiatives are more than just events. They represent a **strategic evolution** of the ESO model by bringing training directly into national contexts, identifying specific needs and consolidating the School's role as a **bridge between expertise, healthcare systems and professional communities**.

At the same time, the **ESO ecosystem** continued to develop in 2025, with **ESO College** growing to **480 members** across **69 countries** (+8% compared to 2024), and the **ESO Ambassador network** strengthening to include **31 professionals** in **28 countries**. These ambassadors are a vital part of training programmes increasingly rooted in local communities.

Other significant achievements this year include the attainment of **ISO 9001 quality certification**, a tangible reflection of the School's **increased organisational strength**, and the introduction of innovative training initiatives, such as **practical training in oncological surgery** and the consolidation of **clinical fellowship programmes** in European centres of excellence.

A defining feature that continues to set ESO apart is its complete **independence from the pharmaceutical industry**. This approach ensures complete freedom in determining training content and enables us to respond more effectively to the real needs of clinical practice.

Looking to the future, the journey towards our **50th anniversary** represents a concrete opportunity for ESO to consolidate our role in an ever-changing global landscape. Our ambition is to help train a **new generation of healthcare professionals and leaders** who can address the emerging challenges of oncology, while promoting **innovation, sustainability and equitable access to care**.

I am deeply grateful to all the **stakeholders** who support and trust the School and accompany us on this journey. Together, we can continue to build a **shared vision of the future of oncology**, founded on **knowledge, responsibility and solidarity**, for the benefit of patients and society.

Fedele Gubitosi  
President of ESO



[www.eso.net](http://www.eso.net)



# ESO IN BRIEF

In 2025

ESO – European School of Oncology brings together the best resources and expertise to offer highly qualified, multidisciplinary and independent training to medical professionals wishing to keep up to date on oncology topics.



**1,483**

HOURS OF TRAINING  
DELIVERED



**21**

SCHOLARSHIPS  
AWARDED

**17**

FULLY FUNDED  
BY ESO



**22**

TRAINING EVENTS  
ORGANISED ONLINE AND OFFLINE



OVER

**€ 107,000**

AWARDED IN SCHOLARSHIPS



**618**

LECTURERS  
INVOLVED



**31**

ACTIVE  
AMBASSADORS



**13**

EMPLOYEES

**92%**

FEMALE



**480**

STUDENTS ENROLLED  
IN ESO COLLEGE

**+8%**

INCREASE IN ENROLMENT  
COMPARED TO 2024



**100%**

FINANCIAL  
INDEPENDENCE FROM  
THE PHARMACEUTICAL  
INDUSTRY

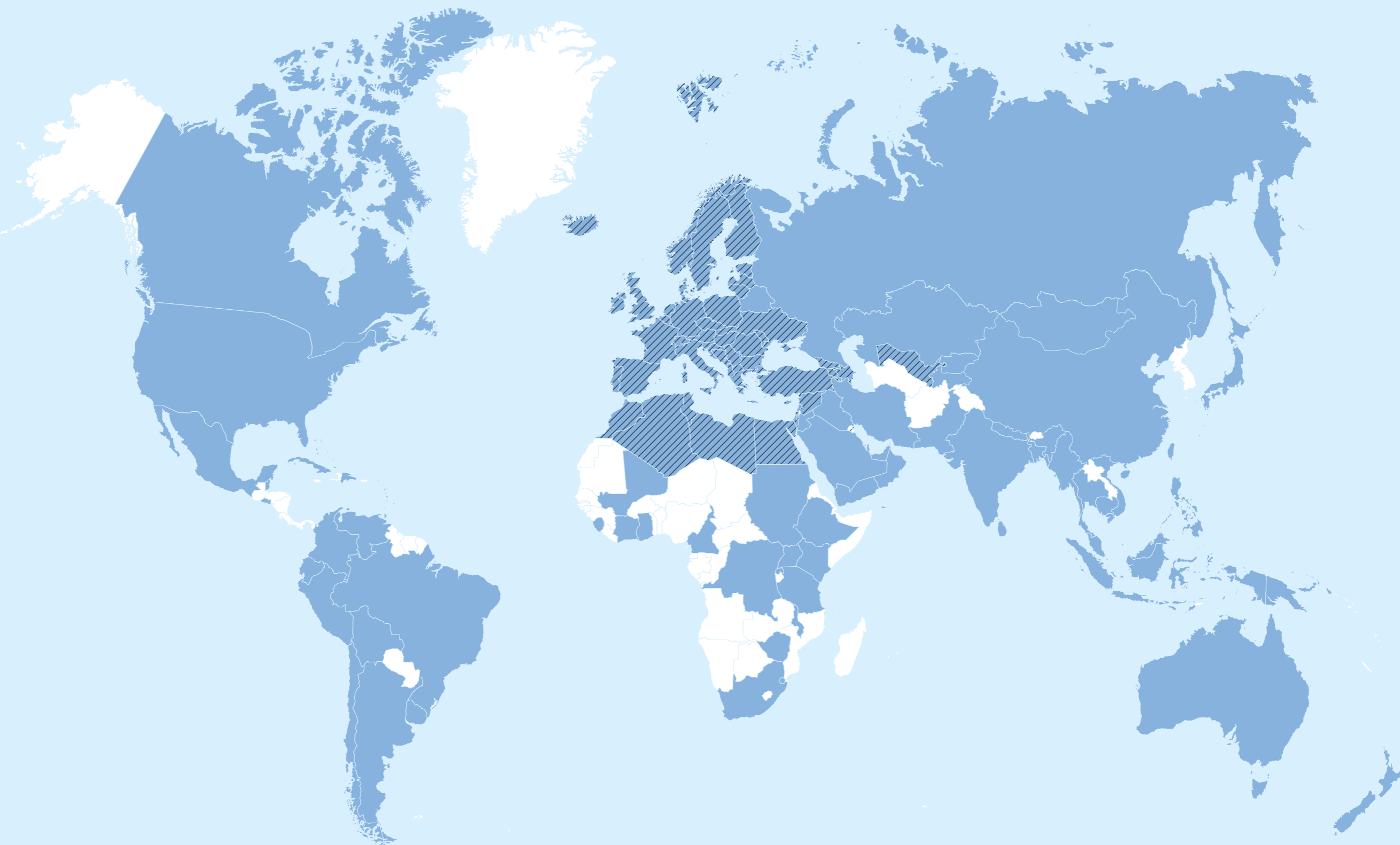


**2,710**  
STUDENTS TRAINED

**62%**  
FEMALE

**COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF STUDENTS TRAINED BY ESO IN 2025**

**COUNTRIES WHERE ESO MAINLY CARRIES OUT ITS ACTIVITIES**





**European School of Oncology**

il Museo del Manicomio e l'isola di San Servolo

Visit to the Insane Asylum Museum and San Servolo Island

Venice International University

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# 1

## The School's Educational Architecture



By 2025, the European School of Oncology had consolidated its Educational Pathway, strengthening its identity, coherence and vision. Multidisciplinarity at ESO is not merely a stated principle: it is an operational reality. It is the very structure upon which the School is founded.

Contemporary oncology is characterised by increasing scientific, organisational and technological complexity. The clinical decision-making process has been transformed by molecular biology, the use of biomarkers, advanced imaging, artificial intelligence and the constant increase in patient survival rates. Each medical decision requires integrated skills, continuous dialogue and a systemic vision.

ESO has developed its training model based on this understanding. The Pathway – from Basic Oncology Courses to Masterclasses, from Fellowships to Postgraduate Programmes – constitutes a cohesive system in which each level interacts with the others and incorporates different clinical perspectives.

The integration of expertise is evident in both the content and the method: collective discussions of clinical cases, faculty members from complementary fields, and dialogue between professionals from different healthcare systems. Training becomes a space for structured interaction between disciplines.

This approach is also reflected in scientific governance. A Multidisciplinary Scientific Council ensures balance in terms of content and representation of the various disciplines, as well as consistency across programmes. The composition of the Faculty, the definition of topics, and the structure of the panels are designed to encompass a range of expertise, including medical oncologists, surgeons, radiotherapists, nurses, researchers, healthcare managers, and patient advocates.

By 2025, the model had become firmly established. Integrating clinical, organisational and scientific dimensions confirms a vision of training centred on patients and teamwork. Training oncologists involves preparing professionals who can make decisions collectively, engage in dialogue, and work in complex healthcare environments.

In a European landscape that is characterised by increasing vertical specialisation, ESO maintains an integrated approach, combining different skills to improve the quality of care.

# ESO Educational Pathway

## STEP 1

MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
ONCOLOGY COURSES  
FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

## STEP 2

BASIC PRINCIPLES  
IN ONCOLOGY  
COURSES

## STEP 3

MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
MASTERCLASS  
IN ONCOLOGY

## STEP 5

CLINICAL TRAINING  
CENTRES FELLOWSHIP  
PROGRAMME

## STEP 4

REFRESHER  
COURSES

## STEP 6

POSTGRADUATE  
PROGRAMMES

## STEP 7

IMPROVING CANCER  
OUTCOMES AND  
LEADERSHIP COURSES

# MULTIDISCIPLINARITY AS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

## Interview with Barbara Jereczek Fossa

Member of the Multidisciplinary  
Scientific Council  
Chair of ESO 2025 events

### Where does ESO stand today in the European oncology landscape?

Today in Europe we have excellent scientific societies, each focused on a specific discipline: medical oncology, radiotherapy, surgery. What was missing, and what ESO represents, is a truly multidisciplinary space. ESO does not duplicate what already exists: it acts as a bridge between disciplines. Today's oncology cannot be practised by a single specialist. It is a team effort. And ESO embodies precisely this vision.

### Why is a multidisciplinary approach so central to training?

Because traditional training is vertical. We study medicine, and then we undertake four or five years of specialist training. We become experts in one specific medical area, but we rarely get used to thinking alongside other specialists. At ESO, we discuss things together, share clinical cases and listen to different perspectives. This is amazing, because it changes your mindset. It forces you to step outside your own field and see the patient in all their complexity.

### What concrete effects do you observe in clinical practice?

It really is a quantum leap. Take radiotherapy, for example, which is my specialty. In Europe we have advanced technologies, yet we know that some patients who would benefit from radiotherapy do not receive it. Not because of a lack of equipment, but because they are not referred to a specialist. It is a cultural issue. Post-operative radiotherapy can significantly improve the survival rate of some patients with breast cancer. If a patient isn't assessed, she misses out on this opportunity.

When there is a real multidisciplinary culture, this risk is reduced. Since completing the ESO courses, I have noticed a change in my colleagues' approach: they discuss issues more, consult with other specialists and suggest integrated solutions.

### What is the role of the Multidisciplinary Scientific Council?

It is an ambitious but necessary mission. The Council brings together representatives from various disciplines, and we work to ensure balance in the programmes. I like an English saying: "If you are not at the table, you are on the table." If you're not at the decision-making

table, someone else will decide for you. Every discipline must be represented; otherwise, the view becomes partial. Multidisciplinarity must be genuine, not just a claim.

### In 2025, you chaired several ESO events. What does it mean to build a multidisciplinary programme?

It means striking a genuine balance. For example, if we organise a course on a specific type of cancer, it is only natural for everyone to focus on their own area of expertise. Our job is to provide the most comprehensive overview possible.

It also means involving young people right from the start. I always ask participants to prepare a question. This changes the way they listen. ESO is very interactive and open. They shouldn't feel intimidated, but part of the community.

### Have participants' needs changed in recent years?

Yes, very much so. Today, we don't just talk about drugs or guidelines. We also talk about communication, carers and burnout. Cancer isn't just the patient's illness; it's the whole family's. Finally, we're also talking about the people who are responsible for delivering care.



**Barbara Alicja Jereczek-Fossa** is a full professor of radiation oncology at the University of Milan (UNIMI). She is Director of the Division of Radiation Oncology and Proton Centre at the European Institute of Oncology (IEO IRCCS) in Milan, as well as Director of the School of Specialisation in Radiation Oncology at UNIMI.

On the international stage, she is President-elect of ESTRO (the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology) for the period from May 2026 to May 2028 and sits on the boards of several international scientific societies, including the APCCC (Global Prostate Cancer Panel), ESO, and Europa Uomo.

As Principal Investigator on numerous studies, including RADIOSA, GIVE-ME-FIVE on ablative radiotherapy and STRA-MI-VT on radioablation of cardiac arrhythmias, she is heavily involved in clinical and translational research. She has authored 565 scientific publications and has a Google Scholar H-index of 63, with over 15,000 citations. She is included among the Top Italian Scientists (TIS) and in the Stanford World's Top 2% Scientists list.

# MULTIDISCIPLINARITY AS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Oncology is demanding. The workload is growing and patients are living longer, so we follow them for years. If the professionals aren't well, neither will the patients be. For me, this is a real step forward.

## What has been your personal journey with ESO?

My journey began with attending a course. You then become part of this positive community and grow alongside it. Over time, I became involved first with the faculty and then with the Multidisciplinary Scientific Council. ESO supports professional development throughout your entire career. It is a community that supports and values its members.

## What message would you like to leave regarding the future of oncology training?

The field of oncology has changed profoundly. Nowadays, many patients are able to return to normal life. I have even had patients who have run a marathon while undergoing treatment. This would have been unthinkable years ago. We must also change how oncology is perceived and train professionals who can collaborate and work together, because the quality of care increasingly depends on the ability to combine different skills.

Barbara Alicja Jereczek-Fossa

### Current roles

- Full Professor of Radiation Oncology at the University of Milan (UNIMI), Italy
- Director of the Division of Radiotherapy and Proton Centre at the European Institute of Oncology (IEO IRCCS), Milan, Italy
- Director of the Postgraduate School of Radiotherapy at the University of Milan (UNIMI), Italy

### International leadership

- President-elect of ESTRO (European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology), term 5/2026-5/2028
- Active member of the boards of international scientific societies: APCCC (Global Prostate Cancer Panel), ESO, Europa Uomo, etc.

### Excellence in research

- Principal Investigator of translational clinical trials: RADIOSA, GIVE-ME-FIVE (ablative radiotherapy), STRA-MI-VT (radioablation for cardiac arrhythmias), etc.
- Scientific output: 565 publications | Hirsch index (Google Scholar): 63 | over 15,000 citations
- International recognition: listed in Top Italian Scientists (TIS) and the Stanford World's Top 2% Scientists list



# MAIN COURSES 2025

The quality of cancer care stems from the integration of different areas of expertise



## STEP 5

### Clinical Training Centres Fellowship Programme

#### European mobility and cross-disciplinary

The **Clinical Training Centres (CTC)** programme provides hands-on experience in the integration of clinical skills. ESO facilitates training mobility in European centres of excellence, promoting individual clinical development and exposure to teamwork-based organisational models. Rather than merely observing clinical procedures, participants are actively involved in case discussions, audit processes and clinical governance as part of their day-to-day practice. In 2025, three fellowship programmes were offered (to doctors, paediatric oncologists and oncology nurses), consolidating a training network that brings together expertise, institutions and countries, within a shared European perspective.

#### Programme for Doctors

The **fellowships for doctors** provided an opportunity for clinical specialisation in areas of high therapeutic complexity. In the 2025 programmes, participants engaged with specialist units involved in the management of solid tumours, the development of innovative therapies and the integration of systemic treatment, surgery and radiotherapy. Direct placement in host centres focused on quality and clinical research provided insight into the decision-making processes and organisational dynamics of these facilities.

The value of the experience extended beyond the acquisition of technical skills to include an understanding of clinical governance models, the organisation of breast units, and programmes dedicated to gastrointestinal cancers and advanced therapies. This training model empowers healthcare professionals to adopt a more systematic approach to cancer care management and to enhance collaboration across different disciplines and levels of care.

#### Programme for Paediatricians

In the field of **paediatric oncology**, the programme facilitated access to leading European centres specialising in the management of childhood and adolescent cancers. Participants worked in highly specialised settings characterised by close coordination between oncology, haematology, paediatric surgery and multidisciplinary support. Immersion within clinical teams has enabled participants to consolidate their skills in managing complex conditions and to become

familiar with internationally shared treatment protocols. In fields where cases are less frequent but require highly specialised skills, experience in centres of excellence is a crucial step for professional development. The programme's impact extends beyond the duration of the placement, helping to strengthen stable collaborative networks between European institutions involved in paediatric oncology care.

## Programme for Nurses

For oncology nursing, the programme has emphasised learning in settings where nursing care is an integral part of the treatment strategy. The experiences gained in the host centres have highlighted organisational models in which nurses actively participate in the planning and coordination of the care pathway. The focus was on continuity of care, primary nursing and the structured management of clinical pathways, with particular emphasis on

the organisational dimension and collaboration with the medical team. On-the-job learning has strengthened operational skills and coordination abilities, with direct benefits for the quality of care in the nurses' home centres. In this way, training mobility helps to consolidate a more integrated care model, in which the clinical and relational dimensions support one another.



## NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS IN 2025 BY COUNTRY AND HOSTING CENTRES

**ITALY**  
European Institute of Oncology

**SPAIN**  
Valencian Institute of Oncology

**GERMANY**  
Asklepios Tumorzentrum Comprehensive Cancer Centre ULM

**HUNGARY**  
National Institute of Oncology Budapest

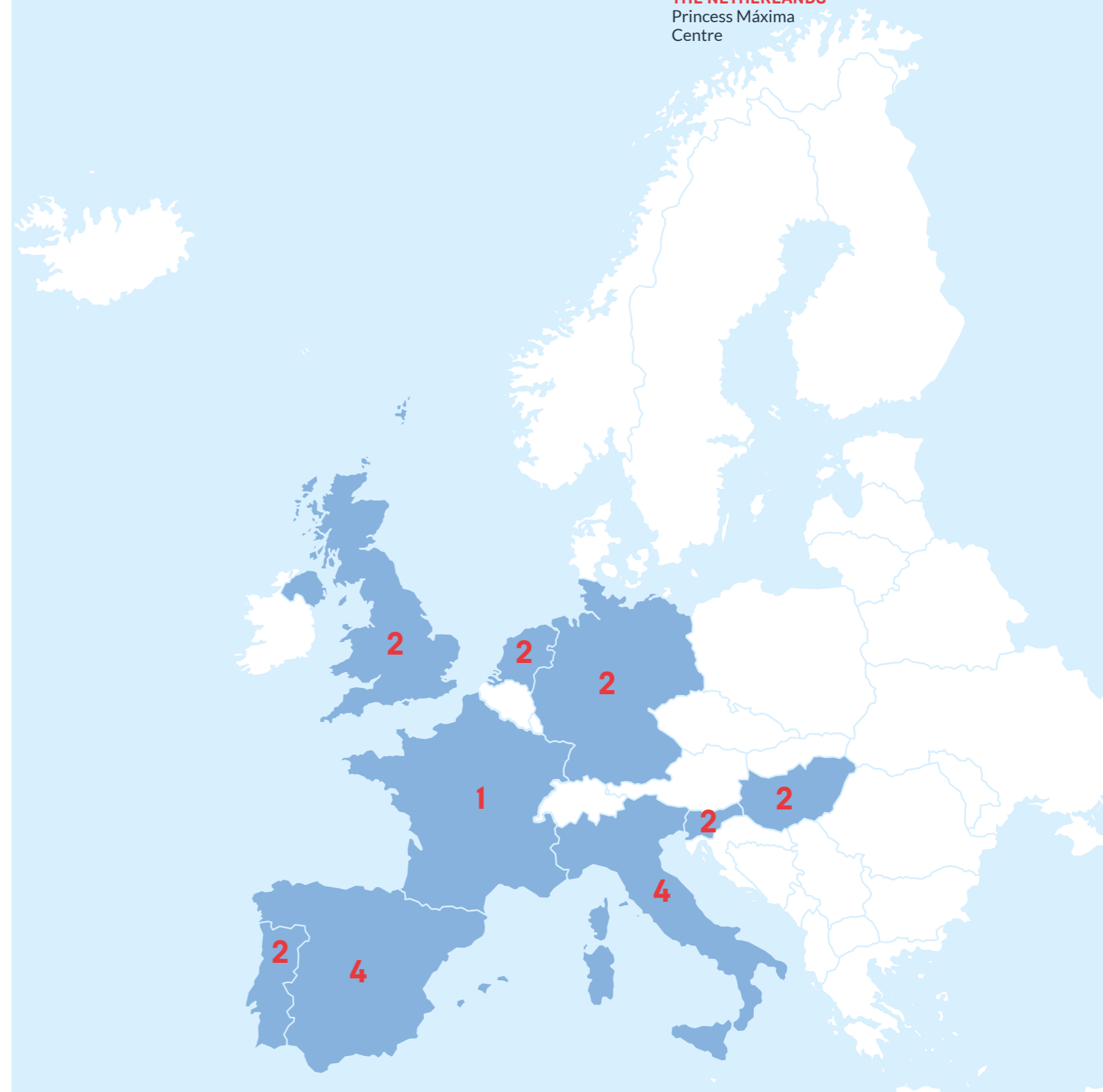
**PORTUGAL**  
Chamalimaud Clinical Center

**SLOVENIA**  
Institute of Oncology Ljubljana

**THE NETHERLANDS**  
Princess Máxima Centre

**UK**  
The Christie NHS Foundation Trust, Manchester  
The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust

**FRANCE**  
Centre Leon Berard



**STEP 7**

**Improving Cancer Outcomes and Leadership Courses**

While Clinical Training Centres operate at the clinical level, the **Improving Cancer Outcomes and Leadership Course** operates at the systemic level. Differences in cancer outcomes across Europe often depend on the organisation of services, the quality of interdisciplinary integration and healthcare governance. This course is designed to equip professionals with the skills they need to influence such processes. Doctors, nurses, healthcare managers, patient advocates, industry representatives and regulators work together to extend the concept of multidisciplinary to the institutional and decision-making levels.

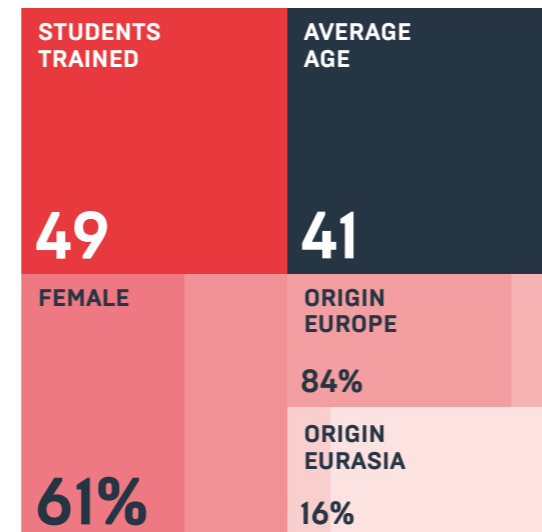
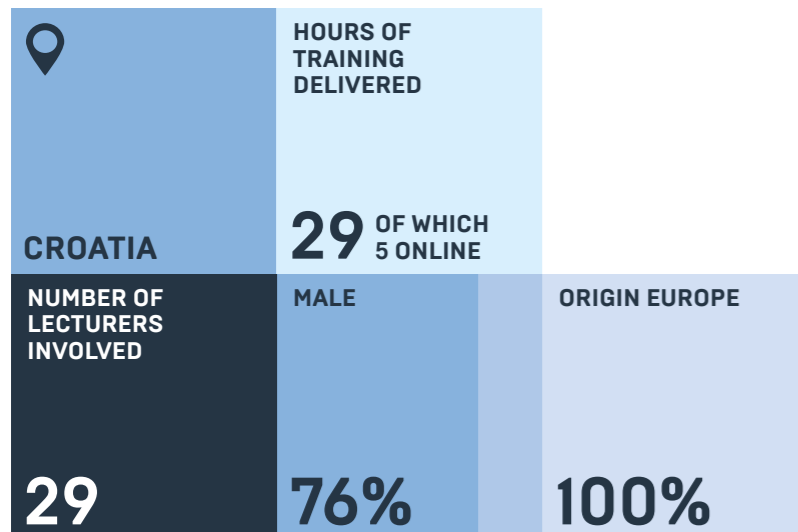
**From the clinic to the system: training those who drive change**

**8-11 May 2025  
Zagreb, Croatia**

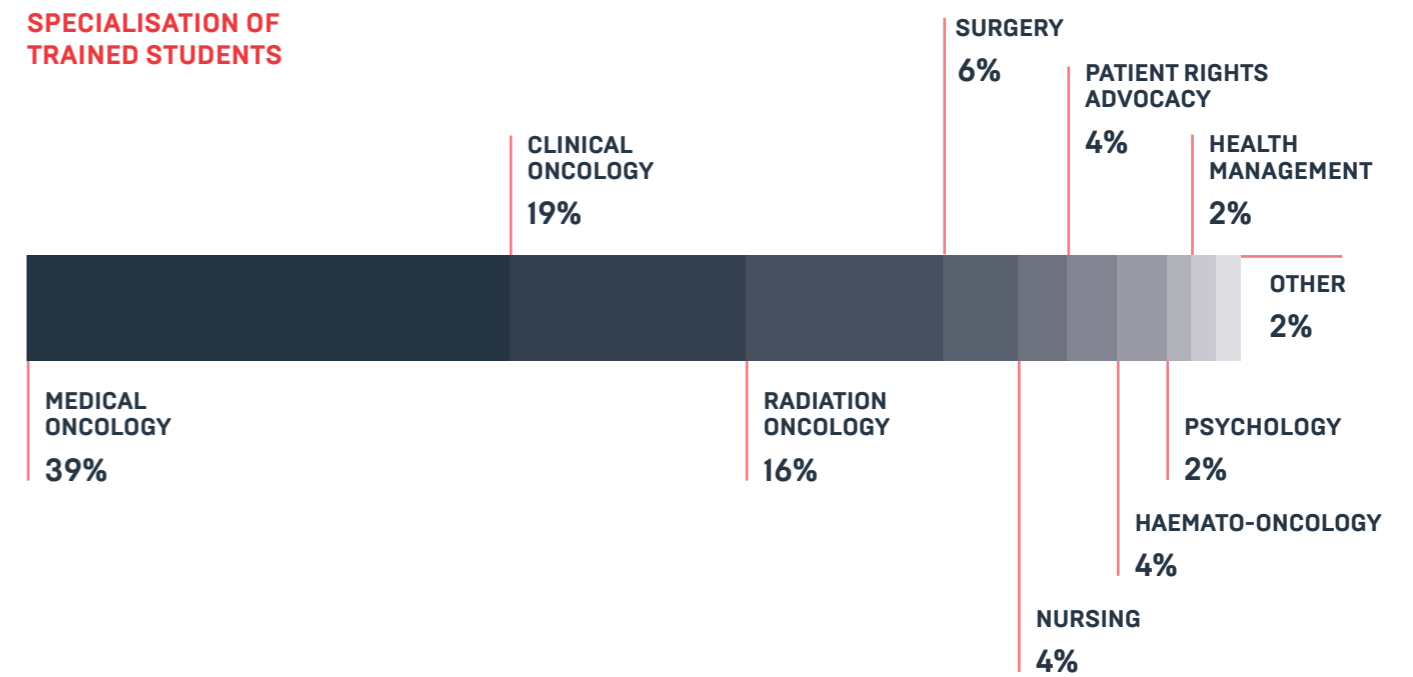
**Chairs:**  
A. Eniu, CH/RO - R. Popescu, CH - P. Selby, UK  
- T. Spanic, SL

In 2025, the **Improving Cancer Outcomes and Leadership** course reaffirmed its strategic role within the ESO training programme. The course is devoted to the analysis of inequalities in cancer care within healthcare systems. Its objective is not to intervene exclusively at the clinical level, but rather to strengthen the leadership and governance skills necessary to enhance service organisation, care pathway quality, and, consequently, patient outcomes. Aimed at professionals with clinical, managerial and institutional responsibilities, the programme promotes an integrated approach to care, in which strategic decisions, resource allocation and the ability to drive change have a direct impact on cancer outcomes. Its hybrid nature, comprising a preparatory online phase and three intensive in-person days in Zagreb, has facilitated practice-oriented learning, with workshops and discussion sessions on real-life cases from various European contexts.

The 2025 course further expanded this perspective by introducing **Advice Clinics** dedicated to patient advocacy, the use of big data and multi-professional interactions, as essential tools for modern and inclusive governance. The introduction of the first **Improving Cancer Outcomes Award** recognised initiatives that have successfully translated the principles discussed during the course into concrete action. The session dedicated to the establishment of a **Comprehensive Cancer Centre in Croatia** was of particular significance. This initiative is a prime example of how effective leadership can translate into effective organisational planning and the strengthening of healthcare organisations. This step made the programme's mission explicit: to train professionals on how to drive systemic change and contribute to reducing inequalities between European countries and regions.



**SPECIALISATION OF TRAINED STUDENTS**



**STEP 2**

**Basic Principles  
in Oncology Courses**

Entering the oncology specialisation coincides with a phase of rapid professional development. The rise in sub-specialisation and the increasing complexity of clinical knowledge have progressively reduced early exposure to oncological practice during university studies. Young doctors thus find themselves facing a complex discipline, in which clinical skills, scientific interpretation and teamwork must be integrated from the outset. The Basic Principles in Oncology Course represents the first step in the ESO Educational Pathway and has been designed to support this transition, offering structured guidance on the fundamentals of oncology and introducing participants to the reality of multidisciplinary care.

**The foundations of an integrative approach**

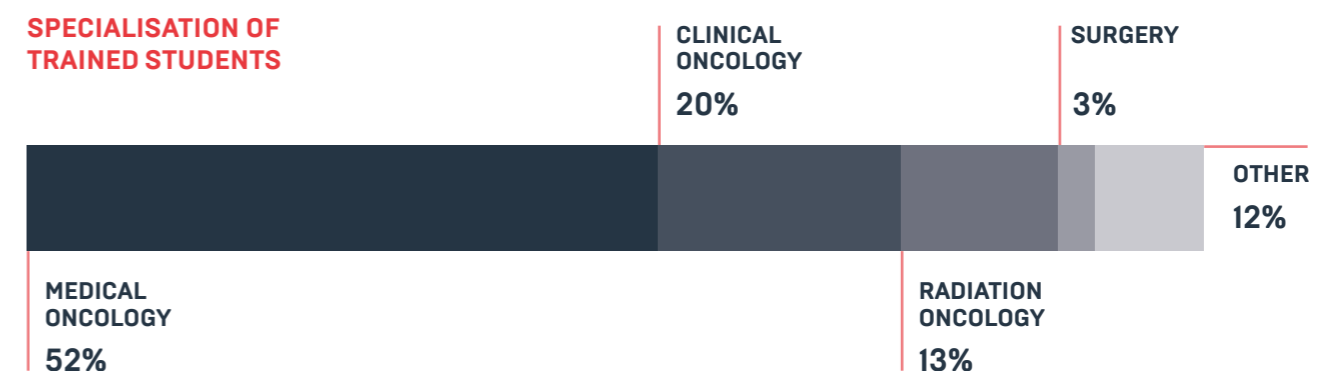
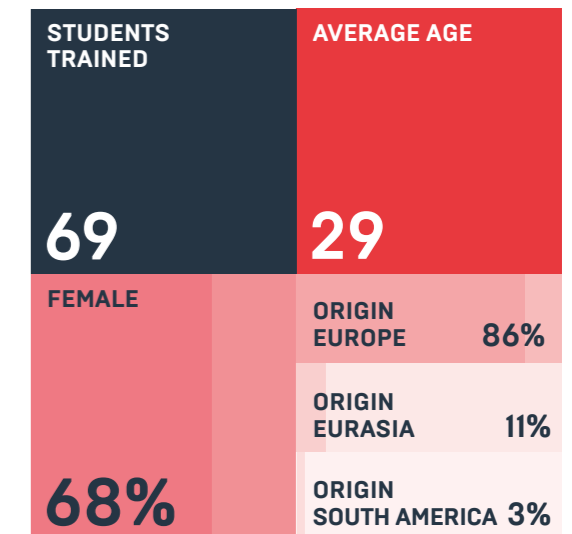
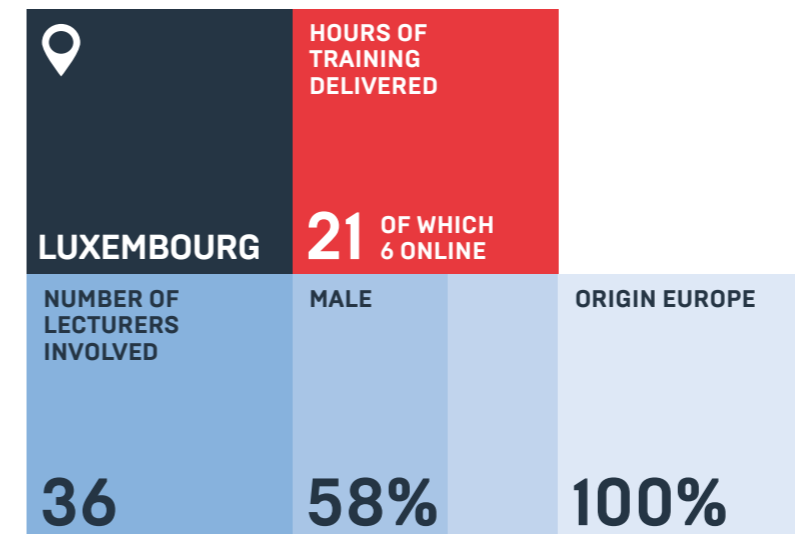


**18 August 2025, online  
18-21 September 2025,  
Luxembourg, LU**

**Course Scientific Leadership:**  
F. Cardoso, PT - A. Eniu, RO/CH  
- A. Jereczek-Fossa, PL/IT - S. Servais, LU

The 2025 edition of the **Basic Principles in Oncology Course** reaffirmed the programme's role as the first structured orientation opportunity for young doctors at the start of their specialisation. Hosted at the **Centre Hospitalier de Luxembourg**, in collaboration with the **Luxembourg National Cancer Institute** and under the patronage of the University of Luxembourg, the course strengthened the dialogue between academic training and clinical practice. The direct involvement of local healthcare and university institutions has broadened the European scope of the initiative, facilitating interaction between young specialists from different educational backgrounds. At this early stage of their professional journey, this exposure to diverse organisational and cultural models represents an essential step towards understanding the complexity of contemporary oncology.

The official inauguration of the course by the **Italian Ambassador to Luxembourg** and the reception of the faculty at the diplomatic mission further underscored the institutional value placed on oncology training and cooperation between countries. The presence of the authorities highlighted how the training of new generations of specialists is an integral part of a broader European strategy focused on the quality of care and the sharing of expertise. Through lectures, interactive discussions and opportunities for direct dialogue with the international faculty, the 2025 edition reaffirmed the course's mission: to provide a solid clinical and scientific foundation, introducing from the outset the culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that characterises the entire ESO Educational Pathway.



**STEP 3**

**Multidisciplinary Masterclass in Oncology**

**Interdisciplinary collaboration as a shared experience**

The Masterclasses represent one of the central elements of the ESO Educational Pathway and constitute a consolidation phase for professionals who have already gained clinical experience and wish to strengthen their skills, decision-making autonomy and ability to engage in dialogue. Situated at an intermediate stage of the training pathway, the Masterclasses transform continuing scientific education into an experience of structured dialogue between disciplines and professions. Clinical knowledge is conveyed through case discussions, collegial analysis of treatment choices and the comparison of complementary perspectives. The distinctive value of the programme lies precisely in this shared dimension: specialists from different fields, together with nursing professionals, participate in a learning process that reflects contemporary clinical practice. Constant interaction between faculty and participants fosters the development of critical thinking, analytical discussion skills and professional responsibility. The Masterclasses are designed as opportunities for professional development that combine clinical updates with community-building, thereby strengthening collaborative networks that underpins ESO's entire training model.

**5 May 2025, online**  
**20-24 June 2025, Warsaw, PL**  
 Summer Edition

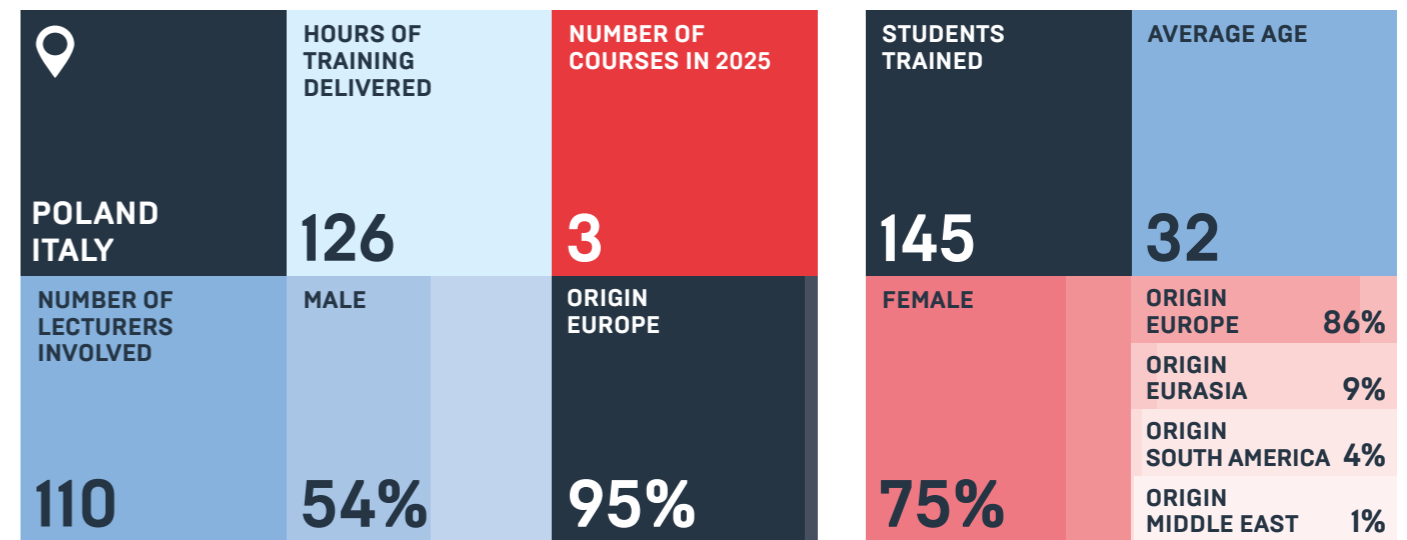
**Chairs:**  
*B. Jagielska, PL - B.A. Jereczek-Fossa, PL/IT*  
*- W. Wysocki, PL*

**24- 28 October 2025**  
**San Servolo, Venice, IT**  
 Autumn Edition

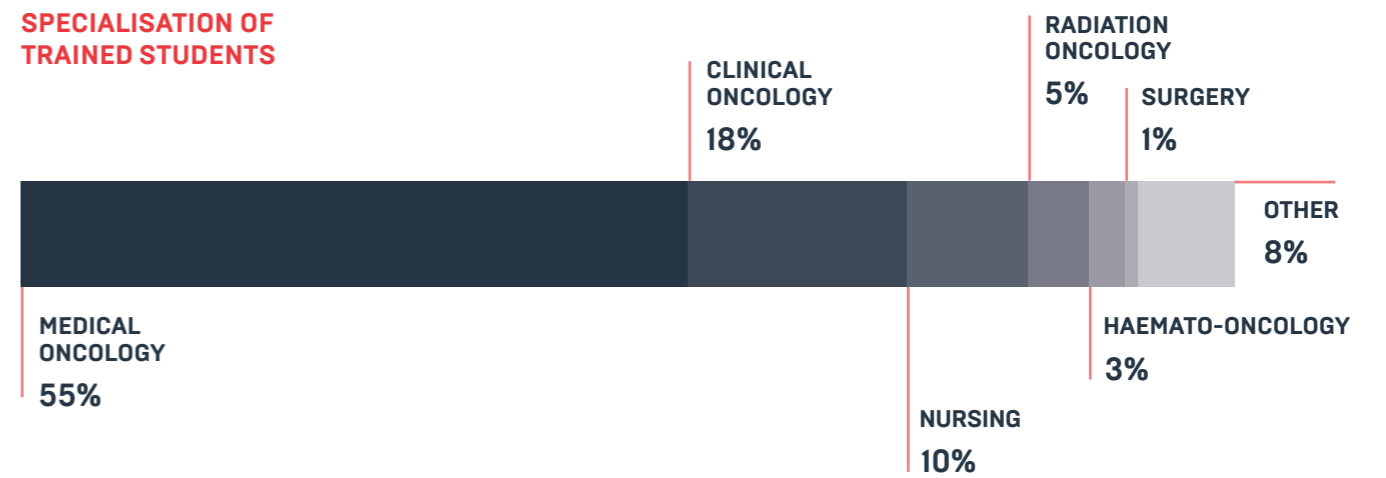
**Chairs:**  
*J. But Hadžic, SI - T. Cufer, SI*  
**Host Chair:**  
*V. Guarneri, IT*  
**Scientific Supervisor:**  
*R. Audisio, SE/IT*

In 2025, the **Masterclass in Clinical Oncology** was delivered with two editions – in Warsaw (20–24 June) and in Venice (24–28 October). During the latter edition, the **Masterclass in Oncology Nursing** was also held, confirming the importance of these events as opportunities for professional development for doctors and nurses in the early stages of their careers in oncology. More than just a clinical update, the Masterclass represents a structured exercise in the exchange of expertise. A key feature of the experience is direct dialogue between specialities when discussing clinical cases, with medical oncologists, surgeons, radiotherapists and pathologists all contributing to the decision-making process and thus highlighting how a shared treatment decision is reached. In 2025, this approach was further strengthened through the active involvement of ESO College members as leaders of the case discussions, creating a concrete bridge between advanced training and the School's scientific community.

The College's participation has also made the Masterclass a space for mentoring and empowering the next generation. Among the updates introduced in the 2025 edition, the topic of artificial intelligence applied to oncology took on particular significance, reflecting the focus on technological evolution and its impact on clinical decision-making processes. The venues chosen for the editions – Warsaw and the island of San Servolo – have fostered an immersive training environment that encourages continuous dialogue between participants and faculty. In this setting, scientific discussion intertwines with the building of lasting professional relationships, reinforcing a sense of belonging to the European oncology community. The Masterclass thus stands as a space where clinical updating is integrated with professional growth, transforming learning into a shared experience.



**SPECIALISATION OF TRAINED STUDENTS**



STEP 4

Refresher Courses

### Specialist refresher training and knowledge exchange

Refresher Courses represent the most targeted form of professional development within the ESO Educational Pathway. Dedicated to a single cancer group, they offer an in-depth exploration of the latest developments in diagnosis and treatment, with a highly specialised approach. Unlike the Masterclasses, which consolidate skills across multiple areas of oncology, the Refresher Courses concentrate on a specific condition, facilitating technical and clinical discussion on complex decision-making scenarios and rapidly evolving fields. The programme's value lies in its ability to facilitate critical analysis of new evidence and discussion of its practical applicability.

### 20–22 March 2025, Belgrade, RS

The **Early-Stage Lung Cancer Refresher Course** held in Belgrade addressed one of the most significant topics in European oncology: the diagnosis and management of early-stage lung cancer. In 2025, the course concentrated on the main diagnostic and therapeutic updates, with particular reference to screening, the changes introduced by the TNM 9 system, and the evolution of surgical and perioperative strategies. The comparison between surgical and non-surgical approaches, the integration of immunotherapy in the early stages, and the analysis of follow-up strategies formed the core of the discussion. The aim was to strengthen deci-

**Chairs:**  
A. Curioni, CH - D. Jovanovic, RS  
- M. Shackcloth, UK

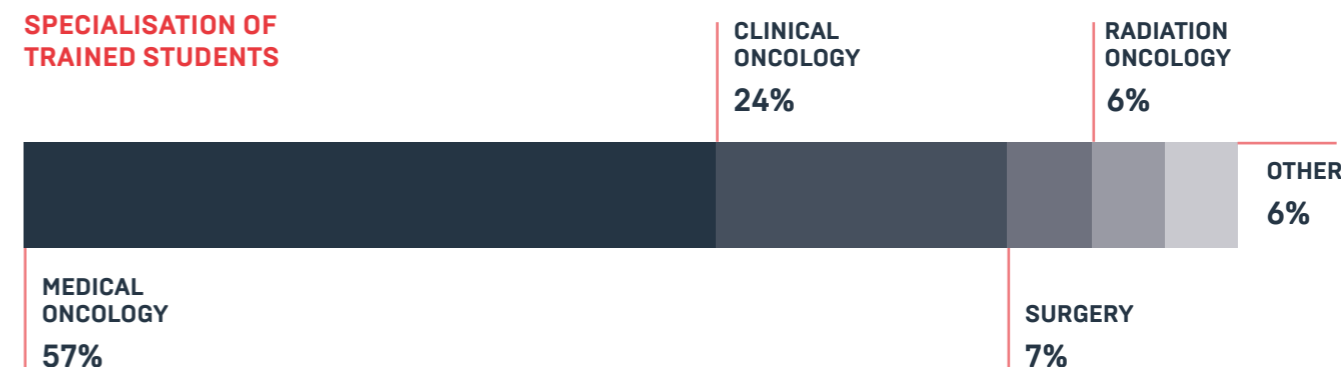
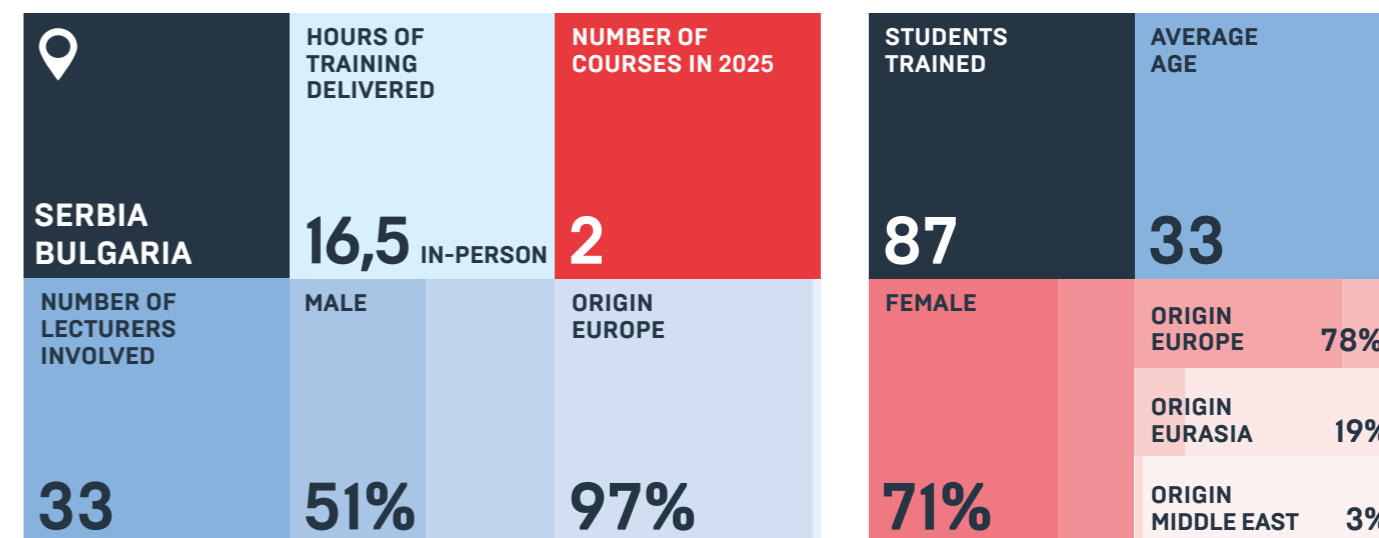
sion-making capacity in complex cases and clinically borderline situations. The 2025 edition saw an increase in participation, with the number of professionals involved reaching 60. Members of the ESO College participated actively in the discussions on clinical cases, thereby strengthening the link between scientific training and the professional community. The Belgrade Refresher translated the evolution of scientific evidence into practical tools for daily use, supporting an increasingly personalised and timely management of early-stage disease.

### 21–23 November 2025 Sofia, BG

**Chairs:**  
R. Audisio, SE/IT - A. Eniu, RO/CH  
- A. Konsoulova, BG - M. Lambertini, IT

The **Breast Cancer Refresher Course** offered a targeted update on one of the oncological conditions with the greatest clinical and epidemiological impact in Europe. The event explored the latest developments in diagnostic and therapeutic strategies with a focus on systemic therapies, personalised treatments and the integration of surgical, radiotherapy and medical approaches. The discussion on emerging evidence and daily clinical practice formed the core of the programme, encouraging a critical assessment of new treatment options and their implications for the various subtypes of the disease. The analysis of clinical cases allowed for the exploration of complex decision-making scenarios, highlighting the contribution of the various specialities involved in the management of breast cancer.

As with the Belgrade edition, the Sofia course also saw its intake expanded to 60 participants, broadening the audience compared to previous years. Members of the ESO College made active contributions as lecturers and leaders of clinical discussions, strengthening the link between scientific training and the professional community. The faculty were hosted at the residence of the Italian Ambassador to Bulgaria and the course was officially opened by the Deputy Ambassador, who emphasised the value of scientific cooperation and international oncology training. The 2025 edition thus further established the Refresher Courses as intensive training sessions, designed to translate therapeutic innovations into effective decision-making tools for clinical practice.



## Academic training, European perspective, advanced skills

The Postgraduate Programmes represent the most structured and academically recognised level of the ESO Educational Pathway. These are long-term programmes that have been developed in collaboration with European universities. They comply with the Bologna Process standards and combine advanced clinical training with methodological rigour.

In contrast to short courses, these programmes are designed to run for over a year, during which time participants have the opportunity to consolidate their specialist skills and to foster the development of a European community of professionals who share a common vision of cancer care. Each certificate focuses on a specific group of cancers, but the training incorporates contributions from various clinical and scientific fields. The aim is to develop the ability to critically interpret evidence and apply it in a coordinated manner in clinical practice.

In 2025, six programmes were active, dedicated to lymphoma, thoracic, gynaecological, gastrointestinal, prostate and breast cancers.

### Certificate of Advanced Studies in Lymphoma (CAS-LYM)

**PERIOD** June 2025 – February 2026

**PROGRAMME SITES**

- International Conference on Malignant Lymphoma (ICML) – Lugano, Switzerland
- ESO Learning to Care Seminar – Padua, Italy
- Lymphoma Forum of Excellence (LyFE) – Bellinzona, Switzerland

**IN COLLABORATION WITH** University of Italian Switzerland (USI, Università della Svizzera italiana), Lugano, Switzerland

**CHAIRS**

- *Elias Campo* – University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain
- *Stephan Stilgenbauer* – Ulm University Hospital, Ulm, Germany
- *Emanuele Zucca* – Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland, Bellinzona, Switzerland

In 2025, the **Certificate of Advanced Studies in Lymphoma** continued its educational programme by combining academic activities with international exchange in a field characterised by rapid therapeutic developments and increasing biological complexity.

The inclusion of the International Conference on Malignant Lymphoma (ICML) within the programme ensured direct access to the latest evidence, while in-person seminars facilitated structured discussion between participants and faculty on clinical cases and complex decision-making scenarios. Integration with Learning to Care and the Lymphoma Forum of Excellence (LyFE) helps to build a training pathway that combines specialist knowledge with clinical responsibility.

Through collaboration with the University of Italian Switzerland and links with the ESO College, the programme consolidates an academic dimension that translates into opportunities for professional development and integration into a European network of specialists dedicated to the treatment of lymphomas.

### Certificate of Advanced Studies in Thoracic Malignancies (CAS-TM)

**PERIOD** March 2025 – June 2026

**PROGRAMME SITES**

- European Lung Cancer Congress (ELCC) – Paris, France
- ESO Learning to Care Seminar – Padua, Italy
- Final seminar and Final Exam – Fribourg, Switzerland

**IN COLLABORATION WITH** University of Fribourg – Fribourg, Switzerland

**CHAIRS**

- *Alessandra Curioni* – Freiburger Spital, HFR Kantonsspital Fribourg, Fribourg, Switzerland
- *Jarushka Naidoo* – Waterford Regional Hospital, Waterford, Ireland
- *Christian Rolfo* – The Tisch Cancer Institute, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, United States

In 2025, the **Certificate of Advanced Studies in Thoracic Malignancies** continued its educational programme with the launch of a new cohort, thereby enhancing the integration of clinical updates and scientific in-depth study in the field of thoracic cancers.

The inclusion of the European Lung Cancer Congress (ELCC) among the in-person events ensured direct engagement with the latest innovations in the treatment of lung cancer and other thoracic malignancies. The programme, which was built around online activities and residential seminars, provided a robust framework for analysing diagnostic strategies, therapeutic options and the evolution of systemic and integrated therapies.

The collaboration with the University of Fribourg reinforces the programme's academic credibility, while the link with the ESO College ensures the continuity between advanced training and professional development within the European scientific community.

### Certificate of Advanced Studies in Gynaecological Cancers (CAS-GC)

**PERIOD** May 2025 – September 2026

**PROGRAMME SITES**

- ESMO Gynaecological Cancers Annual Congress – Vienna, Austria
- ESO Learning to Care Seminar – Padua, Italy
- Final seminar and Final Exam – Lugano, Switzerland

**IN COLLABORATION WITH** University of Italian Switzerland (USI, Università della Svizzera italiana), Lugano, Switzerland

**CHAIRS**

- *Andrea Papadia* – Ospedale Regionale di Lugano, Lugano, Switzerland
- *Cristiana Sessa* – Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland (IOSI), Bellinzona, Switzerland
- *Alina Sturdza* – Comprehensive Cancer Center, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

The launch of the second cohort of the **Certificate in Advanced Studies in Gynaecological Oncology** in 2025 has further consolidated its role as an academic programme dedicated to the specialist management of gynaecological cancers at all stages of their progression. Attendees of the ESMO congress on gynaecological cancers had the opportunity to explore the latest advancements in surgical, systemic and radiotherapy techniques, integrating scientific evidence with clinical practice. The in-person seminars explored the complex decision-making processes that characterise these conditions, where treatment planning requires coordination between different disciplines and attention to quality of life and long-term survival.

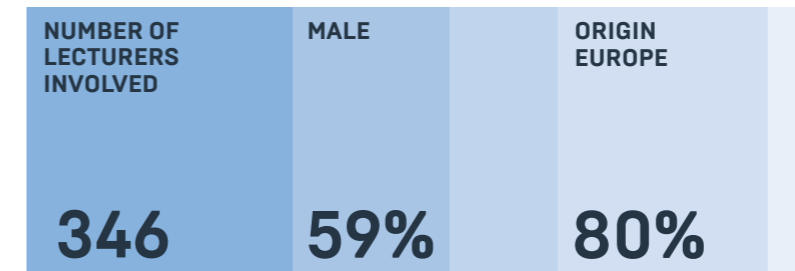
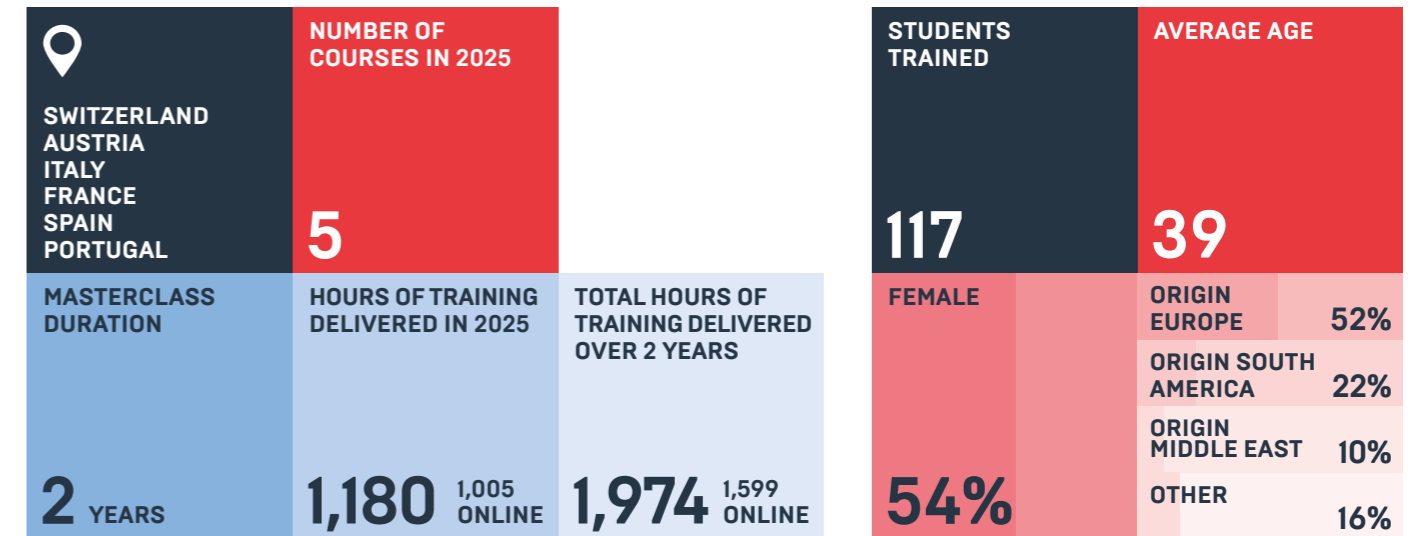
The competence-based approach of this 17-month programme was reaffirmed, as was its focus on the ability to apply newly acquired knowledge in a structured manner within a multidimensional management of cancer patients.

# Certificate of Advanced Studies in Prostate Cancer (CAS-PC)

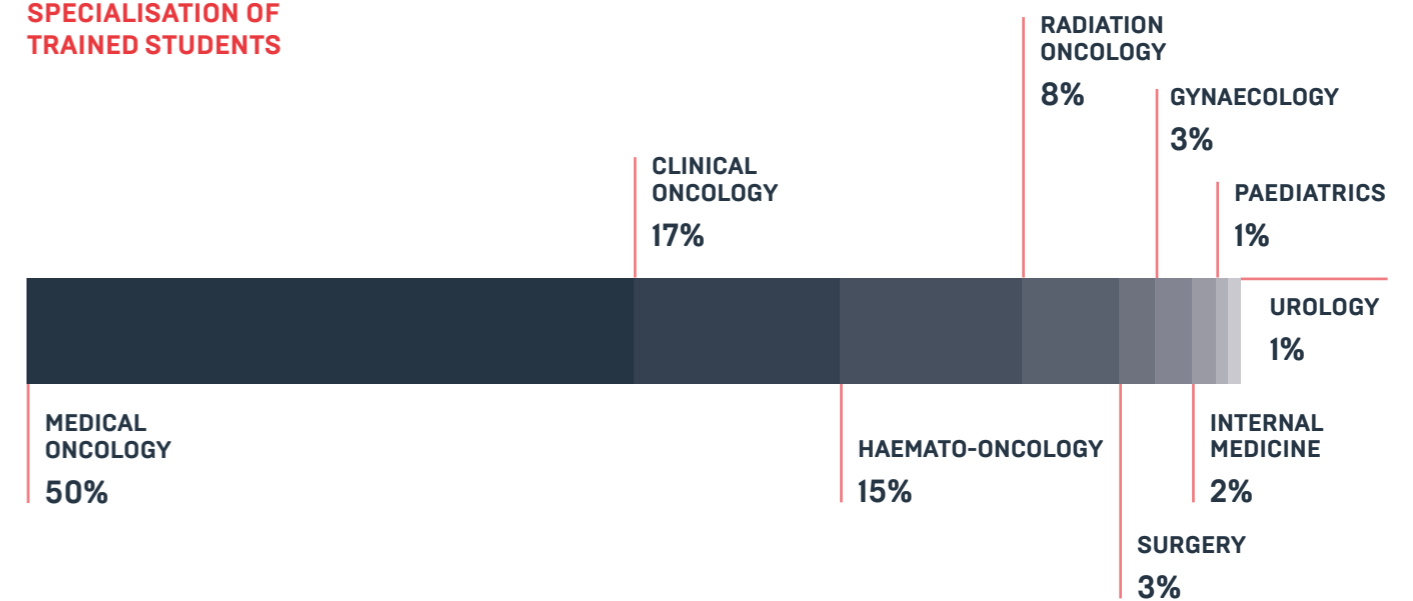
<b>PERIOD</b>	September 2025 – November 2026
<b>PROGRAMME SITES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PROSCA 2025 – Lisbon, Portugal</li> <li>APCCC 2026 – Lugano, Switzerland</li> <li>ESO Learning to Care Seminar 2026 – Padua, Italy</li> </ul>
<b>IN COLLABORATION WITH</b>	University of Italian Switzerland (USI, Università della Svizzera italiana), Lugano, Switzerland
<b>CHAIRS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Andrea Gallina – Ente Ospedaliero Cantonale, Switzerland</li> <li>Silke Gillessen – Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland, Switzerland</li> <li>Barbara Jerezczek-Fossa – European Institute of Oncology, Italy</li> <li>Ursula Vogl – Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland, Switzerland</li> </ul>

In 2025, the second cohort of the **Certificate of Advanced Studies in Prostate Cancer** was launched. This condition is one in which the fast-changing landscape of systemic therapies and integrated strategies requires ongoing training and critical evaluation of evidence. The incorporation of scientific events such as PROSCA and the Advanced Prostate Cancer Consensus Conference (APCCC) enabled participants to exchange views on significant clinical topics, ranging from treatment options for advanced stages to treatment sequencing strategies. Face-to-face seminars facilitated an in-depth analysis of the complex decisions involved in the management of prostate cancer, where dialogue between urologists, medical oncologists and radiotherapists is crucial. This 13-month programme emphasises a specialist approach and the ability to interpret international guidelines in light of individual patients' specific circumstances, reinforcing clinical practice grounded in evidence, discussion and shared responsibility.

## POST GRADUATE PROGRAMMES



## SPECIALISATION OF TRAINED STUDENTS



# TEACHING RESEARCH: INVESTING IN THE QUALITY OF CARE

## Interview with **Matteo Lambertini**

Medical Oncologist  
Faculty - *Comprehensive Online Course on Oncology Research and Clinical Trials*

In 2025, ESO explored the topic of research education through the *Comprehensive Online Course on Oncology Research and Clinical Trials* and a dedicated workshop during the ESO College Convention in Budapest.

**In 2025, ESO dedicated a comprehensive online course to clinical research and a workshop during the ESO College Convention in Budapest. Why is teaching research so important today?**

We are in a unique phase in the history of oncology. A significant amount of pharmaceutical research is currently underway, and many drugs have already demonstrated positive results in the treatment of various cancers. However, despite these advances, there remain many questions in clinical practice that these studies do not answer. The development of new pharmaceuticals invariably raises a number of questions. As an academic community, it is our task to produce scientific evidence that fills these gaps. To achieve this, we must equip individuals with the necessary research skills. The Comprehensive Online Course on Oncology Research and Clinical Trials has been developed with the express aim of explaining academic research, its rules, its stages of development, and the different types of study – from phase 1 and phase 3 trials to translational studies with biomarkers.

**What is the most important aspect of this training programme?**

The first is to cultivate interest. Today, academic research is more complex than it was when

I started out fifteen years ago. There are more rules, higher costs and greater complications. This can cause young people to lose interest and motivation. That is why it is essential to explain why research is important. It is crucial for patients and for medical progress, but it is also vital for the professional development of those who carry it out. The second aspect is methodological training. In specialist training programmes, oncologists receive training in oncology, but research methodology is not covered in great detail. This online course provides an effective solution to this challenge.

**You worked extensively on networking during the Budapest Convention. What role does networking play in research training?**

It is crucial. Research is not done alone. Educational events can take place online. However, when it comes to research, networking is fundamental. Building a network, meeting people to develop projects with, and exchanging ideas during breaks and in informal settings is where ideas and collaborations are born. The Budapest Convention is a prime example of this. People who only knew each other online were able to meet and strengthen their real-life collaborations. For a young person just starting out, having a network is essential.

**If you had to summarise the significance of teaching research today, what would you say?**

Teaching research today means investing in improving cancer care. By care, I don't just mean drugs that increase survival rates. I mean comprehensive patient management; I also deal with survivorship and oncofertility, as well as comprehensive patient management. It is unlikely that a pharmaceutical company would conduct a study to determine whether a woman treated for breast cancer could have children after immunotherapy. Yet, it is a question our patients ask us every day. It is up to us to provide that answer. Training young people to conduct research means training people who can truly improve the quality of care and, consequently, people's lives.



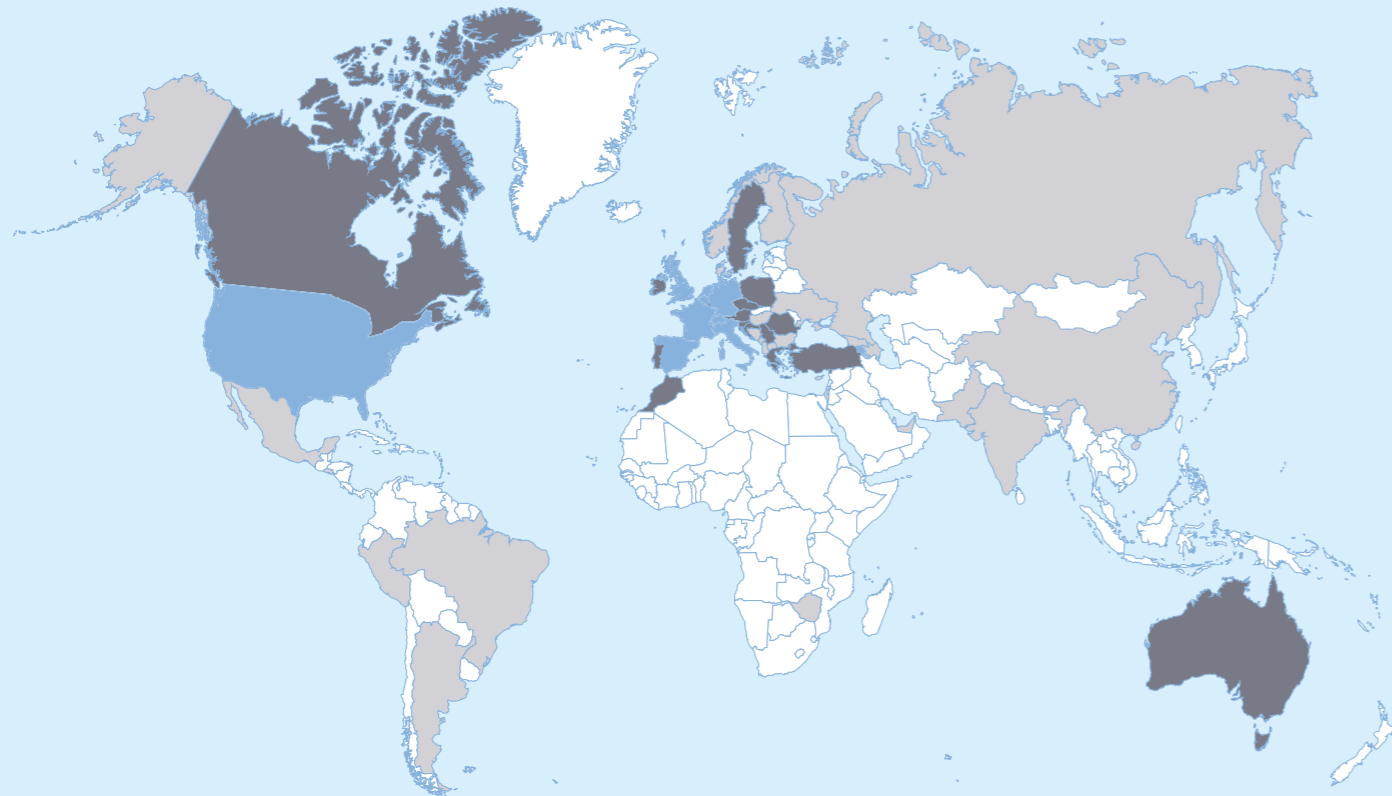
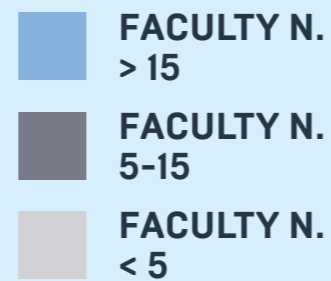
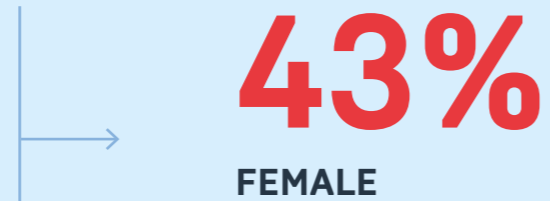
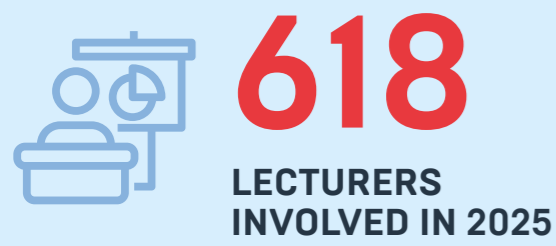
**Matteo Lambertini** is Director of Medical Oncology at the IRCCS Azienda Ospedaliera Metropolitana - Ospedali Galliera and Associate Professor of Medical Oncology at the University of Genoa.

His clinical and scientific work focuses primarily on the care breast cancer patients and he is deeply committed to research in this field. He has special expertise in breast cancer in young women, with a focus on fertility and pregnancy following diagnosis.

He is the author of over 350 publications in peer-reviewed journals and book chapters. His main research has focused on the role of administering gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) analogues during chemotherapy as a

strategy to preserve ovarian function and fertility in patients with early-stage breast cancer who are candidates for cytotoxic therapy (Lambertini M et al., JAMA 2015; Ann Oncol 2015; Eur J Cancer 2017; J Clin Oncol 2018; JNCI 2022), pregnancy safety in women with a history of breast cancer (Lambertini M et al., JNCI 2018; Cancer 2019; J Clin Oncol 2021) and the numerous challenges faced by breast cancer patients associated with BRCA gene mutations (Lambertini M et al., Ann Oncol 2018; J Clin Oncol 2020; JAMA 2024; J Clin Oncol 2025; Blondeaux E et al., Lancet Oncol 2025).

## Faculty



## ESO's institutional connections and European network

In 2025, a series of ESO training events were successfully hosted by the Italian Embassies in Belgrade, Zagreb, Luxembourg and Sofia. These events offered much more than just logistical support; they also provided an opportunity to raise awareness of critical issues, such as the quality of cancer care and multidisciplinary training within an institutional and diplomatic framework.

This, too, can contribute to the establishment of a European healthcare community. Forging connections means bridging gaps, fostering dialogue between healthcare systems, and providing training opportunities, even in contexts with fewer resources. For ESO, training is a means of promoting equity and European cooperation.



# Targeted responses to emerging needs



In addition to the core structure of the Educational Pathway, ESO promotes training initiatives that address the specific needs of individual centres, geographical areas or professional groups. These programmes do not necessarily follow the Pathway's training progression, but they are aligned with its principles of rigorous continuous professional development, multidisciplinary exchange and integration between clinical practice and European standards.

Visiting Professorships, highly technical practical courses and specialist initiatives are flexible tools through which ESO identifies emerging needs, promotes the direct transfer of expertise, and strengthens the European network for cancer training. ESO's multidisciplinary approach remains a constant feature in these contexts, evident in the analysis of clinical cases, the comparison of different healthcare systems and the integration of technical expertise with organisational models in cancer care. The Visiting Professorship is a tool through which ESO responds to training requests from individual centres or regions. It is a bespoke programme that brings together the expertise of an international specialist with the clinical priorities of the host institution.

In contrast to the Pathway programmes, Visiting Professorships are initiated in response to specific local requirements. They take the form of an intensive period of exchange, with a strong emphasis on discussion and the contextualisation of guidelines. With regard to intensive practical courses, the 'Basics in Breast Cancer Surgery' programme is a highly specialised course dedicated to refining surgical skills in breast cancer management. It integrates theoretical updates with intensive practical training to enhance the quality of surgical procedures and is structured within a treatment pathway that considers oncological control and aesthetic-functional outcomes as complementary.

## Visiting Professorship

July 2025 Rabat, MA

**Host Chair:**  
Dr H. Mrabti, MA

**Visiting Professor:**  
Dr S. De Dosso, CH

In July 2025, Rabat hosted the first Visiting Professorship organised by ESO in Morocco, which focused on the **treatment of colorectal cancer (Dissecting the Treatment of Colorectal Cancer)**. The initiative provided an opportunity for dialogue and sharing the clinical experience of the host centre and the most up-to-date therapeutic strategies in Europe. The sessions explored key decision-making in the management of colorectal cancer, from treat-

ment planning across the various stages of the disease to the integration of systemic, surgical and radiotherapy treatments. The discussion of local clinical cases facilitated the adaptation of international recommendations to the organisational reality and available resources, strengthening dialogue between professionals and consolidating ESO's role in the transfer of expertise to emerging contexts.

## Basics in Breast Cancer Surgery

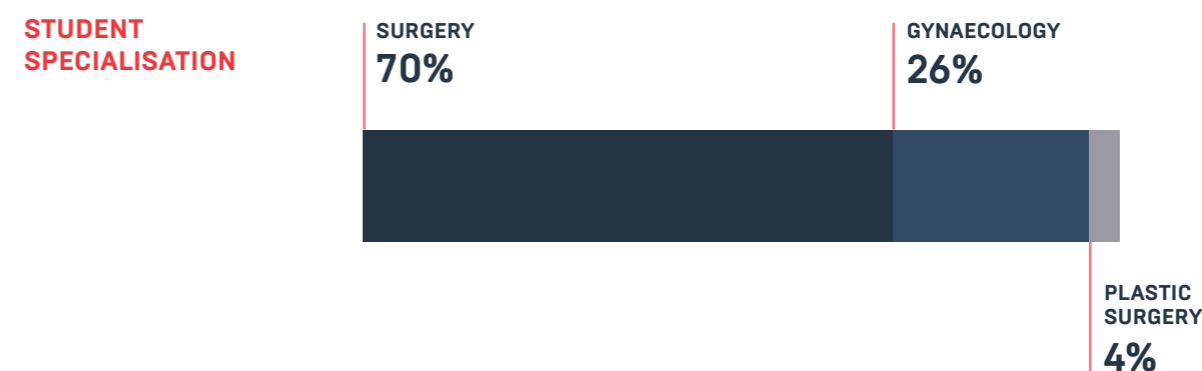
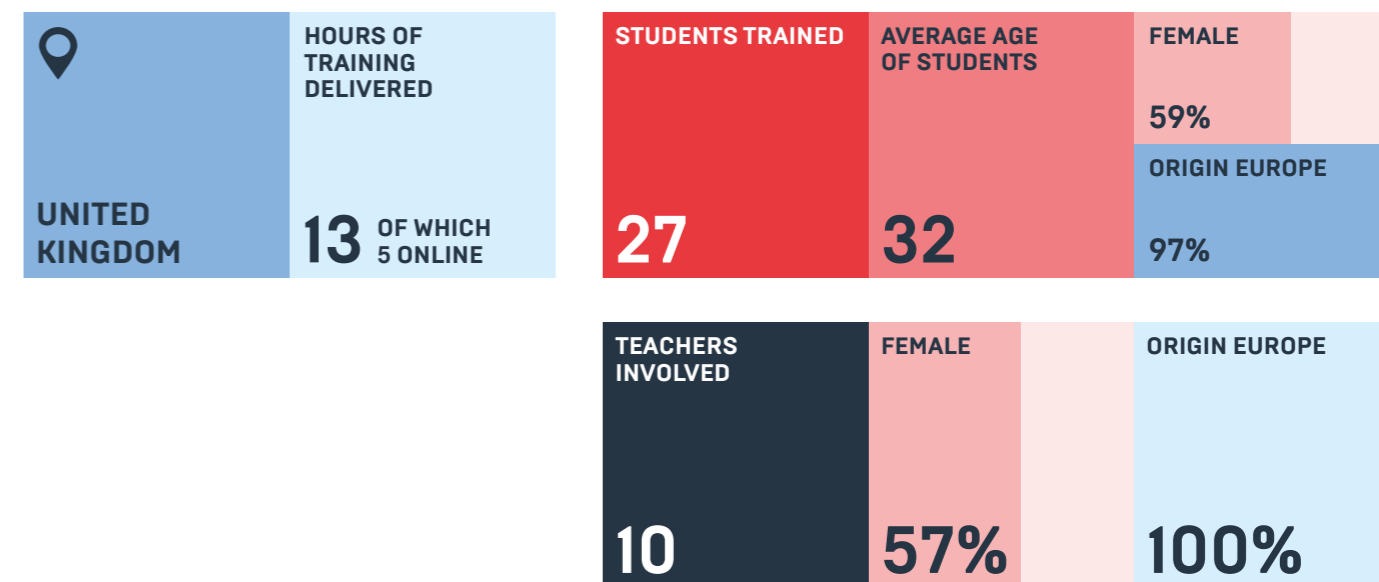
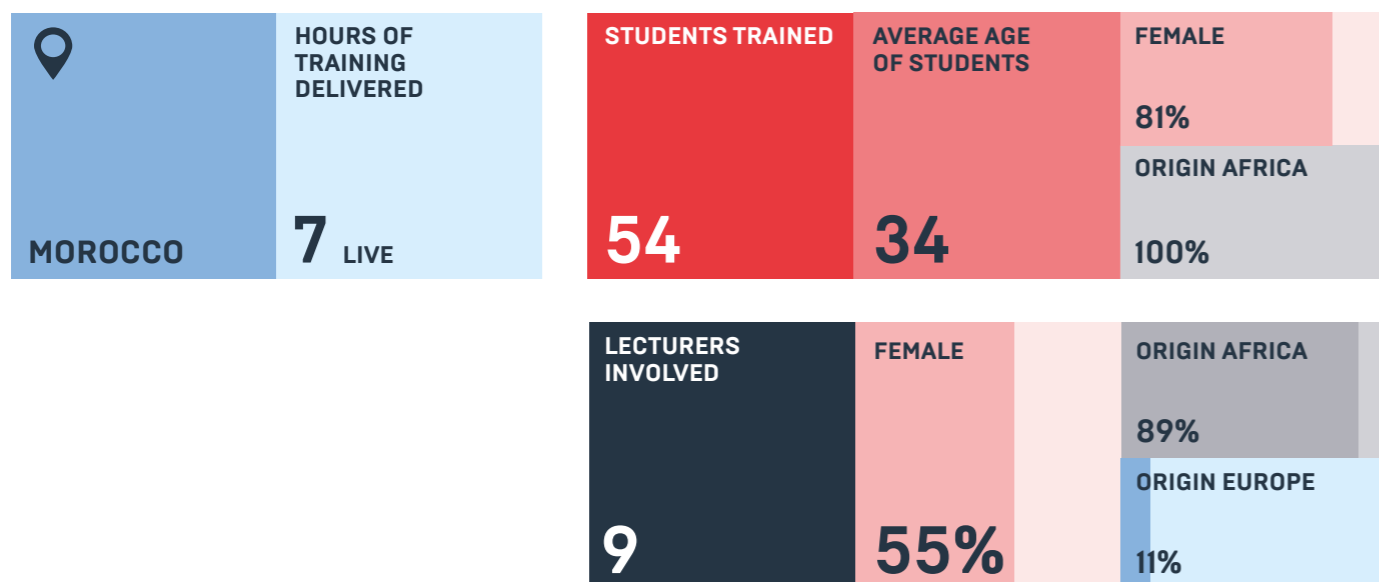
14–15 November 2025 Imperial College, London, UK

**Chair:**  
R. Audisio, SE/IT

**Endorsement:**  
ESSO

The 2025 edition, hosted at Imperial College London, confirmed the highly selective and technical nature of the programme. With a limited number of participants each day, the course prioritised a direct relationship between faculty and learners, promoting personalised learning. The practical sessions allowed participants to perform **key surgical procedures** directly on customised simulators, developed and

supervised by Promeditec Innovation, while the localisation probes used during the exercises were supplied by Endomag. The integration of theory, critical discussion and hands-on training strengthened the participants' ability to immediately apply the skills acquired in clinical practice, contributing to the improvement of surgical quality in their home centres.



## Comprehensive Online Course on Oncology Research and Clinical Trials

In 2025, ESO launched its first course entirely dedicated to cancer research methodology and clinical trials design. The Comprehensive Online Course on Oncology Research and Clinical Trials stems from the recognition that the development of modern therapies depends on the ability to integrate preclinical research, trans-

lational research and clinical trials. Biomarkers, sequencing technologies, experimental models and innovative study designs are redefining contemporary oncology: understanding the entire pathway leading from the identification of a molecular target to clinical validation is now a strategic skill.

19 and 26 September 2025

**Modalità:**  
 Live Online

**Course Leadership:**  
 M. Puchinskaya  
 A. Stathis  
 B. Stefanovska

The 2025 edition marked a substantial expansion of ESO's training programme, with the introduction of a **course entirely dedicated to the methodology of cancer research**. The decision to use an online format encouraged broad and diverse participation, involving professionals from various disciplines. The course concentrated on the pathway leading from laboratory research to clinical trials, highlighting the interdependencies between preclinical models, biomarker identification

and the design of randomised trials. Special attention was devoted to the conceptual planning of trials and the definition of endpoints as crucial elements in a rapidly evolving therapeutic context. The high turnout and positive feedback confirmed the relevance of the topic and led to plans for an in-person iteration of the course in 2026, with the aim of further strengthening interaction between scientific communities that are traditionally separate.

HOURS OF TRAINING DELIVERED ONLINE	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	COMPLETED THE COURSE IN 2025
7	646	93
AVERAGE AGE	FEMALE	LECTURERS INVOLVED
35	60%	12

## Oncology Diagnostics: From Molecule to Patient

In 2025, ESO launched a training programme dedicated to young oncologists with the aim of strengthening their ability to interpret complex diagnostic data and translate it into informed clinical decisions. Contemporary oncology requires skills that go beyond scientific updates: the integration

of advanced imaging, endoscopy, pathological anatomy and molecular biomarkers is now central to defining the therapeutic pathway. This course has been designed to meet this need, combining in-depth technical knowledge with the development of decision-making and collaborative skills.

1 September and 23 October 2025

**Modalità:**  
 Live Online

**Chair:**  
 L. Norton, USA  
 O. Postupalenko, UA  
 R. Sullivan, UK  
 N. Verovkina, USA

The 2025 course was of particular significance due to the decision to hold the residential component in Kyiv, **in collaboration with the Kyiv City Clinical Oncology Centre**. In a complex geopolitical context, the programme represented a concrete sign of educational continuity and international cooperation. The course covered four key areas — advanced radiological diagnostics, endoscopy, molecular pathology and decision-making. This approach emphasised how the quality of care depends

on the integrated interpretation of data from different sources. The programme emphasised the importance of communication and teamwork, stressing the need to balance technical precision with interpersonal and organisational skills. In addition to scientific innovations, the initiative facilitated the establishment of a network among young oncologists committed to developing a shared vision of clinical practice with a view to strengthening dialogue between European and international centres.

HOURS OF TRAINING DELIVERED ONLINE	HOURS: PRE-RECORDED	TOTAL N. OF REGISTRATIONS
	10	
14.5	HOURS: LIVE	381
	4.5	
AVERAGE AGE	FEMALE	LECTURERS INVOLVED
36	63%	22

## ESO Observatories

The ESO Observatories represent a well-established format within the School's training programme, designed to offer a forward-looking perspective on imminent developments in rapidly evolving areas of oncology. These are not merely scientific updates, but sessions designed to summarise emerging evidence, interpret trends in clinical research and provide participants with a clear message on what may

change clinical practice over the next twelve months. The Observatories are held in conjunction with major international conferences, thereby strengthening the dialogue between the ESO community and the relevant scientific societies. Exchanging views on clinical, surgical and molecular helps to integrate therapeutic innovation and organisational impact.

## 4 July 2025, Barcelona, ES

**Chairs:**  
*S. De Dosso – Bellinzona, CH*  
*E. Van Cutsem – Leuven, BE*

The 2025 **Gastrointestinal Cancer Observatory** was held in Barcelona with the aim of providing a reasoned overview of the key innovations expected in the treatment of colorectal cancer over the coming year. The session analysed the latest clinical data and prospects for therapeutic development, highlighting areas where significant changes in clinical practice

are anticipated. The event provided a forum for professionals from the medical, surgical and molecular sectors to interact and share knowledge, facilitating a cross-disciplinary understanding of the innovations and translating emerging findings into practical guidance for the professionals in attendance.

## 23 March 2025, Madrid, ES

**Chairs:**  
*Ursula Vogl – CH*  
*Jochen Walz – FR*

The eleventh **ESO Prostate Cancer Observatory**, held during the EAU Annual Congress in Madrid, offered a forward-looking perspective on anticipated innovations in prostate cancer treatment. The session presented an integrated analysis of the latest evidence and emerging

treatment trends, highlighting the areas that are set to evolve in the coming months. The objective of the project was to deliver practical guidance for clinical practice, with a particular emphasis on the implications of the new evidence for clinical pathways.



# 2

## A growing network: College, Ambassadors and Faculty



While the Pathway represents ESO's educational framework, the ESO College constitutes its relational dimension. The School is more than just a collection of programmes. It is a network of professionals who continue to meet, collaborate and exchange ideas over time.

The College is the space where this network takes shape and consolidates. A progressive system of membership levels and training credits is in place to support professionals throughout their professional growth. Its value lies in continuity: taking part in multiple activities means reconnecting with colleagues met in a Refresher, a Masterclass or a Fellowship; it means transforming casual contacts into lasting professional relationships. By 2025, the College had reached **480 members**, with an **8% increase compared to 2024**, indicating an increasingly engaged and stable community. The membership breakdown highlights a strong presence of professionals in the early stages of their careers, with over **80% of members aged between 25 and 40**, and a particularly significant concentration in the 31–35 and 36–40 age groups. Throughout the year, this community continued to strengthen through opportunities for meeting and collaboration that fostered dialogue across countries, disciplines and generations, transforming the ESO network into an increasingly active space for professional exchange. Within this ecosystem lies the Faculty, a direct expression of the scientific community that drives the School. Faculty members participate in the design and delivery of training programmes, contributing to the scientific quality and integrated vision of the educational offering. Speakers are increasingly drawn from the College's own members, who, after many years of active participation, assume leadership roles. In 2025, five **College Graduates**

joined the Faculty, reflecting a journey in which participation, experience and responsibility grow within the network itself. Alongside the College, ESO operates a network of: **Ambassadors: 31 professionals** were appointed for the **2025–2026 period** to represent ESO in their respective countries. The network is active in 28 countries and comprises 78% women, with an **average age of 39**. The Ambassadors act as a link between the School and national contexts. They participate in local conferences, promote ESO activities, facilitate dialogue with scientific societies and residency programmes, identify educational needs and disseminate training opportunities. Throughout 2025, they were a constant presence at institutional meetings, public speaking events, and international conferences, as well as making editorial contributions. They also contributed to the mapping of emerging cancer centres in Southern and Eastern Europe. An in-person meeting further strengthened the network's cohesion and facilitated structured discussions on communication, the College's development and educational priorities across different countries. The College, the Faculty and the Ambassadors represent three dimensions of one community: a network that grows through continuous exchange, shared responsibilities and the progressive adoption of roles. The **College Convention in Budapest** marked the moment when this dimension became most visible: a space where training, networking and joint planning were tangibly intertwined.

# College Convention 2025: turning the network into a community



The ESO College Convention 2025 was one of the most significant events of the year for the ESO community. For three days in Budapest, over a hundred College members gathered to share experiences, strengthen professional ties and reflect together on their role in the evolution of European oncology.

The Convention was conceived as a **space for building relationships** even before it was conceived as a training event. Its structure – comprising plenary sessions, themed workshops and small-group activities – has fostered direct dialogue across generations, disciplines and different national contexts. The 2025 full programme reflected the richness of content and the variety of perspectives involved.

The opening session focused on networking as a catalyst for professional growth. The dialogue between scientific leaders and young

College members highlighted how building a career in oncology is closely linked to **the quality of relationships**, the ability to take on responsibility and a willingness to collaborate beyond borders. The subsequent sessions successfully transformed the meeting into a **workshop for career guidance and development**. The workshops offered practical tools for tackling crucial stages of the professional journey, from clinical leadership to research, from international fellowships to mentorship. Discussions among peers and with experienced faculty brought the topics under discussion to life, generating practical exchange and shared perspectives.

The interaction with the host institution added an organisational dimension to the discussion, enabling participants to closely observe integration models in clinical care and research.





## POST-CONVENTION SURVEY

RESPONSES PROVIDED BY 55 OUT OF 90 PARTICIPANTS

EXPERIENCE

**95%**

Excellent

CONTENT

**91%**

Very significant

NETWORKING

**96%**

Says they have expanded their network

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**92%**

Believes the event was useful for their profession

EXPECTATIONS

**95%**

Would attend another ESO College Convention

Consequently, their training experience was intertwined with their comprehension of the systems and structural decisions that underpin the quality of care. Informal moments also played a central role. Social activities and participatory initiatives strengthened the bonds between participants, fostering an atmosphere of trust that often forms the basis for future collaborations. Events such as the **OncoQuiz** brought energy and light-heartedness to the experience and were met with enthusiasm and active participation. They transformed the sharing of knowledge into an opportunity for play, engagement and collective enjoyment. Similarly, the **dinner on the Danube** was one of the most memorable moments of the convention, providing an opportunity to expand

professional relationships into spontaneous conversations, laughter and genuine conviviality outside the sessions. It was in these spaces that the ESO community came alive, strengthening bonds naturally and ensuring that the experience was not only educational, but also deeply enjoyable and shared. The significant participation of professionals from countries that are less represented at major European conferences reinforced the inclusive nature of the initiative. The convention provided an environment in which every experience was valued, helping to expand and diversify the College's network. In Budapest, this network took concrete form as a community capable of sharing responsibilities, ideas and vision, and of transforming dialogue into collective growth.

PARTICIPANTS	COLLEGE MEMBERS	AVERAGE AGE OF PARTICIPANTS
	77	
	LOCAL OBSERVERS	
<b>90</b>	13	<b>35</b>

FEMALE	FROM EUROPE	73%
<b>58%</b>	FROM EURASIA	16%
	FROM ARAB COUNTRIES	11%

EUROPEAN LECTURERS INVOLVED	AVERAGE AGE
<b>16</b>	47
	FEMALE
	48%



# AN EXPERIENCE OF COLLECTIVE ENERGY

## Interview with Amil Družić

Oncology and Radiotherapy Resident  
Young Cancer Professional – European Cancer Organisation  
ECAC Youth Ambassador for Bosnia and Herzegovina

**The College Convention in Budapest was one of the key events in the College's calendar in 2025. What was the experience like for you?**

First and foremost, it was an experience of collective energy. I sensed a strength arising from the coming together of people from very different specialities, countries and backgrounds, yet united by the same desire to build something together. It wasn't just a training event. It was a space in which ideas, new directions and potential collaborations could be brought to life. Looking at that group, I thought: Something important and lasting can emerge from this.

**What struck you most about the programme?**

I was impressed by the presence of countries that are typically under-represented in major European oncology societies. In Budapest, I saw common ground, a truly inclusive space where every voice could contribute. The roundtable with Alberto Costa and other international leaders, for example, demonstrated a very strong strategic dimension. At the same time, moments such as the OncoQuiz and the group work at the National Institute of Oncology encouraged genuine connections to be formed. It was precisely this combination of high-level vision and practical interaction that made the Convention so special.

**In what ways does the Convention reflect the value of the ESO community?**

ESO is a community because it fosters enduring connections. Each time you attend a refresher course, a masterclass or other events, you meet people you've met before. After a few events, they become more than just colleagues: they become friends. The Convention brought this network to life, uniting over a hundred individuals with diverse skills and a shared energy. That was the moment when I truly realised that ESO is not just a training platform.

**It is a community. Could you give me a practical example of a connection that was made thanks to ESO?**

I met Dr Enes Erol from Istanbul during ESO activities. Today we are in touch almost daily, not just regarding oncology but also on a personal level. In 2025, he was invited to speak at our main oncology congress in Sarajevo. This is the real impact that relationships built within ESO can have on clinical practice and professional development. Your journey with ESO began before the Convention.

**How did you end up in Budapest?**

I came into contact with ESO in 2022 during the Colorectal Cancer Refresher Course in Sarajevo, which was strongly supported by our Clinic Director, Prof. Dr Semir Bešlija, and a fine example of the long-standing collaboration between our Oncology Clinic and ESO. Taking part in a European training event with international ex-

perts as a young trainee was a defining moment for me as it opened a door to the wider European oncology community. I then joined the College, followed the Pathway and continued with masterclasses and online courses. The mentorship programme with Professor Filipe Calvo was a key turning point, helping me to define my clinical and academic path, by building on a solid foundation in gastrointestinal oncology and then guiding me towards a specific career path. More recently, this path has naturally evolved towards head and neck oncology. Visiting the INT and having the opportunity to work alongside Dr Alessandro Iacovelli has enabled me to apply this mentorship and training to real-world clinical practice and daily decisions, reinforcing the area on which I wish to build my professional future. Coming to Budapest was the natural next step in my journey.

**Looking to the future, what legacy do you think the Budapest Convention will leave behind?**

Budapest has demonstrated that there is a generation of young oncologists who are willing and able to contribute actively. Not just to learn, but to build. If I had to sum up ESO in one sentence, I would describe it as a hub of knowledge and collaboration – an open door to the international oncology community where you can develop professionally without having to leave your own country, while still feeling connected to the rest of the world.

**Amil Družić** is a doctor and an Oncology and Radiotherapy Resident at the University Clinical Centre in Sarajevo. He is involved in clinical and research activities in the field of oncology, with a particular interest in radiotherapy, cancer prevention and public health. Alongside his specialist training, he is a Young Cancer Professional at the European Cancer Organisation (ECO) and participates in international research projects as a sub-investigator, including the International Watch & Wait Database (IWWD) and the Eukelade registry. He is also an ambassador for the European Code Against Cancer (ECAC) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he actively promotes cancer prevention and awareness initiatives, and is involved in the development and dissemination of educational programmes

aimed at the general public. His educational background includes a PhD in biomedical sciences and numerous international programmes in oncology and radiotherapy (ESO, ESTRO), reflecting his commitment to continuing professional development and international collaboration.



## College

# 480

ENROLLED  
IN 2025

# +8%

COMPARED  
TO 2024

# 60%

FEMALE

### BREAKDOWN OF MEMBERS BY LEVEL\*:

# 41%

STUDENT

# 37%

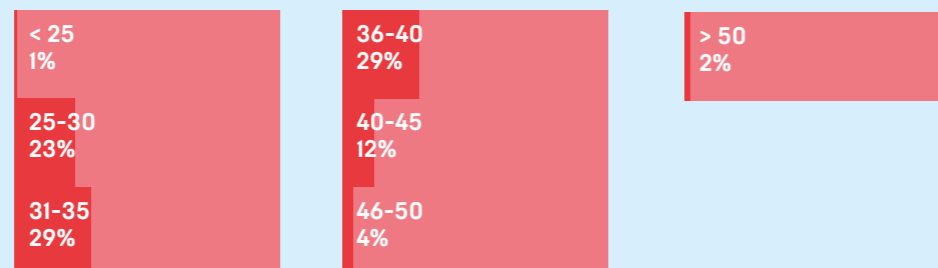
FELLOW

# 21%

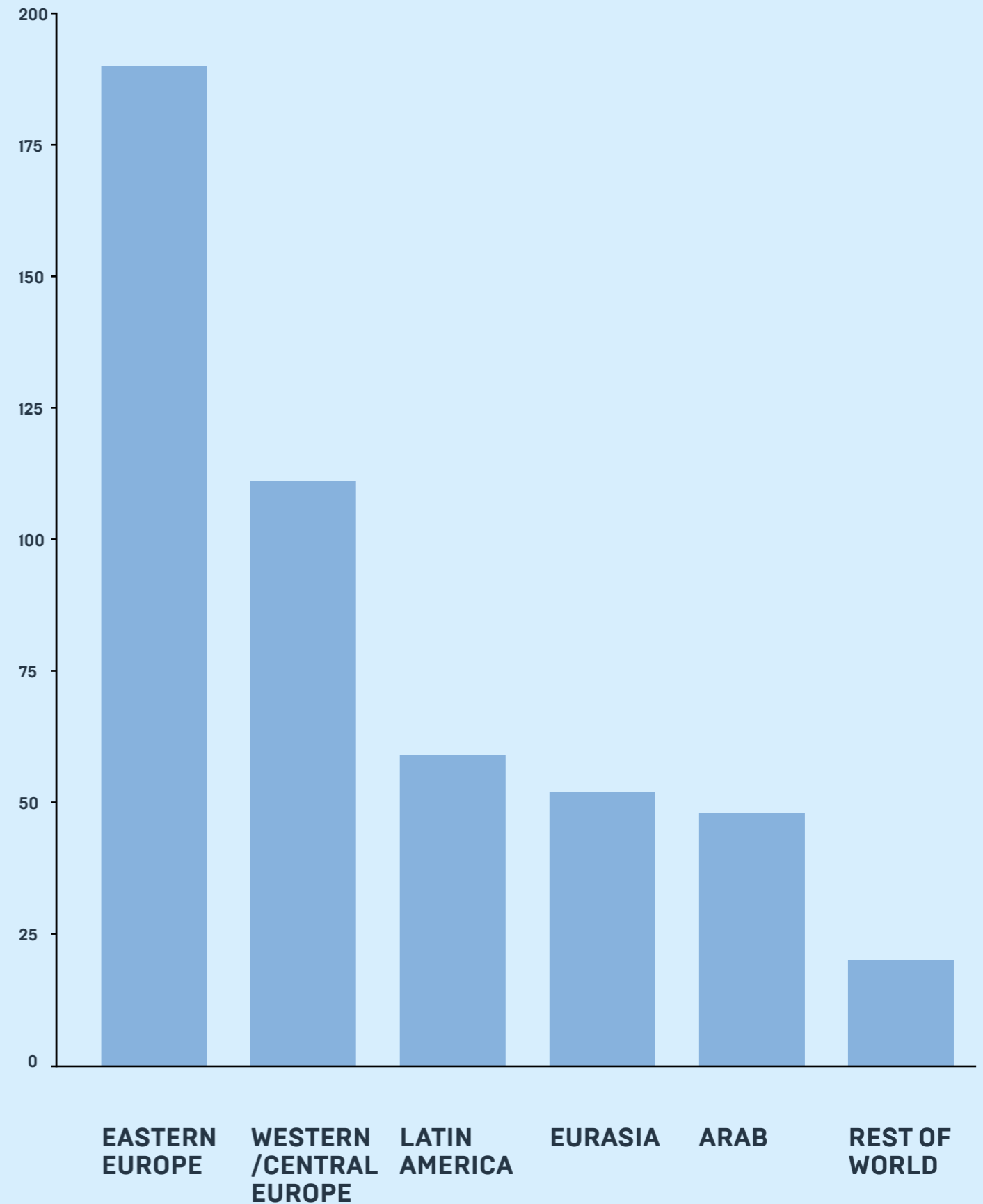
GRADUATE

\*All college participants are awarded credits by ESO based on their level of participation, commitment and engagement in training and professional development activities. Students are then assigned to levels (ranging from Student to Graduate) based on the credits they have obtained. These levels determine the type of benefits each individual can receive from the College.

### SHARE OF STUDENTS BY AGE GROUP



### COLLEGE MEMBERS BY AREA OF ORIGIN



## Interview with Fatjona Kraja

Clinical Oncologist  
ESO Faculty  
ESO Ambassador for Albania

A clinical oncologist and university lecturer in Albania, Fatjona Kraja has completed every stage of the ESO pathway, from the initial courses during her specialisation, through the CTC programme, to joining the ESO Faculty in 2025. Her experience illustrates how an international network can support a career over time, transforming training and collaboration into responsibility.

### You began your journey with ESO many years ago. What has kept you in the community over the years?

At first, I joined ESO for the training opportunities. Over time, however, I realised that I was becoming part of a community. ESO has broadened my clinical knowledge and changed the way I work and teach. Every course and programme has introduced me to colleagues with whom I continue to exchange ideas, even after the event. It is the continuity of these relationships that has kept me here.

### How has this network specifically influenced your career?

The CTC programme was a turning point. Spending six months at a centre of excellence allows you to observe different clinical and organisational models, but above all, to build long-lasting professional relationships. ESO gave me access to knowledge that simply wasn't available within my local training environment. Following my experience at the European Institute of Oncology (IEO) in Milan, Italy, I returned to Albania with new skills and implemented IMRT-SIB for prostate cancer for the first time. This was not just a technical transfer, but the result of ongoing dialogue with international colleagues and the network built through ESO. To this day, I maintain professional contacts that allow me to discuss complex cases and clinical updates.

### Beyond the clinical aspect, what opportunities for growth did you find within the ESO community?

Mentorship was fundamental — not only for research, but also as guidance at a time when I needed to define my professional direction. Subsequently, the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Gastrointestinal Cancers enabled me to consolidate a specialisation that is now central to my clinical and academic work. Each step was linked to the previous one. These

were not isolated experiences, but rather parts of an ongoing journey within the same network. From a clinical perspective, ESO has honed my expertise in breast, gastrointestinal and genitourinary cancers, while also strengthening my foundation in radiotherapy and multidisciplinary oncology. From an academic perspective, ESO has supported my progression from trainee to lecturer. Professionally, it has opened doors to international collaborations and leadership roles, and now the honour of being part of the ESO Faculty.

### You joined the ESO Faculty in 2025. What did this step mean to you?

For me, it represented a natural progression. I first joined ESO as a student, then as a mentor, and subsequently became an active member of the community. Becoming a Faculty member means contributing to the training of other young oncologists within the very same network that supported my own professional development. This transition demonstrates that the community is not static; it evolves and integrates new generations, while also valuing those who choose to give back. For me, joining the Faculty was like coming full circle — from student to mentor to lecturer. Today I am also an Ambassador for Albania.

### How does this role strengthen the network dimension in your country?

As a university lecturer, I can integrate ESO programmes into the training of my postgraduate students. In recent years, the number of applications from Albania has increased significantly. The aim is to create a stable link between our national training system and the European network. If we want to guarantee patients the same standard of care, we must offer professionals the same level of training and international exchange. The ESO network makes this continuous exchange possible. My appointment as ESO Ambassador for Albania for 2025–2026 stems directly from this experience and reflects ESO's investment in my potential to serve the region.

### What would you say to a young oncologist starting out in the profession today?

That training is essential, but it is not enough. You also need a community. A community where you can exchange ideas, seek advice and share projects. Professional growth happens through people. ESO offers just that: a supportive network that transforms training into collaboration over time.

### How would you describe ESO in one sentence?

ESO is a community that guides you in building your career and offers you the connections you need to grow and give back to others.



Fatjona Kraja is a clinical oncologist and lecturer in oncology at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Medicine in Tirana. Since 2014, she has been working at the University Oncology Clinic of the "Mother Teresa" University Hospital Centre in Tirana, combining clinical, teaching and research activities. She obtained her PhD in 2020 and has undertaken extensive international training and fellowship programmes at leading oncology centres in Europe and the United States, supported by ESO, ESMO, IAEA, the Fulbright Programme and EU Horizon 2020. She has developed advanced expertise in radiation oncology techniques, including SBRT, adaptive radiotherapy, re-irradiation and radiobiology. Since 2025, she has been a faculty member of the European School of Oncology and is actively involved in initiatives of the European Com-

mission and international research networks such as ESTRO, EORTC and COST Actions. Her research focuses on cancer epidemiology, radiotherapy outcomes, toxicity and the quality of life of cancer patients, and she is part of the first Albanian national project on quality of life (QoL) in cancer patients. She has authored over 25 peer-reviewed publications and has presented more than 70 scientific papers at national and international conferences, reflecting her commitment to promoting high-quality cancer care and oncology training both nationally and internationally. In 2026, she was elected to the Albanian-American Alumni Council (AUSA), contributing to the promotion of international collaboration, education and civic engagement.

# Ambassadors



**31**

TOTAL ESO  
AMBASSADORS  
IN 2025

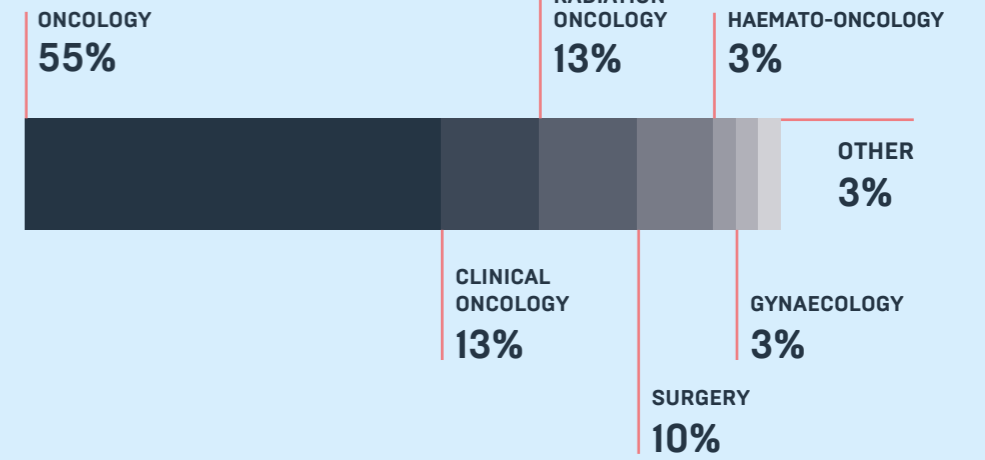
**39**

AVERAGE  
AGE

**78%**

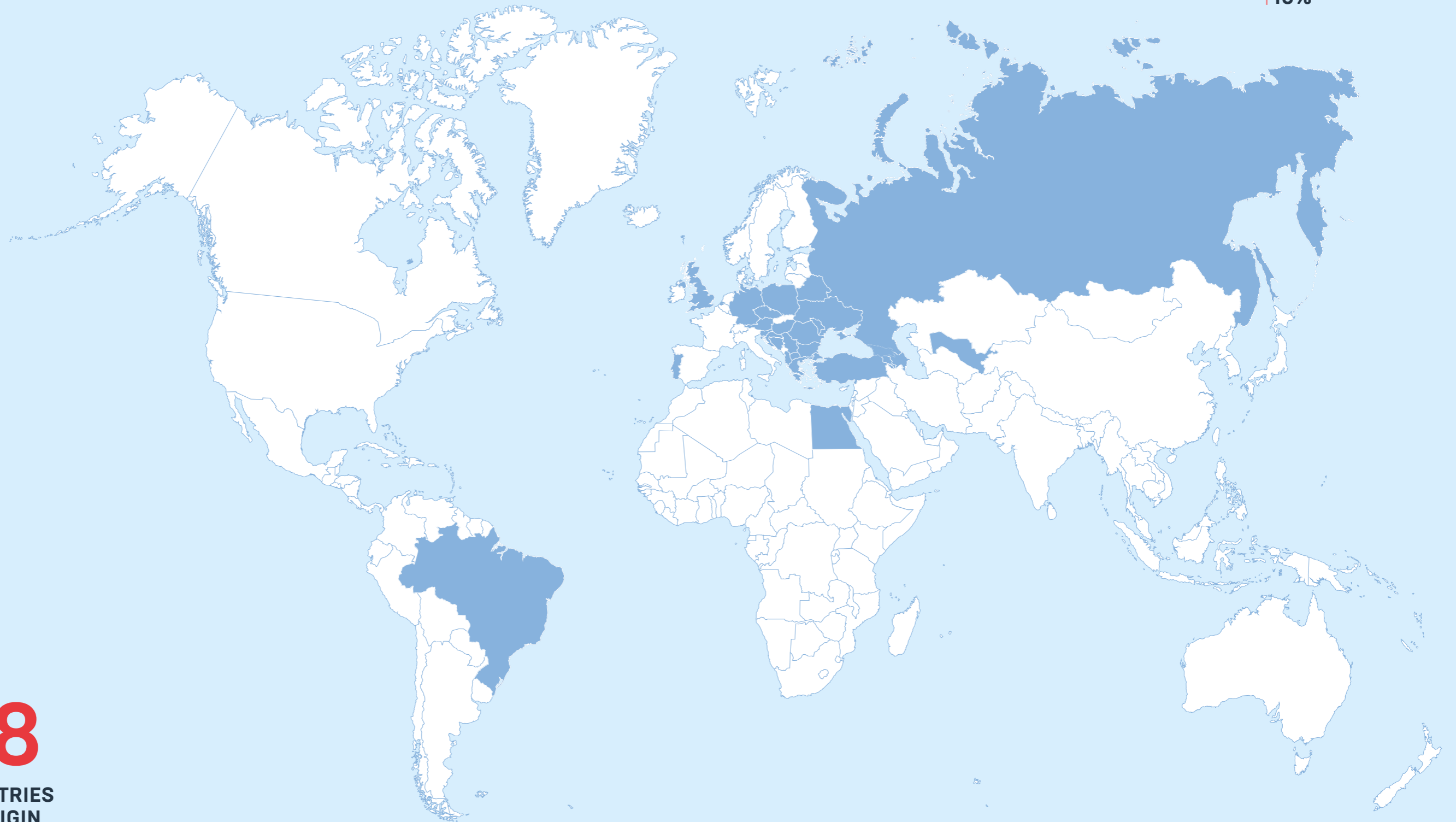
FEMALE

7 SPECIALTIES,  
OF WHICH:



**28**

COUNTRIES  
OF ORIGIN



# 3

## Organisation and governance



### Working for quality

ESO stands out for its authority and credibility thanks to a combination of scientific excellence and a transparent governance that places independence at its core.

In 2025 ESO published its first Annual Report and invested in the development of a **new website**, combining the pre-existing platforms (e.g. E-ESO, Esco) within a single environment, thus making its governance structure and the services it offers even clearer.

With the aim of consolidating its organisational structure and ensuring that the excellence of its educational mission is supported by rigorous and transparent management processes, in 2025 ESO also began the process of obtaining **ISO 9001 certification**, the international standard for Quality Management Systems (QMS). This certification serves as a reliable management framework, promoting governance that is more robust, transparent and resilient. It establishes clear objectives, quantifies risks and ensures continuous improvement through procedural requirements. ISO 9001 has been shown to enhance reputation and long-term sustainability by broadening the scope of decision-making to include the needs of the workforce, suppliers and partners among the variables to be monitored.

In this context, ESO published its own Corporate Policy in 2025, in which it identified the following nine objectives that guide its operations:

- Understanding and responding to the needs and **expectations of stakeholders**;
- Ensuring compliance with regulatory, contractual and voluntary requirements, especially with regard to **CME** (Continuing Medical Education) **regulations** and best practices in healthcare training;
- Design, organise and deliver training activities in line with one's vision and mission;
- Promote the adoption of a process-based approach, supported by an appropriate assessment of risks and opportunities, to ensure a **robust and sustainable system** geared towards continuous improvement;
- Define **measurable quality and effectiveness objectives for training** that are consistent with the institutional mission, and monitor them through key performance indicators, participant feedback, and internal audits;
- Ensure leadership from management and commitment from all staff in supporting the policy, thereby promoting a culture based on accountability, collaboration, competence and continuous development;
- Strengthen the role of the scientific director and the scientific committee to ensure **independence in defining training objectives** and content, and to prevent conflicts of interest;
- **Invest in the continuous improvement** of the Quality Management System through corrective actions, periodic reviews, updates to documentation, and the active involvement of all resources;
- Promote student and stakeholder satisfaction by implementing a **structured system** for collecting, analysing, and using information.

## Decision-making bodies

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The **Board of Directors** is responsible for defining ESO's values, objectives and strategies, as well as for approving the budget and annual accounts. The Board meets twice a year. In 2025, it consisted of 11 members, including ESO President Fedele Gubitosi, as well as three external auditors responsible for auditing the accounts and financial statements.

### ADVISORY BOARD

The **Advisory Board** is responsible for approving the three-year strategic plan and contributing to the development and evolution of training activities.

In 2025, ESO drew up its **new strategic plan for 2026–2028**, with the aim of consolidating its leadership in oncology education by embracing digital and academic transformation. The plan integrates advanced technologies (AI) and the best distance learning practices, all within a holistic, human-centred approach designed to safeguard the well-being of professionals and patients alike.

The programme includes formal recognition of qualifications (Master's/ CME) and the strengthening of multidisciplinary networks, with the aim of having a tangible impact on professionals' careers and the global oncology community as a whole.

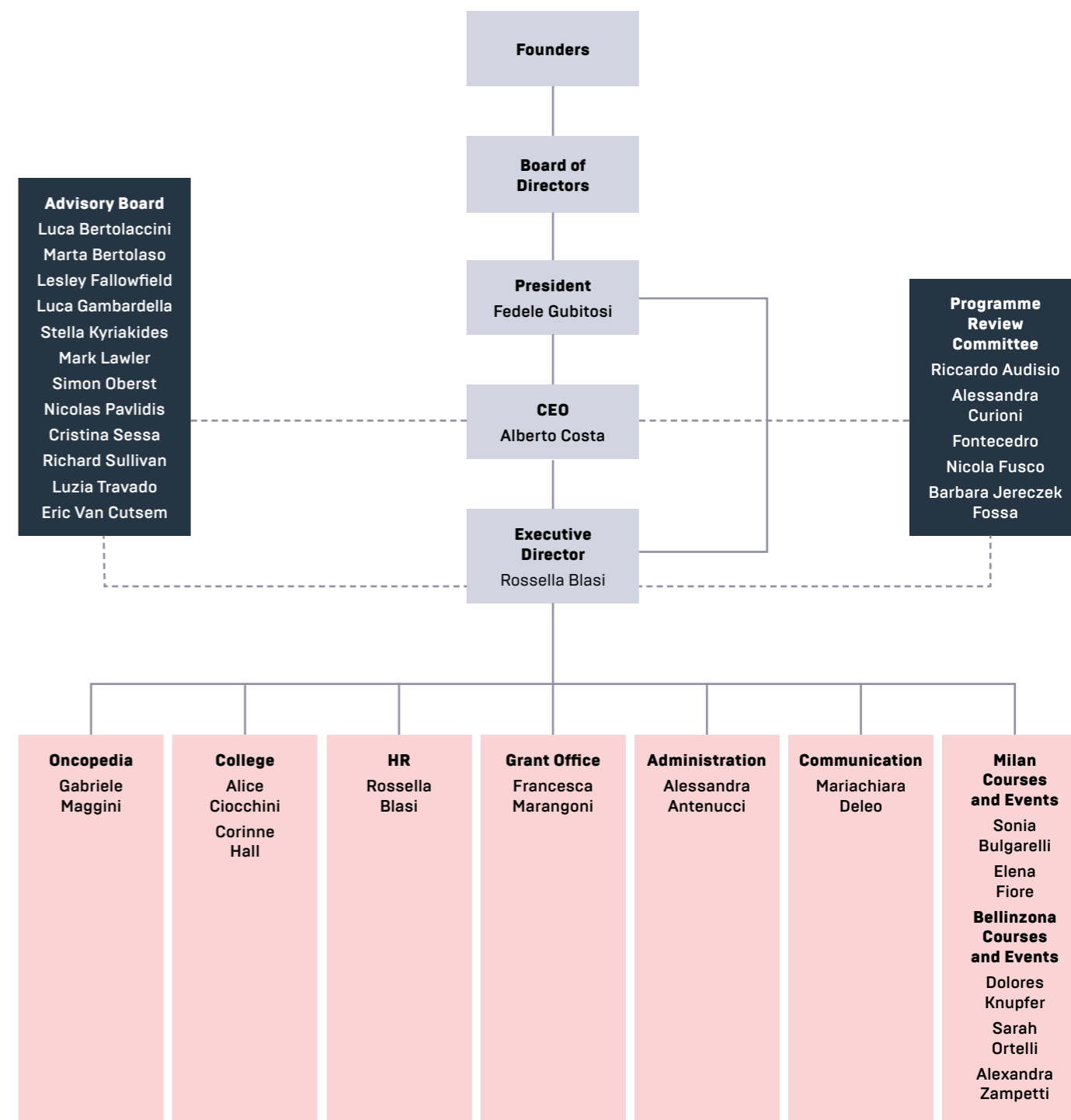
The Advisory Board meets twice a year (once in person and once online) and in 2025 it consisted of 14 members, including the Chair, Nicholas Pavlidis Ioannina, and the new Co-Chair, Stella Kyriakides.

### PROGRAMME REVIEW COMMITTEE

Formerly known as the Multidisciplinary Scientific Committee, the committee's main objective is to guide the school's direction and oversee the quality of its educational offerings and pathways. In 2025, the committee met twice to analyse and approve the Pathway programmes, and to consider how it can best support the school's future activities. From 2026 onwards, the Programme Review Committee is expected to meet exclusively at the beginning of each year to select the venues for the subsequent year's courses and determine the necessary leadership.

## Organisational Chart

ESO's decision-making structure is designed to support a European educational mission and, as outlined in the official organisational chart, **governance** is organised around three key decision-making bodies:



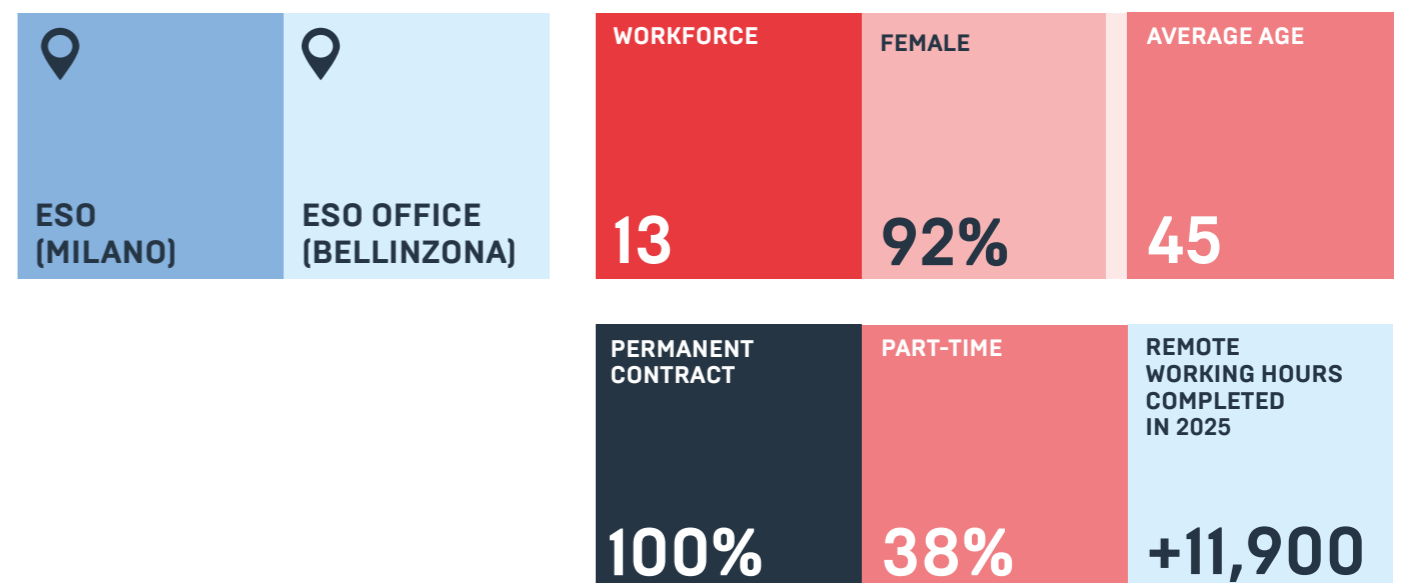
# The heart of ESO



ESO's educational excellence stems from the deep dedication of its staff, who work with the utmost care every day to support and advance the international oncology community.

This commitment translates into constant attention to every stakeholder, from supporting students on their growth journey to collaborating with faculty and strategic partners. **The stability of our team**, all of whom are employed under permanent contracts, is the **cornerstone of our identity**. Our in-depth knowledge of the network, gained through years of collaboration, enables us to cultivate long-standing relationships, ensuring the utmost effectiveness in terms of education and the human element for all stakeholders. This continuity is complemented by our constant

attention to the team's needs for flexibility. ESO offers remote working and part-time options, as we recognise that catering to personal needs is essential for maintaining high quality standards. ESO's activities are coordinated by two entities: ESO, which is based in Milan, Italy, and the ESO Office, which is based in Bellinzona, Switzerland. The total workforce comprises thirteen employees, most of whom are women of European origin, with an average age of 45, and a unique ability to transform their daily work into shared value.





In order to ensure the highest quality of service for doctors and nurses, ESO strictly safeguards its **independence from the pharmaceutical industry**, making this a strategic pillar of its educational mission. ESO's activities are financed by donations from the Foundation for Oncology Training (FFO) and the ESO Foundation (ESOF), as well as through European funding. Since 2022, ESO has received **four grants under the European Union's research and training programmes** for the two-year period 2024–2025, totalling **€1,372,000**.

The European projects implemented in 2025 and their results are described below:

1. **Comprehensive Cancer Infrastructure for the European Union (CCI4EU)**. This three-year project aims to support Member States and associated countries in developing or improving their cancer infrastructure, whether existing or future. It promotes research, innovation, and the development of digital capabilities in cancer care. The project began in 2023, with 54 partners from 27 European Member States and 5 associated countries, collaborating to create recommendations for structuring future capac-

ity-building projects, as well as for developing and scaling up national and regional cancer infrastructure. As part of the project, ESO is responsible for organising numerous training courses, in addition to carrying out coordination and development activities. Thanks to the funding secured through this EU-funded project, ESO was able to organise **two in-person conferences and eight online training courses** in 2025, leading to the issuance of **462 training certificates**.

2. **INTERACT-EUROPE 100** is a project that aims to provide oncology professionals with essential knowledge through an inter-specialty cancer training programme (ISCT) across 100 cancer centres throughout Europe between December 2023 and November 2026. It is co-funded by the European Union under the EU4Health 2021–2027 programme, as part of the European Plan to Combat Cancer, and it involves 38 partner organisations from 15 European countries. As part of this project, ESO is tasked with, among other things, delivering inter-specialty cancer training courses and train-the-trainer courses. In 2025, thanks to these funds, ESO organised **eight Train-the-Trainers courses and trained 293 professionals**.

3. **Mobility 2 Improve Clinical Oncology Skills (M2ICOS)** is a mobility grant to fund the participation of 24 physicians in 3–6-month internships at centres of excellence in Europe. The project officially began in December 2024 with the promotion of the initiative, the launch event and the opening of appli-

cations. In 2025, **four internships** were completed and a further three will start in 2026. The financial data relating to ESO's Milan and Bellinzona offices for the year 2025 is presented below. The revenue structure

demonstrates ESO's ongoing commitment to preserving its scientific autonomy and ensuring complete independence from the pharmaceutical industry.

## 2025 FINANCIAL DATA

Expenses	ESO	ESO OFFICE
Distance learning, website, e-learning	205,797.00	177,597.62
Advanced courses, conferences, scholarships, residential courses, masterclasses	438,264.00	819,684.71
Training programmes abroad	691,506.00	25,124.63
Personnel costs	596,865.00	807,071.00
Operating expenses and depreciation	798,888.00	370,025.00
Future innovation projects	460,000.00	-
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>3,191,320.00</b>	<b>2,199,502.96</b>

Revenues	ESO	ESO OFFICE
Revenue from institutional activities	884,638.00	330,630.74
Contributions from ESOF (ESO Foundation)	-	1,862,770.99
Contributions from FFO (Foundation for Oncology Training)	1,690,898.00	-
Contributions from third parties	59,702.00	-
Contribution from European grants	548,798.00	-
Other revenues	7,284.00	6,101.23
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>3,191,320.00</b>	<b>2,199,502.96</b>

EUROPEAN GRANTS AWARDED

TOTAL FUNDS RAISED BETWEEN 2024 AND 2025

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE FROM PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES FOR ESO AND ESO OFFICE

4

EUR 1,372,000 100%

# Looking to the future

by Alberto Costa, CEO of ESO

When we founded the European School of Oncology, our goal was clear: to improve the education of healthcare professionals treating people with cancer. Over time, our vision has expanded. We have not only established a school, but also a scientific community with a shared European identity.



Europe means collaboration. It means pooling the best practices from east to west across the continent. It means ensuring the **quality of training and care** for patients wherever they live. Our mission is to promote European oncology based on expertise, responsibility, and knowledge sharing.

Innovation has accompanied every stage of our development. New teaching methods, distance learning, postgraduate programmes and scholarships are all tools that contribute to our single goal of raising the standard of oncology training. Innovation gains value when it improves quality and increases access to training. In addition to technical expertise, we cultivate another essential dimension: **emotional intelligence**. Communicating a diagnosis, providing support to family members and accompanying a patient through their treatment journey requires sensitivity, active listening and respect. Our Pathway Courses, inspired by the '**Learning to Care**' principle, ensure that learning to take care of the patient becomes an integral part of oncology training.

The future of European oncology is built on the integration of science and humanity. Research evolves, technologies advance, and therapies are refined. The quality of care we provide depends

on the training we give our professionals, as well as on their ability to understand the whole person. As we approach the school's 50th anniversary, we are inspired by the same ambition that has guided us from the outset: looking ahead. Each milestone represents a step towards greater responsibility. It means consolidating our achievements, while preparing the next generation to lead European oncology through robust methodology, openness and vision.

I see young oncologists who are ready to play an active role in the community, contribute to the faculty and share the experience they have gained within the ESO network with their own countries. This continuity between training, collaboration and leadership is one of the most tangible manifestations of our mission.

Looking to the future means strengthening a Europe of knowledge, cooperation and quality. It means defending **independent oncology** that is open to innovation and guided by sound ethical principles.

We remain committed to training knowledgeable and mindful doctors, who can treat patients with scientific rigour while focusing on the individual. It is on this basis that we wish to build the European School of Oncology in the coming years.

**ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

# Learning to care

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**With the support of:**

School staff and personnel

**In collaboration with:**

Giuditta Passini  
Data analysis and KPI processing

Mira! - Positive impact communication  
Editorial project, texts, interviews and layout

Printed in May 2026



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