Julio Celis gives an insight into Cancer Policy Developments at the European level from his position as chair of the ECCO Policy Committee; he is excited by the possibilities that are presented by networking with National Member Societies and looks forward to the EACR-22 congress in Barcelona.

Our recent Member Satisfaction Survey produced some very interesting findings and one that I found particularly encouraging was the overwhelming support for EACR’s involvement in policy activity. Members value EACR services, strongly approve of benefits such as fellowships and bursaries, and are enthusiastic about our congress and educational programme; but members also expect the Association to make its voice heard on the policy matters that affect the opportunity to secure great advances in the research field to which they are passionately committed.

EACR’s main route to impact on European Policy is through the European Cancer Organisation (ECCO). ECCO, in the interest of patients, exists to uphold and promote the essential interaction between all organisations involved in cancer research, education, treatment and care.

ECCO is multidisciplinary and represents 60,000 oncology-related professionals, of which EACR’s European membership of nearly 10,000 is a most significant part. It is a time of rapid change and opportunity and it is in this context that I am very pleased to chair the ECCO Policy Committee. The complexity of cancer means that in speaking with one voice we can help all interested parties grasp the implications and major challenges facing oncology professionals and specialists in treating an increasingly ageing and diverse population, especially in the incoming era of personal medicine. Oncologists are not alone however. The wider health challenges facing Europe are huge, with national governments facing burgeoning costs at a time of economic crisis.

Research is the only tool that society has to identify causes of disease and to develop strategies for prevention as well as diagnosis and treatment. It helps save lives. New treatments, drugs, diagnostics and technologies are a result of many years of study, clinical trials, promise and investment. But a strategic approach across the entire health spectrum needs to be taken to ensure that excellent research results reach Europe’s citizens. That is why ECCO is a founding member of the Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe (biomed alliance), along with the European Association for the Study of Diabetes, the European Respiratory Society and the European Society of Cardiology.

“Research is the only tool that society has to identify causes of disease and to develop strategies for prevention as well as diagnosis and treatment. It helps save lives.”

It is a huge undertaking to create an alliance that represents around 200,000 professionals and aims to provide a unified voice for the biomedical community but it is only by doing so that we can truly make an impact and bring the growing healthcare crisis to the attention of policymakers.

The European Commission’s recent Horizon 2020 framework programme proposals have understandably generated great interest. Coming at a time of economic pressure, it is vital to emphasise the importance
of investing in health research to ensure innovation and growth and maintain Europe’s research competitiveness.

Consolidating expertise and resources across borders and speeding up the translation of discoveries into applications that impact on healthcare delivery is essential. Innovative ways to address such issues are currently being considered, namely through a ‘European Council for Health Research’ (EuCHR).

ECCO believes that working with the alliance to strengthen health research in Europe could have huge advantages. A European initiative that centralises and coordinates biomedical and clinical research can provide significant added value by addressing the current fragmented research landscape in Europe and help to accelerate the translation of discoveries into applications that have an impact on healthcare delivery.

Echoing ECCO’s commitment to multidisciplinary cancer prevention, treatment and care, a multidisciplinary approach towards EU policymakers can also be effective. Certain issues can be tackled more effectively working with the entire cancer continuum, as well as all health disciplines. By joining together with other major disciplines, we can ensure the scientific community has a voice on the future of research in Europe and help to safeguard Europe’s competitiveness in biomedical research.

**National Cancer Societies**
I am very pleased to display the logos and badges of the thirteen National Societies that have affiliated to EACR as member societies and to be writing directly to the 5,000+ members of EACR who receive their membership through their national society as well as our individual members.

I recently had the pleasure of chairing a meeting in Amsterdam with National Society presidents to discuss the variety of ways we can work together and make the most of what is becoming a very exciting network. I am confident that in future years we will see an increasing number of valuable educational meetings and that partnerships will develop between societies, as well as with EACR, to ensure that members have the professional support they need through a rich and well focussed programme of scientific meetings.

We are also looking forward to a meeting on the ‘Tumour Micro-environment’ which will be staged in partnership with the Irish Association for Cancer Research (IACR) in Dublin. The meeting will be part of the wider programme of scientific events that mark the Irish capital’s designation as European City of Science 2012.

Our partnerships also extend to other like-minded organisations and we will be co-hosting the second of the Molecular Pathology courses in Amsterdam with the Organisation of European Cancer Institutes (OECI) next month.

**EACR-22**

At the point that you are reading this address, EACR-22 will be just three months away. Many hundreds of abstracts will have been submitted and Meeting Bursary applicants will have received news of the outcome of their applications. The ‘early rate deadline’ so popular with members will have passed but interest in the congress will not abate.

Can I ask for your support? Please encourage colleagues who are not EACR members to visit our special website: [www.eacr.org](http://www.eacr.org). I have yet to meet anyone who hasn’t enthused about the programme and EACR-22 will provide an outstanding experience for student and senior researchers alike.

I look forward to meeting you in Barcelona.