Press Release

World Digestive Health Day: EASL and UEG join forces to highlight the importance of prioritising liver disease research

(Brussels, May 29, 2013) Today, on the occasion of World Digestive Health Day, the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) and United European Gastroenterology (UEG) participated in an event held in Brussels, which was hosted by Karin Kadenbach, Member of the European Parliament (MEP). In line with this year’s World Digestive Health Day theme "LIVER CANCER: Act Today. Save Your Life Tomorrow. Awareness. Prevention. Detection. Treatment", the event focused specifically on the importance of research into liver cancer and alcohol as a risk factor.

MEP Karin Kadenbach opened the event by highlighting the importance of ensuring that digestive diseases are not forgotten in upcoming research initiatives. “The time to act is now,” she said. “We have the data that show a growing burden of liver disease. With 29 million people in the EU affected, something must be done and it is up to us to lead the way and guide member states to enable them to also take action.”

Professor Markus Peck, EASL Secretary General, speaking at the event, noted that urgent action was needed in view of the rising incidence and prevalence of liver cancer: “Liver disease as a whole, and liver cancer in particular, is very much amenable to prevention and screening measures. At present, there is a less than 5% survival rate beyond 5 years of a late-stage diagnosis for liver cancer. With an ageing population and with the rising costs associated to treatment for liver disease (when treatment is possible), the European Union cannot afford to ignore the problem.”

Emphasising the importance of research in meeting health and societal challenges, Professor Reinhold Stockbrugger, UEG Public Affairs Committee Chair, said: "With an alarming rate of approximately 50,000 new cases of liver cancer being diagnosed each year in the EU, it is clear that this is a growing problem. Alcohol has been identified as a risk factor in over 60 diseases, including liver and digestive diseases. Stronger policies and additional research are needed in order to deal with the ever-increasing damage, both in terms of health and socio-economics, caused by excessive alcohol consumption."

Notes to Editors

About the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL)
EASL is the leading liver association in Europe. EASL attracts the foremost hepatology experts as members and has an impressive track record in promoting research in liver disease, supporting wider education, and promoting changes in European liver policy.

EASL believes the EU has a key role to play in raising awareness of liver disease in Europe, increasing additional funding for research, setting standards and guidelines for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care of liver disease across the EU, and encouraging member states to make liver disease a public health and research priority. EASL is one of the seven founding members of UEG.

For more information please visit www.easl.eu
About United European Gastroenterology (UEG)
UEG is a professional non-profit organisation combining all the leading European societies concerned with digestive diseases. Together, its member societies represent over 22,000 specialists, working across medicine, surgery, paediatrics, gastrointestinal oncology and endoscopy. This makes UEG the most comprehensive organisation of its kind in the world, and a unique platform for collaboration and the exchange of knowledge.

For more information, please visit www.ueg.eu

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