

UEG Standards and Guidelines: A UEG initiative to reduce health inequalities across Europe

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UEG's key values in the Strategic Plan 2015–2018 are excellence and partnership. A major goal in UEG's aim to improve European excellence and partnership is the advancement of care in gastroenterology by improving the prevention and management of digestive diseases in Europe. Providing easy access and improving clinical standards and services for the prevention and management of digestive disorders for all European health care professionals will ultimately result in a reduction of health inequalities across Europe and provide state-of-the-art care all over Europe.

UEG believes that partnership with all its specialist member societies and national societies is key to making this standards and guidelines initiative successful, and to implementing standards and guidelines into clinical practice across Europe. Working closely with our specialist member societies and national societies will make a real difference to our patients and the management of their digestive disorders.

Following discussions by the National Societies Committee (NSC) and National Societies Forum (NSF), in a Strategic Day in 2015 UEG identified a great desire by national societies and individuals to place greater emphasis on standards and clinical guidelines and to initiate the development of a UEG central repository for clinical standards and guidelines to promote and disseminate appropriate standards of GI care across Europe.

In order to advance the ideas on European standards and guidelines, a Standards and Guidelines task force was established within the NSC of UEG. This task force was formed by Axel Dignass, Joost PH Drenth, Hubert Louis and Monique van Leerdam, and was supported by Wilma Hofer from the UEG office. The task force concluded that the collection of existing clinical practice guidelines and standards and the establishment of a central repository of these existing clinical standards and practice guidelines would be the most appropriate way to serve the needs of our members and to make use of the richness of European gastroenterology, and to engage our special member societies and national societies. A roadmap for the establishment of a central repository for existing clinical standards and practice guidelines, and a gap analysis of potential areas with further need for additional guidelines, was developed and discussed with the relevant stakeholders

at the beginning and throughout the process of developing the repository. The roadmap and the milestones that have been already achieved are summarized in Figure 1.

In September 2015 the first request for feedback from member societies regarding recommendations on specific guidelines and standards was announced; a large amount of feedback has been received from both special member societies and individual national societies. Due to an increasing workload, and also to broaden the scientific and clinical background of the Standards and Guidelines taskforce, the group was enlarged by two additional members from the NSC: Luigi Ricciardiello, Chair Elect of the NSC, and Johan Burisch as Young Talent Group representative.

Over 100 standards and guidelines items of UEG member societies and non-ordinary members have been received to date. While the standards and guidelines of the ordinary special member societies were categorized according to pre-defined criteria, all other guidelines were also reviewed by the task force according to pre-defined criteria, for example exclusion of involvement of the biomedical industry in the development of the guideline, clear description of a reasonable methodology to develop the guideline, validity of the guideline and, initially for the repository, English language only. Guidelines from societies and groups that are not part of the UEG ordinary society membership were assessed in an online review and onsite discussion, and were also included in the repository. Currently, an additional review of non-English guidelines and other guidelines from non-UEG member organizations is planned. A review of new English items will also follow the established review process, and a decision on inclusion in the online repository will be decided in consensus meetings. For the review of non-English items, a different evaluation process is anticipated involving native colleagues, for example respective NSF members. Decisions on including non-English items into the repository will be taken once the full collection is available. Further steps, for example to commission the translation of specific existing guidelines, will also be further discussed once the full repository is available.

In June 2016 a separate “Standards & Guidelines” section on the UEG website (<https://www.ueg.eu/>)

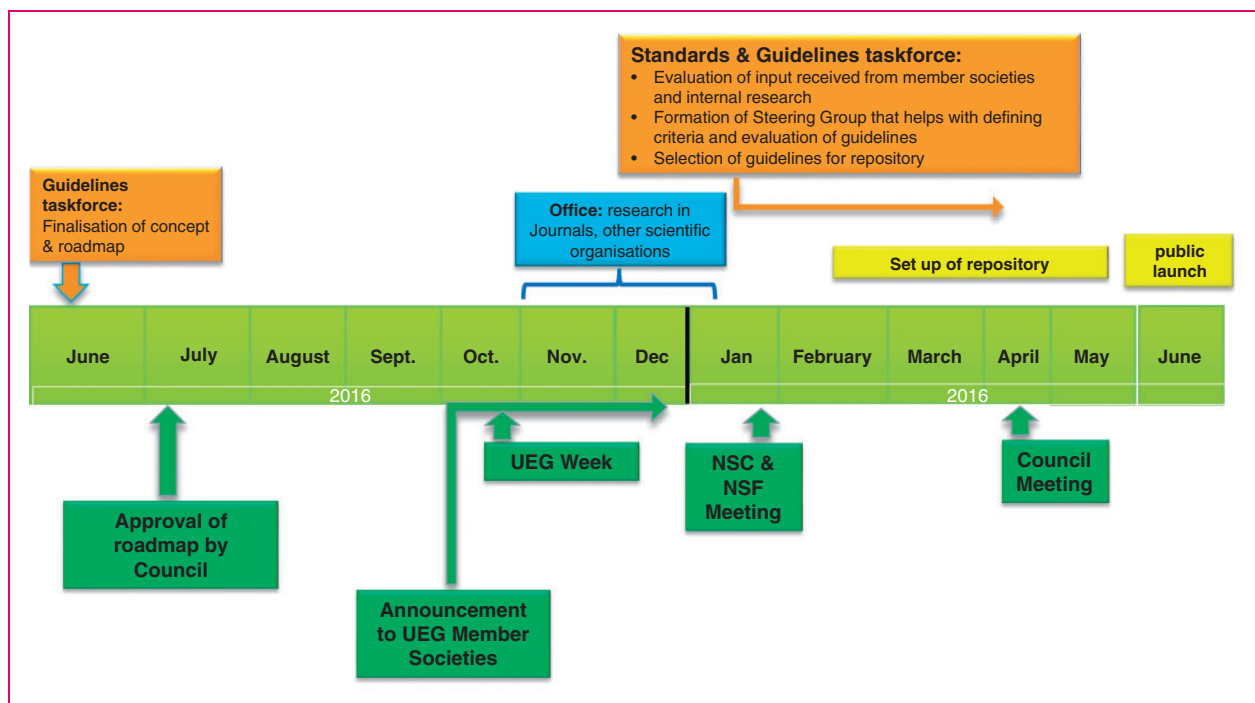


Figure 1. UEG Repository of Guidelines - roadmap.

education/standards-guidelines/) was launched, allowing search mechanisms similar to the UEG Week 24/7 platform through pathways and use of search terms. In addition, all guidelines in the repository are publicly available and searchable alongside other educational material in the UEG Education library (<https://www.ueg.eu/education/library>) using an easy search tool, making all guidelines in this repository easy to find. The complete guidelines can be accessed via a link to the homepages of the societies that developed the guidelines. Currently, the Standards and Guidelines task force tries to identify gaps where guidelines are still needed, in order to work together with our member societies and individuals to fill these potential gaps.

The experience and expertise of our members in the development of standards and guidelines is greatly valued, and we thus invite everybody to join us in our effort and combine our strengths. With the launch of

our Standards and Guidelines repository, individual researchers and gastroenterologists now have convenient access to clinical standards and guidelines that cover the full breadth of digestive diseases. These clinical practice guidelines will now reach a greater audience and hopefully receive greater use and visibility, which will help to facilitate the harmonization of standards of care and reduce health inequalities across Europe. We hope this will persuade you to explore the clinical standards and guidelines material available at your fingertips by visiting <https://www.ueg.eu/education/standards-guidelines/>.

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