

## How to start a Young GI Section in your country – A cookbook

### Authors

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### **Conflicts of interest**

There are no conflicts of interest related to this manuscript.

Ethics approval: Not applicable

Funding: Not applicable

Informed consent: Not applicable

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## **Cookbook Version 2.0.**

This is the second article on how to make a young Gastroenterology (GI) section in your country. The first cookbook was published in UEG Journal in 2017 and looked at the major points to be taken into consideration when creating a young GI section in your own country<sup>1</sup>, namely:

- 1) aims and bylaws
- 2) board members, posts and terms
- 3) meetings
- 4) finance
- 5) communication
- 6) how can a young GI section make a difference

This publication still remains true and serves as a valuable resource for building your own young GI section. The present article focuses more on events that have happened since then and describes the current situation, lists inspiring stories and speaks about potential obstacles and the way they could be overcome. Valuable practical recommendations on setting up a successful GI trainee research network can also be found in previous UEG Journal issues.<sup>2</sup>

## **The overview of the current situation across Europe**

There are currently 44 countries with 48 national societies and 17 specialist societies within the UEG. The Young Talent Group (YTG) - a group of active young GIs that supports junior physicians and researchers working in the field of Gastroenterology - is actively working on creating a strong bond between UEG and young GIs in each country and member society. Therefore, one of the main goals of the YTG for the previous 2 years has been to encourage the establishment of young GI sections in each UEG member country and strengthen the links between UEG and the young representatives of each specialist society. Forty five of the national societies have a friend of YTG – a young GI who is in close contact with UEG's YTG and shares the information with other young GIs in their home country. Up to now, 21 countries have their own young GI section and 5 more are in progress of founding a section right now. We are also in contact with the young GI sections of 7 specialist societies: the European Crohn's and Colitis Organisation (ECCO), European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), European Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ESGE), European Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology Hepatology and Nutrition (ESPGHAN), European Society of

Gastrointestinal and Abdominal Radiology (ESGAR), European Society of Pathology (ESP) and the European Pancreatic Club (EPC). It is always inspiring to see young and active people getting involved in shaping the future of Gastroenterology in their home countries, Europe and Gastroenterology subspecialties. If you are not part of any already existing young GI section yet, please feel free to join, promote and found one!

### **Five types of young GI sections across Europe. Which one is yours?**

1. **We want that and we can. Support, integrity and inclusion.** There are many national and specialist societies with well-established young GI sections – e.g. UK<sup>2</sup>, Denmark, ECCO and ESPGHAN. One of the main factors of success for these young GI sections was that the initiative or the support to make a young GI section came from the mother national or specialist society. The young GI sections have their full support, are working in close connection and collaboration with their mother society. Often the young GI section chair or president is represented in the council of the national or specialist society – with or without voting possibilities, the opinion of the young GIs is heard, they are involved in the decision making on topics that concern the young GI training, like working conditions, etc. Also, this is a great opportunity for young GIs to learn from experienced colleagues and progress in their careers. Frequently, the young GI section is also sponsored from the mother national or specialist society. This type of young GI section is a great model and definitely something to strive for and look at as an example.
2. **We want that, but we cannot. Dialogue in progress.** There are some countries where young GI sections have formed independently from their mother national society. There are different reasons for that, but most of the time there is a lack of support from the national society. The mother national society does not believe that the young GI section is needed, that the young GIs should be involved in decision making, that the young GIs are too young and naïve, are not fully able to understand the “real situation” and would make bad decisions. Conversely, there are young GIs in these countries who feel the need to be active, express themselves, who have opinions and feel that they have things to offer. In situations like these it is always wise to look for a dialogue, seek to understand the mother society, explain the needs of the young GIs (more influence on training, education and professional opportunities)<sup>3</sup>, hear out the

concerns of the mother society and maintain mutual respect. Young GIs should also look for and give credit for the positive things that have already been developed and value each gesture towards collaboration. In a situation like this it is not easy to confront the national society, often because the GI community is small, the politics are intense and the future career development of the young GIs could be affected. On the other hand, you should never let go of your standards, lose your integrity and the principles you strongly believe in. Just be prepared not only to complain, but also to work very hard. As mentioned previously – you should always look for a dialogue and seek support from the mother national society, because synergy is always the right way to move forward and achieve the best possible results. Sometimes it takes time to implement your ideas and you should be prepared to do it bit by bit and wait for a gradual attitude change from the mother national society. A good example for finding support from the mother national society and gradual change of attitude after forming an independent young GI section is Latvia. The initial surprise about the sudden independent activity of the young GIs slowly grew into mutual respect and offers from the national society to young GIs to participate in the formation of GI community. But also know that if you are not able to negotiate your ideas in a reasonable period of time or the resistance from the mother national society is too strong and you still want to move forward with the making of a young GI section, you can count on the support of UEG. A good example for this is Bulgaria. The young GI section of Bulgaria is now one of the Europe's most active young GI sections – actively organising a congress for young GIs with lectures and hands on training in Bulgaria, helping to organise the European conference for young GIs and actively increasing their participation in UEG's (educational/support) programmes. All of this can be done if you persist and learn to work through the difficulties.

3. **We want a young GI section, but in reality it is hard.** These are countries where the support from the mother national society is there, the young GI section is formed, but the real circumstances fail to naturally support an active and prosperous work of the young GI section. For example Norway – long distances and geographical obstacles between the young GIs are the main reason for difficulties in running a young GI section as trainees are scattered across Norway. In situations like these, you should aim for organising teleconferences and look for other ways to work together without

actually meeting face to face very often Then Skype calls, What's app chats and Facebook groups might come in handy.

In this category you can also find countries where there is very little initiative from the young people. The mother society supports the young, but the young tend to see all the hard work and too little incentives or benefits for actively participating and being part of a young GI section. Sometimes the working hours are too long – GI training and extra work load is making it impossible to take up volunteer work. You also have to be very careful of falling into this trap if you are in a young GI section which has been recently formed. Often this happens after the initial hype and enthusiasm after forming a young GI section decreases and you reach a plateau phase in the growth of your young GI section. A solution that might help is to have a good plan of action in place beforehand – when founding a young GI section think about the deadlines of the posts in your bylaws, so that you can always change and evolve, so that you can always bring in new, active and motivated people and develop new and fresh ideas – evolve the GI section and bring it to new – higher places. Also think about incentives, personal motivators and competition – these things can help to choose the most active people and make the active ones even more active.

4. **We do not need that.** There are also a number of countries where the young GIs think that the young GI section is not absolutely necessary. These are usually small countries with a close GI community, where all the doctors – the young and the experienced ones are working in close connection, where ideas and input of young GIs are taken into consideration and difference can be made together. A good example of this model is Estonia.
5. **We are almost there.** There are five countries which are currently making their own young GI section. If you are one of them – we want to wish you the best of luck and remind you that in case of any question or obstacle – UEG is there for you! Always feel free to contact UEG's YTG for tips, tricks, information and support. We are also able to pair you up with other – already existing young GI sections, which have successfully talked similar issues and solved similar problems.

**The future for the young GIs in Europe looks great and promising**

In May 2019 in Vienna (Austria), the first UEG's YTG meeting with the Friends of YTG was held to discuss the situation with young GI sections in all European countries. The meeting was a great success – a good opportunity to learn from each other, exchange ideas, make friends, share inspiration and seek practical support. This kind of meeting will happen again in April 2020 in Vienna. In December 2018, the 1<sup>st</sup> European Conference of Young Gastroenterologists (organised by the young GI section of the Croatian national GI society) took place in Zagreb (Croatia) and was considered a great success – a wonderful opportunity to work together with senior colleagues, mentors and learn from each other. The 2<sup>nd</sup> conference will happen again in May 2020 in Dubrovnik (Croatia). Young GI ideas are heard and supported by the UEG. And finally, remember that UEG offers loads of opportunities for the young GIs – education possibilities, online and classroom courses, summer schools, UEG week, mentoring programmes, visiting fellowships for young clinicians and researchers, different prizes, grants and many more. Therefore, without a doubt we can say that some solid stones are put into foundation for a better future for young GIs across Europe. A big thank you to Yasmijn van Herwaarden – the chair of the YTG between 2017 and 2019, whose priority was to work with the young GI sections in each of the countries and help them to become as active as possible. A very warm welcome to the YTG's new chair Henriette Heinrich who has created UEG's Talent Pool – a great opportunity for young and active GIs to join UEG's activities – work in UEG's boards and committees, help with the making of UEG Journal and chair sessions at UEG Week. And also remember that each year there is a chance to join the UEG's YTG as well. Stay young, wild and GI!

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