

## **EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE May 12<sup>th</sup>**

### **Press Release**

Luxembourg, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021

#### **Luxembourg hosts international flagship cancer epidemiology conference The 45<sup>th</sup> GRELL Annual Meeting goes fully virtual**

*From May 12<sup>th</sup> until May 14<sup>th</sup>, about 150 international scientists, clinicians, healthcare professionals and policymakers from 17 nations will gather for the 45<sup>th</sup> edition of the Group of Cancer Epidemiology and Registration in Latin Language Countries (GRELL) conference which, due to the current pandemic, will take place in a fully virtual format. Organised in Luxembourg for the first time by the National Cancer Registry of Luxembourg (Registre National du Cancer - RNC) at the Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH), the meeting will feature several prominent speakers, providing an opportunity to discuss the latest developments in the field of cancer epidemiology with a particular focus on COVID-19 and cancer, as well as childhood and adolescent cancers. This 2021 edition of the GRELL conference is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr Michel Untereiner, oncologist and Scientific Director of the RNC between January 2013 and March 2021.*

The three-day event is due to start at 2 pm on May 12<sup>th</sup>, with an opening statement from Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg. As the honorary president of the Fondation Cancer, the Grand Duchess is deeply committed to the fight against cancer, having supported numerous Luxembourgish charities and research institutes active in this field over the years.

The first day of the conference is dedicated to a webinar on COVID-19 and Cancer, which features a series of national speakers and moderators, including Dr Carole Bauer (Fondation Cancer Luxembourg), Prof Gilbert Massard (University of Luxembourg), Dr Sophie Couffignal (Head of the LIH Public Health Expertise unit and Operational Director of the Luxembourg National Cancer Registry), Dr Guy Berchem (Associated Medical Director at LIH and President of the National Cancer Institute of Luxembourg), Dr Claudine Backes (Epidemiologist for the Luxembourg National Cancer Registry at LIH) and Prof Michel Mittelbronn from the Laboratoire National de Santé (LNS), alongside international experts. Through two keynote sessions and a panel session, the speakers will address some of the key clinical challenges related to cancer during COVID-19 times, namely the effect of the current pandemic on cancer registration, incidence, diagnosis, treatment and outcomes for patients.

The webinar will be followed by a two-day virtual panel conference on May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, featuring an opening speech from the Luxembourg Minister of Health, Paulette Lenert. Prof. Aline Müller, CEO of the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), will also moderate a panel discussion on the socio-economic determinants of cancer, with a specific focus on social inequalities. In addition, two keynote speaker sessions

on Childhood and Adolescent cancers, moderated by Anne Goeres (Director of the Fondatioun Kriibskrank Kanner), will be delivered by renowned international experts such as Dr Eva Steliarova-Foucher (International Agency for Research on Cancer, France) and Prof Kathy Pritchard-Jones (International Society of Paediatric Oncology & University College London, UK). These sessions will explore aspects such as the WHO Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer, the evolution in childhood cancer survival rates and the specificities of adolescent cancers. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, attention will be given to the epidemiological and clinical use of cancer registry data around the world, looking at the prevalence, incidence and prognosis of various type of cancers. The conference will be introduced by Dr Sean Sapcariu (Programme Manager, Luxembourg National Research Fund - FNR) and by Prof Walter Ricciardi, President of the Horizon Europe Mission Board for Cancer. Dr Guy Fagherazzi, Director of the LIH Department of Population Health, will also moderate a session dedicated to the advent of new digital methods and technologies to analyse cancer registry data and trends.

*“Despite the current COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing restrictions, we were determined to ensure the continuity of the cancer epidemiology conferences and pursue our fight against cancer. We therefore decided to hold this year’s GRELL meeting in a fully virtual format, giving the opportunity to experts from Europe but also from Latin America and Africa to participate, while making it as engaging and interactive as the previous editions. Indeed, to complement the 29 highly compelling scientific oral presentations, we have put in place virtual exhibition stands, 78 e-Poster sessions and multiple other means of communication, such as virtual coffee rooms, which will provide dynamic networking opportunities, thereby fostering fruitful discussions and exchanges between all participants”,* explains Dr Claudine Backes, LIH Epidemiologist for the Luxembourg National Cancer Registry and president of the GRELL 2021 organising committee. A virtual video tour of the Grand Duchy is also foreseen as part of the programme, adding an even more realistic feel of the national context to the meeting and ensuring its conviviality.

*“We are delighted to have been able to count on the support and active participation of all key players in the national oncology field, particularly given the recent launch of the second National Cancer Plan, which further shows the highly collaborative framework and united front adopted by all parties involved in the ongoing fight against cancer”,* concludes Dr Sophie Couffignal, Operational Director of the Luxembourg National Cancer Registry and Luxembourg Representative to the GRELL Steering Committee.

The 45<sup>th</sup> GRELL Annual Conference is financed by the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR) through the RESCOM: Scientific Events funding programme, and supported by the Health Directorate of the Luxembourg Ministry of Health, the Luxembourg Institute of Health, the Fondation Cancer, the Fondatioun Kriibskrank Kanner, the Société Luxembourgeoise d’Oncologie and the National Cancer Institute.

### ***About the Group for Cancer Epidemiology and Registration in Latin Language Countries (GRELL)***

*Gathered since 1976, the Group for Cancer Epidemiology and Registration in Latin Language Countries (GRELL) promotes epidemiological cancer research, mainly through the registration of cases in geographically defined populations. The Group works in collaboration with the International Association of Cancer Registries and the European Network of Cancer registries, as well as other scientific associations operating in the same field.*

### **About the National Cancer Registry of Luxembourg**

*The Luxembourg National Cancer Registry (Registre National du Cancer - RNC) is a continuous, systematic and exhaustive collection of all new diagnosed and/or treated cancer cases occurring in the Luxembourg population, as well as those diagnosed and/or treated in Luxembourg in the non-resident population, providing an overview of all patients treated for cancer in Luxembourg. The objectives of the RNC include the epidemiological surveillance of cancers; the evaluation of public health actions in terms of cancer prevention and screening; the evaluation of the quality of care provided to cancer patients; the monitoring of the Cancer Plan and the planning of the necessary resources; and the provision of support to epidemiological and clinical research. The RNC was established by the Health Directorate of the Luxembourg Ministry of Health in 2013. The Department of Population Health of the Luxembourg Institute of Health was mandated to oversee its implementation and management.*

### **About the Luxembourg Institute of Health: Research dedicated to life**

*The Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH) is a public research organisation at the forefront of biomedical sciences. With its strong expertise in population health, oncology, infection and immunity as well as storage and handling of biological samples, its research activities have an impact on people's health. At LIH, devoted scientists investigate disease mechanisms to develop new diagnostics, innovative therapies and effective tools to implement personalised medicine.*

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