

Dear EMEUNET members,

We would like to invite you to participate in the inaugural edition of the “EULAR/EMEUNET Interest groups” during the virtual EULAR Congress 2021.

The aim of the initiative is to offer a networking space for researchers/clinicians with interest in a specific topic during EULAR 2021. In each group we will offer 1) a live chat forum to virtually interact during the whole congress and 2) participation in a live video interactive discussion with the rest of the group and an invited speaker. Each interest group is organized by an EMEUNET Ambassador and will cover the topics below.

This is a unique opportunity to meet and interact with colleagues from the field and discuss hot topics during the EULAR 2021 Congress. Each interest groups will be limited to 12 participants in total, so we will have to pre-select participants for each group. All registered EULAR participants can apply, however, priority will be given to EMEUNET members.

Applications to participate in the Interest groups will open with **the start of the Congress on 2.6.2021 on the EULAR Congress platform**. You will be able to apply to the Interest Group via virtual platform (under Interest Group Discussion tab, you will be able to choose the subgroup of interest and apply through the “Book” button). To apply, please share with us a short motivational statement (up to 200 words) in the box that will open up. Please note that with application you also confirm your availability to participate in live video discussion (see time-slots below). Based on your profile description and short motivational statement, ambassadors will select the participants for each group. In order to secure the spot in the group, we highly suggest to submit your application as soon as possible **on 2.6.2021**.

Best wishes,

Tue Kragstrup and Blaz Burja  
(on behalf of the EMEUNET education SG)

## **Interest groups**

### **1. Basic research**

**Ambassador:** Blaz Burja

**Title:** Dissecting fibroblasts heterogeneity: emerging reservoir of stromal targets in rheumatic diseases

**Time:** (Saturday, 11.00-12.00)

**Invited Speaker:** Dr Adam Croft

Fibroblasts maintain the structural tissue framework and coordinate physiological processes. In the context of inflammatory disease microenvironments, activated fibroblasts act as immune sentinels, directly interacting with immune cells to drive disease progression/persistence. Despite their crucial role, efficient fibroblast targeting therapies are still lacking. The era of new technologies, such as single-cell transcriptomics, revolutionised our understanding of intra-tissue fibroblast heterogeneity. Unravelling the composition and function of different fibroblasts subpopulations in homeostasis and

disease will unlock their therapeutic potential in tissue repair, while minimizing the risk of adverse effects associated with directly targeting immune cells. With Dr Adam Croft we will discuss fibroblast heterogeneity in the context of fibroblast-driven rheumatic diseases and provide the rationale for developing fibroblast-targeting therapeutics.

## **2. Rare diseases/Pediatric rheumatology**

**Ambassador:** Ertugrul Cagri Bolek

**Title:** Monogenic rheumatic diseases - what can adult rheumatologists learn from paediatric rheumatologists?

**Time:** Friday, 15:00-15:30 *30 min time slot*

**Invited Speaker:** Prof. Seza Ozen, MD

Most of the childhood RMDs may be quite devastating disorders although they have lesser prevalence and incidence compared to adulthood equivalents. Due to their nature, monogenic-variants (IFNopathies, DADA2, AIDs etc.) and illnesses associated with inherited backgrounds make up the important part. In the next couple of years, it is expected that the majority of them can reach adulthood with the professional care of paediatricians. For those who were not recognised during childhood, with the help of increasing diagnostic opportunities and genetic-first approaches, it is possible to identify them in adulthood as well by adult rheumatologists. We will discuss with Prof. Ozen about increasing the awareness about monogenic rheumatic diseases and determine some strategies for management and transitional care.

## **3. Connective tissue diseases**

**Ambassador:** Chris Wincup

**Title:** Lupus, the next 10 years

**Time:** (Friday, 12:30-13:30)

**Invited Speaker:** Prof. Ed Vital

Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is a disease characterised by marked heterogeneity in both clinical symptoms and immunological abnormalities. With the advent of a number of new biologic targets and recent clinical trial success, we stand on the verge of a new therapeutic era in the treatment of the disease. However, the challenge of tomorrow will be to suitably stratify patients so that treatment is both effective and without adverse impact. The landscape of treating SLE is likely to change drastically in the next 10 years. With Prof. Ed Vital, this Interest Group will focus on advance relating to the latest translational research, clinical trial outcomes and the future for personalised medicine in SLE.

## **4. Vasculitis**

**Ambassador:** Alvis Bert

**Title:** The latest on diagnostic and classification criteria for systemic vasculitis

**Time:** (Thursday, 12:00-13:00)

**Invited Speaker:** Prof. Raashid Luqmani

There are currently no criteria to make a diagnosis of vasculitis. The project “Diagnostic and Classification criteria in Vasculitis (DCVAS)” aimed to develop diagnostic criteria for the primary systemic vasculitides (i.e. granulomatosis with polyangiitis, microscopic polyangiitis, eosinophilic granulomatosis with polyangiitis, polyarteritis nodosa, giant cell arteritis, Takayasu arteritis), and to update the current classification criteria. The criteria (or part of them) will be released soon, likely before the end of this year. Prof. Raashid Luqmani, one of the principal investigators of DCVAS, will provide a brief overview of the status of the project, and will answer to all the questions from the participants.

## 5. Epidemiology

**Ambassador:** Mrinalini Dey

**Title:** Multimorbidity and comorbidity in inflammatory arthritis

**Time:** (Thursday, 9:45-10:15) *30 min timeslot*

**Invited Speaker:** Prof. Gyorgy Nagy

The Epidemiology interest group will focus on comorbidities in inflammatory arthritis, including a discussion on difficult-to-treat rheumatoid arthritis and the EULAR definition and guidance on this, published last year. This discussion will complement the “Difficult to treat RA: definitions and mechanisms” session, and we will be joined by Prof. Gyorgy Nagy, a lead author on this publication and speaker at this session. Participants will have the opportunity to hear more about this work, ask questions, and discuss the role of comorbidities in the context of difficult-to-treat rheumatoid arthritis, including implications for clinical practice.

## 6. Horizon Europe

**Ambassador:** Tue Wenzel Kragstrup

**Title:** Introduction to Horizon Europe

**Time:** Friday, 11:45-13:30

**Invited Speaker:** Monica Schofield

The “Horizon Europe” interest group will provide a practical introduction on how to approach Horizon Europe (HE) research grants. Compared to other interest groups, the thematic focus in this group will be broader and it welcomes any participant interested in submitting proposals to HE calls. The main activity of this interest group will be the live meeting with a presentation by Director of International Cooperation, Monica Schofield, from the academic consultancy company Tutech Innovation, associated with Hamburg University of Technology, Germany. The target groups for this meeting are potential proposal coordinators, researchers and others interested in preparing proposals for collaborative projects in HE. This meeting is suitable for beginners as well as those with Horizon 2020 experience.