



## EuropaColon Slovenia

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### Subject: Wolfram Nolte Memorial Award

Dear Ghislaine,

EuropaColon Slovenia would like to apply for the implementation of the program for carers for the Wolfram Nolte Memorial Award. We plan to implement the Heart to Heart, Carer Support Programme in 2026.

### Heart to Heart - Carer Support Programme



#### Introduction / Background

Family carers of patients with colorectal and other digestive cancers play a central role in supporting both daily care and emotional well-being. They assist with medication management, nutrition, hygiene, mobility, and monitoring treatment progress. Particularly for patients in advanced stages or with reduced independence, carers provide essential physical and emotional support, often prioritizing patient needs over their own, which can lead to stress, burnout, and social isolation.

In Slovenia, systematic support for this group is minimal. **The Heart to Heart programme** is a novel initiative designed to empower family carers with knowledge, practical skills, and psychosocial support, improving both carer and patient quality of life.

**Note:** In the pilot version of the programme, priority will be given to carers of patients with colorectal cancer, who represent approximately half of all digestive cancer patients in Slovenia.

## Programme Objectives

1. **Enhance carers' knowledge and practical skills** to provide effective care for patients with colorectal cancer, including those with a stoma.
2. **Strengthen carers' emotional resilience and coping strategies** to prevent burnout and maintain their own well-being.
3. **Foster peer support and community-building** among carers for shared experiences, guidance, and mutual encouragement.
4. **Improve carers' confidence in communicating with healthcare professionals** and navigating healthcare and social support systems.

## Activities

The Heart to Heart programme combines interactive online coaching sessions, expert-led practical workshops, supportive materials, and peer networking opportunities. All activities are designed to empower family carers with practical knowledge, self-awareness, and emotional resilience. The programme will be led by a Certified Carer Coach in collaboration with professionals in psychosocial support, nutrition, physical rehabilitation, pain management, and medical care.

**1) Online Coaching Sessions (via Zoom)** - A series of 6–8 interactive meetings based on coaching principles, focused on helping carers take care of themselves while caring for others. Each session will include:

- Guided reflection and coaching exercises to enhance self-awareness, coping strategies, and self-care skills.
- A short relaxation or mindfulness technique to support emotional balance and reduce stress.
- Time for sharing experiences and mutual support within a safe and compassionate group setting.

These sessions create a space where carers feel heard, supported, and equipped with practical tools they can apply in their daily lives. Sessions are held biweekly on weekdays from 17:00–18:30 (first session 90 minutes; subsequent 60–75 minutes).

**2) Expert Practical Workshops (in person)** - Two interactive workshops featuring 2–3 professionals per workshop (e.g., nurse, physician, clinical dietitian, psychologist, social worker) providing expert guidance and practical knowledge on key topics such as digestive cancers, care practices, nutrition, stoma management, and communication with healthcare professionals. Each workshop includes:

- Informative segments led by the professionals.
- Hands-on exercises and practical demonstrations to apply knowledge in real-life situations.
- Open discussion to address participants' questions, share experiences, and explore practical solutions.

Workshops bridge professional expertise with the real-life challenges carers face, helping them deliver effective daily care and navigate the healthcare system. Each workshop will last 3 hours, scheduled on Saturday mornings (9:00–12:00).

### **3) Supportive Materials**

- Development of a Carer's Journal, Self-help Cards, and educational video materials to reinforce learning and provide tools for reflection and self-support.
- All materials will be freely available on the association's website, ensuring broad accessibility and long-term sustainability.
- These resources benefit not only programme participants but also the wider community of family carers across Slovenia.

### **4) Peer Support Community**

- Establishment of a carer support network encouraging ongoing exchange of experiences, emotional connection, and mutual encouragement.
- Optional WhatsApp or Viber groups and access to Beyond Horizon educational and social events provide additional opportunities for interaction.
- This component reduces isolation and provides a sustainable foundation for long-term psychosocial support among carers.

## **Budget**

**Total Budget: 8,000 EUR**

### **Professional Fees (6,500 EUR):**

- Carer Coach (programme lead, facilitator, coordinator): 3,000 EUR (75h × 40 €/h)
- Other professionals (doctor, nurse, dietitian, psychologist, social worker): 1,200 EUR
- Supportive materials (journals, cards, videos): 2,000 EUR
- Venue rental (2 workshops): 300 EUR

### **Other Costs (1,500 EUR):**

- Communication and promotion: 300 EUR
- Administration and coordination: 500 EUR
- Travel costs for experts: 200 EUR
- Additional materials: 200 EUR

The majority of funds is allocated to professional expertise and materials development, ensuring high-quality support and long-term accessibility. Modest allocations for administration, promotion, and venue rental guarantee smooth implementation. Co-funding from FIHO and corporate sponsors is anticipated to complement DiCE funding, strengthening financial sustainability.

## **Key Performance Indicators & How We Will Measure Impact**

### **KPIs:**

- Online coaching sessions held: 6–8, 10-15 participants per session.
- Expert workshops: 2 workshops, 4-6 professionals.
- Materials developed and accessed online by >50 users in the first year
- Participant satisfaction: >80% positive responses.
- Active peer support network active; >70% report reduced isolation.

### Impact Measurement:

- Post-programme **survey** including NPS question: *“How likely are you to recommend this programme to another carer?”*
- In-depth qualitative interviews with 5–8 participants to explore meaningful experiences, application of tools, and perceived changes in well-being.
- Combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in a final evaluation report.

### Timeline

|                                 |                                                                                  |                       |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Preparation</b>              | Programme design, coordination with experts, development of materials, promotion | Jan – Feb 2026        |
| <b>Registration</b>             | Open until 10 March 2026 or until 12 places filled                               | Feb – Mar (10.3.2026) |
| <b>Online Coaching Sessions</b> | 6–8 biweekly sessions (Zoom), 17:00–18:30                                        | Mar – Jun 2026        |
| <b>Expert Workshops</b>         | 1st: April 2026, 2nd: May 2026, 09:00–12:00 (in person)                          | Apr – May 2026        |
| <b>Ongoing Support</b>          | Peer network, online materials, newsletters, viber or whatsapp group             | Mar – Jun 2026        |
| <b>Evaluation</b>               | Surveys and interviews                                                           | Jun – Jul 2026        |
| <b>Reporting</b>                | Final evaluation report                                                          | Jul – Sep 2026        |

### Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

*The Heart to Heart programme* is designed to provide lasting benefits to family carers beyond the pilot phase. All educational materials, including the Carer’s Journal, Self-help Cards, and video resources, will remain freely accessible on the association’s website, ensuring long-term use for participants and the wider community. Ongoing peer support through optional WhatsApp or Viber groups and participation in Beyond Horizon educational and social events will help maintain connections and mutual support. By strengthening carers’ knowledge, practical skills, and emotional resilience, the programme enhances their ability to manage caregiving challenges while maintaining well-being. The programme is intended to be repeated annually, gradually expanding its reach and long-term impact across Slovenia.

### Key Partners

#### Financial and Strategic Partners:

- DiCE (Digestive Cancers Europe)
- FIHO (Foundation for Humanitarian and Disabled Organisations)

- Corporate Sponsors / Donors (pharmaceutical companies and others)
- Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia

#### **Expert Partners:**

- Oncology Institute of Ljubljana specialists
- Nurses, dietitians, psychologists, and social workers contributing to workshops and coaching sessions

**Note:** We are currently awaiting the results of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia's 2026–2028 funding call and are preparing an application for the FIHO funding programme for 2026.

#### **Expected Outcomes**

- Enhanced knowledge and practical skills in carers.
- Improved emotional resilience and well-being.
- Stronger peer support and community connection.
- Greater confidence in healthcare navigation.
- Sustainable access to resources and materials.
- Establishment of an annual, repeatable programme model.

#### **Ethical Approvals and Data Safeguards**

- Participation in surveys and interviews is voluntary.
- All data is anonymised, securely stored, and GDPR-compliant.
- Data used solely for evaluation and reporting; no individual is identifiable.
- Programme activities are non-clinical; participants receive guidance if health concerns arise.

We would be deeply grateful for financial support to implement the *Heart to Heart* programme. The experiences gained, insights from participants, and developed materials will not only benefit carers in Slovenia but will also be translated into English and shared with other member organisations, allowing the programme's impact and lessons learned to reach a broader European audience. Your support will help empower family carers, strengthen community connections, and improve the well-being of both carers and the patients they care for.

Best regards,

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President of EuropaColon Slovenia



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