Event Report: Nuclear Medicine as a Strategic Opportunity for Europe

DATE	18 november 2025
LOCATION	Holland House Brussels
ORGANISERS	Novartis Nederland
	Schuttelaar & Partners

The event on 'Nuclear Medicine as a Strategic Opportunity for Europe' today brought together politicians and policymakers, industry and experts, healthcare professionals and researchers, patient representatives and more to discuss the current and future landscape of nuclear medicine. **MEP Jeannette Baljeu**, member of the Committee on the Internal Market & Consumer Protection (IMCO) for Renew Europe, hosted the event and opened with words that fittingly set the scene: *"We want health to be European, and it will only be better if we use European mechanisms to make it stronger"*.

During the session, we saw four excellent presentations from our experts, bringing their varied and vast expertise and experiences:

- **Prof Dr Wim Oyen** – Professor of Nuclear Medicine at Radboud University, Professor of Diagnostic Imaging and Radiotherapy at Humanitas University in Milan, Italy, Chair of the Policy & Regulatory Affairs Committee at the European Association of Nuclear Medicine (EANM) and former Special Envoy for Medical Isotopes by the Ministry of Health of The Netherlands set the scene, explaining the benefits of nuclear medicine including providing more personalised medicine and the enormous opportunities for expansive growth – if we overcome challenges in legislation, regulation, and financing to present bold global leadership. Radioligand therapies are an important new innovative pillar in the solution in cancer care besides the pillars of immunotherapies, cell&gene therapies and traditional chemotherapies, Registered radioligand therapies will also have important role outside of cancer therapies. Of importance is that these registered radioligand therapies become available for all patients within Europe.
- **Dirk Wyndaele** – Patient representative and prostate cancer survivor informed the audience on his own story but also delved deeper into the advantages of radionuclide therapies compared to traditional cancer treatments like chemotherapy, meaning patients would experience fewer and milder side effects and therefore enjoy a higher quality of life during and after treatment.
- **Prof Dr Peter Luijten** – Interim CEO of NRG PALLAS, who provides the irradiated materials for medical use, showed us what's to come in nuclear medicine if we reshape the ecosystem and offer clear policies on

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reimbursement. We are only seeing now the tip of the iceberg but will soon see new applications for other cancers thanks to strong public-private partnerships and staying competitive.

- **Domenico Rossetti di Valdalbero** – Deputy Head of Unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research & Innovation (Euratom) explained to attendees the importance of nuclear medicine from the European level, and the current funding and mechanisms in place as well as the likely developments to come in the next year.

Following the presentations, a lively debate was held, including audience questions that provoked interesting discussion between the panellists and with other attendees.

Kicking off with a question as to the barriers faced in supporting collaboration in the ecosystem, the panellists argued that the system itself needs to be overhauled so that everyone can get their rightful piece of the pie. All actors in the system – academia, industry, government – are seeing hurdles in the process to get treatments and medicines available for patients and as a result facing an uneven playing field, including on reimbursement.

Posed questions on how to get more trust into the system and the roll of Europe as a world leader, panellists outlined how, despite being a member state competence, health still needs guidance and attention from the EU level. After a lively back and forth with the audience, several perspectives had been presented on the role of national governments and international mechanisms pertaining to diversifying funding and garnering support that would allow Europe to remain strategically autonomous. A key point was the support provided after potential medicines cross the clinical trial 'valley of death' whereby they still need the support to get to market and, importantly, to patients.

During the presentations and the panel, the experts outlined how there is an 'avalanche' coming regarding new therapeutic and diagnostic products in the field. In order to make the most of this, decisions will have to be made on which products will have the greatest impact on patient lives knowing that each patient is different and not every treatment is therefore applicable., Currently only two radioisotopes are approved in Europe, but the potential is enormous and could extend to treat many more cancers including breast cancer.

Further, multiple experts mentioned that previously collaboration between the various bodies overseeing nuclear energy and medicine products was very challenging, limiting the potential for the Netherlands to remain competitive. Reconciling this legislation would create a level playing field for all stakeholders throughout the nucleair medicines value chain. The increasing dialogue between DG SANTE and DG ENER is promising and shows a shift towards policy that fosters innovation.

A follow up question from the audience stimulated further discussion, with mention of how Australia's system facilitates innovation rather than bogging it down. The panellists mentioned that indeed countries such as Australia are leading the charge, building policy and legislation based on trust and not precarity. Their well-coordinated environment means that innovation can continue to progress, clinical trials advance timely, and medicines reach the patients who need it most, whilst Europe continues to debate and get tangled in its own system. Similarly, harmonising regulations across the EU should not simply revert to the most restrictive policy, but rather be tailored to each country, however it was noted this would require immense dialogue and wisdom in Brussels.

On the question of improving collaboration between government, industry, and academia (the so-called triple helix), the panel from all angles pressed the need for greater participation to showcase the strength of public-private partnerships, all with the end goal of treating patients, for patients, especially those with rare diseases (of which cancer patients are many). When industry and regulators butt heads however, it's patients that suffer.

MEP Baljeu posed to the panel a question on how we can coordinate internally in Europe, that hearing voices facing the same issues across Europe would benefit the Dutch argument naturally. This led to some interesting input around nuclear medicine and cancer associations across Europe, with concerns as to the West/East and North/South divide seen in Europe whereby patients in Bulgaria, for example, have to wait longer to have access to new treatments compared to those in Western countries.

As well as funding mechanisms, the need to promote the longevity of the field itself was raised by the audience. Panellists agreed on the importance of attracting talent to the field, as without new doctors and nurses, treatment facilities, efficient regulations for safe transport, and more, the sector would come to a halt. Presenting nuclear medicine as a good and viable career path to students at university and even high school thus came out as a key message during this segment.

Looking forward, the EU Commission plans to double Horizon funding for research and hopefully increase the Euratom budget too, but questions remain on the hurdle to get this research from the lab to the patient. In this manner, panellists explored that we also need to be open to and explore alternative and creative funding mechanisms including other EU funds, the pharmaceutical sector, or investors. Similarly, on December 16th, the EU will release part one of its Biotech Act, which will bring new clarity to the sector including on clinical trials.

Edwin Hecker moderating the panel discussion summarised that there are enormous prospects for the nuclear medicine field and that matched with a strong call for equality of access to patients across Europe, the avalanche of developments could transform healthcare and ensure the Netherlands' position as a global leader. But this requires a strong commitment from national and international governments to create a pool of talented and trained professionals, develop more creative and specific funding models, and improve regulations that stimulate and not stifle innovation and clinical trials. The system itself requires an update at each level to make way for a new era of healthcare and innovation.