



Newsletter – Issue No. 2
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Advancing personalised cancer care: from innovation to implementation

Since its formal launch, SPARC has continued to advance its work in strengthening personalised cancer medicine across Europe, building on the foundations established in the first months of the project. This second issue of the newsletter provides a comprehensive overview of key developments, collaborative efforts, and upcoming activities across the consortium.

As personalised cancer medicine continues to evolve, the challenge is no longer limited to scientific discovery, but increasingly lies in ensuring that innovation can be effectively translated into clinical practice in a way that is equitable, sustainable, and accessible across all Member States. SPARC addresses this challenge by connecting research, implementation, and policy dialogue.

At the heart of this edition is a focus on liquid biopsy, a rapidly advancing innovation that is transforming how cancer is detected, characterised, and monitored over time. Alongside this thematic focus, the newsletter highlights SPARC's contribution to European-level coordination, ongoing internal work to support implementation, and opportunities for stakeholder engagement, including the launch of the Patient and Caregiver Advisory Group (PCAG).



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Strengthening Personalised Cancer Medicine in Europe: the SPARC–JA PCM Synergy

Across Europe, personalised cancer medicine (PCM) is steadily transitioning from a largely research-driven concept to an integral component of clinical care. However, ensuring that this transition is both effective and equitable requires strong coordination between research initiatives, healthcare providers, and policy frameworks at national and European levels.

Within this context, SPARC operates in formal synergy with the Joint Action on Personalised Cancer Medicine (JA PCM), following a mandate from the European Commission to enhance alignment between European initiatives and maximise the impact of EU investments in personalised oncology. This collaboration reflects a broader recognition that fragmented efforts are insufficient to address the complexity of implementing personalised approaches at scale.

While SPARC and JA PCM differ in scope and operational focus, they are closely aligned in their overarching objectives. JA PCM provides a comprehensive policy and coordination framework across Member States, addressing the full cancer care continuum, from prevention and early detection to treatment, survivorship, and follow-up. SPARC complements this work by focusing on implementation-oriented activities, including pilot projects, stakeholder engagement, and the development of practical tools and methodologies to support the integration of personalised approaches into real-world settings.



A key strength of this synergy lies in its ability to connect policy development with practical experience. Through SPARC's pilot activities, covering areas such as liquid biopsy, Molecular Tumour Boards (MTBs), and digital tools, valuable insights are generated on the challenges and opportunities associated with implementation. These insights can then inform the broader policy discussions led by JA PCM, ensuring that strategies are grounded in real clinical practice.

The collaboration is structured around three complementary pillars, each designed to address a critical dimension of personalised cancer medicine. The first pillar focuses on patient-centred approaches, recognising that technological innovation must be aligned with the needs, preferences, and experiences of patients. The SPARC Patient and Caregiver Advisory Group (PCAG) plays a central role in this regard, providing a structured mechanism to capture patient perspectives across different cancer types. Through the synergy framework, JA PCM can engage with these insights, ensuring that patient voices are reflected in policy and clinical discussions.

The second pillar centres on technical and clinical collaboration. Joint thematic Working Groups have been established to facilitate knowledge exchange and coordination in key areas, including Liquid Biopsy and Next Generation Sequencing (NGS), Molecular Tumour Boards, and Education and Training. These groups bring together experts from both initiatives to identify barriers, share best practices, and contribute to the development of guidance that supports implementation across diverse healthcare systems.

The third pillar focuses on stakeholder engagement and policy translation. A structured model has been developed to ensure that insights generated through SPARC activities can be effectively translated into policy-relevant outputs. This includes an Alignment Group to coordinate with EU-level initiatives, a Stakeholder Coordination Group to validate and refine technical findings, and a broader Stakeholder Forum to facilitate dialogue among clinicians, researchers, policymakers, industry representatives, and patient organisations.

Through this integrated approach, the SPARC–JA PCM synergy contributes to building a more coherent and connected European ecosystem for personalised cancer medicine. By linking innovation, implementation, and policy, it helps ensure that advances in science can be translated into tangible benefits for patients across Europe.



SPARC at the forefront of liquid biopsy discussions

As part of its ongoing commitment to contributing to the European and international dialogue on personalised cancer medicine, SPARC will participate in an upcoming scientific workshop in Pompei, Italy (May 22–23, 2026) dedicated to liquid biopsy. The event, titled “The Path to Leading Innovation in Liquid Biopsy”, is organised by the International Society of Liquid Biopsy (ISLB), a consortium partner, and will bring together leading experts, researchers, and stakeholders to discuss recent developments, challenges, and future directions in the field.

Within this context, SPARC will be featured during a roundtable discussion on the second day of the event, focusing on projects exploring different approaches to the clinical implementation of liquid biopsy across diverse settings. The discussion will address how to bridge existing gaps in the full integration of liquid biopsy into clinical practice, considering variations across countries, regions, healthcare systems, and types of institutions.

This roundtable will provide an opportunity to present SPARC’s vision and objectives in this area, contributing to a broader exchange on how to translate scientific advances into effective and equitable clinical implementation.

Participation in such events is essential for ensuring that SPARC remains aligned with the latest developments in the field, while also contributing to shaping the broader conversation around the integration of innovative diagnostics into healthcare systems. It further highlights the importance of collaboration and knowledge exchange in advancing personalised cancer care at both European and global levels.

SPARC Internal Workshop #2: strengthening collaboration across work packages

On March 17th, SPARC partners convened for the project’s second internal workshop, marking an important step in strengthening coordination and alignment across work packages. The workshop focused on ongoing survey activities, which play a central role in supporting the project’s evidence generation and implementation efforts.

Bringing together partners from across the consortium, the session provided a valuable opportunity to review progress, exchange perspectives, and ensure a coherent approach to survey design and deployment. Discussions addressed key aspects such as the identification of relevant target audiences, the scope and objectives of different surveys, and the need to harmonise methodologies to enable comparability of results.

A particular emphasis was placed on avoiding duplication of efforts and maximising synergies between work packages. By aligning approaches and sharing insights, partners were able to identify opportunities for collaboration and streamline ongoing activities, contributing to a more efficient and integrated workflow.



During the workshop, Work Package 3 presented the current status of the pilot study protocols survey. This highlighted the diversity of the seven SPARC pilots, which differ in terms of technological focus, methodological approaches, and levels of clinical integration. While some pilots are already embedded in clinical evaluation processes, others remain at an earlier stage of development. This diversity reflects both the complexity of personalised cancer medicine and the need for flexible, context-specific approaches to implementation.

The mapping exercise presented by WP3 provides

a valuable baseline for understanding the current landscape and identifying areas for further development. Building on this foundation, the next phase of work will involve the development of dedicated monitoring tools to track the evolution of each pilot over time. These tools, to be developed in collaboration with WP2 and WP4, will support ongoing evaluation and help generate evidence on implementation pathways and outcomes.

Other work packages continue to advance their respective survey activities, contributing to a broader effort to capture data and insights across different dimensions of the project. Together, these activities will form an important evidence base to support SPARC’s policy recommendations and implementation strategies.

In parallel, Work Package 2 continues to play a key role in shaping the overall methodological framework of the project. Building on its ongoing activities, WP2 is contributing to the definition of a common methodology to

support the organisational and economic assessment of personalised cancer medicine approaches, including liquid biopsy, NGS, and Molecular Tumour Boards. This work is closely linked to the upcoming milestone scheduled for April 2026, which will mark the formal definition of the methodology for protocol development. By ensuring methodological consistency across pilots and activities, WP2 provides a critical foundation for the comparability, robustness, and policy relevance of SPARC outcomes.

Call for Members: Join the SPARC Patient and Caregiver Advisory Group (PCAG)

Ensuring that personalised cancer medicine reflects the realities of patients' lives is a central priority for SPARC. To support this objective, the project has established a Patient and Caregiver Advisory Group (PCAG), designed to integrate lived experience into research, implementation, and policy development.

The PCAG will bring together patients, caregivers, and patient representatives connected to seven cancer areas addressed by SPARC: lung cancer, pancreatic cancer, breast cancer, adrenocortical carcinoma, neuroblastoma, multiple myeloma, and melanoma. Members will have the opportunity to participate in selected SPARC activities, including meetings and consultations, and to provide input on patient-facing materials, guidelines, and engagement initiatives.

Through their contributions, PCAG members will help ensure that personalised cancer care is not only scientifically advanced, but also accessible, understandable, and responsive to patient needs. Their perspectives will play a key role in shaping communication strategies, improving the clarity of information, and identifying potential barriers to access and implementation.

In addition, the PCAG will support broader efforts to strengthen patient engagement within SPARC, contributing to the development of more inclusive and participatory approaches. By integrating patient voices into decision-making processes, the project aims to enhance the relevance and impact of its outputs across different contexts.

SPARC is currently inviting new members to join the PCAG. Patients, caregivers, and patient representatives who are interested in contributing to this work are encouraged to take part and help shape the future of personalised cancer care in Europe.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the initiative and join the group.

Looking ahead

As SPARC continues to progress, its work remains grounded in collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to improving cancer care across Europe. By connecting scientific advances such as liquid biopsy with policy development, stakeholder engagement, and real-world implementation, the project is contributing to a more integrated and effective approach to personalised cancer medicine.

The coming months will bring further opportunities to deepen collaboration, expand activities, and translate insights into practical outcomes, ensuring that innovation ultimately delivers meaningful and lasting benefits for patients. In particular, SPARC will continue to translate its activities into concrete outputs supporting the implementation of personalised cancer medicine. By October 2026, the project is expected to deliver several key results, including:

- an ethics framework and security guidelines,
- detailed protocols for each liquid biopsy pilot study,
- a digital ecosystem map and portfolio of PCM services,
- a report on training needs and proposed educational courses,
- and guidelines on patient engagement activities.

These deliverables will further strengthen the project's contribution to evidence-based policymaking, capacity building, and the integration of innovative approaches into healthcare systems across Europe.



Statements from Partners

The Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)

The Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL) contributes primarily to (WP7) Patient, Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement, leading patient empowerment activities, collecting best practices, and supporting Dissemination, Communication and Policy Outreach (WP9).

We plan to use our expert capacities and long term-built knowledge to the benefit of patients and relevant stakeholders by providing senseful output into every stage during the implementation process. We will work, participate, and contribute to reflecting the real needs of patients in everyday practice. We aim to achieve this through a participatory and collaborative approach to deliver quality results.

We can draw on our expertise and internal structures, in particular our Patient Support Working Group (PSWG), which brings together 77 representatives from 32 member leagues, to effectively share insights and strengthen the promotion and advocacy for the needs of key target groups, including patients, survivors and carers.

We will also leverage our well-established communication channels to share the project's progress and activities, reaching a broad range of stakeholders interested in best practices and results that support personalised medicine, as well as highlighting opportunities and solutions to address key challenges

ECL advocates for improved cancer control and care in Europe by facilitating collaboration and creating added value for its members, the public, patients and diverse policy and research stakeholders. We believe that personalised medicine offers a unique approach to cancer prevention and care that can be tailored to individuals.

There are clear opportunities for improvement and standardisation in Europe, and we believe collaboration is key to success. This project addresses the main challenges by creating a collaborative ecosystem in EU Member States with the aim of delivering solutions for the integration of personalised medicine practices.

We support and advocate for initiatives and actions that foster collaboration, improve prevention, early detection and diagnosis, treatment and cure and quality of life for patients and carers. We aim to contribute to shaping better policies and best-practices, and believe that SPARC can deliver this added value.

Nice University Hospital (CHU Nice)

We are proud to contribute to the SPARC project as the IHU RespirERA and the Nice University Hospital (France) , bringing combined expertise in project coordination and clinical practice, particularly in lung cancer pathology.

Within Work Package 6, our team is involved in association with the ISLB in assessing the training needs of healthcare professionals and stakeholders engaged in precision oncology workflows. Through the development of a structured survey, we aim to identify gaps in knowledge and practice related to liquid biopsy and Molecular Tumor Boards, and to support the design of targeted, role-specific training programmes adapted to real-world clinical settings. A first version of the survey regarding training needs has already been developed and discussed within the consortium.

We strongly believe that SPARC represents a major step forward for personalised healthcare, by fostering harmonisation across centres, strengthening multidisciplinary collaboration, and enabling the effective integration of innovative diagnostic approaches into routine clinical practice. Ultimately, this will contribute to improving patient care and outcomes across Europe.



The International Society of Liquid Biopsy (ISLB)

The International Society of Liquid Biopsy (ISLB) is the first international professional organization committed to the improvement and implementation of liquid biopsies in clinical routine practice and the promotion of a multidisciplinary approach for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer patients. Within the SPARC consortium, ISLB acts as a cross-cutting expert partner, contributing its unique expertise in liquid biopsy science, clinical implementation, and training across multiple work packages.



ISLB contributes to the development of methodological frameworks for evidence validation and consensus-building (WP2), as well as to protocols integrating liquid biopsy into cancer diagnosis, management, and follow-up care. It also supports the design of workflows for digital pathology and AI-based interpretation.

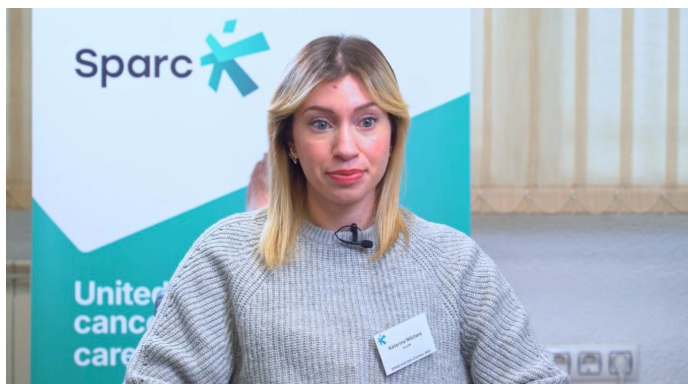
In WP4, ISLB is involved in monitoring and analysing the implementation of Molecular Tumor Boards (MTBs), including the integration of liquid biopsy data, and helps identify barriers and develop adaptable models for their use across European healthcare systems.

WP6 represents one of ISLB's most central contributions to SPARC. As the field's leading international society, ISLB brings its established educational programs, including the validated Course of Advanced Study (CAS) methodology, to co-develop and deliver the project's training activities on liquid biopsy. This includes structured training programs progressing from foundational to expert-level modules (T6.2), training in MTB theory and practice (T6.3), and the evaluation and certification of training outcomes (T6.4). ISLB coordinates closely with CHU Nice throughout, and aligns with existing educational frameworks programs to avoid duplication and maximize impact.

In summary, ISLB serves as the scientific backbone of SPARC's liquid biopsy activities, bringing international expertise, validated training methodologies, and a global network of healthcare professionals to support the project's mission of advancing personalized cancer medicine across Europe.

Fresh from LinkedIn:

- [From Alignment to Action: SPARC at the JA PCM Kick-Off Meeting](#)
- [Call for Members: Join the SPARC Patient and Caregiver Advisory Group \(PCAG\)](#)
- [Voices from the SPARC Kick-Off | Interview with Katerina Nikitara \(ELLOK\)](#)



Katerina Nikitara (ELLOK) at the SPARC Kick-Off Meeting in Madrid (November 2025)

Click [here](#) to watch her interview!



Manuel Ottaviano (UPM) at the JA PCM Kick-Off Meeting in Brussels (January 2026)

Click [here](#) to watch his interview!



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