



First Regional SDIR-HDIR-MOKAD Congress (Belgrade, Serbia, October 8–10, 2025)

Prvi regionalni SDIR-HDIR-MOKAD kongres
(Beograd, Srbija, 8–10. oktobar, 2025)

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The Serbian Association for Cancer Research organized the 1st Regional European Congress of Serbian (*Srpsko društvo istraživača raka* – SDIR), Croatian (*Hrvatsko društvo za istraživanje raka* – HDIR), and Turkish (*Moleküler Kanser Araştırma Derneği* – MOKAD) societies for cancer research – SHM1RC. The congress took place at the Nobel Zira hotel in Belgrade on October 8–10, 2025, bringing together around 300 scientists, clinicians, and patient advocates not only from our region, but from 16 countries all over Europe and the USA.

SDIR is a non-profit association, founded to improve conditions for cancer research and the professional development of society members. It also organizes scientific and professional meetings to exchange the latest information in the field of oncology. SDIR, HDIR, and MOKAD belong to the group of national societies affiliated with the European Association for Cancer Research (EACR), which supported all previous SDIR congresses through the auspices of lectures by eminent scientists and traditional EACR awards for the best presentations.

The 1st Regional Congress addressed key topics in current cancer research through the following sessions: Benefits of combination therapies in cancer treatment; Personalized anticancer treatment through targeting signaling pathways; Tumor microenvironment – friend or foe; Immuno-oncology; Exploring the role of MDR mechanisms and stem cell biology in cancer treatment strategies; Cancer epidemiology – strategies for prevention and early detection; Advancements in molecular diagnostics and cancer biomarkers in oncology; Liquid biopsy (EACR plenary session); Bioinformatics

and cancer genomics; Novel cancer therapies and drug development strategies; Toxic triggers – environmental chemicals and cancer risk; Tumor metabolism; Innovative models and approaches in cancer research. A patient–clinician–scientist educational interactive panel took place during the session “Bridging patients and researchers”. Patient advocates addressed key concerns related to participation in scientific/clinical research and emphasized the need to strengthen the partnership between patients and researchers. Young scientists had the opportunity to discuss topics on career development in a session called “Meet the Experts”. At the very end of the meeting, participants discussed regional collaboration through an interactive panel session. In summary, participants had the opportunity to listen to two plenary lectures, 37 invited lectures, 22 short presentations selected from 106 posters, and six sponsored symposiums. Abstracts from the congress were published in *Oncology Insights*, the official journal of SDIR (ISSN 3009-3848, 2025, No.3).

During the opening ceremony, SHM1RC participants were welcomed by Dr. Milena Čavić, President of the SDIR, Prof. Engin Ulukaya, President of the MOKAD, Prof. Sonja Levanat, President of the HDIR (Figure 1), Ass. Prof. Milan Žegarac, Acting Director of the Institute for Oncology and Radiology of Serbia, Prof. Nenad Filipović, Director of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, and Dr. Milica Pešić and Dr. Ana Damjanović Veličković as Chairs of the Scientific and Organizing Committees, respectively (Figure 2).

The congress was closed by an Award ceremony supported by the EACR, FebsOpenBio, Molecular



Fig. 1 – Dr. Milena Čavić, SDIR president, Prof. Engin Ulukaya, MOKAD president, Prof. Sonja Levanat, HDIR president (from left to right).



Fig. 2 – Dr. Ana Damjanović Veličković (left) and Dr. Milica Pešić (right), chairs of the Organizing and Scientific committee.



Fig. 3 – Congress closing and Award ceremony.

Oncology Journal, and the European Liquid Biopsy Society (Figure 3).

The EACR Awards were given to:

1st prize: Beyza Ozturk Sever, Turkey – “Investigation of the effect of exportin-1 gene inhibition with Selinexor on glioma”;

2nd prize: Vuk Gordić, Serbia – “The effect of novel diclofenac-based carbon-substituted prodrug on colon cancer cell lines and mouse-derived organoids”;

3rd prize: Ivana Banićević, Serbia – “A 3D *in vitro* osteosarcoma model based on porous scaffolds and a perfusion bioreactor for preclinical applications”.



Fig. 4 – Congress participants during the guided tour through Belgrade, Serbia.

The Molecular Oncology Award for Best Short Oral Presentation was shared by Muhlis Akman, Turkey, for “TFEB Controls Chemoresistance in NSCLC”, and Janja Josić, Croatia, for “Expression profiling of p53 family isoforms in targeted therapy-resistant primary melanoma cell lines”.

The FEBSOpenBio Award for Best Young Researcher Abstract was given to Josipa Jelačić, Croatia, for “Estrogen receptor modulation and Hedgehog-GLI crosstalk in head and neck squamous cell carcinoma”.

The ELBS Award for the Best Liquid Biopsy Abstract was given to Dr. Bojana Cikota-Aleksić, Serbia, for “The association of baseline concentrations of circulating tumor DNA with the clinical course of advanced melanoma”.

On Saturday, October 11, participants of the congress enjoyed a guided tour through the history and streets of our beautiful Belgrade, supported by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia (Figure 4).