

Newborn Screening in Neuromuscular Diseases

Satellite Scientific Symposium organized by ERN
EURO-NMD
March, 6th 2025

Genetic newborn screening through targeted gene panel and WGS: the Screen4Care approach

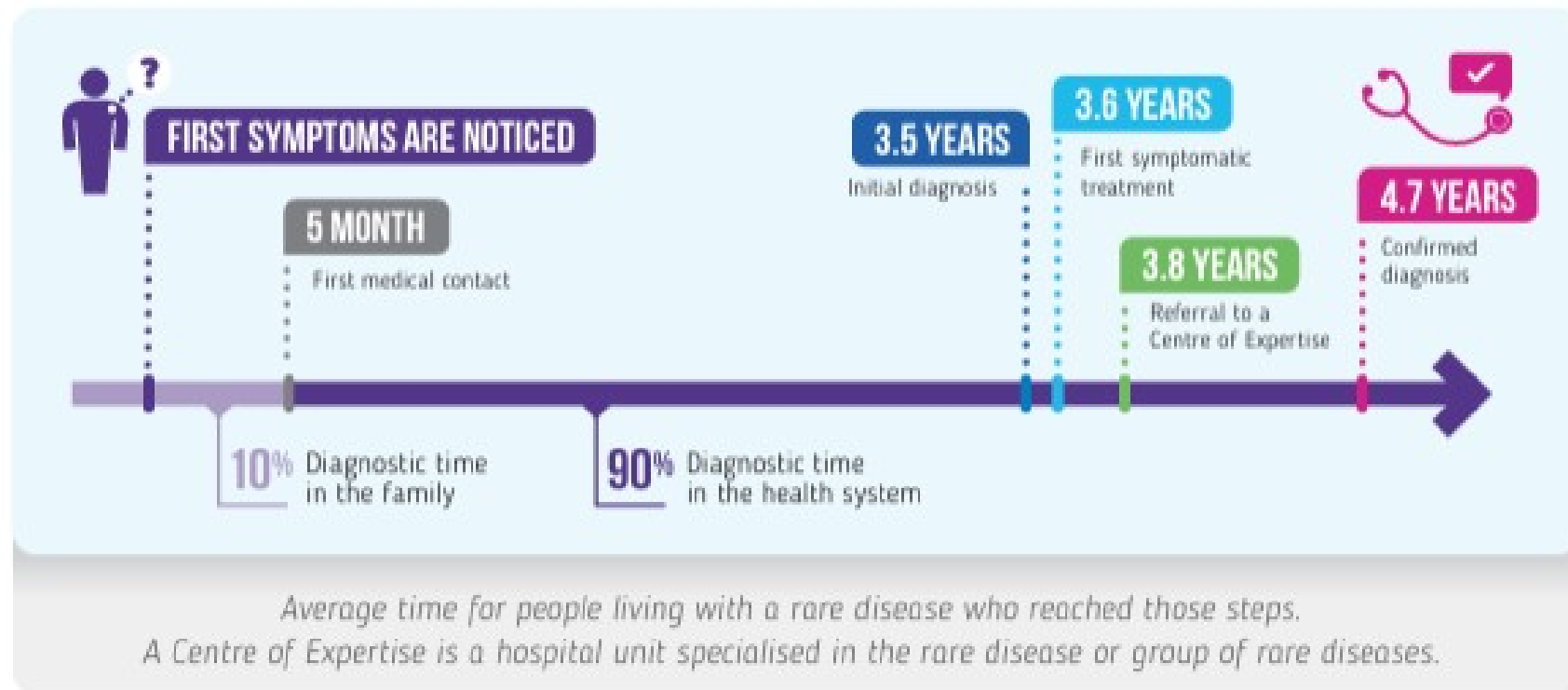
Fernanda Fortunato, MD, PhD fellow

Medical Genetics Unit

Dept. of Medical Sciences, University of Ferrara, Italy

RARE DISEASES IN EU: NUMBERS AND THEIR IMPACT ON NEWBORNS SCREENING

Average time between first symptoms and further steps of the diagnostic odyssey



NBS dimension in EU (2020 EU data source)

- EU Inhabitants: 447.000.000
- Newborn/Year: 4.000.000

RDs: 6-8% of EU population

- 27-36 million persons
- 72 % are genetics

Difficulties associated with the diagnostic odyssey

Key findings from a Rare Barometer Survey, EURORDIS

60% have been **misdiagnosed** with another **physical disease**.

40% have **NOT** been referred to a **Centre of Expertise**.

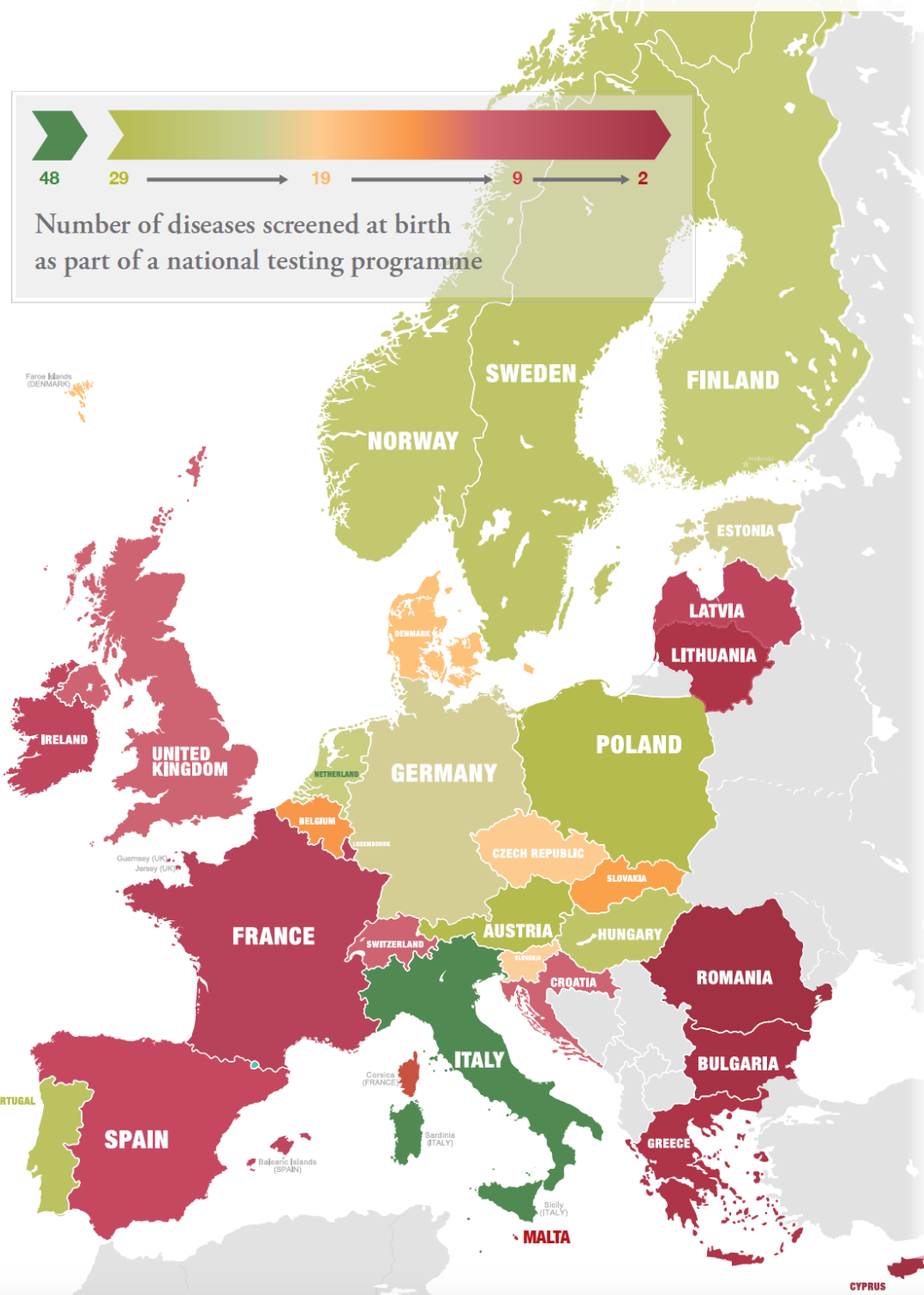
60% have been **misdiagnosed** with another **psychological disease** or had their symptoms not taken seriously.

25% had **8 consultations or more** with healthcare professionals before their diagnosis was confirmed.

NBS: WHERE ARE WE TODAY IN EU?

DK-UNB-21-0002 | March 2022

Newborn Screening: 1 heel prick test has the potential to diagnose 50 diseases SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS EXIST ACROSS COUNTRIES



1 test  **More than 50** diseases

Disease Abbreviations (used overleaf...)

ALD Adrenoleukodystrophy	IVA Isovaleric acidemia
ASA Argininosuccinic aciduria	LCHAD Long-chain hydroxyacyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency
ARG Arginase deficiency	MADD Multiplex acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency
A-T Alpha Thalassemia	MAL Malonic aciduria
BIOPT (BS) Biopterin cofactor biosynthesis deficiency	MAT Methionine adenosyltransferase deficiency
BIOPT (REG) Biopterin cofactor regeneration deficiency	MCAD Medium-chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency
BKT Beta-ketothiolase deficiency	MCD Multiple carboxylase deficiency
B-T Beta thalassemia	MLD Metachromatic Leukodystrophy
BTD Biotinidase deficiency	MMA Vitamin B12 deficiency
CACT Carnitine-acylcarnitine translocase deficiency	MPS I Mucopolysaccharidosis Type I
CAH Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia	M / SCHAD Short / medium chain 3-OH acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency
Cbl A Methylmalonic acidemia (CblA)	MSUD Maple syrup urine disease
Cbl B Methylmalonic acidemia (CblB)	MTHFR Homocystinuria due to MTHFR deficiency
Cbl C Methylmalonic Acidemia with Homocystinuria (CblC)	MUT Methylmalonic acidemia (Mut)
Cbl D Methylmalonic Acidemia with Homocystinuria (CblD)	ORN Hyperornithinemia with Gyrate Atrophy of Choroid and Retina
CF Cystic Fibrosis	PA Propionic Acidemia
CHT Congenital Hypothyroidism	PKU Phenylketonuria
CIT I Citrullinemia type I	POMPE Pompe Disease
CIT II Citrullinemia type II (Citrin deficiency)	SAHH S-Adenosylhomocysteine hydrolase deficiency
CPT I Carnitine palmitoyl-transferase (L) deficiency	SCD Sickle cell disease
CPT II Carnitine palmitoyl-transferase II deficiency	SCID Severe combined immunodeficiency
CUD Carnitine uptake defect	SMA Spinal Muscular Atrophy
FABRY Fabry Disease	TFP Trifunctional protein deficiency
GA I Glutaric acidemia type I	TYR I Type I tyrosinemia
GA2 Glutaric acidemia type II	TYR II Tyrosinemia type II
GALK Galactokinase deficiency	TYR III Tyrosinemia type III
GBA Gaucher disease	VLCAD Very long-chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency
GNMT Glycine N-methyltransferase deficiency	2MBG 2-Methyl butyryl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency
G6PD Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency	2M3HBA 2-Methyl-3-hydroxybutyric aciduria
HCU Homocystinuria (CBS deficiency)	3MGCA 3-Methylglutaconic aciduria
HMG 3-Hydroxy 3-methylglutaric aciduria	3MCC 3-Methylcrotonyl-CoA carboxylase deficiency (also known as 3-MCC deficiency)
H-PHE Benign hyperphenylalaninemia	
IBG Isobutyryl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency	

Country	Rankings	Screening for...
1	Italy	48 Diseases
2	Poland	29 Diseases
3	Austria	29 Diseases
4	Portugal	29 Diseases
5	Hungary	27 Diseases
6	Sweden	26 Diseases
7	Norway	26 Diseases
8	Netherlands	25 Diseases
9	Finland	23 Diseases
10	Germany	21 Diseases
11	Estonia	20 Diseases
12	Slovenia	19 Diseases
13	Czech Republic	19 Diseases
14	Denmark	18 Diseases
15	Slovakia	13 Diseases
16	Belgium	11 Diseases
17	Switzerland	10 Diseases
18	UK	9 Diseases
19	Croatia	9 Diseases
20	Spain	8 Diseases
21	Ireland	8 Diseases
22	France	6 Diseases
23	Latvia	6 Diseases
24	Luxembourg	5 Diseases
25	Malta	5 Diseases
26	Greece	4 Diseases
27	Lithuania	4 Diseases
28	Bulgaria	4 Diseases
29	Cyprus	2 Diseases
30	Romania	2 Diseases

RESEARCH PUBLISHED MARCH 2022

 Research supported by Novartis AG

Italian Health Ministry Decree –
 Decreto Legge n. 162 del 2019:
 de inition of 48 mandatory
 diseases (SNE or Extended
 newborn screening) to be
 screened (metabolic and genetic
 screening)

CHALLENGES AND GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED TO ENHANCE THE ROLE OF GENETIC NEWBORN SCREENING (gNBS)

WHY GENETIC NEWBORN SCREENING

- Novel **therapies** for **RDs** getting **beyond metabolic diseases**
- Novel methods as **high-throughput genetic strategies**
- Applicable to “**hundreds**” **RDs**
- Avoiding **diagnostic odyssey**

CHALLENGES

- **Treatability VS Actionability** concepts
- **High scale genetic screening**
- Standard of **care** and **prevention**

GAPS

- **Data ownership**
- **Data storage**
- **Genetic strategies**
- **Ethical** issues
- Turnaround **reporting time**
- **Costs**

**Neonatal screening is an important preventive measure
for the wellbeing of newborns and their families**



Shortening the path to rare disease diagnosis by using newborn genetic screening and digital technologies

AN EU-IHI FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECT 2021-2026



Alessandra Ferlini
EU
Scientific Coordinator



**Università
degli Studi
di Ferrara**

SCREEN 4CARE
Accelerating Diagnosis for Rare Disease Patients Through Genetic Newborn Screening and Artificial Intelligence

- START DATE**
1 OCTOBER 2021
- DURATION**
5 YEARS
- BUDGET**
25 MIO €
- 14 COUNTRIES**
35 PARTNERS



Aldona Zygmunt
EFPIA
Project Leader



This project has received funding from the Innovative Medicines Initiative 2 Joint Undertaking (JU) under grant agreement No 101034427. The JU receives support from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and EFPIA.



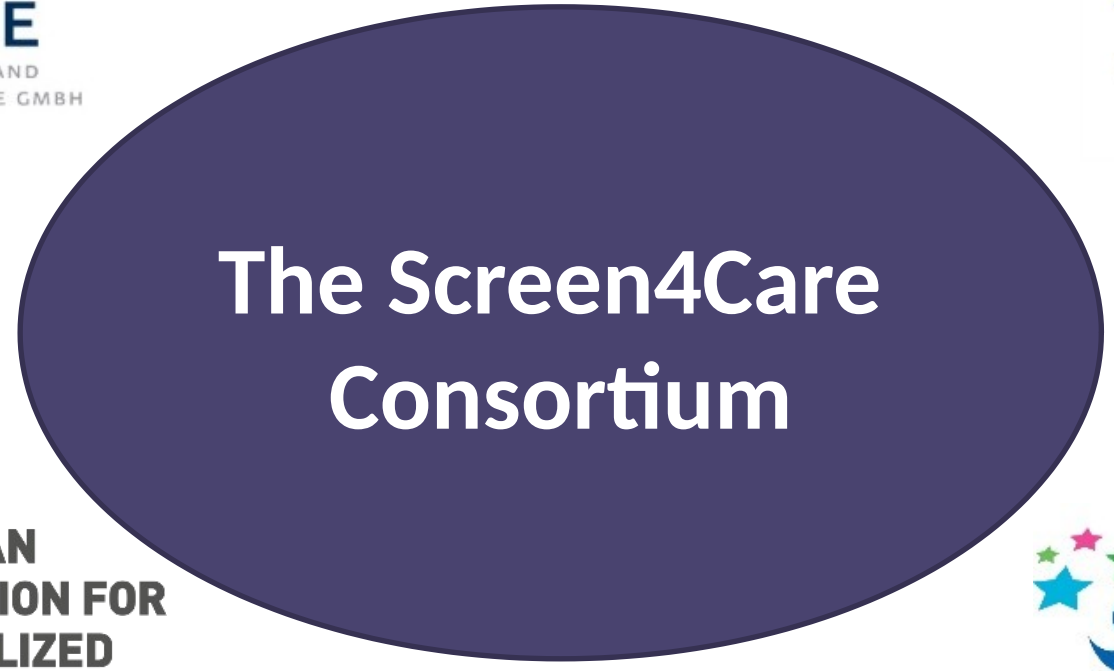
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Università di Siena 1240



SCREEN4CARE PROJECT



YEARS OF DURATION



MIO EURO BUDGET

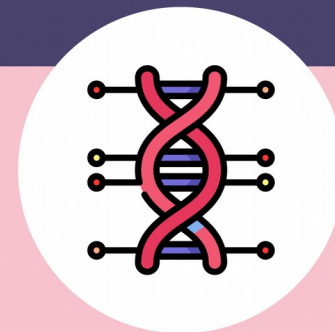


COUNTRIES

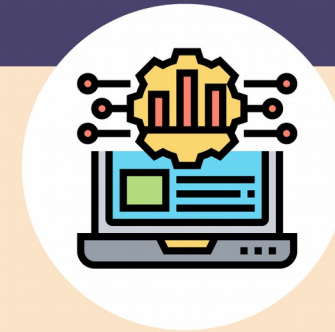


PARTNERS

The Screen4Care Dual approach



Genetic Newborn Screening (NBS)

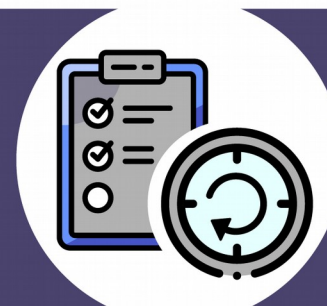


Virtual Solutions

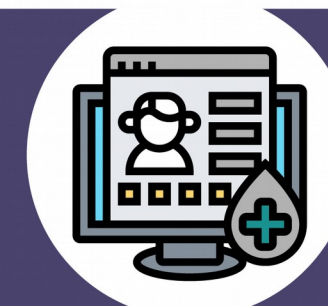
EHR Algorithms

Meta-Symptom Checker

Screen4Care Virtual Platform (Virtual Clinic)



Shortened diagnosis journey
for people living with rare diseases




SCREEN4CARE PROJECT: PILLARS AND MILESTONES



Knowledge about NBS EU ecosystem (landscaping RDs initiatives)



- Champion a sustainable genetic NBS framework for RD early diagnosis (Treatable and Actionable) in about 18.000 newborn in EU countries
- Offering Whole Genome Sequencing to all early symptomatic babies (post-screening, two-tier approach)
 - **NEW!!!!** Whole genome screening for gNBS 



Improve accuracy & speed of patient diagnosis using innovative digital tools

MILESTONE: GENETIC NEWBORN SCREENING

- **Champion** a sustainable genetic NBS framework for early diagnosis (Treatable and Actionable) in about 18.000 newborn in EU countries
- Targeted gene panel and WGS “*in silico*” (panel *in silico* with WGS backbone)
- Offering Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) to all early symptomatic babies (post-screening, two-tier approach)

Countries involved:

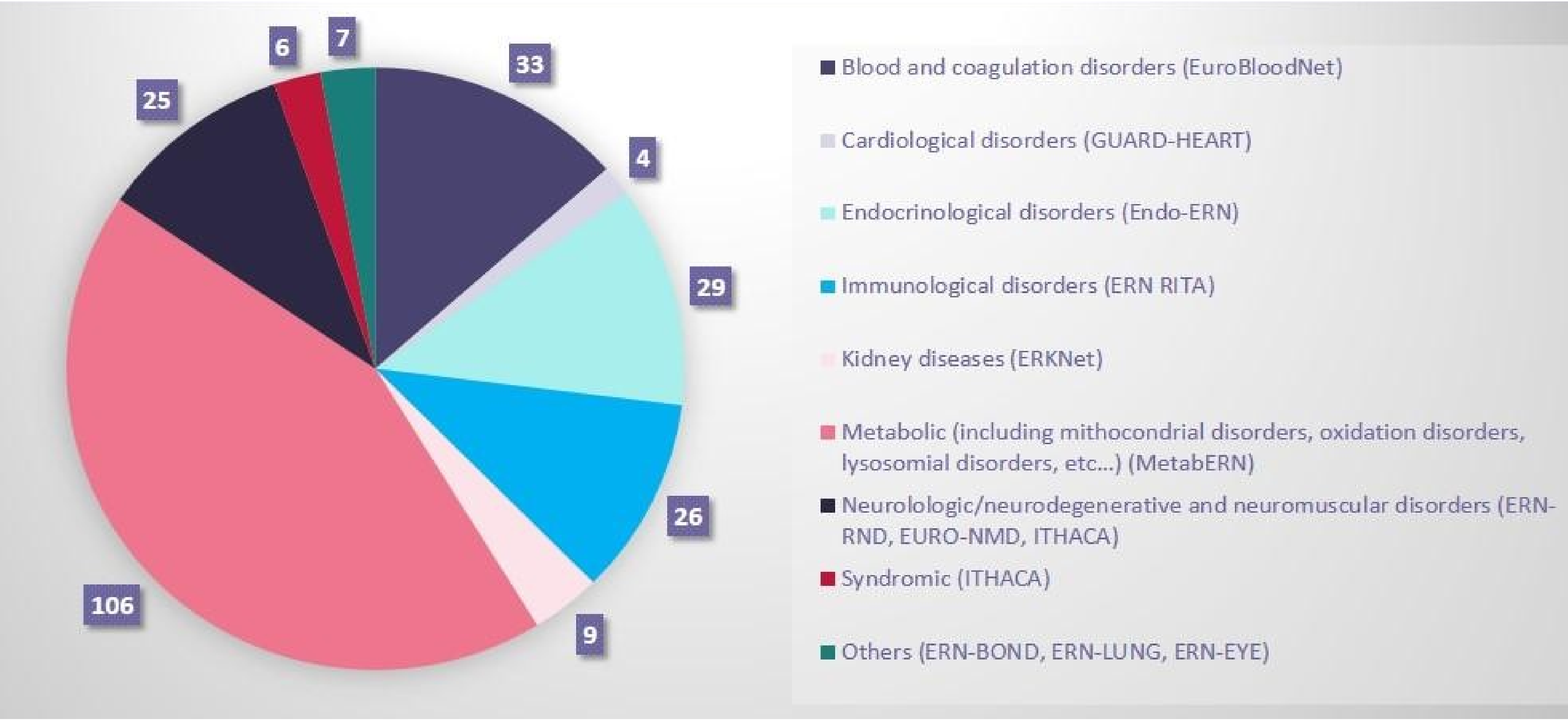
France (Dijon), Italy (Rome, Ferrara), Germany (Freiburg, Gottingen, Erlangen, Berlin^), Greece (Thessalonica)*, Czech Republic (Brno)*, Ireland (Dublin) *

**Material Transfer Agreement signing in progress*

WP3 studies ethical applications:

- TREAT-panel and WGS: approved in Italy, France and Germany: 18.000 infants
- NBS WGS (in silico TREAT panel) approved in Italy (Ferrara): about 1000 infants
- ACT-panel: rejected (revisions requested) in Italy (Ferrara)

TREAT PANEL: PHENOMICS



TREAT PANEL: CUSTOM DESIGN

The design of TREAT panel is based on:

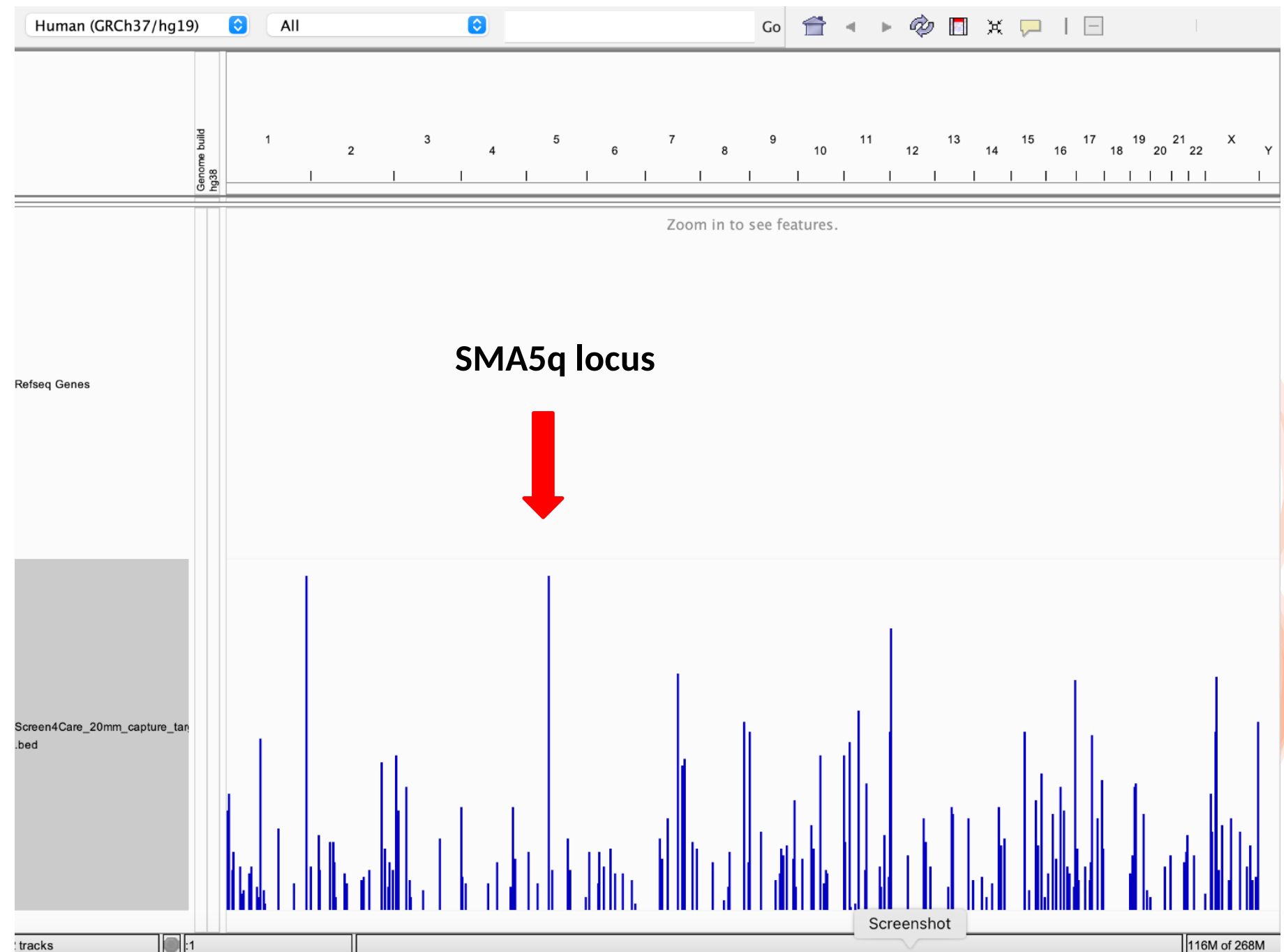
A system of robust criteria and scoring for prioritization

(from 0 to 2)

- **TREATability:** approved treatment by EMA (yes or no)
- **Disease onset:** Prioritized pediatric-onset versus adult-onset diseases
- **Disease severity:** Prioritized diseases with higher probability of causing significant health problems
- **Penetrance:** Prioritized diseases with \geq 80% of penetrance
- **Clinical validity:** Prioritized genes with known pathogenic variants and a clear genotype-phenotype correlation

(Fleyers et al, Orphanet J, under revision)

Custom design : TREAT PANEL capture target



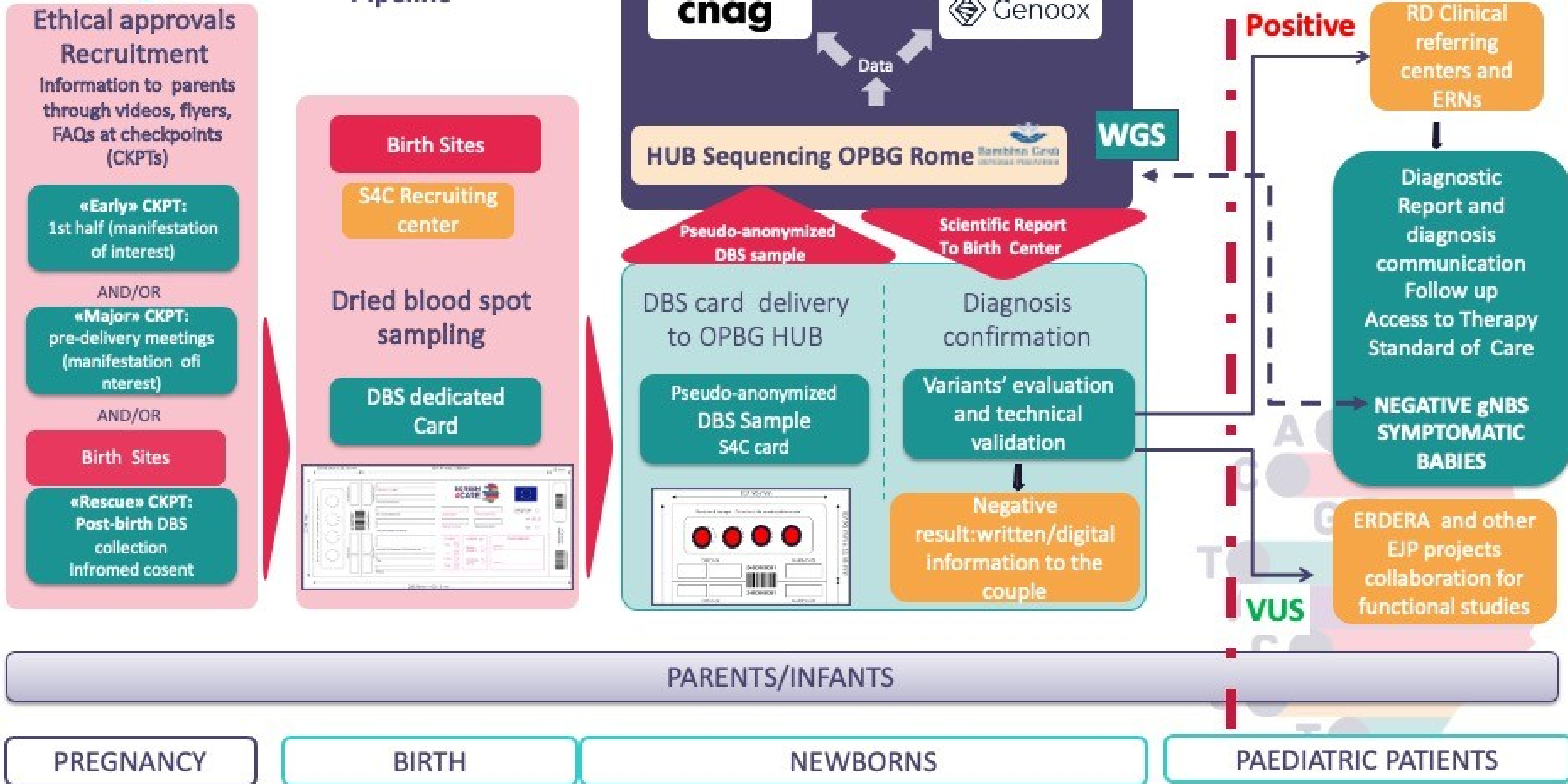
TREAT PANEL: THE SMA COMPLEX LOCI

TREAT panel captures the entire region including *SMN2* - intergenic - *SMN1* genes





Genetic & Genomic NBS (gNBS) Pipeline



OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR S4C-ERN INTERACTION

Involved ERN for TREAT panel



TREAT PANEL: PHENOMICS

Category	Total number of genes (out of 245) and associated ERN
Blood and coagulation disorders	33 - EuroBloodNet
Cardiological disorders	4 - GUARD-HEART
Endocrinological disorders	29 - Endo-ERN
Immunological disorders	26 - ERN RITA
Kidney diseases	9 - ERKNet
Metabolic (including mitochondrial disorders, oxidation disorders, lysosomal disorders, etc...)	106 - MetabERN
Neurologic/neurodegenerative and neuromuscular disorders	25 - ERN-RND, EURO-NMD, ITHACA
Syndromic	6 - ITHACA
Others	7 - ERN-BOND, ERN-LUNG, ERN-EYE

In all infants resulted **positive** at TREAT-panel and **WGS technical validation** of the panel result will be carried out **within S4C**

All infants with **validated results** at TREAT-panel and **WGS** will be referred to the competent ERN (phenomics) to get access to the ***standard of care* procedures, clinical diagnosis and treatment**

Aims of these operational procedures are:

- to define **modalities** and **strategies** to address patients to **ERN center**
- to clarify **responsibilities/tasks** of **S4C** and **ERN centers**

S4C-ERN collaborating paper (Genetic newborn screening: ERNs' transversal operational pipelines) in preparation (to be submitted to PlosOne by end of June)

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR S4C-ERN INTERACTION

Form Name: Screen4Care DBS
Design ID: 40480001v001
Version: 001
Design Date: 10/19/23 TN

Front of Form: Face of Parts 1 & 2
 All measurements can vary +/- 1/16" (1.6mm);
 Manufacturing equivalent substitutions allowed for demographic papers;
 Glue lines are between parts 1, 2, & 3

Dotted Cyan lines signify perf lines.
 Solid Cyan lines signify die cut window.

Diecut window is 15/16" x 3 1/2"
 (23.8mm x 88.9mm)

Piggy back label:
 3/4" x 1 3/8"
 (19.1mm x 35mm)

Perf: 1" (25.4mm)

Perf: 2 3/32" (53.18mm)

Do not use if damaged. Do not touch the sample application area.

SCREEN 4CARE logo and European Union flag.

Fields:
 Institute of origin
 Surname newborn
 First name newborn
 Date of birth
 Weeks gestation
 Sex (M/F)
 Multiple pregnancies
 Spontaneous / ART (Y/N)
 Surname name maternal
 Collection date
 Transfusion date
 Consanguinity of the parents (Y/N)
 Address of residence of the newborn
 City
 Phone
 Ethnicity (Cau, As, A-Am, Other)
 Childbirth type (Natural, Cesarean section)
 BLOOD SAMPLER (Signature, Date)

Part 1: 125# White Tag; Black and Magenta Ink Face & Back; CMYK 4 color process on Face only;
 (1) Code 128 barcode with (3) human readable on Face;
 Part 2: Revvity 226; Biologically Inactive Ink face only; 12.7mm ID circles; 2 3/32" (53.18mm)

Total Form Height: 4 1/4" (107.95mm)
 Total Form Length: 11 3/8" (288.93mm)

revvity

Operational procedures with Unit of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Neonatology finalized, in particular:

- Collection of informed consent
- Collection of Extra S4C DBS card

Enrollment of newborns started in Ferrara (Italy) in December 2024 and in Dijion (France) in January 2025

Dissemination of information through:

- S4C Website
- FAQ (Italian, English, Arabic, Urdu, Chinese)
- Flyers (Italian, English, Arabic, Urdu, Chinese) at dedicated Checkpoints (CKPTs)

1 A NEW SCREENING APPROACH FOR RARE DISEASES: NEWBORN GENETIC SCREENING IN THE EUROPEAN SCREEN4CARE PROJECT

2 WHAT ARE RARE GENETIC DISEASES?
 Genetic diseases are caused by the presence of alterations ("errors") in DNA. The genetic heritage of each of us is written in our DNA sequence, which is contained in the cell nucleus. In the DNA sequence there are genes which are specific regions that function to produce the proteins of our body. Rare diseases affect less than 1 in 2,000 people. To date, more than 7000 rare diseases are known. Most rare diseases have a pediatric onset and have a genetic origin. These are often serious conditions, especially if not diagnosed and treated.

3 WHAT IS NEWBORN SCREENING?
 Newborn screening is used to identify many pathologies within the first 48-72 hours of life by taking few drops of blood (dried blood spot, DBS) from the heel of the newborn. There are two types of newborn screenings. Newborn metabolic screening at birth is currently carried out in Europe. Today in Italy, with Extended Newborn Screening (ENS), the possible presence of 48 different diseases is researched through the analysis of some substances in the blood (metabolites). Newborn genetic screening (NBS) offers an added value to metabolic screening by directly analyzing DNA. In fact, a genetic disorder is not always associated with a specific metabolite. Genetic screening is possible thanks to the use of new generation techniques (NGS) that allow the analysis of gene panels (multiple genes at the same time).

4 WHAT IS THE SCREEN 4CARE PROJECT?
 The SCREEN4CARE Project (S4C) is a four-year European research project with a total budget of 25 million euros and funded by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI 2 AI). SCREEN4CARE aims to meet the urgent need to accelerate the diagnosis time for rare diseases. The project is coordinated by the Medical Genetics Unit of the University-Hospital of Ferrara, directed by Professor Alessandro Ferrito. The project will offer newborn genetic screening in Italy (Ferrara, Modena, Parma, Reggio) and in some provinces in Germany (Potsdam), for 32 months, starting from mid-2024, up to a total of 25 thousand newborns in Europe.

5 WHAT DOES THE PROJECT INCLUDE?
 If you join the project, a newborn genetic screening (NBS) for treatable diseases will be offered to your child, in addition to the mandatory newborn metabolic screening. This screening will include some genetic diseases (TREAT panel) for which there is an approved therapy. In addition, for infants tested negative on newborn genetic screening, but who will manifest early symptoms in the first two years of life, it will be offered the Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS), the most extensive genetic analysis currently available.

6 WHICH DISEASES ARE INCLUDED IN THE SCREENING?
 The screening tests for diseases of various types: metabolic, neuromuscular, endocrinological, immunological and many others! If you wish, you will be provided with the whole list.

7 WHEN WILL WE MEET TO TALK ABOUT THE PROJECT?
 Dedicated and properly trained staff from Screen4Care will be in charge of the information path and the presentation of the project to you future parents. There are three scheduled meeting times:
 • A first meeting in the first half of pregnancy;
 • The second meeting at the end of pregnancy at the IUS of Obstetrics and Gynecology;
 • The third meeting will take place after delivery, on the day of the newborn discharge, and coinciding with the time of sampling from the heel for metabolic screening.

8 WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES AND RISKS?
 The benefits of the TREAT-panel are the possibility of screening for early diagnosis, which allows access to reference centres (European Reference Networks, ERNs) for available therapies and treatments, as well as the possibility of making informed decisions for future pregnancies. WGS allows for the timely diagnosis of genetic diseases in the event of symptoms and, in the case of the TREAT-panel, access to reference centers and the ability to consciously choose for future pregnancies. With regard to the risks, as for any blood collection, there are minimal risks associated with taking blood from the heel (slightly required by law for metabolic screening) for the TREAT-panel, or spontaneously for WGS (some risks as for all blood draws). Incidental (unexpected), or secondary (not related to the specific disease) results may emerge for TREAT-panel and to a greater extent for WGS. These findings will be reported to you according to the guidelines of the scientific societies (ISGG, ESHG, ACMG). Carrier status for recessive diseases may be reported if explicitly stated in the informed consent.

9 WHAT IS THE TREAT-PANEL?
 It is a new generation sequencing (NGS) technique that allows us to "read" many genes associated with multiple diseases in a single analysis. A molecular analysis of 245 genes associated with rare diseases that are treatable with an available and approved therapy for patients (pharmacological/genetic/dietary) will be performed. The goal is to start therapy as soon as possible to treat the disease.

10 WHAT IS THE WHOLE GENOME SEQUENCING?
 Whole Genome Sequencing (or WGS) is the most extensive genetic analysis currently available. This analysis makes it possible to "read" ALL the "letters" (nucleotides) that compose the DNA. S4C will offer WGS to newborns with negative results from the newborn genetic screening but show early symptoms in the first one to two years of life.

11 DON'T FORGET THAT...
 For all those born in the time span established by the project, it is possible to participate in newborn genetic screening by:
 TREAT-panel
 TREAT and WGS panel

12 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION Contact us by email or get to know the European Screen4Care Project on our social networks:
 trials@geneticamedica.unife.it
<https://www.screen4care.eu/>
<https://twitter.com/screen4care>
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/screen4care/>
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/screen4care>

www.screen4care.eu

S4C INFORMATION MATERIAL IN SEVERAL LANGUAGES



一种筛查
罕见病的
新方法:
新生儿遗传性疾病筛查
欧洲项目下属的
SCREEN4CARE



Logo and contact information in Chinese.



A NEW SCREENING APPROACH
FOR RARE DISEASES:
NEWBORN GENETIC SCREENING
IN THE EUROPEAN
SCREEN4CARE PROJECT



Logo and contact information in English.



ایک نیا طریقہ کار
برائے نادر بیماریوں کی اسکریننگ
نایاب بیماریاں:
نیونٹل جینیٹک اسکریننگ
یورپی پروجیکٹ برائے
SCREEN4CARE



Logo and contact information in Urdu.



منهجية جديدة
للفحص من أجل
الأمراض النادرة:
الفحص الجيني لحديثي الولادة
في إطار المشروع الأوروبي
SCREEN4CARE



Logo and contact information in Arabic.

Flyers (Italian, English, Arabic, Urdu, Chinese)

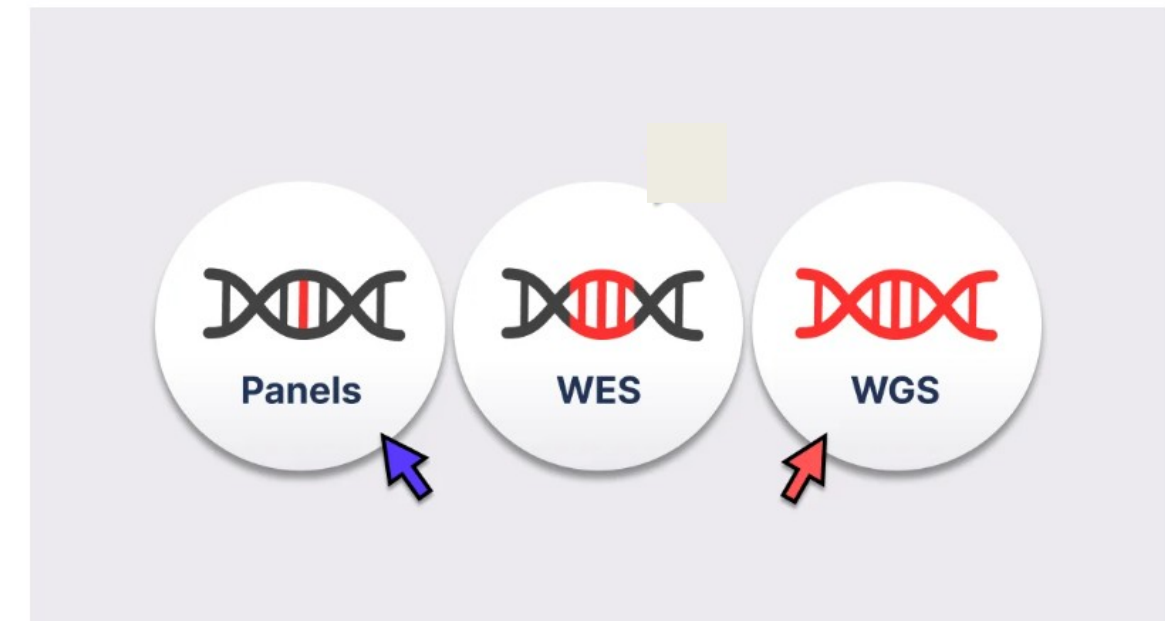
TREAT PANEL *IN SILICO* WITH WGS BACKBONE: SUB-STUDY

- The objective is the application of **WGS** as a **technical validation tool** of a **NGS custom panel (TREAT panel)** in a **separate cohort (1000 newborns)**
- In this “**sub-study**”, the same **information, dissemination** and **technical methods** of the **TREAT panel** will be adopted
- The application of **WGS** as a **technical validation tool** represents an **absolute novelty** in the **NBS panorama**
- This type of approach **minimizes** the **amount of data generated** and the **presence of VUS**
- It significantly **reduces** the risk of “**incidental findings**”, thus proving to be **ethically acceptable**
- Compared to targeted gene panels, this approach offers the great potential to **revisit genomic data** in the **future** with **improved screening algorithms** or as **new treatments** become **available**

WGS will be carried out with the sole purpose of validating the technical “accuracy” of a targeted gene panel

TREAT PANEL vs TREAT PANEL IN SILICO WITH WGS BACKBONE

- **Technical assessment of the TREAT panel *in silico* with WGS backbone**
- Comparison of **feasibility** and **detection rate**
- Comparison of **gene coverage**
- Evaluation of **number** and **type of reported variants**
- Assessment of **couples/expecting parents' compliance** to a **WGS based screening test** (assessed through parent's decision to accept/decline the TREAT panel when WGS as testing method is proposed)



To demonstrate the **feasibility** and **sustainability** of **WGS** as a **technical validation tool** of a **targeted gene panel** could be the **first step** in a wider application, not limited to gNBS

Study approved by Emilia-Romagna (Italy) Ethical Committee on January 2025

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

- **Screen4Care (S4C)** focuses on **accelerating RD diagnosis** through **two central pillars: genetic NBS (gNBS) and AI-based tools**
- It aims at **planning, designing, testing and validating a comprehensive scheme for gNBS**
- **gNBS** will be carried out by a **two-tier step**:
 - **Targeted gene panel and WGS “*in silico*” in 18.000 infants**
 - **Post-gNBS whole genome sequencing in early symptomatic infants**
- The use of **innovative digital tools** will **improve accuracy & speed of patient diagnosis**
- **European Reference Networks** may have the **high added value to facilitate patients’ referral to expertise and quality services**
- Through **coordinated work** between **Screen4Care** and **ERNs members**, **operational procedures** are **in progress** to ensure **timely access** to the **optimal standard of care** and **available treatments** for **RD patients**

ERN collaboration and interaction with S4C project is vital for screened infants

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THANKS FOR YOU ATTENTION!