

Annual meeting of the Coalition for Vaccination 2021

EU Health Policy Platform

11 March 2021, 09:00-12:30

Minutes

Participants:

Coalition co-chairs: (CPME), (PGEU), (EFN).

Coalition Member Associations and Associated Associations: CED, EAP, EAHP, CEOM, EMSA, EMA, EPSA, ESNO, ACN, HOPE, EUPHA, EIP, FEAM, ThinkYoung, ViVI

IMMUNION consortium: (EuroHealthNet), (Europa Media), (University of Antwerp)

European Commission: SANTE 0.2, SANTE C.3.

EFN opened the meeting, thanking all stakeholders and the Commission for their efforts around the set-up and the development of the Coalition for Vaccination and for their support to health professionals/front line workers during the pandemic. The representative also expressed the Coalition's support to the EU Strategy for COVID-19 vaccines and explained the important role of health professionals in the vaccination effort, including as role models, getting vaccinated themselves. In addition, she recalled to the audience the background of the Coalition (set up in 2019 on the basis of the Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases) and the layered membership consisting of Full Members of the Coalition (European health professionals' and students' associations) and Associated Organisations (other European associations/movements/initiatives promoting or having an interest in promoting vaccination).

CPME presented the online advocacy campaigns, which the Coalition launched in April 2020 (simultaneously with the WHO European Immunization Week) and in October 2020 (simultaneously with the WHO Flu Awareness Week) to promote the uptake of vaccines among health professionals and their patients. Despite of the pandemic, the campaigns, based on video spots and images for social media, were successful, with many views and decent reach. The audience was invited to provide comments, possibly in writing after the meeting.

SANTE 02 presented the Commission's COVID-19 vaccination communication efforts, in which the Coalition has been heavily involved. There is a toolbox of communication materials that stakeholders are free to use. They also presented the Commission's more "reactive" COVID-19 vaccination communication efforts, including social media listening. There is a "misinformation corner" where key myths are addressed/debunked.

The IMMUNION consortium, led by EuroHealthNet, introduced their project, starting on 1 April 2021, work package by work package. The project is the successful offer provided for a call in the Annual Work Programme 2020 of the EU Health Programme and will, via a multitude of activities, support the Coalition for Vaccination and contribute to the Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases.

The consortium presented the Coalition's Manifesto, launched in February 2021, aiming to increase the uptake of COVID-19 vaccines among health professionals and address hesitancy in this group. The audience was invited to provide comments, possibly in writing after the meeting. There was a discussion about hesitancy among health professionals, in particular in France. Vaccination is becoming a political issue.

The European Academy of Paediatrics presented their vaccination campaign, stressing the importance of the continuation of routine (childhood) vaccination programmes despite of COVID-19. There was a discussion about the extent to which the pandemic has damaged such vaccination programmes. Not much data seems to be available yet.

The Coalition co-chairs and the audience had an open discussion about the next initiatives to be undertaken by the Coalition. Should such initiatives focus on COVID-19 vaccination or the continuation of routine (childhood) vaccination programmes? There was agreement that focus needs to be on both.

EFN concluded the meeting on a positive note, stressing its usefulness despite the "virtual" format. She recalled to the audience that the Coalition was set up with a focus on vaccination in general, and that this focus needs to be maintained even though COVID-19 has been a "hook" for many things. In addition, the representative of the co-chairs expressed herself positively about the IMMUNION project and the Commission's funding of this. Finally, she thanked the stakeholders and the Commission for participating in the meeting and for their efforts around the Coalition and vaccination.