

Flash Report

Second meeting of the subgroup on vaccination under the Expert Group on Public Health

4 October 2023

The subgroup on vaccination under the Commission Expert Group on Public Health (PHEG) held their second meeting, chaired by DG SANTE. The representatives of 19 Member States, plus Iceland, attended the virtual meeting together with several Commission services, and agencies¹.

Update on the Commission's work on vaccination, including the Prevention Package

DG SANTE gave an overview of activities under this topic in recent years as guided by the Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation on vaccine-preventable diseases from 2018. These activities include a feasibility study for an EU vaccination card, the establishment of the Coalition for Vaccination², the organisation of a Global Vaccination Summit, the launch of a European Vaccination Portal, and a joint procurement agreement for pandemic influenza vaccines. The European Joint Action on Vaccination³ complemented these activities. One flagship initiative in the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan is the Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers, focused on supporting Member States in increasing the uptake of Human papillomaviruses (HPV) and Hepatitis B vaccination. A call for evidence⁴ was open in early 2023, followed by targeted consultations of key stakeholder groups. The proposal is currently being finalised.

Presentation of the PHEG priority-setting exercise: Outcomes of survey and discussion on work areas for the PHEG subgroup on vaccination

EUHealthSupport presented the results of a recent survey of members of the PHEG, identifying priorities to steer the 2023-2025 strategic work programme of the group. Vaccine-preventable diseases, including vaccine-preventable cancers, was highly prioritised by Member States. As to potential EU level action, addressing vaccine hesitancy through collaborative efforts involving healthcare professionals, civil society and communities emerged as the highest priority, followed by the importance of effective communication, equitable access to vaccines, and the establishment of electronic vaccination registries to facilitate vaccination programmes. With respect to the type of EU-level actions that would be most welcome to support and enable Member States to address the various topic areas, the survey results showed that supporting the exchange of best and promising practices and experiences across Member States were highly prioritised. Following a 'tour de table' among Member States, there was support for teaming up and clustering Member States based on national experience and shared challenges, as well as continuing identification of best practices, and for addressing physical obstacles to vaccination.

Presentation by the "Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination" project, followed by discussion on best/promising practices on vaccination

¹ Directorates-General represented included the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (SANTE) and representatives from a number of EU decentralised and executive agencies such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Medicines Agency (EMA), and the Consumer, Health and Food Executive Agency (HaDEA).

² [IMMUNION \(coalitionforvaccination.com\)](https://immunio.com)

³ <https://eu-jav.com>

⁴ Cancer prevention – action to promote vaccination against cancer-causing viruses (europa.eu)

Member States were informed about the ongoing three-year Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination⁵ project, funded under the EU4Health Programme. The project focusses on seven vaccines: COVID-19; Human papillomavirus (HPV), seasonal influenza, Measles, Mumps & Rubella (MMR), Meningitis, Polio and Tetanus and identifies obstacles to vaccination of physical, practical, and administrative nature and the adverse impact these obstacles have on vaccination coverage rates. In addition, it is identifying promising practices implemented by EU Member States to overcome such obstacles and developing recommendations to address them. Updates on progress and outputs were also provided.

[Communicating the upcoming influenza/respiratory diseases season, including the Commission's #UnitedInProtection campaign](#)

DG SANTE informed Member States on the results of the first phase of the #UnitedInProtection awareness campaign on the benefits of vaccination, and briefly outlined plans for 2023-2024. The campaign builds on experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 22 million people were already reached through targeted campaigns and its webpages were viewed by more than 350 000 people, and the hashtag (#UnitedInProtection) used more than 2 000 times between October 2022 and June 2023. The awareness campaign will continue to be active on multiple levels, for example engaging with healthcare professionals, young people and teachers, as well as national authorities.

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The Chair thanked everyone for their attention and valuable contributions and noted that the Member States welcome the clustering/teaming up approach to promote collaborative action, as well as work on IT tools to support vaccination, and complementary efforts on both physical obstacles and hesitancy. The date of the next meeting will be communicated in due course.

⁵ [Home | Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination](#)