

Flash Report

Network of Expertise on Long COVID under the Expert Group on Public Health

2 May 2023

The Network of Expertise on Long COVID under the Commission Expert Group on Public Health held a virtual meeting, chaired by DG SANTE. The representatives of 13 Member States attended the meeting together with several Commission services, and agencies¹.

Welcome and Introduction

Prof Peter Piot, special advisor to the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, on the response to the coronavirus and COVID-19, welcomed participants. He identified the double challenge of what to offer those living with long COVID and how to improve their lives, and how to improve research. A bottom-up approach is needed, involving those in medical research and those affected by long COVID, and to identify the value added in Member States. He concluded by saying that he was hopeful that research in this area will bring results in other post-viral illnesses; long COVID is not anything new, but the sheer numbers globally make the problem a challenge.

Mandate and use of the Health Policy Platform by the Network of Expertise on Long COVID

The network is set up to bring together national centres of expertise on Long COVID to advise the PHEG and the Commission on how to strengthen EU- and national-level responses to Long COVID. It will provide a platform for exchanges of national experiences on diagnosis, treatment and management of Long COVID, and will also collect information regarding the situation on Long COVID in different EU countries. The work of the network will be carried out under the supervision of the Public Health Expert Group (PHEG). DG SANTE is launching a survey for Member States on Long COVID to be able to identify the main challenges and needs; submitted ideas will be prioritised by the PHEG. The Health Policy Platform will act as the technical infrastructure of the network; a presentation was made of functionalities and workflows. DG SANTE then identified potential tasks for the network; network members were encouraged to identify national topics of interest.

Long COVID research by one of the Member States

The Netherlands presented their national approach; since the start of the pandemic, there has been themed research programming around COVID, one of which is persistent complaints and aftercare. Post-COVID research projects were identified together with their aims. The next steps are to develop an inventory, through this identify knowledge gaps, and then develop a comprehensive knowledge agenda into the post-COVID phenomenon. A new research programme will be developed, directed by these important knowledge gaps, to transfer knowledge that been generated; knowledge and expertise about post-COVID will thus be increased.

Conclusions and AOB

Member States were encouraged to indicate² particular ideas for future meetings of the network. Those Member States who have not yet nominated members to this network, were encouraged to do so. The Chair then thanked everyone for their attention and comments and reminded participants of the next virtual meeting currently scheduled for 18 September 2023.

¹ Directorates-General represented included Environment (ENV) and Health and Food Safety (SANTE), as well as the Special Advisor to the President of the EC.

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