

## Flash Report

### First meeting of the sub-group on vaccination under the Public Health Expert Group

30 March 2023

DG SANTE hosted the first online meeting of the sub-group on vaccination under the Commission's newly established Public Health Expert Group ("PHEG"). Representatives of 26 Member States, as well as Iceland and Norway, attended the meeting together with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

The objective for the sub-group on vaccination is to advise the Commission on how to support Member States in increasing the uptake of vaccination across the EU in a life-course perspective.

#### Rules of Procedure for the PHEG and mandate for the sub-group on vaccination

DG SANTE noted that the Commission supports Member States in achieving or maintaining high vaccination coverage rates in a life-course perspective, to safeguard individual and population health as well as resilient health systems, while fully respecting that vaccination is a national competence. The Rules of Procedure of the PHEG and the mandate for the sub-group on vaccination were presented. The sub-group on vaccination will have a special focus on Human papillomaviruses (HPV) and Hepatitis B virus (HBV) vaccination in support of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. It will regularly inform the PHEG on its activities.

#### Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers

DG SANTE presented the initiative, which is part of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and set to be adopted in the third quarter of 2023. The consultation strategy was also explained. The overall aim of the initiative is to help Member States prevent cancers caused by infections with HPV and HBV, with a focus on increasing vaccination uptake.

Member States were asked what actions are taken or needed at national and EU level to increase the uptake of HPV vaccination among girls and boys and how the monitoring of vaccination coverage can be improved. Participants were also asked what actions are taken or needed at national and EU level to increase the access to HBV vaccination for all affected population groups and how the monitoring of vaccination coverage can be improved.

Member States welcomed the work towards a Council Recommendation and their involvement in the preparatory discussions. They provided overviews of their national situation, identifying challenges and ways in which the EU could support. The use of COVID-19 infrastructure for other vaccines was highlighted, as well as issues in terms of reaching vulnerable groups. Pros and cons of using a school-based vaccination programme versus a primary care-based programme were discussed, and it was suggested that HPV vaccine hesitancy/acceptance could be addressed by focusing on cancer prevention aspects rather than sexual/reproductive health aspects. The importance of electronic vaccination registers was cited by several Member States, together with issues in relation to the interpretation of GDPR legislation. Some Member States would welcome guidance on whether to use of a single-dose HPV vaccine schedule.

#### Close of meeting

The Chair thanked participants for their contributions. A second meeting of the sub-group on vaccination is planned for autumn.