

Annual Meeting of the Coalition for Vaccination 2023
24 October 2023, 10:00-13:00

Minutes

Participants

Coalition co-chairs: Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME), European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN), Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU)

Coalition Member Associations: Council of European Dentists (CED), European Academy of Paediatrics (EAP), European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP), European Pharmaceutical Students' Association (EPSA), European Specialist Nurses Organisations (ESNO)

Coalition Associated Organisations: Active Citizenship Network (ACN), EuroHealthNet, European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (HOPE), Federation of European Academies of Medicine (FEAM), ThinkYoung, Vaccine Safety Initiative (VIVI)

DG SANTE, European Commission
EY

Meeting

The **Coalition for Vaccination Annual Meeting 2023** brought together Coalition Member Associations and Coalition Associated Organisations. The Coalition brings together European health professionals' and students' associations and aims to deliver accurate information to the public, combating myths around vaccines and vaccination, and exchanging best practices on vaccination. There are currently 18 Coalition Member Associations and 9 Coalition Associated Organisations.

To open, a brief summary was given of recent activities since the last meeting in May 2022. The IMMUNION project finished earlier this year and a project booklet has been produced. IMMUNION supported the Coalition by developing education and training resources for health professionals, advocacy materials and campaigns on vaccination, as well as tools for national authorities to help increase vaccine uptake, with a focus on Italy, Greece, Latvia and Romania. All resources are available on the Coalition's website¹. It was noted that it is now time for the seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccination campaigns across the EU.

DG SANTE intervened with an overview of key policy initiatives in recent years, starting with activities undertaken under the 2018 Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases. The European Joint Action on Vaccination, which ended in 2022, was outlined. DG SANTE next explained upcoming key policy initiatives, starting with the subgroup on vaccination under the Commission's new Public Health Expert Group (PHEG). The Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers, which was announced in the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and is part of the Prevention Package, was highlighted. A call for evidence and targeted consultations of key stakeholder groups have been undertaken, and the Recommendation is expected to be adopted at Commission level at the end of 2023 or start of 2024. Finally, other vaccination-related initiatives under the EU4Health Programme were mentioned, such as the Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination² project. The Annual Work Programme 2024 of EU4Health is

¹ [IMMUNION \(coalitionforvaccination.com\)](https://coalitionforvaccination.com)

² [Home | Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination](#)

expected to be published towards the end of the year, and this will be the next large funding opportunity for stakeholders.

A **roundtable on the Coalition's recent and future activities on vaccination** took place. The **Coalition co-chairs** started by providing an update on the IMMUNION project. Partners met for the final General Assembly in January 2023. A Coalition for Vaccination Conference was also held in January 2023, as the first public conference organised by the Coalition. Around 100 health professionals met in Brussels to discuss how to strengthen the Coalition and support future vaccination policies. A research article³ was published in March 2023 on supporting workers and students who lacked confidence in vaccine advocacy. Finally, the role of the Coalition in the kick-off of the World Health Organization's and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's European Immunisation Week 2023 was outlined. The **Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU)** spoke of their 2022 Annual Report, their role in the European Immunisation Week 2023, and their upcoming position paper on the role of community pharmacists in vaccination, which will be published in November 2023. The **Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)** talked about the feedback provided to the European Commission consultation activities in relation to the proposal for a Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers. Their feedback concerned vaccination against Human papillomaviruses for both boys and girls as well as Hepatitis B vaccination. CPME had participated in the #UnitedInProtection⁴ and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) video campaigns. CPME had also been dealing with the final technical and financial reporting of the IMMUNION project. The **Council of European Dentists (CED)** spoke of their role in the IMMUNION project as well as in the awareness campaigns for the Coalition for Vaccination and the European Immunisation Week 2023. They also provided feedback to the European Commission on the upcoming Council Recommendation, specifically for boys to be vaccinated against Human papillomaviruses, due to the link to oral cancers. The **European Academy of Paediatrics (EAP)** updated on the HaDEA IMMUHUBS project and the H2020 RIVER-EU project; the EAP was also involved in the IMMUNION project. The **European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP)** spoke of vaccine-related questions from their survey on hospital pharmacy practice in Europe, of the current state of the art related to COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 vaccination practice, and the potential for future collaboration. The results of the survey were explained in detail. Please refer to the slides for further detail. The key messages were that hospital pharmacists are a key resource in primary care, that they have improved the awareness of the importance of vaccines, and with improved health records, they can react appropriately to patient vaccination status. The **European Pharmaceutical Students' Association (EPSA)** spoke of their work on vaccination, being a position paper, activity in groups and stakeholders' network, contribution to public health campaigns, and contribution to scientific education and awards. EPSA was also involved in the European Immunisation Week 2023, including a webinar. The public health campaign tackled vaccine hesitancy; specific activities took place at the Summer University Event in Warsaw. EPSA concluded with a statement of position and a call for action on six various specific themes. Please refer to the slides for further detail. The **European Specialist Nurses Organisations (ESNO)** spoke of their pan-European study⁵ on nurses' roles, views and knowledge regarding vaccines and vaccination. ESNO is still working on translations of the nursing education guide, which communicates and educates on vaccination; if we improve education, it is much more efficient than increasing awareness. The latest and updated version⁶ of that nursing guide was cited.

³ https://coalitionforvaccination.com/assets/content/attachments/Article_Survey_VaccineConfidence.pdf

⁴ [#UnitedInProtection \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/20534345231207527>

⁶ https://www.esno.org/assets/files/AMR_Module_2.pdf

EuroHealthNet updated on the RIVER-EU project to reduce vaccine inequality. They informed participants of the JITSUVAX project⁷ and the training of trainers; this is a useful resource for identifying the roots of anti-vaccination arguments and helping debunk those. EuroHealthNet has also attended various meetings, e.g. in Gastein, and will be in Dublin for the public health conference. They also outlined their role in the PERCH project on vaccine-preventable cancers. The **European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (HOPE)** spoke of the Periscope research project⁸, which is closing this month. Inside the organisation, they have dealt with vaccination from the angle of COVID-19 issues with the workforce. HOPE will also be in Ireland for the public health conference. The **Federation of European Academies of Medicine (FEAM)** published a science policy paper⁹ on immunisation. This is being followed up with a series of meetings to stretch and disseminate the key conclusions from the report; it started in 2023 at a symposium in Amsterdam. Joint position papers have been published. There is a need to converge immunisation programmes across Europe, especially related to supply chains and records. Improving health education will contribute to higher vaccine acceptance. FEAM have surveyed members of the academy network as there is a need for education among health professionals. Plans have not yet been established for 2024, and FEAM are open to collaboration. **Think Young** spoke of their involvement in vaccine-related projects and attendance at the Vaccination and Prevention Summit¹⁰ which took place in Brussels in June. At the regional level, they are organising two panel discussions imminently in Bulgaria¹¹ and Romania¹², with a specific focus on vaccination against Human papillomaviruses targeted at young medical and pharmaceutical students. The **Active Citizenship Network (ACN)** updated on two projects, one being the 3rd edition of a vaccine action project targeted to leaders of patient and civic associations in networks via an EU institutional event and a communication campaign on social media. The second project was towards civil society promoting vaccination across the life course, and taking place in Spain, Italy and France. Different stakeholders were involved in discussions on lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic. The **Vaccine Safety Initiative (VIVI)** stated the importance of pursuing the directions and actions taken via the European Commission's vaccination roadmap¹³ and landmark Council Decisions in 2018/19. Sustainability and perseverance were identified as critical for progress on protection through vaccination of European citizens, including hard-to-reach population groups. Many EU projects¹⁴ have developed useful tools that can be leveraged to this end. VIVI also pointed to #SEKI (Strengthening Education and Knowledge on Immunisation)¹⁵, which is a training platform developed for health professionals.

DG SANTE informed the Coalition of the second phase of the **#UnitedInProtection**, the EU's awareness campaign on vaccination and highlighted its intention to continue collaborating with healthcare professionals through the Coalition. The communication campaign aims to raise awareness of the benefits of vaccination across the life course and focuses on five distinct strands: COVID-19, seasonal influenza, measles, HPV and HBV. Specific activities and timings for each of the strands have been identified, including the following opportunities for healthcare professionals: webinar on seasonal vaccination during autumn/winter (October), co-creation webinar on HPV vaccination for healthcare students (January), updated guidance on addressing mis- and disinformation as well as online communication training course (March-April). Efforts and collaborations will include the Cervical

⁷ <https://jitsuvax.info/>

⁸ <https://www.periscopeproject.eu/>

⁹ <https://www.feam.eu/wp-content/uploads/Adult-Vaccination-Report-Design-V12-23-March-2022.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.thinkyoungeu/europe-tomorrow>

¹¹ <https://www.thinkyoungeu/mer-bulgaria>

¹² <https://www.thinkyoungeu/mer-romania>

¹³ [2019-2022 roadmap_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/vaccines-and-biologicals/immunisation/immunisation-strategies/roadmaps/2019-2022-roadmap)

¹⁴ <https://immunisationhubs.eu/projects/technology-platform/>

¹⁵ <https://seki.eu/>

Cancer Awareness Week in January, the European Immunisation Week in April and World Hepatitis Day in July. The Coalition is invited to continue making use of material on the hub: <https://vaccination-protection.ec.europa.eu>

EY presented **the Study on the coherence, complementarity and continued relevance of actions in the Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases in view of possible similar policy initiatives in the future**, which is a study wrapping up the Commission's work on the 2018 Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases and the vaccination roadmap.

The meeting was wrapped up outlining the next steps for the Coalition for Vaccination, which are 1) a statement on the upcoming influenza season and the WHO Europe's influenza awareness campaign, 2) continued activity on social media, 3) raising awareness on the topic of vaccination and sharing best practice, and 4) exploiting the materials developed for the IMMUNION project. All participants were thanked; issues raised will be followed up.