

## **REPORT**

### **Workshop on vaccination**

#### **Seeking new partnerships for EU action on vaccination**

**31 May, Brussels**

The workshop was organised by DG SANTE and explored how cooperation at EU level can increase vaccine coverage, address shortages and strengthen routine immunisation programmes. The workshop was attended by 121 participants from Member States, the European Commission, the European Medicines Agency, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, European Parliament, key international organisations (WHO, UNICEF), industry, healthcare professionals, patients, civil society, academics and the scientific community.

The meeting was opened by Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis who highlighted that despite the huge successes of vaccination programmes, Europe could do better with more effective vaccination programmes and higher rates of uptake. He pointed to ongoing measles outbreaks in a number of Member States and the worrying result that Europe is now exporting measles to other parts of the world. The Commissioner also referred to growing vaccine hesitancy which is one of the key challenges in low vaccine acceptance and uptake in a number of Member States. He also mentioned that a number of countries are currently facing vaccine shortages. Against this background, he highlighted the potential and synergies of close cooperation at EU level and called for working better and more cohesively together in order to address the challenges in the area of vaccination.

#### **Session 1: Vaccine hesitancy – new partnerships to tackle growing hesitancy in the EU**

This session was chaired by Andrea Ammon, Director of ECDC. Impulse statements were given by Robb Butler, WHO Euro, Emilie Karafillakis, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Gary Finnegan, Vaccines Today, Pierre Van Damme, University of Antwerp, Peggy McGuire, European Institute of Women's Health, and Giovanni Rezza, Italian Health Institute. The discussion highlighted the role and requirements for health care workers to better advocate and promote vaccination and to enhance people's trust in vaccines and vaccination programmes. This requires education in the area of immunology and vaccinology, and continuous professional training of health care professionals (medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists etc.). Communication skills and training in social science are also important to understand the reality of the patient beyond his medical condition and communicate adequately. Furthermore, school health education programmes should address vaccination to enhance sensitisation of future generations. Participants also stressed the importance of improving access to vaccines and the need for more research to evaluate impact and effectiveness of alternative vaccine delivery models, e.g. administration of vaccines in pharmacies or outside settings. Overall, participants stressed the added-value of sharing best practice and information to update and learn from each other to better understand and tackle vaccine hesitancy, broaden opportunities of access to vaccines and improve education and training of students and health care workers.

**Suggested activities at EU level could support efforts to strengthen i) education and training programmes for students, health professionals and in schools, ii) monitoring of vaccine confidence iii) technical capacities to deliver vaccine hesitancy tools iv) evaluation of vaccine access/delivery models.**

#### **Session 2: Sustainable vaccine policies in the EU – promoting access**

This session was chaired by Benoit Vallet, Director-General, French Ministry of Health. Impulse statements were given by Aurora Limia, Spanish Ministry of Health, Mike Catchpole, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Andrea Rappagliosi, Vaccines Europe, and Fergus Sweeney, European Medicines Agency. The discussion touched on mandatory vaccination, compensation schemes, varying vaccine schedules, vaccine safety monitoring and surveillance. It highlighted the importance of evidence-based and transparent vaccine schedules to increase trust in vaccination programmes. The importance of data management systems to support planning, evaluation and delivery of longitudinal data in the context of vaccine assessment and vaccine effectiveness monitoring/surveillance was discussed. It was stated that it would be beneficial to agree on standardized definitions of vaccine schedules/programmes and to work towards common approaches in particular for new vaccines. Collaboration of national vaccination advisory bodies at EU level could reduce the number of doses and vaccine combinations administered in different Member States. Such cooperation would also facilitate the central authorisation of vaccines as it would lower the number of local safety and immunogenicity studies. To this end, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is working with national vaccination advisory groups to strengthen efficiency in their decision-making process, to optimize use of resources and avoid duplication of work. Such activities could also take into account work in the area of health technology assessment (HTA). In addition, aligned vaccine schedules would mitigate the need to justify or explain the general public the reason why the same vaccine product is utilized in different ways (dosage and timing) in countries with fairly similar epidemiological situations. This would maintain and increase trust and confidence in vaccination programmes and vaccines. Moreover, this would facilitate comparing national programmes. EU-wide vaccine effectiveness monitoring could rapidly deliver robust quantitative data for the assessment of the impact and effectiveness of vaccination programmes. This could optimize the use of limited national resources, enhance comparability of study results and help decision-makers to assess the impact of a vaccination programme.

As regards vaccine safety monitoring, a large, common, monitoring system for adverse events (cooperation of vaccine safety monitoring networks) would allow to respond quickly to signals. The regulatory aspects of these ideas need to be evaluated. Immunization information systems were seen as pivotal in ascertaining and improving compliance with vaccination schedules as they increase transparency for stakeholders, in particular patient's and health care professionals. These systems could be used to identify at-risk populations for vaccine-preventable diseases or to document and increase vaccination coverage. Against the background of growing vaccine shortages, solid vaccine forecasting would be crucial to ensure vaccine security. Improved vaccine supply and demand forecasting would highlight key demand- and supply-side constraints, providing manufacturers with information about new market potential, while allowing national governments to efficiently allocate resources by fostering appropriate prices and adequate supplies of products. Overall, participants stressed the added-value of coordinating communication on vaccination at EU level and of advocating vaccination by a broad range of stakeholders. To this end, it was stressed that launching an output-oriented dialogue between public health, regulators and manufacturers would be essential to ensure sustainable programmes and targeted interventions.

**Suggested activities at EU level could support efforts to strengthen i) national immunisation technical advisory groups / health technology assessment; ii) immunisation data information systems; iii) vaccine demand and supply forecasting; iv) vaccine safety monitoring; and v) coordinated communication between stakeholders.**

**Session 3: Making vaccine research & development more effective in the EU**

This session was chaired by Line Matthiessen, Acting Director, Health Directorate in the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission. Impulse statements were given by Gerd Sutter, University of Munich, Emmanuel Hanon, Vaccines Europe, Frank Follmann, Danish Statens Serum Institut, Brigitte Autran, Sorbonne Universités, and Adam Finn, European Society for Paediatric Infectious Diseases. The discussion highlighted the need for research to address barriers to vaccine development and bottlenecks in the implementation of vaccination programmes. It was stated that despite substantial funding and policy initiatives, the European vaccine R&D field faces challenges related to advances in vaccinology, the emergence of new players in vaccine manufacturing and shifts in the public's attitude towards vaccines. Some participants referred to the “Innovation Partnership for a Roadmap on Vaccines in Europe” (IPROVE) which was funded by the Commission to inform strategic decisions on the priorities for future vaccine investment in innovation and technological development at the level of the EU as well as for individual Member States. This initiative highlighted in particular the need to prioritize vaccine implementation research as a major tool towards understanding and addressing vaccination hesitancy and informing public health policy decisions. Furthermore, the discussion touched on the complexity of vaccine development which requires substantial financial investment and expertise, making the development of the next generation of innovative vaccines much more complex, challenging, costly and risky. Overall, participants stressed the added-value of research collaboration to link up research groups with different areas of expertise. To this end, there is need for social/behavioural research to address bottlenecks in the implementation of vaccination programmes and translating innovative research into applied production innovation.

**Suggested activities at EU level could support efforts to i) translate innovative research into applied production innovation; ii) strengthen social/behavioural research related to the implementation of vaccination programmes, addressing e.g. needs related to communication/hesitancy or vaccine (cost) effectiveness.**

### **The global picture**

The discussion on the global picture of vaccination touched on global aspects (presented by the WHO, UNICEF and Vaccines Europe) and possibilities related to regulatory rules on pharmaceutical approval, procurement and market access, highlighting the interplay between EU vaccine supply and the global vaccine market. Presentations were given by Philippe Duclos, WHO, Heather Deehan, UNICEF, and Johan van Hoof, Vaccines Europe. The World Health Organization referred to the Global Vaccine Action Plan and stressed the neglected dimension of global health security. Against the background of global vaccine shortages UNICEF stressed the importance to incentivize and exchange experience on procurement, to consult with industry about best practice as regards stockpiling and focus on strong routine immunisation and resilience of vaccination programmes. Vaccines Europe highlighted the importance of harmonizing regulatory requirements at international level to increase vaccine supply flexibility at global level. Furthermore, it referred to demographic/epidemiological changes as root causes of shortages at global level, (e.g. increase of susceptible individuals in adolescence and early adulthood towards hepatitis A or measles infections).

### **Closing remarks**

MEP Adina-Ioanna Valean provided the perspective of the European Parliament and underlined the need to tackle vaccine hesitancy, enter into dialogue with industry and recognising the role of vaccination to tackle antimicrobial resistance. In a European Parliament resolution on EU options for improving access to medicines, adopted in 2017, the Commission and the Member States were requested to develop a comprehensive policy

approach to address ongoing outbreaks, to better understand current challenges and promote information campaigns to gain trust by the general public.

Ms Tairi Täht, on behalf of Estonian Presidency stressed that vaccination is a cornerstone of health systems. However, the success of vaccination programmes has increased complacency as people and health care workers increasingly forget the crucial role of vaccination. It pointed to a framework agreement between the three Baltic States which allows cooperation as regards sharing vaccines/joint procurement between countries to ensure vaccine supply during outbreaks and to prevent vaccine shortages.

DG Xavier Prats Monné thanked all participants for their active engagement. The workshop highlighted the complexity and importance of the topic of vaccination. Given the many actors involved and interdependences identified there would be need for a multi-sectorial approach and scope for further cooperation and collaboration with all stakeholders, in particular industry. The link to AMR and the importance of social science research was highlighted. He mentioned an upcoming initiative on innovation and communicable diseases which could build on the outcomes of today's discussion.

### **Next steps**

As mentioned at the workshop, Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis informed Health Ministers about this workshop at the EPSCO (Health) meeting on 16 June.

France had expressed interest to lead a joint action on vaccination co-funded by the Health Programme Work Plan 2017 in order to address the common goal of increasing vaccine coverage rates in Europe. The Joint Action will be developed in 2017 and should start in 2018.

**[https://ec.europa.eu/health/vaccination/events/ev\\_20170531\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/health/vaccination/events/ev_20170531_en)**

### ***Disclaimer***

This report does not entail any commitment by the European Commission but offers insights that will facilitate reflections on the way forward to address identified challenges.