



## **EHP: First impressions and Vaccination plans on the spotlight**

The first EHP Plenary managed to grasp the participants' attention by allowing the informal interactions not only among the participants but also with the sponsors. One of the highlights of the day was discovering the Committee that the participants were going to be engaged with for the next seven months. Our Committee will focus on providing a Pan-European Vaccines initiative, coming at a necessary time, following the outbreaks of measles in a series of EU Member States and the call of the European Commission for further vaccination plans. The greatest highlight was the Plenary session at the European Parliament, allowing participants to have a first discussion with the EU elected policy-makers.

The Committee on a European Vaccine initiative intends to provide recommendations for the establishment and creation of a pan-European vaccination programme. To begin with, the Committee will conduct a research on the legal and policy framework of the vaccination policy plans, considering that Health is not an exclusive competence of the EU. This first research will further allow our Committee to explore the existing initiatives that have been undertaken by Member States to comprehend their advantages and disadvantages. By focusing on the national vaccination plans and policies, the Committee on a European Vaccine Initiative will draw up a map with national plans that can be used as a best-practice example for the development of further pan-European vaccination initiatives. The policy recommendations will consider the national laws that constitute the immunisation of the citizens, whether they are obligatory, optional or prohibited. In addition to this, our Committee will conduct research on the European framework on vaccination, past Action Plans and public-private Partnerships that have assisted in the R&D of new innovative vaccines in affordable prices. In addition to this, the policy

recommendations will provide concrete steps for the development, communication and application of those initiatives on the ground.

Vaccination is the most important aspect of immunisation for the citizens. However, vaccination hesitance has risen amongst citizens, jeopardising public health. Diseases, such as measles, which were rumoured to have been eradicated in years are rearing their ugly heads, leading not only to the massive hospitalisation of children and elderly people but also to deaths. Moreover, every year thousands of women are dying from cervical cancer, which is preventable with vaccination preferably at an early age. Indeed, vaccination is critical to avoid unnecessary deaths, issues associated with long term treatments and additional financial costs that higher percentages of not-immunized citizens could bring to the healthcare system.

The European Commission and the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Mr. Vytenis Andriukaitis, have announced that in 2018 an EU Joint action on vaccination will be adopted in order to assist and enhance the national vaccination programmes. In fact, In the recent State of the Union speech, President Jean-Claude Juncker said: “In a Union of equals, there can be no second class citizens. It is unacceptable that in 2017 there are still children dying of diseases that should long have been eradicated in Europe. Children in Romania or Italy must have the same access to measles vaccines as children in other European countries. No ifs, no buts. This is why we are working with all Member States to support national vaccination efforts. Avoidable deaths must not occur in Europe.”

Our Committee on a European Vaccine Initiative aims to not only gain ideas from these plans, but to help shape this initiative by providing concrete recommendations for the development of enhanced national vaccination programs.

The Vaccines Initiative Committee of the European Health Parliament will strive to engage openly with different stakeholders, in order to gain further information and concrete proposals from experts. Our list of contacts includes the cabinet of Commissioner Andriukaitis, various Members of the European Parliament, trade associations, NGOs, Academia and other European Commission agencies such as

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ECDC and EMA. Our speaking partners will also be invited to subsequent Plenary hearings to present their findings before the European Health Parliament participants. By adopting a holistic approach on vaccines' hesitancy and the direction the national vaccination plans need to take, the Vaccines Initiative Committee will attempt to provide concrete solutions not only on the application of those plans on the ground. We will strive to raise awareness on the necessity of vaccination for the immunisation of the European Citizens by creating digital campaigns in the media and the social media and assisting in the dismantlement of misconceptions and propaganda. The Committee on a European Vaccine Initiative will strive its best to make health great again in the area of vaccination!

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