

# Vaccination: Commission calls for stronger EU cooperation against preventable diseases

Today, the Commission is issuing a set of recommendations for how the EU can strengthen cooperation in the fight against diseases that can be prevented by vaccines. This follows President Juncker's call, in his [2017 State of the Union address](#), for action to increase vaccination coverage and to ensure that everyone in the EU has access to vaccines.

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis **Andriukaitis** said: *"Vaccination is one of the most powerful and cost-effective public health measures developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a medical doctor, I find it disheartening to witness children dying because of low uptake, vaccine hesitancy, or vaccine shortages. Infectious diseases are not confined within national borders. One Member State's immunisation weakness puts the health and security of citizens at risk across the EU. Cooperating in this area is in all of our interests. Protect our children, vaccinate!"*

Vaccination saves between 1 and 3 million lives worldwide every year. According to the World Health Organisation, vaccines will save 25 million more lives in the coming decade. And yet, according to [ECDC](#), several EU countries are facing unprecedented outbreaks of measles and a resurgence of other vaccine-preventable diseases due to insufficient vaccination coverage, and children and adults in the EU are still dying from these diseases.

The Commission's proposal focuses on 3 main pillars for action: tackling vaccine hesitancy and improving vaccination coverage; sustainable vaccination policies in the EU; and EU coordination and contribution to global health.

The proposal calls for 20 concrete actions by the Commission and Member States, including:

- Developing and implementing **national and/or regional vaccination plans** by 2020, including a target of at least 95% vaccination coverage for measles;
- Introducing **routine checks** of vaccination status and regular opportunities to vaccinate across different stages of life, for example in schools and workplaces;
- Presenting options for a common **vaccination card** that can be shared electronically across borders;
- Establishing a European **vaccination information portal** by 2019 to provide online objective, transparent and updated evidence on the benefits and safety of vaccines;
- Mitigating the risks of shortages by developing a virtual repository **EU data warehouse** with information on vaccine stocks and needs to facilitate voluntary exchange of information on available supplies and shortages of essential vaccines;

- Equipping all **healthcare workers** with the necessary training to confidently deliver vaccinations and address hesitant behaviours;
- Convening a **Coalition for Vaccination** to bring together European associations of healthcare workers as well as relevant students' associations in the field, to commit to delivering accurate information to the public, combating myths and exchanging best practice;
- Establishing a **European Information Sharing System** to gather knowledge and develop guidelines for a core EU vaccination schedule by 2020 with doses and ages that EU Member States agree as being common to all countries;
- Strengthening partnerships and collaboration on vaccination with **international partners**.

### **State of play: key vaccination gaps in the EU**

According to the most recent data collected by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), measles cases continue to increase in a number of EU and EEA countries. In the 12-month period between 1 March 2017 and 28 February 2018, 14,813 cases of measles were reported through the European Surveillance System. Of these cases, where vaccination status was known, 86% were unvaccinated. Furthermore, the ECDC estimates that at least 40,000 people die every year from influenza, partly due to low vaccination coverage.

### **Next steps**

The Commission's proposal for a Council recommendation will be discussed by the Council, with the aim of seeing it adopted before the end of 2018, with an immediate entry into force. Following this, every 3 years the Commission will report on progress made in the implementation of the recommendation. In addition the Commission will also produce a report on '*The State of Confidence in Vaccines in the EU*', to monitor attitudes towards vaccination, in the context of the [State of Health in the EU](#) process.

### **Background**

In his [2017 State of the Union address](#), President **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. (...) No ifs, no buts. (...) Avoidable deaths must not occur in Europe.*"

The Commission's recommendations on vaccine-preventable diseases build on a number of existing EU policies and projects in area of vaccination. These include the 2009 Council Recommendation on seasonal influenza vaccination, the Joint Procurement Agreement, established by the serious cross-border health threats Decision (1082/2013/EU), and a Joint Action on vaccination co-funded by the Health Programme 2014-2020, which will start in the months to come, addressing vaccine hesitancy amongst other topics.

### **For more information**

See [MEMO/18/3458](#)

[Vaccination – Overview](#)

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