



EU Manifesto

ON INFLUENZA VACCINATION

Our response to the burden of influenza in Europe

We, the Steering Group on Influenza Vaccination, together with other signatories of this declaration, call for more action to increase seasonal influenza coverage rates in Europe to reduce the burden of this disease, and therefore improve citizens' health outcomes and quality of life.

- Influenza is a life-threatening disease. Each year, it affects 5-10% of the world's population resulting in up to 650,000 deaths and 3 to 5 million cases of severe illness worldwide¹;
- Influenza is particularly dangerous for vulnerable groups of people, such as the elderly, persons with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women, and children, as they are at higher risk of developing serious complications because of influenza infection²;
- Influenza vaccination is one of the greatest medical achievements of the past century, and one of the most powerful, cost-effective and evidence-based public health measures available today.³ For almost 80 years,⁴ influenza vaccination has protected the world population from influenza pandemics and has reduced the economic and social burden of seasonal influenza.
- Influenza vaccination plays a key role in the fight against antimicrobial resistance by reducing the incidence of viral infections and decreasing antibiotic prescription;
- Seasonal influenza vaccination coverage rates remain low in most countries in Europe, and are declining in many of them.⁵ Low demand for vaccination can be associated with a perceived low need for influenza vaccination due to underestimations of the severity of and susceptibility to influenza;
- A comprehensive understanding of the safety and benefits of seasonal influenza vaccination, its impact on the transmission of infection and reduction of disease severity is crucial in the context of current challenges faced by EU healthcare systems⁶;
- Addressing the challenges of influenza in Europe requires holistic, people-centred, health system-wide approaches to disease awareness, training and integrated care, with all stakeholders⁷ combining their diverse skills and resources in a unified voice.

1 Global Seasonal Influenza-associated Mortality Collaborator Network, Estimates of global seasonal influenza-associated respiratory mortality: a modelling study, December 2017, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)33293-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)33293-2) [Accessed on 18 December 2017].

2 2008 ECDC Guidance on Priority Risk Groups for Influenza Vaccination.

3 Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety presenting the EU Health Award for NGOs promoting vaccination at the annual EU Health Policy Platform on 27 November 2017.

4 Hannoun C., The evolving history of influenza viruses and influenza vaccines, *Expert Rev Vaccines*. 2013 Sep;12(9):1085-94.

5 Seasonal influenza vaccination in Europe, Vaccination recommendations and coverage rates in the EU Member states for eight influenza seasons 2007-2008 to 2014-2015, <https://ecdc.europa.eu/sites/portal/files/documents/influenza-vaccination-2007%E2%80%932008-to-2014%E2%80%932015.pdf> [Accessed on 29 November 2017].

6 Martin Seychell, Deputy Director-General of DG Santé addressing a key-note speech on the High-level hearing on the implementation of the council Recommendation on seasonal influenza vaccination on 30 April 2015.

7 Stakeholders include: policy-makers, patient group representatives, at-risk groups representatives, healthcare professionals, academics, and industry representatives.

In line with the 2003 WHO Resolution on prevention and control of influenza pandemics and annual epidemics,⁸ and the 2009 European Council Recommendation on seasonal influenza vaccination,⁹ which encourages Member States to establish and implement strategies to increase influenza vaccination coverage in all people at high risk, with the goal of attaining at least 75% vaccination coverage, we call for both EU and national policy-makers, respective communities and organisations to:

Burden of the Disease

1. Recognise the burden of influenza and the importance of its prevention through adequate resources for tackling the disease, development and effective implementation of national influenza vaccination programmes by including the establishment of vaccination coverage rate targets in national policies.
2. Secure appropriate and accurate monitoring of epidemiology, disease burden and vaccination coverage rates in all EU countries to enable the assessment of national influenza vaccination programmes and tailored communication.
3. Recognise the link between the level of vaccination coverage during influenza seasons and pandemic preparedness.
4. Pay attention to the importance of influenza vaccination within at-risk groups¹⁰ and the burden of the disease among these groups, ensuring that their needs are reflected in the national influenza vaccination programmes.
5. Promote influenza vaccination uptake among all healthcare professionals to provide a positive example and fulfil an ethical obligation towards patients, and in recognition of the additional burden the disease has on the families of healthcare professionals.

⁸ WHO Resolution on the prevention and control of influenza pandemics and annual epidemics, 28 May 2003.

⁹ Council Recommendation of 22 December 2009 on seasonal influenza vaccination 2009/1019/EU, OJ L 348, 29.12.2009, p. 71-72.

¹⁰ Older age group, usually 65 years and older; persons with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women, children (below age 2 or below age 5) as mentioned in 2008 ECDC Guidance on Priority Risk Groups for Influenza Vaccination.

Influenza Awareness & Public Trust

6. Engage in a multi-stakeholder dialogue, especially including healthcare professionals and health authorities, to raise public awareness of the importance and safety of influenza vaccination and to restore trust in influenza vaccination to improve uptake.
7. Organise training programmes for healthcare professionals on immunisation; the burden of influenza; recommended population coverage targets; and the best ways to engage with and listen to patients when discussing the need to vaccinate, tackling vaccination myths and assumptions.
8. Ensure that at-risk groups understand the threat to their health if they contract influenza.
9. Recognise the contribution of influenza vaccination in the fight against antimicrobial resistance by reducing secondary bacterial infections for which antibiotics are needed and by reducing misuse of antibiotics by preventing viral diseases.

Good Practices & Access

10. Strengthen the exchange of good practice at the European level around national influenza vaccination plans to meet WHO recommendations on the prevention and control of influenza pandemics and annual epidemics.
11. Encourage the development of Healthcare Professionals' inter-professional collaboration at local, regional and national level to build support, trust and access to influenza vaccination across the sector, through the exchange of best professional and regulatory practices at European level.

By signing the Manifesto, we commit to raising awareness around the burden of influenza and the Manifesto asks, especially around European Influenza Awareness Day, to allow coordinated messages from different stakeholders to be delivered.

We commit to introducing a clear implementation plan of this Manifesto by reviewing progress on achieving its objectives and goals on a regular basis and at all relevant opportunities.

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