

# VACCINE HESITANCY IN EUROPE: FACTS, OPINIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Policy Recommendations  
DG SANTE trainees, October 2016 – February 2017 session



## BACKGROUND AND AIM

Although uptake of vaccination is high in Europe, vaccine hesitancy, which refers to delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccination despite availability of vaccination services has become a recurrent issue. In light of this, the trainees at the European Commission in Directorate for Health and Food Safety organised the conference “Vaccine Hesitancy in Europe: Facts, Opinions and the Way Forward” in February 2017 in Brussels, Belgium. The conference aimed to offer different perspectives on the drivers of vaccine hesitancy in Europe as well as to discuss possible ways on how to tackle the issue in the future. The stakeholders involved were European Commission, World Health Organisation, European Medicines Agency, European Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control, Vaccines Europe, Royal Dutch Medical Association and The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations are based on the stakeholders’ suggestions, but represent the point of view of the trainees.

### Research

- Support research and development of new vaccines and invest more in pharmacoepidemiology research.
- Invest more in participatory research before implementing any action and taking into account context-specific factors of different sub-groups which demonstrate low vaccination coverage rates.
- Invest more in social sciences research to understand the drivers of vaccine hesitancy.

### Communication

- Promote vaccine awareness and vaccination as a matter of solidarity.
- Measure and closely monitor the evolution of vaccine confidence in media in order to detect early signals and prevent possible vaccine refusals or outbreaks.
- Engage relevant stakeholders who can influence large groups of people in raising awareness on importance of vaccination.

### Education and training

- Reinforce the university curriculum of healthcare professionals concerning vaccines – introduce training in social science and risk communication.
- Inform and educate general public about the consequences of vaccine preventable diseases and the benefit/risk ratio of vaccines.
- Train and develop critical thinking as a skill in order to be able to judge the value of scientific facts.

### Vaccination issues in a broader perspective

- Reinforce confidence of people in healthcare systems – the process of authorization of vaccines as well as the scientific grounds on which decisions are taken should be explained clearly.
- Increase access to vaccines and vaccination by introducing vaccination in pharmacies and option to be vaccinated by different health professionals (i.e. pharmacists).
- Strengthen co-operation between Member States - national immunisation programmes need to be properly implemented and monitored.

The full report can be requested from Franjo Čaić (franjo.caic@gmail.com).

The conference record is available on:  
<https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/vaccination-hesitancy-in-europe-facts-opinions-and-the-way-forward>

