

Mission Board on Vaccination in Europe

Consensus report Launch event

21 March 2024, 09:00 – 11:00 CET

European Parliament, Brussels

The **Mission Board on Vaccination in Europe** (MBVE) launched its Consensus Report in a multi-stakeholder event in the European Parliament. The Consensus Report outlines ambitious yet attainable targets for strengthening immunisation systems and policies in Europe, along with recommendations for action at national and European level.

The event, co-hosted by **Members of the European Parliament (MEP) Alessandra Moretti** (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, Italy) and **MEP Stelios Kypouropoulos** (European People's Party, Greece) was moderated by **Professor Walter Ricciardi**, Chair of the MBVE.

Cross-party support

The MEPs welcomed the MBVE Consensus report recommendations, **calling for renewed political commitment to vaccination as a fundamental pillar of public health**, particularly in view of the upcoming EU elections.

MEP Alessandra Moretti emphasised the critical role of vaccination in disease prevention, stressing the importance of initiatives such as the MBVE in reinforcing vaccine confidence and serving the public health interest. She also highlighted the **growing attention to health in the political agenda** and the need for evidence-based decision making. However, she acknowledged that challenges arising from political and economic interests often overshadow scientific expertise, leading to fluctuations in vaccine confidence across the EU. Additionally, she highlighted the significant responsibility associated with addressing health-related issues at the political and policy levels, emphasising the importance of effective collaboration and evidence-based policymaking. In line with the European Parliament COVI Committee report and the MBVE recommendations, MEP Alessandra Moretti concluded by calling for **stronger EU coordination in vaccination strategies for better alignment across Member States**.

MEP Stelios Kypouropoulos¹ echoed the call for **increased intersectoral collaboration among stakeholders** to promote vaccine confidence and streamline efforts. He highlighted the EU's important role in addressing public health challenges, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, stressing the **need for targeted actions on vaccination and national immunisation programmes**. He highlighted the European People's Party's manifesto commitment to health matters and reaffirmed his commitment to the EU Health Union, underlining the importance of maintaining public health as a top priority, particularly in view of the upcoming EU elections. He concluded by calling for **improved alignment of decision-making processes** in light of cross-border health threats.

¹ His Political Advisor Antonios Koulianos spoke on his behalf.

Keynote presentations from OECD and the Belgian EU Presidency

Michele Cecchini, Head of the Public Health Unit at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), reflected on the broad value of vaccination, particularly from an **economic standpoint**. He emphasised that investing in vaccination policies not only benefits public health in terms of preventing diseases and protecting people at high risk, for example for antimicrobial resistance, but also brings positive returns to national economies in terms of workforce productivity. On average, across 20 EU Member States, annual expenditure for immunisation programmes amounted to only around **12.5 euros per capita** in 2019, corresponding approximately **15%** of total spending for prevention activities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, increased vaccination expenditure significantly contributed to the **reopening of economies** and mitigating economic downturns, underscoring the **vital role of vaccination in ending the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic**. Additionally, Dr. Cecchini noted that challenges such as **lack of public trust, and insufficient financing** to ensure a healthy research and development pipeline for new vaccines hinder optimal vaccination policies implementation. Mr. Cecchini highlighted the **alignment** between the MBVE's recommendations and the OECD's work, stressing the implementation of the recommendations as the next critical step forward.

Prof. Pierre Van Damme, Chair of Belgian Vaccine & Infectious Disease Institute and Full Professor at University of Antwerp, delivered a presentation on behalf of the **Belgian EU Presidency**, addressing the importance of pandemic preparedness. He highlighted the correlation between a healthy population and a healthy economy, underlining that inequalities become more apparent during crisis. Drawing lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, he raised the importance of accelerating vaccine development and production during emergencies, as well as implementing **robust immunisation policies to achieve higher coverage and improved accessibility**. Additionally, investments in **new technologies**, data sharing, and adequate vaccine delivery capacities are essential for future preparedness.

Prof. Van Damme stressed the need for **harmonisation** of regulatory approval processes across Member States and **better coordination** at both EU and national levels, supported by consistent guidelines and transparent public communication. Additionally, he highlighted the critical need for investing in data sharing and science to understand the impacts of immunisation programmes. Harmonising data and streamlining the regulatory processes for multinational clinical trials is also essential to regain lost competitiveness globally and create a more favourable environment within the EU. Prof. Van Damme concluded by raising concerns regarding declining vaccine confidence in recent data, particularly among younger populations, stressing the need for healthcare professional training and tailored communication strategies.

About the Consensus Report

The MBVE Consensus report offers actionable recommendations for strengthening immunisation targets at both European and national levels, with a particular focus on decision-making (available [here](#)). The recommendations are set out across four thematic

chapters, alongside two cross-cutting recommendations, which were presented by Working Group Chairs:

1. **Data and evidence for decision-making**, presented by **Prof. Maarten Postma**.
2. **Beliefs, perceptions, and vaccine confidence**, presented by **Dr. Emilie Karafillakis**².
3. **Citizens' access to vaccines**, presented by **Dr. João Paulo Magalhães**.
4. **Convergence and alignment**, presented by **Prof. George Griffin**.

Roundtable discussion

Following the keynote presentations, some participants³ contributed to a **roundtable discussion** and highlighted several important points:

- **Vaccination as an investment, not a cost for healthcare systems:** Emphasising vaccination as a tool that brings returns on investment is essential considering the budgetary constraints. Vaccination not only protects individuals but also safeguards economies.
- **Accessibility of vaccination:** Participants stressed the importance of ensuring vaccine accessibility for all citizens, especially considering ageing and migrant populations. Collaborative efforts with educational institutions and pharmacies were recognised as effective, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Harmonisation of immunisation policies:** There was consensus on the need for more harmonised immunisation policies across Member States by establishing European-level benchmarks to enhance confidence and trust in vaccination. Infectious diseases know no borders; therefore, it is essential to focus on common challenges and approaching by adopting strategies that are transferrable between Member States, such as standardised clinical approaches and modelling methods.
- **Health Literacy:** Improving health literacy among the general public is essential, emphasising the importance of clear and accessible information about vaccinations to empower individuals to make informed decisions about their health. Additionally, past experiences with targeted vaccination policies, such as HPV and rubella, have highlighted the necessity for consistent and clear communication from public authorities, avoiding confusion caused by inconsistent messages.
- **Involvement of citizens and patients:** Participants stressed the importance of involving citizens and patients in vaccination policies and decision-making processes, emphasising transparent communication to address public concerns and foster trust.
- **Data and electronic vaccination records:** Participants called for electronic vaccination records to empower citizens to have access to their vaccination history, as well as to prevent duplication of vaccinations, and to facilitate data collection, serving as an important information source for patients, healthcare professionals and

² Prof. Walter Ricciardi spoke on her behalf.

³ Jose Navarro Alonso (Honorary Consultant in Immunisation to the Spanish Ministry of Health), Sandra Evans (Coalition for Life-Course Immunisation), Mariano Votta (Active Citizenship Network-Cittadinanzattiva), Anca Toma (European Patients' Forum), George Griffin (Federation of European Academies of Medicine), Sibilja Quilici (Vaccines Europe), Maarten Postma (University Medical Centre Groningen), Pierre Van Damme (University of Antwerp), Zsófia Mészner (National Institute of Paediatrics Heim Pal) and Marcin Czech (Institute of Mother & Child).

public authorities. This is especially relevant when moving across borders, considering the forthcoming European Health Data Space⁴.

- **Need for evidence-driven approaches:** There was consensus on the importance of evidence-driven approaches, advocating for informed decision-making and cost-effective analysis to optimise vaccination programmes. Real-world evidence offers a more dynamic approach, allowing for the regular readjustment of immunisation programmes. This leads to increased efficiency in protecting the population and utilising resources effectively.
- **Tailoring vaccination programmes through “at-risk group approach” and “age-group approach”:** There was consensus on the importance of targeting at-risk groups and tailoring vaccination efforts to meet specific needs and vulnerabilities of different populations.
- **Life-course immunisation:** Participants stressed the importance of life-course approach to immunisation that can be achieved with practices tailored to age and risk groups. Particularly, the need to address the misalignment of adult vaccination policies across the EU was highlighted, which currently lags behind pediatric vaccination programmes. Moreover, participants agreed on the necessity for establishing milestones and benchmarks for disease protection across different age groups, moving towards greater alignment of immunisation systems across the EU.

Participants shared a common view of the key principles and strategies needed for effective immunisation programmes and policies across the EU, stressing the importance of building on the recommendations from the MBVE’s Consensus report. Vaccination stands as an important pillar in building the EU Health Union; therefore, we must continue our efforts to prioritise it and ensure that it remains a focus in next European Commission mandate.

⁴ The **European Health Data Space** (EHDS) is a health-specific data sharing framework that establishes clear rules, infrastructures, and a governance framework for the use of electronic health data. Read more [here](#).