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From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

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Subject: **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council**  
meeting on 16 June 2017

Outcomes of the workshop "Seeking new partnership for EU action on  
vaccination" (Brussels, 31 May 2017)

– *Information from the Commission*

(Any Other Business item)

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Delegations will find attached an information note from the Commission on the above mentioned subject in view of the Council (EPSCO) meeting on 16 June 2017.

**Outcomes of the Workshop**  
**"Seeking new partnerships for EU action on vaccination"**  
**(Brussels, 31 May 2017)**

Vaccination is one of the most important public health tools of the 20th century and has led to eradication of small pox, elimination of poliomyelitis from Europe, and dramatic decrease of mortality and morbidity of communicable diseases preventable by vaccination. It is estimated that worldwide vaccination prevents 2.7 million cases of measles, 2 million cases of neonatal tetanus, and 1 million cases of pertussis each year. In Europe, seasonal influenza vaccination prevents around 2 million cases each year.

However, vaccination programmes are facing challenges, such as a decline in vaccination coverage in some countries, the increasing cost of new vaccines and shortages in supply. In addition, misconceptions about vaccination can further shift the public focus from the individual and collective benefits of vaccination to increased distrust and fear of possible side effects.

In this challenging and complex environment, there is a clear added value in involving all stakeholders within the EU and in working with global partners to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of vaccination programmes.

The European Commission is ready to support Member States to improve the response to vaccine-preventable infections with a serious cross-border potential in Europe<sup>1</sup>. A Joint Action under the EU Health Programme to support national action on vaccination is also under preparation with the participation of most Member States.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter of Commissioner Andriukaitis to EU Member States Health Ministers of 25 April 2017

Therefore, the European Commission decided to organise a Workshop on "Seeking new partnerships for EU action on vaccination", which took place on 31 May 2017, to launch an action-oriented discussion and explore how cooperation at EU level can increase vaccination coverage, address shortages and strengthen routine immunisation programmes.

The event was divided into three sessions, where participants explored ideas for collaborative work and partnerships.

The first session addressed the vaccine hesitancy phenomenon, and explored new partnerships and novel solutions to address this issue. One of the main factors contributing to a critical view to vaccination seems to be its success in reducing the burden of many vaccine preventable diseases in Europe. Indeed, as the incidence of the disease decreases, people's perception of the risk associated with these diseases may also decrease, affecting in turn the perception of the perceived value of vaccines. Furthermore, misconceptions about side effects of vaccines are leading to distrust and fear about their safety.

The second session addressed the sustainability of vaccine policies in the EU and access to vaccines. Routine immunisation often faces questions related to the transparency of evidence-based decision-making, availability of data on the impact of vaccination programmes and financial sustainability of vaccination programmes. In addition, the mismatch between supply and demand led many European countries to report vaccine shortages in recent years. Taking into account the global dimension of the vaccine market, this situation requires a reflection on the improvement of forecasting and planning tools as well as an exploration of the potential of digital and e-health tools.

The last session focused on improving the effectiveness of research and development of vaccines in the EU. Europe has traditionally been a major player in vaccine research. Public research programmes, from the European Commission and Member States, as well as the industry, have invested substantially in vaccine research and development. However, despite substantial funding and policy initiatives, there are continuous challenges related to advances in vaccinology, emergence of other players and shifts in public attitude to vaccines. Furthermore, there is unrealised potential of research to address public health needs and bottlenecks in the implementation of vaccination programmes.

The workshop brought together the European Commission, Member States and Members of the European Parliament, the European Medicines Agency and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, key international organisations (WHO, UNICEF), industry, as well as healthcare professionals, patients, civil society, academics and the scientific community.

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