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From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

Subject: **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
session on 14 June 2019**
Measles situation in the EU/EEA
- Information from the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Commission services on the measles situation in the EU/EEA. This note has been prepared to provide information under "Any Other Business" at the session of the Council (EPSCO) on 14 June 2019.

EPSCO HEALTH COUNCIL – 14 JUNE 2019**INFORMATION FROM THE COMMISSION SERVICES****MEASLES SITUATION IN THE EU/EEA**

Measles is a European Union-wide health threat. Currently, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) estimates that 4.5 million children and teenagers in the EU are unnecessarily at risk of measles because of a failure to reach global vaccination targets. To this figure, we should add those infants that are too old to be protected by maternal antibodies but too young to be vaccinated (infants aged between 6 and 12-18 months) and adults (20 years and above). Of all measles cases in the EU, 35% have occurred in adults. Of deaths resulting from measles, 45% occurred in infants.

The ECDC published a risk assessment on 28 May 2019: "Who is at risk for measles in the EU/EEA? Identifying susceptible groups to close immunity gaps towards measles elimination".¹ It shows an exceptionally high number of cases reported since 2016 compared to the previous three years (2012–2015). It is important to note that, despite the fact that an effective vaccine has existed since the 1960s, every EU Member State has reported measles cases in the last three years. Furthermore, the ECDC considers that there is a high risk of continued and widespread circulation of measles in the EU/EEA in the near future, as long as significant immunity gaps and suboptimal vaccination coverage remain. In 2017, only 4 out of 30 EU/EEA countries have achieved the target of 95% vaccination coverage with two doses of measles-containing vaccine. By comparison, in 2007, 14 out of 30 countries had reached this target.

¹ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. *Who is at risk for measles in the EU/EEA?* 28 May 2019; <https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/risk-assessment-measles-eu-eea-2019>

The report identifies a number of ways forward, focusing on ensuring a high-quality routine immunisation programme. This builds on the Commission Communication and Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases adopted in 2018.² The report also contains detailed country profiles describing the epidemiology of measles per country. The Commission now intends to discuss the follow up by Member States of this risk assessment with the EU health security Committee³.

The ECDC's analysis is in line with recent data published by the World Health Organization.⁴ During the World Health Assembly in Geneva, 20-28 May 2019, Commissioner Andriukaitis; Director General WHO, Dr Tedros; and United States Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar, drew attention to the importance of vaccine confidence and highlighted the need to coordinate efforts to stop measles outbreaks. Measles is a cross-border health threat and as such, it cannot be eliminated from one region until it is eliminated from all regions.

The European Commission is organising a Global Vaccination Summit in cooperation with WHO on 12 September 2019. The Brussels event should gather some 400 participants, including political decision makers, health ministers, UN organisations, NGOs, representatives of national science academies, researchers, health care professionals, and the vaccine industry. The Summit aims to boost global political commitment to vaccination and engage political leaders and opinion makers to identify solutions and eliminate vaccine preventable diseases, such as measles.

² Commission Communication on Cooperation against Vaccine Preventable Diseases; COM/2018/245 final; Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases, OJ C 466, 28.12.2018, p. 1–7

³ Decision No 1082/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2013 on serious cross-border threats to health and repealing Decision No 2119/98/EC

⁴ <https://www.who.int/csr/don/06-may-2019-measles-euro/en/>