
Cancer Prevention Through Vaccination: EU's Plan for 2024



Europe's Beating Cancer Plan is a political commitment to turn the tide against cancer and another stepping stone towards a strong European Health Union and a more secure, better-prepared and more resilient EU. In 2020, 2.7 million people in the European Union were diagnosed with cancer, and another 1.3 million people lost their lives to it, including over 2,000 young people. Unless we take decisive action now, cancer cases are set to increase by 24% by 2035, making it the leading cause of death in the EU. About 40% of cancer cases in the EU are preventable. Safe and effective vaccines exist and could save a lot of lives. Europe's Beating Cancer Plan will have €4 billion of funding, including €1.25 billion from the future EU4Health programme.

Commission's Recommendations for Cancer Prevention through Vaccination

The Commission has therefore put forward new recommendations to support Member States in their efforts to prevent cancer through vaccination. The focus is on boosting the uptake of two key vaccinations that can prevent two viral infections that can lead to cancer: Human papillomaviruses (HPV) and Hepatitis B virus (HBV). The coverage of these vaccinations should also be monitored more closely and the new measures include:

- Boost the uptake of vaccines in all affected population groups, including by increasing confidence in vaccination
- Address barriers to vaccination, including by offering it free of charge or reimbursing costs
- Integrating HPV and HBV vaccination programmes into national cancer prevention plans
- Strengthening communication and outreach to increase awareness of vaccination as a cancer prevention tool
- Setting concrete targets and improving monitoring and reporting of vaccination coverage by implementing electronic vaccination registries to guide public health action
- Exchanging best practices.

Preventing HPV-Related Cancers: Vaccination Efforts and Targets in the EU

HPV is the most common viral infection of the reproductive tract causing a range of conditions in both women and men, including precancerous lesions that may progress to cancer. Estimates put cervical cancer cases at 28 600 occurrences, leading to 13 700 deaths every year in EU/EEA countries. 3 vaccines against HPV are authorised in the EU, and recommended for adolescent and preadolescent girls and boys. The objective is to fully vaccinate at least 90 % of the EU target population of girls and significantly increase the vaccination of boys by 2030, to ultimately eliminate cervical cancer and other cancers caused by HPV.

Combating Hepatitis B: Vaccination Strategies and Public Health Goals in the EU

HBV is a chronic infection with the virus is a major cause of chronic liver disease, cirrhosis and liver cancer. 64 000 annual deaths are caused by diseases due to HBV and Hepatitis C viruses across the EU/EEA and the UK. 12 vaccines are authorised in the EU, recommended for infants, adults at high risk and sometimes in disadvantaged situations, health professionals. The target is to boost vaccination in line with WHO 2030 targets to ultimately eliminate hepatitis as a public health threat in the WHO European Region and improve access and increase uptake of the HBV vaccination to prevent liver cancer.

Local Disparities and challenges in vaccination drive EU's Commitment to Fighting Cancer

Whereas a few Member States have vaccinated against HPV more than 90 % of adolescent or preadolescent girls with one out of the two doses that are needed for those age groups, this figure remains below 50 % in many other Member States. There is also a significant lack of data on HBV vaccination rates. Over the past five years, there have been significant EU-wide changes in public perceptions towards the importance and safety of vaccines. Whilst vaccine confidence levels differ between countries, according to vaccine type and within sociodemographic

characteristics, more efforts are needed to restore trust. The Commission has dedicated the largest budget ever to beating cancer, including €4 billion from the EU4Health programme and other instruments. EU Cancer Plan targets and intentions are fully aligned with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.

Source & Image Credit: [European Commission](#)

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