



## **ESMO Feedback - Call for Evidence**

### **Cancer prevention - action to promote vaccination against cancer-causing viruses**

The [European Society for Medical Oncology \(ESMO\)](#), as the leading professional organisation for medical oncology representing more than 28,000 oncology professionals from over 160 countries worldwide, is supportive of the efforts of the European Commission to extend routine vaccination of girls and boys against Human Papillomaviruses (HPV) and help ensure access to vaccination against the Hepatitis B virus (HBV).

Given that prevention offers the most cost-effective long-term strategy for the control of cancer according to the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>1</sup>, we are committed to drive the development of robust EU-wide strategies to help prevent new cancer cases. In this regard, ESMO fully endorses vaccination against HPV and HBV and believes that all should be done to increase vaccination rates across Europe and beyond, as this is key to driving back cancers caused by these viruses.

**ESMO welcomes the intent of the European Commission to put forward a proposal for a Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers** with the aim to support EU Member States with addressing the cancer risks related to HPV and HBV infections. Taking this measure holds the promise to improve the health and well-being of EU citizens, and it is a requisite for achieving the prevention-oriented goals of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

In order for the Council Recommendation to become a success and significantly improve vaccination coverage rates, EU citizens should be willing to accept and receive the vaccines developed to protect against HPV and HBV. ESMO as such welcomes the *Council Conclusions on vaccination as one of the most effective tools for preventing disease and improving public health*<sup>2</sup> - adopted by EU Health Ministers on 9 December 2022 - and especially the call to establish an "Expert Forum on Vaccine Hesitancy". We consider the creation of such Expert Forum to be key to strengthening the EU's efforts in fighting vaccine hesitancy, including as regards HPV and HBV vaccines, and believe that there should be close alignment between the work of this group and the development of the Council Recommendation.

What is more, once developed and adopted, robust efforts should be taken at the EU level to ensure the implementation of the Council Recommendation in practice. This entails allocating sufficient funding at the

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<sup>1</sup> [World Health Organization, Cancer \(2022\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Conclusions on vaccination as one of the most effective tools for preventing disease and improving public health \(2022\)](#)



EU level to support the Member States with implementing the recommended actions that are to be set out in the Recommendation. Special efforts should also be made to prevent and mitigate fragmented approaches towards HPV and HBV vaccination across EU Member States, and ensure that all obstacles to vaccination - both physical and non-physical - are reduced.

ESMO fully supports the efforts of the EU to drive back cancers caused by HPV and HBV infections and stands ready to engage with the EU legislators to support the development and implementation of the Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers.

*For further information, please contact: [publicpolicy@esmo.org](mailto:publicpolicy@esmo.org)*