

PROTECT-EUROPE Webinar 2 – Effective Online Resources and Strategies to Increase Vaccination

Summary and Key Takeaways

Date: Thursday, 28 November 2024, 14:00 (CET)

General Information

This event followed [Webinar 1](#), where we presented the vaccine hesitancy and strategies for. In this session, we have instead presented insights from the PROTECT-EUROPE project on the following topics:

- Improving professional knowledge and providing relevant information
- Digital communication skills and platforms for HPV prevention
- Addressing misinformation, with a focus on HPV vaccines
- The influence of peer education and influencers on vaccination decisions

Participants shared insights on targeting specific groups, utilizing digital platforms, and addressing cultural and religious factors affecting vaccination rates across Europe. The project's key deliverables, including a knowledge-sharing platform and educational resources, were highlighted, along with the importance of positive messaging and age-appropriate communication in promoting HPV vaccination.

Speakers:

- **Dr. Claire Bennett:** Reader in Health Improvement at the School of Healthcare Sciences, Cardiff University
- **Prof. Daniel Kelly:** Co-Chair, ECO HPV and Hep B Action Network

Key Takeaways:

The PROTECT-EUROPE project is a two-year initiative co-funded by the European Union that aimed to increase HPV vaccination rates among young people. The project involved 31 organizations and 16 countries, with a focus on countries with lower HPV uptake rates.

Prof. Kelly took the initial stage to discuss the significance of HPV vaccination in reducing the incidence of cervical cancer, which is the 4th most frequently diagnosed cancer and the leading cause of cancer in women globally. The HPV vaccine has been available since 2006 and is a powerful tool that offers protection from high-risk HPV types. The World Health

Organization and the European Beating Cancer Plan recommend HPV vaccination within national immunisation programmes. However, the inclusion of the vaccine in national programmes varies widely across Europe due to cultural, religious, economic, and historic factors. Over the last few years, vaccination rates have increased slowly but are still low compared to the best countries in Europe. The European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights has produced an [HPV Policy Atlas](#) to show where each country stands in terms of HPV vaccination. The need to campaign effectively with clear and consistent messaging to make vaccination an attractive offer for sexually active men was also highlighted, as they could be a source of infection for other men and women if unvaccinated.

Dr. Bennett, taking the stage then presented her team's work at Cardiff University on reviewing and summarizing effective public health campaigns, digital media, and online resources to increase vaccination rates. She highlighted specific campaigns in Ireland, Greece, and the Netherlands, emphasizing the multi-pronged approaches these countries have taken, including online resources, social media, and traditional messaging.

Dr. Bennett also highlighted the importance of targeting mothers in promoting HPV vaccination acceptance among girls, the role of mothers in decision-making about their daughters' immunisation and the need for interventions to improve HPV vaccination uptake and informed decision-making. As an example, the Netherlands' work on peer educators and the use of virtual assistants for delivering tailored feedback to mothers was showcased. She emphasised the need for short messages to gain people's attention and the effectiveness of real-life stories and testimonies in campaigns. The speakers also discussed the importance of addressing misinformation through strategic communication and the role of influencers and peer networks in amplifying vaccine messages. She concluded by summarizing the key findings of Work Package 3, emphasising the effectiveness of peer-to-peer education, real-life stories, and government-funded campaigns in increasing HPV vaccine uptake.