

ECDC launches the report 'Countering online vaccine misinformation in the EU/EEA'

The report explores the evidence base for how to counter online vaccine misinformation in the EU/EEA, current strategies used by public health authorities in a selection of EU countries, and training needs on this topic.

“Vaccine misinformation poses risks to national vaccination efforts as it can lead to increased vaccine hesitancy which, in turn, reduces vaccination uptake. Addressing the root causes for the spread of misinformation needs new approaches aimed at enhancing the public’s critical assessment, and these should involve a wide variety of actors, including (social) scientists, and communications experts”, says Mike Catchpole, ECDC Chief Scientist.

Vaccine hesitancy has been recognised as a major global health problem: in December 2018, the European Council called for stronger European cooperation against the risks posed by vaccine misinformation; and in 2019, WHO put vaccine hesitancy on their top 10 list of global health threats.

The current pandemic offers a unique insight into how rapidly vaccine misinformation can spread and why it is necessary to counter it quickly and effectively. Timely actions are needed to address emerging and evolving narratives that can adversely affect the prevention and control of COVID-19 and hamper efforts to achieve high vaccination coverage.

Research for the study included a literature review, interviews with representatives of national public health authorities from six EU Member States (Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Romania) and several pan-European and international organisations involved in countering vaccine misinformation, as well as a social media analysis in the six participating countries.

The study identifies several key actions for public health experts in Member States to take to counter online vaccine misinformation:

1. Monitoring of misinformation on social media;
2. Pre-emptive interventions aimed at promoting people’s digital, health and science literacy;
3. Correcting misinformation through debunking techniques;
4. Evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at countering online vaccine misinformation.

The study showed that existing practices for addressing online vaccine misinformation vary across Europe, and it also identified both the need and potential for expanding monitoring and evaluation of interventions being

conducted in this area. It also indicates that consideration should be given to ensuring that sufficient resources are devoted to supporting national public health authorities in these efforts.

To support public health authorities, ECDC will also develop a training package on addressing online vaccine misinformation for public health and communication professionals in the EU/EEA Member States.

[EASO welcomes agreement establishing EU Agency for Asylum](#)

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) welcomes today's political agreement reached by the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Parliament, together with the European Commission, on a new enhanced mandate that will re-establish the Agency as the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA).

The agreement sends a strong signal that the EU is committed to working in the spirit of compromise in order to improve asylum management. It is the first of the European Commission's proposals for the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) to be agreed to by co-legislators and EASO hopes that the development will serve to drive progress on the other files.



Commenting on the agreement, EASO's Executive Director, Nina Gregori, stated: *"I am delighted that through engagement with all stakeholders, Europe will soon have an asylum agency that will continue building on EASO's successes of the past years. It is a significant step in creating the **world's only multinational asylum system**. The implications of this development cannot be understated. The EUAA will be in a position to provide stronger operational and technical assistance to any Member State in managing challenges associated with asylum and reception, in line with the EU standards. Importantly, this will also lead to improved conditions for people in need of international protection."*

The new EUAA mandate will result in numerous benefits to the proper implementation of the CEAS, including by:

- Enabling the Agency to **deploy personnel to operations quicker**;
- Establishing a mandatory **reserve pool of 500 Member State experts** to be available in the case of disproportionate pressures;
- Providing for **EUAA Training** to include new topics, including the clearer inclusion of reception;
- Allowing the Agency to produce **stronger and more practical technical tools**, coordinate common analysis and publish Country Guidance;

- Establishing the independent position of a **Fundamental Rights Officer** to ensure respect for fundamental rights in all activities of the Agency;
- Enhancing the role, and independence, of the Consultative Forum of **Civil Society Organisations**;
- Establishing **EUAA liaison officers** in Member States, as well as in third countries;
- Providing the EUAA with a stronger ability to support **third countries** in their capacity building;
- Establishing a **Complaints Mechanism**; and
- Establishing a **Monitoring Mechanism, in the future**, which will allow the EUAA to monitor the operational and technical application of the CEAS.

EASO looks forward to the formal approval of the final text by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament, and its subsequent publication in the Official Journal of the European Union, in anticipation of the mandate entering into effect later this year.

The Agency's transition programme is already well under way with a view to be ready to begin implementing the main elements of its new mandate from day one.



Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: press@easo.europa.eu

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ESMA announces the appointment of James von Moltke as Chairman of the Euro Risk-Free Rates Working Group

Moltke will take over as Chair from ING's Tanate Phutrakul following the conclusion of the EUR RFR WG's initial mandate in May 2021, which culminated in a number of recommendations on euro area benchmark transition and reform.

Under Moltke's leadership, the EUR RFR WG is tasked with building on the significant progress made to date. In the short term, its focus will include advancing risk-free reference rate adoption in the euro area by promoting the widespread transition from the LIBORs across a range of financial products and identifying potential impediments to the widespread adoption of €STR.

Regional leaders commit to launch an 'Alliance of Regions for European Democracy' to enhance regions' political impact at EU level



□□□ **Apostolos Tzitzikostas (EL/EPP)**, President of the European Committee of the Regions, said: *"We all know that our Union is diverse. Some Member States are more centralised, whilst others regions hold legislative powers. But every region, regardless of their power, has a crucial impact on the national and European level. Regional and local authorities implement 70% of all EU legislation and represent one-third of public spending and half of public investments. Therefore, we cannot accept forever that others will make decisions on our behalf. Our regional and local legal responsibilities and democratic mandate must be fully taken into account at European and national level. It is time to end this democratic and legal gap. The Declaration we are adopting intends to launch a political Alliance of Regions for European Democracy. Its purpose is to improve the way regions impact EU decision making, for the benefit of our Union and the citizens it serves."*

Gustavo A. Matos Expósito (ES/PES), President of the Parliament of the Canary Islands and President of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies added: *"The regional parliaments and legislative assemblies of the EU represent the citizens of their regions, through their elected representatives, therefore they are fundamental tools to achieve the*

involvement of citizens in the process of redefining the EU in the CoFE.”

José Manuel Bolieiro (PT/EPP), President of the Autonomous Region Azores, who hosted the event, commented: *“It is our duty to promote an alliance. An alliance between all European regions, regardless of their competences within their Member States. An alliance where each of our regions finds its place and every region can count on the support of the other regions.”*

Vasco Ilídio Alves Cordeiro (PT/PES), 1st Vice President of the European Committee of the Regions and Member of the Regional Parliament of Azores concluded the event: *“ This declaration is the founding document of an Alliance of Regions for European democracy. Our mobilisation is crucial for the Conference on the Future of Europe, as local and regional authorities represent the third pillar of European democracy. We need to reinforce their political role for the implementation but also for the definition of all policies that are relevant to our communities.”*

[The Declaration](#) **“The place of regions in the European Union architecture in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe”** can be endorsed [here](#).

Quotes from other speakers at the event:

– **Mark Speich (DE/EPP)**, CoR CIVEX Chair and Secretary of State for Federal, European and International Affairs in North Rhine-Westphalia: *“Regions know better about the implementation of EU law than the national level. They are also closer to EU citizens and enterprises. Strengthening their position in the institutional structure of the EU could attribute to a better EU decision-making, and at the end to a better EU legislation.”*

– **Concepción Andreu Rodríguez (ES/PES)**; President of the Regional Government of La Rioja: *“ The participation of regional administrations in European affairs should be included in the national and regional legal systems. La Rioja is reforming its Autonomy Statute and one of the proposals is the regional participation in the European legislative process.”*

– **Rachid Madrane (BE/PES)**, President of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region: *“The regions are at the forefront of European democracy. They are often the laboratory for new practices that aim to « facilitate » democracy – I am thinking in particular of innovations in participatory democracy, such as deliberative commissions. Discussions about their place in the European architecture are therefore very important and the Brussels Parliament will actively participate in them.”*

– **Ilse Aigner (DE/EPP)**, President of State Parliament of Bavaria and President of the Conference of German state parliaments: *“In the future, the regions and their political leaders must be given sufficient degree of flexibility in Europe. Because there is only citizens’ support for the European idea if citizens are more involved – the regional parliaments as the people’s representation have in this context a central role to play as legislators and as mediators of European policy.”*

– **Massimiliano Fedriga (IT/ECR)**, President of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Region and President of the Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces: *“ Citizens look at their daily life and judge institutions and politics based on the quality of life, the availability of public services and the care of public goods that are provided to them, as well as on the wellness and the safety of the environment where they live. Therefore, we need concrete measures which should be built in the medium-long term to be financially sustainable.”*

– Antje Grotheer (DE/PES), CoR CIVEX Member and Vice-President of Bremen City Parliament: *“As those closest to the people in Europe, we in the regions know exactly what the inhabitants of Europe need. It is therefore important that our opinion is heard, our challenges seen and our solutions recognized in the EU.”*

– **Leendert Verbeek (NL/PES)**, King’s Commissioner of Flevoland and President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe: *“The region plays a unique role as a bridge between the European and national levels and local communities and citizens. Regions have the primary responsibility for ensuring territorial cohesion, social protection of citizens and their participation in democratic governance. This special role of regions must be strengthened further through their greater involvement in national and European policy making.”* □

– **Olgierd Geblewicz (PL/EPP)**, President of West Pomerania Region and President of the Association of Polish Regions: *“The Conference on the Future of Europe is a window of opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of the regional level. It is mainly about two things – first providing input for policies which are more citizen and needs-based. Second, providing more democratic legitimacy in EU’s structures. I think we as regional leaders fit both purposes excellently. Because of the variety of competences that our regions have we can deliver ideas for policies which are both needs-based and comply with the realities of implementation.”*

– **Alin-Adrian Nica (RO/EPP)**, President of Timiș County Council: *“The Conference on the Future of Europe is a historic chance for all our European territories to build the democratic house we want to live in. It is the chance for authorities and citizens to work together and generate a rethinking and revival of European policies to fit our children’s needs!”*

– **Juraj Droba (SK/ECR)**, President of the Bratislava Region: *“I am convinced that regions should become stronger partners of the EU institutions, especially when it comes to the preparation of the new programming period and EU Recovery Plan. Conference on the Future of Europe is an excellent opportunity for cities and regions to raise their voices and to call for strengthening of their role in EU policy-making.”*

Watch the conference [here](#).

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