

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.

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[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.