

GLOBSEC 2020 Bratislava Forum Healthcare Focus

“Resilient Societies – Restoring the Value of Vaccines”

October 7th, 2020

Outcome Report GLOBSEC 2020 Bratislava Forum Resilient Societies Side-event

In addition to the debates within the main programme of the GLOBSEC 2020 Bratislava Forum, GLOBSEC also organises a series of high-level, interactive (virtual) discussions on the most pressing issues that require an open dialogue.

It seems that anti-vaccine movements and vaccine scepticism are rising. Trial setbacks make headlines and foster doubt. **Strong and sound public-private cooperation messages are arguably more vital than ever to fully restore vaccine confidence.** In the calm before the storm, the key discussed topic is how to restore the value of vaccines, **ahead of the widely anticipated mass immunization programmes.**

Moderator

- ◁ John Barter, Chief Executive Officer, GLOBSEC

Key discussants

- ◁ Wider European discussants:
 - Andrea Ammon, European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), Director
 - Nicolae Ștefănuță, Member of the European Parliament, Romania
 - Nicoletta Luppi, Vaccines Europe, Member of the Executive Board; MSD Italy, President & Managing Director
- ◁ Central European discussants:
 - Professor Pavol Jarčuška, Slovak Infectological Society, President, SK
 - Pawel Abramczyk, Chief Sanitary Inspectorate, Department of Anti-Epidemic and Sanitary Protection of Borders, Director, PL
 - Dr. Ágnes Dánielisz, National Public Health Center, Head of Department, HU
 - Dr. Ágnes Galgóczy, National Public Health Center, Department of Epidemiology and Infection Control, Unit Lead, HU

Summary points

- ◁ **All recognize that high vaccine confidence is essential and all bring forward different solutions.** The questions of the growing anti-vaccine movement seem to be about communication of the transparency, safety and effectiveness of the vaccines and the development process.
- ◁ Close cooperation with the public and private sector is needed and has to be communicated to the public properly to address the growing vaccine skepticism.
 - The recent pledge from the private sector to the public there will be no compromise to stringent criteria to ensure the safety, efficacy, and manufacturing consistency of COVID-19 vaccines.
 - The EU is in the same corner, as it supports the development of safe and efficient vaccines to be available for every EU citizen as soon as possible via its advanced purchase systems and additional €2.7 billion emergency supports instruments for increased R&D efforts for risk mitigation.
 - **There is an additional proposal from the private sector to boost public confidence further via governments which is to consider exemption from liability from all parties involved in the whole vaccine development process,** as well as no-fault compensation systems to efficiently address those who are affected by potential, rare effects of Covid-19 vaccines. **As 11 member states have these**

- no-fault compensation systems in place already, it is proposed to expand it by including COVID-19 to further express its importance to the public health and to inspire member states for adoption of such a framework.**
- Finally, the private sector **strongly supports the idea from Commission President Von Der Leyen to call for a stronger European Health Union and creating an European version of the US Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) to advance in European pandemic preparedness.**
 - ◁ There has been an in-depth discussion about communication to the public and **the question to consider mandatory or voluntary vaccination programs.** The experts understand it and it is easy to communicate among the experts, but less easy to communicate to the public. However, there is evidence, and we need to go back to the basics to communicate.
 - Central Europe has a history of very successful mandatory vaccination programs with a vaccination coverage of 95-99%. In contrast, if it is voluntary, it is less successful.
 - In Hungary, every year 1.3 million influenza vaccines are free of charge for risk group but only 50 % are used and it seems that healthcare providers do not inform it properly to the public. This leads Hungarian authorities to the idea they have a role to play in informing the public.
 - In Slovakia, only 20 % of the children are vaccinated for the Rotavirus because it is not mandatory, whereas there is a far higher vaccination coverage (up to 99 %) for mandatory vaccinations.
 - The ECDC emphasizes that **mandatory does not necessarily lead to high vaccination coverage as it depends on the societal context. Voluntary vaccination can also lead to high vaccination coverage, especially if it is accompanied by proper information campaigns.** Sometimes the best message is national or even more locally dependent, so there is not per se a one size fit all approach.
 - It is clear that Poland, Slovakia and Hungary have very successful mandatory vaccination programs, but there is a concern of the growing antivaccine movement plus the massive undertaking of vaccinating everyone with the COVID-19 vaccine. There is an increased realization that this is a challenge for the vaccination habits and there is a consensus that **enhancing health literacy of the public and continuous communication from experts to the public is crucial.** Poland even states *"The anti-vaccination movement is one of the most challenging subjects in present times"*.
 - What is likely to help is that **ECDC, EMA and the Commission are working on an independent vaccination information portal with new information on the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines as soon as they are available. ECDC believes it is crucial to support the healthcare personnel with the right information as they are in direct contact with the population. Additionally, ECDC is working together with National Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) to prepare information campaigns and look how specific national approaches can be developed.**
 - Furthermore, the health personnel are the frontline and in direct communication with the public. They should receive the best possible training and receive the best support. Additionally, it is considered by many to involve non-healthcare related stakeholders, like NGOs or public figures, to endorse the message that vaccinations are vital.
 - ◁ To conclude, there is a consensus **we need to rely on experts and we need to rely on politicians to listen to experts.** The vaccination programme of the covid-19 vaccine should be depoliticized and evidence-based and should be initiated by health authorities, only later to be endorsed by politicians. **We need every expert to support this, so we can communicate to the public, so that we boost vaccine confidence together.** There is a lot to be done to improve the health literacy but clearly there is an ocean of best practices from tremendously valuable stakeholders and good-hearted people to involve in this common challenge. **We need to continue to act collaboratively with this one simple goal to uphold the health and safety for all.**