

ADOPTED RESOLUTION

EPP CONGRESS ZAGREB, 20 – 21 NOVEMBER 2019



Resolution adopted at the EPP Congress Zagreb (Croatia), 20th - 21th November 2019

Improving vaccination rates and tackling disinformation

Recognising that:

1. The importance of vaccination in improving public health globally; Vaccines have eradicated or brought under control seven major human diseases — smallpox, diphtheria, tetanus, yellow fever, whooping cough, polio, and measles. Deaths from polio worldwide have fallen 99 per cent since 1988 and more than 16m people have been saved from paralysis, according to the WHO. Eliminating smallpox has alone saved an estimated 40m lives.
2. That Europe is currently facing falling vaccination rates and this is having devastating effects on our continent; Measles cases in Europe last year exceeded 82,000, with 72 deaths. This total is three times higher than 2017 and 15 times higher than in 2016.
3. Anti-vaccination campaigns have become more prominent in recent years as populist politicians have wrapped “anti-vax” scepticism into their narrative of suspicion and hostility towards institutions and multinational companies, amplifying the message through social media. Between 2013 and 2016 in Italy, immunisations declined as rising populist parties, including the Five Star Movement and the League, fuelled scepticism about mandatory vaccinations.

Acknowledging that:

1. Vaccinations currently prevent 2-3m deaths a year worldwide and a further 1.5m lives could be saved if global vaccination rates improved.
2. The World Health Organisation has named “vaccine hesitancy” as one of the top 10 threats to global health in 2019.
3. Political commitment to immunisation is essential for optimizing the performance and impact of any immunisation programme. Through such commitment, countries recognize the importance of vaccination as a critical public health intervention and a public good and acknowledge the value that immunisation represents in terms of health, social and economic returns.
4. Social media has facilitated the spread of anti-vax propaganda; Facebook search results for groups and pages with information about vaccines were dominated by anti-

vaccination propaganda, and that YouTube's recommendation algorithm steers viewers from fact-based medical information toward anti-vaccine misinformation.

EPP calls for:

1. Member States to aim to reach a 95% vaccination rate for the diseases for which a safe, inexpensive and effective childhood vaccine is available to reach herd immunity.
2. EPP Member parties to campaign for improved vaccination rates and continued financial sustainability of national immunisation programmes.
3. Social media platforms to revise their policies on content that could misinform users in harmful ways to include anti-vaccination propaganda.
4. The EU institutions to step up for a sustained Europe-wide campaign promoting vaccination and its benefit for the population, focusing on research results providing that vaccination is vital to the health of our societies.

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