

ELIMINATION OF VIRAL HEPATITIS IN ROMANIA: LESSONS LEARNT AND THE WAY FORWARD

MEETING SUMMARY

On 17 May 2018, the ACHIEVE coalition, in cooperation with its' member Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board (VHPB), hosted a one-day meeting in Romania "Elimination of viral hepatitis in Romania: Lessons learnt and the way forward." The meeting followed the successful VHPB concept for country meetings, bringing in external experts to discuss with national decision-makers and stakeholders.

The meeting took place one year prior to the Romanian EU Council Presidency and against the background of the WHO target to eliminate viral hepatitis by 2030 and the EU's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

ACHIEVE would like to gratefully acknowledge the support provided by the Romanian Ministry of Health in advising on the organization of the conference. ACHIEVE applauds Romania's ambition to become a net contributor to the WHO Europe Action Plan to eliminate viral hepatitis by 2030 and is delighted that Romania is using EU grants to promote viral hepatitis screening. ACHIEVE would also like to extend its thanks to all the speakers and participants.

The key findings from the meeting include:

National viral hepatitis elimination plan

- Needs to be endorsed and adequately funded by the whole government, following its identification as a priority in the national health strategy;
- A national strategic committee should be formed which includes representatives of all the decision-making bodies (including Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance, National Institute of Public Health, National Insurance House), as well as stakeholders (including general practitioners, specialists, community services, patient groups, civil society);
- The strategic committee should coordinate the implementation of the plan, allocating clear and concrete responsibilities;
- The strategic committee should be led by a dedicated person within the ministry of health who should report regularly on progress;

Monitoring

- Develop and implement a functioning monitoring system along the cascade of care as a critical first step to achieve elimination, tracking progress made. This should be in line with European monitoring

criteria, currently developed by the ECDC and WHO Regional Office for Europe in cooperation with national disease control agencies;

- Link data from and between hospitals and other health care providers which need to provide the necessary information to the National Institute of Public Health;

Prevention

- Raise awareness of viral hepatitis amongst the general population and health care providers;
- Target vulnerable populations providing adequate funding for harm reduction services, such as needle exchange;
- Ensure availability of Hepatitis B vaccination;

Diagnosis/ Screening and Care

- Increase in screening for viral hepatitis B and C through targeted measures by age and risk group and consider applying for EU grants to support the programme;
- Adequately equip and train community services and general practitioners.
- Include testing and confirmation in the minimal insurance package;
- Ensure linkage to adequate treatment & care;