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The Home of Hepatology

**MEP Friends of
the Liver Group**

MEP Friends of the Liver Call to Action 'The EU must lead on viral hepatitis elimination by 2030'

On 25 October 2022, the MEP Friends of the Liver Group hosted an event *'The final push to eliminate viral hepatitis – how can the EU lead the successful achievement of this global public health priority?'* in the European Parliament. The event, supported by the European Association for the Study of the Liver and the ACHIEVE coalition, saw panel contributions from representatives of the European Commission (DGs SANTE and INTPA), the ECDC, the German Robert Koch Institute, as well as from the European Cancer Organisation.

The discussion revealed that the European Commission is on the right path with the recognition of viral hepatitis B and C in Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, as well as the funding provided to projects aimed also at eliminating viral hepatitis through the first annual work programme of EU4Health. However, it is equally clear that a lot must and can be done to ensure that the EU collectively meets the WHO's 2030 elimination deadline and also makes a significant contribution to ensure that viral hepatitis be eliminated in the EU neighbourhood and globally, supporting low-income countries.

To keep the momentum going, the MEP Friends of the Liver Group calls for the following concrete actions:

Good Practices sharing

- **Call on the European Commission's new EU Member State Expert Group** to swiftly start their selection of good practices on how to best fight viral hepatitis, also exploiting learnings and synergies in the fight against other communicable diseases. The ACHIEVE Coalition *'Stories to Inspire'*, a collection of Good Practices presented in the European Parliament on 25 October, could be discussed in this forum.

Funding and data generation

- **Call on the European Commission** to ensure that EU4Health funds are used in accordance with the project description of the **Joint Action on Cancer Prevention and health determinant** which explicitly mentions viral hepatitis detection and treatment and that Member States' proposal, expected for February 2023, will be assessed accordingly.
- **Call on Member States** to make use of this Joint Action funding to develop impactful actions to promote the elimination of viral hepatitis and reduce the burden of hepatitis-related liver cancer and liver cirrhosis.
- **Call on the European Commission** that future EU4Health Funds (2023 and beyond) are made available to:
 - 1) support the **national generation of data** on viral hepatitis along the patient pathway, so we have comparable data available on viral hepatitis.
 - 2) support **awareness, prevention, diagnosis, and linkage to care** for all people, in particular those with an elevated risk of contracting viral hepatitis and **educate and support** those healthcare professionals working in primary care.

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan initiatives

- **Call on the European Commission** and the **International Agency for Research on Cancer** to ensure that the revised **European Code Against Cancer** informs not only about hepatitis B childhood vaccination but also informs holistically on the link between cancer prevention and the importance to prevent, diagnose and treat viral hepatitis B and C by:



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- 1) Recommending vaccination against hepatitis B for adults with an elevated risk of contracting the virus, in addition to recommending universal childhood vaccination.
 - 2) Informing how to prevent infection with viral hepatitis B and C.
 - 3) Recommending testing for hepatitis B and C those who have been exposed to a transmission risk, informing them that viral hepatitis C is curable and hepatitis B can be effectively controlled.
 - 4) Ensuring access to treatment for hepatitis C as prevention, also for vulnerable populations, due to the lack of a specific hepatitis C vaccine.
- **Call on the European Commission** to close the childhood vaccination gap for hepatitis B and enable vaccination against hepatitis B for all risk groups in its proposal for a **Council Recommendation on Vaccine Preventable Cancers**.
 - **Call on the European Commission** to make hepatitis-related inequalities visible and include them in the **Cancer Inequalities Registry**, since the scope of the Registry should also include cancer prevention.
 - **Call on EU Member States** to mirror Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and include impactful actions against viral hepatitis B and C in their national cancer plans to reduce the cancer burden.

Global Health and international cooperation

- **Call on the European Commission** to renew its commitment towards hepatitis elimination and other communicable diseases, by including these in the **new EU Global Health Strategy**,
- **Call on the European Commission** to ensure that, in multilateral and bilateral funding programme and initiatives, integrated solutions to fight viral hepatitis, HIV, and other relevant communicable diseases are promoted, in line with the 2019 UN Declaration on Universal Health Coverage.
- **Call on the European Commission** to ensure that GAVI continues its roll-out of Hepatitis B vaccination for children
- **Call on EU Member States** to support the above in their own Global Health Strategies
- **Call on the European Commission** to include viral hepatitis prevention, diagnosis, and linkage care in discussions with accession countries and include standards, as is already the case for HIV.
- **Call on the European Commission** to use the learnings from the coordination of support for Ukrainian refugees and include measures to prevent, diagnose and treat viral hepatitis as part of future health emergency response.