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Providing you with news on RRI in the field of antiviral drugs and vaccines, in the framework of the ASSET project!

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ASSET Action plan on Science in Society related issues in Epidemics and Total pandemics

EDITORIAL: Final Event of the ASSET project in Rome, October 30-31

Events & News



New Horizon 2020 Work Programme “Science with and for Society” The [SWAFS Work Programme](#) 2018-2020 has been developed to reflect and support the evolution of science and society and the increased emphasis on their interplay at national and EU levels. There is recognition that co-design with citizens, stakeholders and end-users needs to be promoted in all policy instruments.

Register to the Infoday and brokerage event [here](#), on January 29th in Brussels.

Best Practice Platform: voices from coordinators In order to improve the effectiveness of the Best Practice Platform, interviews of the coordinators of some relevant initiatives have [been uploaded to the database](#). These interviews provide further information related to the European Immunization Week (EIW), Immuniser Lyon, the French Citizen Consultation on Vaccination, and the Health mediation program in Bulgaria.

The ASSET Final Event was held on October 30-31 and structured in order to reflect the ASSET Project Action Plan focusing on the six main Science in Society (SiS) themes for a Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) applied to the field of pandemic and epidemic preparedness and response. The ASSET Final Event included the brokerage event (with electronic and paper poster displays, videos, interviews, social media corners, etc.) and the conference (3 plenary sessions and two slots of 3 parallel sessions each).

During the first plenary session on October 30th, the ASSET project has been presented to the stakeholders. In line with the European research programme, Michael Sulzner (European Commission, DG Health) presented relevant strategical topics and projects related to vaccination at the EU level, such as the Influenza preparedness in the context of the One Health Strategy, the challenges related to seasonal influenza vaccination, and the Joint Action on vaccination currently under preparation (starting early 2018).

In the afternoon, 3 parallel sessions took place on the following issues: “Unsolved questions and open access”; “Participatory governance and Science education”; “Ethical issues”.

The second plenary session, on October 31st, aimed to discuss vaccine hesitancy based on the Italian experiences and perspectives. In this respect, the Italian national and local level were represented by Stefania Iannazzo from the Italian Ministry of Health, and by Alberto Perra from a Local Health Unit.

Indeed, in January 2017, a new vaccination schedule was adopted at the Italian national level, with an increased planned supply of vaccines, especially during the first year of life, and a recent Law enforcing compulsory immunization with 10 vaccines mandatory. The tangible effect of vaccination hesitancy and influence of the recent law were discussed during the plenary session.

Following this plenary session, 3 parallel sessions took place on relevant RRI issues: “A matter of policy”, “Lay public engagement - let’s be social”, “Gender implications”. Lastly, the third plenary session was based on the perspectives on the European research focusing for example on the open scientific issues.

FOCUS: New insights on unsolved scientific questions related to pandemics

New Vaccines against Epidemic Infectious Diseases Recently published in the New England Journal of Medicine, this [article](#) presents the newly formed international Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) which aims to stimulate, finance, and coordinate the development of vaccines against epidemic infectious diseases, especially in cases in which market incentives alone are insufficient.

Risk Communication in times of an epidemic or pandemic Read our [5th ASSET paper series](#) on the positives and negatives of using modern technology to communicate risk.

 **European Patients' Academy on Therapeutic Innovation**

is a patient-led initiative that uses training courses, educational material and an online public library for empowering patients to engage more effectively in the development and approval of new treatments and become true partners in pharmaceutical research and development. [Learn more here.](#)

The final event organised by the ASSET consortium was a great opportunity to discuss further the unsolved scientific questions related to pandemics and epidemics and to present the project's results achieved in this field.

Following the proposals of the *Experts Groups on Science, H1N1 and Society*, designed by the European Commission, the ASSET project elaborated a [Reference guide](#) on unsolved scientific questions raised by the H1N1 and the associated crisis management. The aim of this work was to outline – by stressing the viewpoint of Science in Society - the main unsolved scientific questions regarding epidemics and pandemics, focusing on the H1N1 2009 pandemic. We complemented our analysis by means of a questionnaire, sent to experts in the field of pandemics and epidemics, and of a focused workshop.

We observed large heterogeneities across Europe in legal systems, various initiatives taken by the Member States and heterogeneous results obtained in terms of vaccine delivery, vaccination uptake, and infectious controls measures.

The analysis of risk communication (RC) showed the lack of transparency and coherence of the process and the messages transmitted by authorities. Rumors and suspicions regarding adverse effects of vaccines have shaken people's trust in vaccination, contributing to what is known as a post-trust society. The most frequently research areas considered as "vital" for future pandemic preparedness were: effectiveness of antiviral drugs; technology transfer, mechanism of virus emergence; epidemiological tool for early detection of outbreaks; standardization and flexibility of pandemic plans; sociological aspects of vaccination, efficiency of social distancing and how to optimize the use of mathematical models.

In conclusion, establishment of a real framework by the Member States to identify avenues for improvement of future influenza pandemics management is warranted. Re-building the trust in the current "post-trust" society requires effective RC campaigns that consider the social and cultural heterogeneity of the target population. It is also crucial to exploit and anticipate the role of Social Networks and Internet and integrate their use in communication strategies. Risk communication can no more be unidirectional but, to some extent, it ought to be bidirectional.

ASSET PROGRESS: Completion of 15 local initiatives all over Europe

Gender stereotypes in medical and research practices

Down with clichés! is a Web-series available to the public, physicians and researchers. These [6 video-clips](#) alert us about gender stereotypes in medical and research practices to improve health care for women and men. Partners: Inserm, CNRS, MEDSRI, University Paris-Diderot, University Paris II and the Institut universitaire de France.

The big challenge of communicating about vaccines safety

Vaccines are very safe, but occasionally they can cause severe reactions. Patrick Zuber, group leader of the WHO Vaccine Safety team, says that it is very important to explain to the public what we know about this risk and how we can reduce them. However, even more important is to explain the benefits of vaccines. Last but not least, people should be informed of what is in place to monitor and continuously ensure the safety of vaccine.

[Watch the video](#)

As explained in our previous newsletters, the aim of the ASSET local Initiatives was to promote mobilization and mutual learning at local level and to enhance the transferability of the most effective policies and practice.

The project's partners have developed 15 local initiatives in many diverse cities (Rome, Milan, Lyon, Dublin, Athens, Brussels, Oslo, Sofia, Bucharest, Geneva, Haifa) involving different kind of stakeholders (family doctors, nurses, educators, health care providers, public health officers, policy-makers, communicators, consumers, students, etc.) The overall goal of this investigation has been set out in order to:

- capture the “spirit of the place” in line with infectious outbreaks, the specific way(s) in which people living in a given city or region perceive and react to the pandemic threat;
- involve the local stakeholders to share information, decisions and relevant policies/practices at community level.

The complete overview (see table on the next page), it is clear that health care workers (HCW) and students are the targets most suitable to mobilization and mutual learning action: 6 local initiatives to professionals and other 6 to the young people. These initiative with young people and children confirmed that collaboration with schools remains a common health promotion practice.

Three local initiatives address peculiar development settings: airport, museum of comics and international stakeholder community. About topics, vaccination represents the core focus of ten local initiatives but is mentioned in the others as well.

Four initiatives are designed to be based on experiences or results of the citizen consultations delivered in 2016, and 3 events dealing with broader concepts such as health emergency preparedness and response.

Furthermore, women were directly involved in 8 initiatives.

The detailed results of those initiatives are fully available in the [Deliverable 5.3](#)



Overview of local initiatives developed by the project's partners:

CITY PARTNER	TARGET(S)	ISSUE(S)
Rome ISS	High school students	Preparedness and response towards epidemics and pandemics
	Professional networks involved in the field	Community resilience
	HCWs, pregnant and/or breastfeeding women	Vaccinations among HCWs in epidemics and/or pandemics
Lyon LYONBIO-POLE, IPRI	Medical students and resident medical doctors at University	Respiratory infectious disease: the role of vaccination and personal behaviours
	Relevant stakeholders of this initiative	Promotion of immunization programs at local level
Dublin EIWH	Pregnant/ recently pregnant women; public health doctor; primary care team; midwifery representative; local women's group	Influenza vaccination in pregnancy
Oslo FFI	Health professionals/ authorities/ agencies working on preparedness and response for epidemics and pandemics	Results of Citizen consultation; Crises- and risk communication; Vaccination with particular concern to HCWs and pregnancy
Athens PROLEPSIS	HCWs, Medical or nursing university students	Vaccine preventable diseases (VPD): role of HCWs; barriers, and appropriate materials; preparing local communities for epidemics and pandemics
Sofia NCIPD	HCWs, Health Care Students	Practical information about prophylactic measures and behaviour during influenza epidemics and pandemic, risk communication; vaccination; citizen consultation.
Brussels TIEMS	Public Health and Civil Protection Authorities and/or manager	Results from citizen consultations, mainly on participatory governance as a management policy
Geneva DMI	General population	Vaccine adherence
Bucharest UMFCD	HCWs, medical students, general population	Knowledge and attitudes towards epidemics and pandemics; Community knowledge, attitude and practice regarding epidemics and pandemics
Haifa HU	High school students	Science-orientation/ education by using artistic tools (comics, painting, photography, etc.): correlation between hygiene, transmission of infectious diseases
Milan ZADIG	Police/army/law enforcement officers	Management of emerging infectious diseases crises in an airport setting
	People visiting the Museum	Vaccine hesitancy

Thank you for having followed the main RRI achievements of the ASSET project!

All project's results are available on our website: <http://www.asset-scienceinsociety.eu/>

Don't forget to read our report summarizing all the project objectives and its achievements <http://www.asset-scienceinsociety.eu/pages/final-summary-report>

