

ACHIEVE

Questions and Answers

Q. What is ACHIEVE?

[ACHIEVE](#) (Associations Collaborating on Hepatitis to Immunize and Eliminate the Viruses in Europe), is a multi-stakeholder coalition bringing together the hepatitis community in Europe, comprising patients, NGOs working with at-risk groups, clinicians and public health experts. The following organisations are involved as members of the coalition through their representatives: EASL International Liver Foundation, the World Hepatitis Alliance, the European Liver Patients' Association (ELPA), the Hepatitis B and C Public Policy Association, the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal), the European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG), the Correlation Network, and the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board (VHPB). Although these organisations had been working together informally for some time, the coalition was officially launched on 6 June 2017 during an event in the European Parliament hosted by MEP Karin Kadenbach (S&D, Austria). The work of the coalition is financially supported by Abbott, AbbVie, CEPHEID and Gilead Sciences. ACHIEVE is in regular dialogue with public institutions such as WHO Europe, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), and Health Protection Scotland.

Q. What are the ACHIEVE coalition's goals?

Speaking with one voice, ACHIEVE's aims to secure political will and adequate policy measures to support the elimination of viral hepatitis B and C in Europe by 2030, in line with the WHO Global health sector strategy on viral hepatitis 2016-2021 and the WHO Europe Action plan for the health sector response to viral hepatitis in the WHO European Region, which supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To achieve this goal, the coalition engages with policy makers at EU level (European Commission, Parliament and Council), to make viral hepatitis elimination a political priority and to ensure Member States receive adequate support and guidance. Particular emphasis is placed on improving monitoring tools to track progress made, improving diagnosis and access to adequate therapy for all those infected with viral hepatitis.

Q. What have been the ACHIEVE coalition's successes to date?

Since its launch, the ACHIEVE coalition has been liaising with EU policy makers, such as Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and European Commission officials to increase their commitment and elevate the issue of viral hepatitis elimination on the political agenda. Members of the coalition have also been cooperating with ECDC and EMCDDA to support their efforts in developing adequate monitoring mechanisms.

As a result of ACHIEVE's advocacy, in July 2017 the European Parliament called on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to put in place an EU-wide harmonised surveillance programme for viral hepatitis C and urged EU institutions and Member States to consider the possibility of updating the Dublin Declaration to put HIV, viral hepatitis and TB on an equal footing, as part of its [Resolution on the EU's response to HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis \(TB\) and Hepatitis C](#).

The European Commission's [Staff Working Document](#) on "Combatting HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis and Tuberculosis in the European Union and Neighbouring Countries" from July 2018 also followed ACHIEVE's argument that as far as

viral hepatitis is concerned, Europe is flying blind and that there are major gaps and limitations in the data available. This is mainly due to the fact that to date, there has not been a systematic, comprehensive EU-wide system able to support countries in developing reliable surveillance programmes to assess progress on elimination and to inform an effective and coordinated response.

Following the publication of the Staff Working Document, the ACHIEVE coalition organised a panel discussion on “EU 2019-2024: How to Support Viral Hepatitis Elimination in Line with the WHO Global Strategy and the UN SDG goals?” in the European Parliament, co-hosted by MEPs Cristian-Silviu Buşoi (EPP, Romania) and Karin Kadenbach (S&D, Austria). During the event, three key priorities were identified which need to be addressed during the next EU legislature to make elimination across Europe a reality by 2030.

- Monitoring
- Diagnosis of all those infected with viral hepatitis
- Treatment for those outside the health system, such as people who are injecting drugs (PWIDs), the home-less and migrants.

ACHIEVE has been very vocal with the European Commission, the European Parliament and Member States to ensure these priorities are reflected in the EU's future endeavours to fight viral hepatitis.

To address the need for better monitoring data, ECDC has recently established a set of indicators in close cooperation with WHO Europe and national disease control agencies to monitor the response to the epidemics of hepatitis B and C in the EU/EEA. However, the success of the ECDC monitoring system will depend to a large extent on the availability and quality of national data along the cascade of care.

For this reason, in February 2019, ACHIEVE suggested the inclusion of two amendments in the European Parliament's Annual Strategic Report on Implementation and Delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals to MEPs. The amendments call on EU Member States to commit to effective monitoring for viral hepatitis, in line with the indicators established by the ECDC and call on the European Commission to closely monitor this process in line with its commitment to the UN SDGs. They were adopted in the final vote on the report in the Parliament's plenary session in March 2019.

ACHIEVE also wrote to the Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans to express its concerns over the way the European Commission's [Reflection Paper “Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030”](#) describes the epidemiological situation of viral hepatitis in the EU (namely the statement that “deaths in the EU due to hepatitis fell rather steadily between 2002 and 2015”) and to urge the Commission to make the fight against the disease a priority for the new legislature.

Thanks to ACHIEVE's advocacy efforts, the Romanian presidency held a discussion on best practice in the fight against hepatitis during the informal Health Council on 15 April 2019 that gathered all health ministers from the EU Member States. This was the first time that hepatitis was discussed in its own right in such a setting. Ahead of the meeting, ACHIEVE, supported by national partners, contacted health ministers of relevant Member States to highlight its priorities for the discussion.

Finally, in line with the focus of health ministers on good practice, ACHIEVE is currently working on a good practice compendium aimed at helping policy makers design and implement policy measures to reach the 2030 elimination goals. The good practice compendium shall be launched in autumn 2019.

<http://achievehepatitiselimination.eu/contact/>