



A Shared Vision for
SOUTHEAST EUROPE
ELIMINATING HPV CANCERS TOGETHER

JOINT DECLARATION 'MESSAGE ACROSS BORDERS' – MAY 2026 EDITION A Regional Call to Action to Eliminate HPV in Southeast Europe

Preamble

We, the undersigned, representing the countries and organisations in the Southeast Europe region, acknowledge the significant public health challenge posed by the human papillomavirus (HPV) and its associated cancers and other diseases. In line with the World Health Organization's global strategy to eliminate cervical cancer and the objectives of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, we hereby commit to working collaboratively towards the elimination of HPV-related diseases for people of all genders in the region.

1. Strengthening Data and Monitoring Systems

We emphasise the critical importance of robust data collection and public registry systems as the foundation of effective HPV policies. Comprehensive, high-quality data enable evidence-based decision-making, facilitate policy implementation and cross-border collaboration, and ensure accountability. We commit to developing and maintaining population-based registries to monitor HPV prevalence, vaccination coverage, and screening outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM "CLOSING THE GAPS – THE STATUS OF CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMMES IN EUROPE"



Link vaccination, screening, and cancer registries at the individual level to monitor the full prevention pathway



Adopt EU-standard performance indicators and publish results annually through accessible public dashboards

'Closing the Gaps' provides examples of good practice in data and monitoring systems from the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ECO GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE ON HPV VACCINATION



Periodically monitor shifts in circulating HPV types to keep vaccination strategies aligned with evolving epidemiology



Ensure interoperability with screening and cancer registries to support coordinated programme management and policy decision-making



Establish vaccination registries that track HPV coverage by age, sex, and geography, with public dashboards enabling accountability and corrective action

The Guide provides examples of good practice in data and monitoring systems from Lithuania, Slovakia, Norway, and Portugal. Finland, and Denmark.

This Joint Declaration was originally agreed and published at the first Southeast Europe HPV elimination conference in Sofia, Bulgaria in January 2025. This second edition, including greater guidance on the mechanisms for achieving the asks of the Declaration was published at the second Southeast Europe HPV cancer elimination conference in Bucharest, Romania in May 2026.

2. Engaging Stakeholders for Collective Action

We recognise that eliminating HPV requires collaboration among diverse stakeholders. We commit to building partnerships that promote awareness, drive resource mobilisation, and strengthen advocacy efforts, ensuring a cohesive approach to achieving our common objective.

FROM "CLOSING THE GAPS – THE STATUS OF CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMMES IN EUROPE"



Use targeted, multi-channel outreach, combining invitations, educational materials, and community health workers, as combined approaches consistently outperform single methods



Engage NGOs and local leaders to build trust, dispel stigma, and promote screening participation in underserved communities



Train healthcare providers in culturally sensitive communication

'Closing the Gaps' provides examples of good practice in communication and engagement with stakeholders from England.

FROM THE ECO GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE ON HPV VACCINATION



Embed sustained, institutionalised communication, using trusted messengers including GPs, nurses, pharmacists, and community actors



Involve patient organisations, parent-teacher associations, and community health mediators, particularly for underserved groups and hesitant parents

The Guide provides examples of good practice in data and monitoring systems from Lithuania, Slovakia, Norway, and Portugal. Finland, and Denmark.

3. Expanding Gender-Neutral Vaccination Coverage

We commit to scaling up vaccination programmes to achieve high coverage rates across all eligible populations, ensuring equitable access regardless of gender and addressing barriers such as hesitancy, misinformation, and logistical challenges.

FROM "CLOSING THE GAPS – THE STATUS OF CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMMES IN EUROPE"



Vaccination and screening must advance together; high HPV vaccination coverage among females and males is the essential first step toward eliminating all HPV-related cancers.

FROM THE ECO GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE ON HPV VACCINATION



Embed sustained, institutionalised communication, using trusted messengers including GPs, nurses, pharmacists, and community actors



Involve patient organisations, parent-teacher associations, and community health mediators, particularly for underserved groups and hesitant parents

The Guide provides examples of good practice in gender-neutral vaccination from Sweden, Poland, Ireland and Slovenia.

4. Enhancing Screening Programmes

We commit to implementing national cervical cancer screening programmes, standardising protocols across the region, and integrating innovative screening technologies, providing training for healthcare providers.

FROM "CLOSING THE GAPS – THE STATUS OF CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMMES IN EUROPE"



Transition to organised, population-based programmes with call-recall systems



Adopt primary HPV DNA testing as the universal screening standard; phase out cytology-based primary screening



Integrate self-collection to reach under-screened populations

'Closing the Gaps' provides examples of good practice in enhancement of screening programmes from the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Slovenia, Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

FROM THE ECO GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE ON HPV VACCINATION



Embed screening within the same governance frameworks as vaccination; national cancer plans should position both as an integrated prevention strategy



Demonstrate publicly how vaccination and screening together reduce HPV cancer burden, this builds sustained confidence in both interventions

5. Addressing Common Challenges Together

We acknowledge the shared challenges that hinder progress, including disparities, resource limitations, and cross-border issues. We commit to exchanging knowledge, sharing best practices, and seeking joint solutions to overcome these obstacles. Regional cooperation will be pivotal in advancing our collective capacity to eliminate HPV-related diseases. In response to these challenges, we call upon national governments, the World Health Organization and other UN Agencies to take action on the following priorities:

FROM "CLOSING THE GAPS – THE STATUS OF CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMMES IN EUROPE"



Address the east-west divide: cervical cancer incidence in Eastern Europe is almost double that of Western Europe



Adopt the European Health Data Space (EHDS) framework to enable cross-border data exchange and regional benchmarking

'Closing the Gaps' provides a regional example of good practice from Slovenia, through the ZORA programme.

FROM THE ECO GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE ON HPV VACCINATION



Vaccine hesitancy is a documented regional challenge; Bulgaria's 'Vaccines School' offers a replicable model



Establish shared cross-border advisory mechanisms, drawing on National Immunisation Technical Advisory Groups (NITGAs) or equivalent structure

The Guide provides a regional example of good practice from Bulgaria, through the 'Vaccines School' programme.

DOWNLOAD "CLOSING THE GAPS – THE STATUS OF CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMMES IN EUROPE"



europeancancer.org/closing-gaps-cervical-cancer



READ THE ECO GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE ON HPV VACCINATION



europeancancer.org/vaccinationguide



Supporting Organisations:

