



Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board

VHPB technical meeting

Addressing Hepatitis A in Europe in 2026 –
Challenges, Strategies, and Opportunities

13-14 October 2026

Antwerp, Belgium

DRAFT AGENDA

MEETING INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) remains a significant, yet often overlooked, public health concern in Europe. While global and regional strategies, such as the WHO's goal to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030, have focused primarily on hepatitis B and C. Although no chronic form exists, HAV continues to cause outbreaks, hospitalizations, and disruption, particularly in high-risk populations.

Improved sanitation and declining natural immunity have shifted the age of primary infection upward, increasing the risk of symptomatic disease in adolescents and adults. At the same time, international travel, migration, foodborne transmission, and outbreaks among vulnerable groups continue to challenge existing prevention efforts. Vaccine-preventable and entirely controllable, HAV demands renewed attention within the broader hepatitis elimination agenda.

This meeting seeks to assess the current HAV landscape in the WHO-Euro region, identify gaps in prevention strategies, document the value and impact of HAV vaccine and vaccination, and explore opportunities for coordinated action.

For more information on the current and previously organised VHPB meetings on HAV, please visit: www.vhpb.org.

MEETING OBJECTIVES

- 1. Review the current HAV epidemiological landscape, burden of disease and immunity gaps in the WHO-Euro region.** Analyse trends in incidence, outbreaks, and immunity gaps, highlighting key risk groups and regional disparities.
- 2. Discuss transmission risks and diagnosis.** Assess the role of travel, migration, and foodborne exposure in shaping HAV risk, and discuss interventions such as risk-based screening, pre-travel vaccination and increasing public awareness.
- 3. Compare and evaluate national HAV prevention strategies and outcomes.** Examine the impact of universal and targeted vaccination (e.g. food handlers, MSM, teachers, travellers...), with lessons learned from country/regional case studies to identify good practices and implementation gaps.
- 4. Assess long-term protection.** Review current evidence on the durability of immunity following vaccination.
- 5. Promote evidence-based, cost-effective policymaking for HAV prevention.** Highlight health economic evaluations and scientific evidence that can inform national policies, strengthen surveillance, and support alignment with WHO viral hepatitis elimination goals.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- **Strategic guidelines for effective HAV prevention and vaccination policies**, including identification of immunity gaps
- **Policy-relevant evidence and economic analyses** to support sustainable, data-driven decision-making at national and regional levels
- **Strengthened collaboration between policymakers, public health specialists, healthcare professionals, and academic researchers**, fostering integration of HAV strategies within broader hepatitis elimination frameworks

TARGET AUDIENCE (± 50 PARTICIPANTS)

- Public health experts, policy makers, healthcare providers, civil society and academics/experts involved in prevention and control of viral hepatitis
- VHPB advisors
- Some selected observers

VENUE

Hof van Liere, University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium (Hybrid)

DRAFT MEETING AGENDA

Day 1 – 13 OCT 2026

SESSION 1: OPENING AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

Chairs: Pierre Van Damme – Sema Mendal

09:00-09:40 Welcome & introduction of participants

Meeting objectives (Greet Hendrickx)

SESSION 2: VIRAL HEPATITIS A IN 2026 – EPIDEMIOLOGY AND SURVEILLANCE

09:40-10:10 **Hepatitis A in Europe 2026 – an overview of epidemiology and surveillance systems**

[Seroprevalence and susceptibility to hepatitis A in the European Union and European Economic Area: a systematic review - PubMed](#)

[Hepatitis A notifications in the EU/EEA, 2010-2019: what can we learn from case reporting to the European Surveillance System? - PubMed](#)

Pier Luigi Lopalco

10:10-10:30 **HAV emerging challenges**

[ECDC releases risk assessment with actions needed to address spike in hepatitis A cases \(2025\) /](#)

https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Multi-country_outbreak_of_HepA_June_2025.pdf

(Public Health Authority of Slovak Republic) (TBC)

10:30-10:50 **HAV beyond Europe**

Noele Nelson

10:50-11:00 **Q&A**

11:00-11:30 **COFFEE BREAK**

SESSION 3: HEPATITIS A SURVEILLANCE AND DIAGNOSIS

Chairs: Rui Tato Marinho – Noele Nelson

11:30-11:50 **Wastewater monitoring**

[Use of passive samplers as sewage surveillance tool to monitor a hepatitis A outbreak at a school in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Oct 2022 - March 2023 - PubMed](#)

Remy Schilperoort

- 11:50-12:05 **The role of the EU Reference Laboratory for Public Health on Food- and Water-borne Viruses (EURL-PH-FWDV)**
Harry Vennema
- 12:05-12:25 **HAV diagnostic tests – challenges and opportunities**
Sema Mandal
- 12:25-12:45 **Q&A**
- 12:45-13:05 **Population based research on the evidence for vaccination once in a lifetime**
Jaime Perez
- 13:05 -14:00 **LUNCH BREAK**

SESSION 4: HEPATITIS A VACCINES

Chairs: Sandra Dudareva – Angela Dominguez

- 14:00-14:20 **Hepatitis A Vaccines - Update from SAGE**
[Hepatitis A vaccines: WHO position paper, October 2022](#)
Kassiani Mellou (WHO SAGE, ONLINE)
- 14:20-14:40 **Scientific evidence for the use of one dose**
[Single-Dose Hepatitis A Immunization: 7.5-Year Observational Pilot Study in Nicaraguan Children to Assess Protective Effectiveness and Humoral Immune Memory Response - PubMed](#)
Christian Herzog
- 14:40-15:00 **Needs to achieve global immunity through vaccination**
[Achieving global immunity against hepatitis A through universal vaccination: a position paper from the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Study Group for Viral Hepatitis - PubMed](#)
Oana Săndulescu
- 15:00-15:20 **Q&A**
- 15:20-15:50 **COFFEE BREAK**

SESSION 5: ECONOMIC ANALYSIS, HEALTH LITERACY AND VACCINATION WILLINGNESS

Chairs: Thomas Vanwolleghem – Sema Mendal

15:50-16:10 **Impact of Hepatitis A vaccination in Spain: Evolution of Hospitalization**

Pere Godoy

16:10-16:30 **Viral hepatitis knowledge and awareness**

[Viral hepatitis knowledge and vaccination awareness among men who have sex with men \(MSM\) in 43 countries of the WHO European Region: results from the European MSM Internet Survey, EMIS-2017 - PubMed](#)

Sandra Dudareva

16:30-16:45 **Q&A**

16:45-17:05 **Duration of protection**

[Thirty years of hepatitis A epidemiology and vaccine studies: A narrative review of lessons learned in Alaska - ScienceDirect / Hepatitis A vaccine immunogenicity 25 years after vaccination in Alaska - PubMed](#)

Brian McMahon (ONLINE)

17:05-17:45 **Interactive discussions**

- Universal vaccination vs risk based vaccination (travel, food handlers)
- Cost effectiveness analyses
- Challenges and needs with regards to health literacy and vaccination willingness

CLOSING OF DAY 1

Day 2 – 14 OCT 2026

SESSION 6: VACCINATION AND OUTBREAK POLICIES

Chairs: Silvia Bino – Sandra Dudareva

09:00-09:20 **Hepatitis A outbreak characteristics: A comparison of regions with different vaccination strategies in Spain**

Angela Dominguez

09:20-09:40 **Examples of outbreak management**

1. [Hepatitis A outbreak among MSM in Berlin due to low vaccination coverage: Epidemiology, management, and successful interventions - PubMed](#) (10min)
Ruth Zimmermann (ONLINE)
2. [Ongoing outbreak of hepatitis A associated with sexual transmission among men who have sex with men, Portugal, October 2023 to April 2024 - PubMed](#)
Rui Tato Marinho

09:40-10:00 **[Hepatitis A prevention in the USA depends on routine universal childhood vaccination - The Lancet](#)**

Noele Nelson

10:00-10:30 **Q&A and interactive discussion on needs for policy change**

10:30-11:00 **COFFEE BREAK**

SESSION 7: GROUPS DISCUSSION

Chairs: Greet Hendrickx

11:00-12:00 **Groups debate – lessons learnt**

Hepatitis A prevention and control recommendations

12:00-13:30 **LUNCH BREAK**

SESSION 8: SUMMARY AND CLOSING OF THE MEETING

Chairs: Pierre Van Damme

13:30-14:00 **Meeting Summary**

David FitzSimons

14:00-14:15 **Closing of the meeting**