

Social Media Strategy Outline

Version: 19.02.2024

1. INTRODUCTION – SOCIAL MEDIA IN HEALTH-RELATED COMMUNICATION

Social media plays an important role in health information-seeking and decision-making. Individuals use social media to obtain such information and engage with peers.

However, there are several challenges for health-related communications on social media due to the diverse nature of online communities, the rapid spread of information, and the potential for misinformation and disinformation. Especially, if communication is related to vaccination (as a prevention strategy).

Overview of existing literature on communicating HPV (vaccination) on social media suggests that social media can increase awareness and knowledge but has only limited effects on health behaviours related to HPV vaccination (vaccination uptake).

Still, social media health interventions can cost-effectively provide education about HPV infection, related diseases, and prevention strategies (including vaccination), offer interactive environments to alleviate parental vaccine hesitancy, and ultimately help adolescents engage in HPV vaccine uptake.

HPV, and especially HPV vaccination, is a popular topic on social media. Whereas pro-vaccine messages report factual information and appeal to logic, antivaccine messages appeal to emotion and may overrule the logical reasons a person would choose to vaccinate against HPV and thus depress vaccine uptake.

These data have important implications for social media message framing and strategies to encourage HPV vaccination. And it also informed our approach and strategy, which will be presented shortly. Still, social media communication needs to be seen as an integral part of a broader communication strategy encompassing various and diverse communication channels and tools.

2. MAIN OBJECTIVE:

- Raise awareness about HPV infection, related diseases, and prevention strategies among adolescents and young adults (AYA) and their parents or guardians.

Specifically:

- Ensuring that individuals within the target groups are fully informed and aware of the availability and benefits of HPV vaccination as a critical preventative measure.

3. TARGET AUDIENCES

- Primary: Adolescents and young adults
- Primary: Parents or guardians of adolescents and young adults
- Secondary: EU and national stakeholders, healthcare professionals

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While the influence of parents on vaccination decisions is often essential, young people are increasingly becoming more involved in personal health-related decision making. This suggests the importance of tailoring HPV vaccination information to both parents and young people. Young people use social media at the highest rate of all age-groups, revolutionizing how they share and receive ideas and information, including health-related content. Thus, social media platforms represent a crucial way to reach an important audience with recommended HPV messaging.

EU and national stakeholders as well as individuals, including healthcare providers, who are crucial for recommending and advocating for the HPV vaccine, are identified (only) as secondary publics. Thus, they will not be addressed directly through social media platforms as these will be reserved for target communication to adolescents and young adults and their parents or guardians. To reach secondary audiences, especially healthcare providers and workers, more suitable communication channels, tools and activities will be identified in the general communications strategy.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

There are around 682 million social media users in Europe. The majority of Europeans use Facebook (67%), WhatsApp (61%) and YouTube (56%). Twitter / X is one of the least used social media platforms in Europe (and globally).

Social media users by age group¹:

- **8–11 years:** TikTok and WhatsApp are most used social media platforms (32%), followed by YouTube (27%), Snapchat (24%) and Facebook (20%).
- **12–15 years:** WhatsApp is the most popular social media platform (80%), followed by Snapchat (62%), Instagram (46%) and TikTok (44%).
- **15–24 years:** Instagram is the most used social media platform (79%), followed by YouTube (76%), WhatsApp (63%), Facebook (54%), TikTok (49%) and Snapchat (43%).
- **25–39 years:** Facebook is the most popular social media platform (73%), followed by YouTube (67%), WhatsApp (65%), and Instagram (59%). Messenger, a Facebook-associated platform, is used by 45% of this age group.
- **40–54 years:** Facebook is highly prevalent with a usage rate of 72%, followed by WhatsApp (64%), YouTube (57%), Instagram (40%), and Messenger (37%).

While most of the popular social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) require users to be at least 13 years of age before they can register, it is important to note that some users join at a younger age, and they can be effectively reached through targeted communication, especially on TikTok.

Facebook

- A social networking site where users can post updates, share photos, and interact with friends and groups. On Facebook, users can create posts that include text, images, videos, and links with no specific limit on text length, although shorter texts often perform better. Facebook Stories are short, lasting 20 seconds and disappearing after 24 hours. Videos on Facebook can

¹ Sources:

- [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes 2023 \(ofcom.org.uk\)](https://www.ofcom.gov.uk/consult/condocs/childrenparents/childrenparents2023/childrenparents2023.pdf)
- [In Europe TV and Facebook still rule, TikTok and podcasts are on the rise: A look at EU media habits \(mediaproducers.com\)](https://www.mediaproducers.com/news/2023/04/in-europe-tv-and-facebook-still-rule-tiktok-and-podcasts-are-on-the-rise-a-look-at-eu-media-habits/)

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be up to 240 minutes long, with a recommended file size of under 4 GB. Facebook Live allows for streaming for up to 8 hours, requiring a strong and stable internet connection.

Instagram

- A photo and video-sharing app with a focus on visual content. Instagram offers posts that can be either photos or videos. Video posts can be up to 60 minutes long. Stories on Instagram last up to 60 seconds and vanish after 24 hours, and they can include interactive elements like GIFs and polls. They can be saved to Highlights on the user's profile. Reels, similar to TikTok, are short videos lasting up to 90 seconds. The Live feature video length is 4 hours.

YouTube

- A video-sharing website where users can upload, view, and comment on videos. YouTube allows for videos with no length limit. It also supports live streaming without a time limit, subject to quality and connectivity requirements. YouTube Shorts are quick videos similar to those on TikTok, capped at 60 seconds.

TikTok

- A platform for creating and sharing short videos, often featuring music, dance, or humour. TikTok primarily focuses on video content. When recording videos within the app, they can range from 15 seconds up to three minutes long. Videos uploaded to the app can be up to 10 minutes long. It also offers a live streaming feature, although the time limits can vary depending on the account and region.

Twitter / X

- A microblogging platform for sharing short messages. X's main feature is a textual post, which is limited to 280 characters and can include images, videos, and polls. Videos on X can be up to 2 minutes and 20 seconds in length. It also offers Spaces, which are live audio chat rooms without a strict time limit.

Challenge: How to effectively adapt evidence-based HPV messaging for the social media environment? Each platform has different ways of sharing information, but all are predominantly peer-driven, and user amplified.

5. APPROACH / STRATEGY

Disseminating accurate, yet culturally resonant vaccine information (considering country specifics) is critical in light of the polarized social media environment, particularly around vaccination. We propose the following overarching dissemination strategy that can significantly increase the reach of HPV (and HPV-vaccine) related messages on social media: **reason-emotion communication underpinned by a push-pull approach.**

- **Reason-emotion communication:** content related to personal stories evoking emotions in the message recipient combined with content related to factual information/evidence on HPV, HPV transmission, risks, and prevention.

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- **Push-pull approach:** publishing content that evokes curiosity and interest to generate more impressions and reactions, and engage users with intervention content (comments, interactions and shares).

This mix of evidence-based information and lived experiences delivered through personal stories may provide opportunities for greater engagement and ultimately lead to more interaction with HPV-related information and educational materials that is relevant to parents and their children.

Frame: BE IN CHARGE / TAKE CONTROL.

- In framing theory, frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning. They tell the information recipient how to understand and interpret the received message.
- With the set frame we want to appeal to AYA that they are in charge of their lives, future, health, vaccination... Messages will be framed in a way to encourage proactive health choices. And we want to appeal to parents' moral obligation and responsibility to protect their children against cancer – that they are in charge of securing their children will have a healthy future.

6. CONTENT THEMES

In line with the proposed strategy and approach we identified following communication themes:

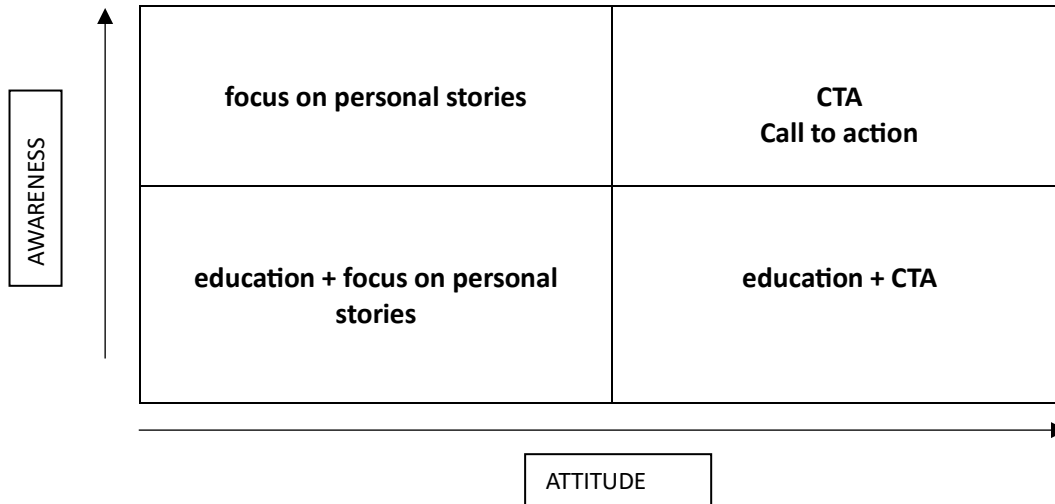
- **Personal stories (*emotions*)** – voices of cancer survivors, vaccinated individuals, adolescents (girls and boys) and their parents:
 - o since first-hand experiences may resonate on a more personal level, stories from cancer survivors, parents who have already vaccinated their children and peers who have received the vaccine can have a greater impact;
 - o personal stories in communicating HPV and related risks are valuable as they humanize the message and make it more personally relatable;
- **Factual information, educational topics (*reason*)** – healthcare experts:
 - o consistent, reliable scientific data to raise HPV awareness and knowledge, and decrease scepticism about the HPV vaccine's efficiency, safety (side effects), and necessity;
 - o use of scientifically accurate data not only to promote the HPV vaccine, but also to combat misconceptions, dis- and misinformation shared by sceptics and anti-vaxxers;
 - o highlight the necessity for women who have been vaccinated against HPV to still participate in cervical cancer screening programs once they reach the recommended age (where such programs are available).

To aid partner countries in communicating with identified primary audiences, we developed a communication / messaging matrix (as shown below). The matrix suggests that the choice of approach should be based on the current levels of awareness and knowledge about HPV (vertical axis) and attitudes toward (HPV) vaccination (horizontal axis) in a specific country. This means selecting key messages and approach that aligns with the audience's existing perceptions and knowledge gaps, ensuring messages resonate and drive the desired outcomes effectively.

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Table 1. Communication / messaging matrix.



The matrix is designed to tailor messages for HPV vaccination campaigns by combining personal stories, education, and calls to action (CTA) to influence certain target audiences. It is divided into four quadrants:

- focus on personal stories: uses personal experiences to make HPV vaccination relatable;
- focus on education and personal stories: combines information with personal narratives to inform and emotionally engage;
- CTA: directly encourages specific actions and positive attitudes towards vaccination;
- Education and CTA: combines informative content with action prompts to empower and motivate immediate action.

7. MESSAGES

- HPV messages focus on:
 - o cancer/disease prevention (HPV vaccine as a cancer-prevention measure) rather than sexual transmission (HPV may be transmitted independently of the type of sexual activity),
 - o highlighting the high risk for acquiring HPV (messages that improve knowledge about transmission and prevention of HPV),
 - o understanding the consequences of long-term HPV infections,
 - o emphasizing the need for both boys and girls to be vaccinated,
 - o vaccination: why it is administered at a certain age, safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

8. MESSENGERS

- Peers (adolescents, young adults, parents):

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- adolescents who hear about the HPV vaccine from friends may be more likely to advocate for the vaccine for themselves, and parents may be similarly likely to take advice from other parents;
 - audience-generated messages offer an effective strategy in health communication.
- Trusted medical professionals, credible, expert sources.

9. TONE AND VOICE

- **Empathetic and Supportive:** Acknowledge emotional aspects of discussing health topics. Many people may feel vulnerable or uncertain. Use empathetic language to recognize concerns and provide reassurance.
- **Positive and Encouraging:** Focus on the positive outcomes of vaccination, such as preventing cancer and promoting overall health.
- **Inclusive (and gender neutral):** Recognize and respect diverse perspectives and experiences related to healthcare decisions. Address diverse audiences, including parents, young adults, and healthcare professionals, as well as both females and males. Ensure that the tone is inclusive and respectful of different perspectives.
- **Sensitive:** Be mindful of the sensitivity of the topic. Communicate with compassion and avoid language that may cause unnecessary fear or anxiety.
- **Educational and Clear:** Provide clear, accurate, and evidence-based information. Break down complex concepts into easily understandable messages. Use language that educates without being overly technical, making the information accessible to a broad audience.
- **Conversational:** Use a conversational tone to engage with the audience. Encourage questions and discussions to foster a sense of community.
- **Transparent and Open:** Be transparent about the benefits and limitations of HPV vaccination. Address common questions and concerns openly, promoting a culture of honesty and trust.

Communication should not come from a position of authority. Rather, the delivered messages will empower primary target groups to take informed decisions on HPV vaccination.

10. DELIVERY OF INFORMATION

Messages, images, and videos on social media should be provided in a format that presents information in an authentic and credible way. Specifically, images and videos can be used to enhance understanding of information, but in a way that does not distract or detract from the message.

11. ADVERTISING AND CAMPAIGNS

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To enhance HPV communication on social media, leveraging advertising and occasional communication campaigns is crucial. Targeted advertising can effectively reach specific demographics, providing them with tailored messages about the importance of HPV vaccination and prevention. By investing in visually compelling and educational content, advertisements can convey key information and encourage engagement.

Furthermore, occasional communication campaigns can be designed to coincide with relevant events or awareness months, creating a focused and intensified effort to amplify the message. These campaigns should incorporate a mix of user testimonials, scientific information, and interactive elements to foster a sense of community and encourage open discussions. Campaigns that invite participation, such as live Q&A sessions with healthcare professionals, interactive quizzes about HPV and its vaccine, and hashtag challenges that encourage users to share their vaccination stories, have the potential to have greater impact.

Also, collaboration with influencers across social media platforms can reach broader audiences. Influencers can help legitimize the message through personal testimonials, Q&A sessions, and sharing scientific information in an accessible manner.

By strategically combining advertising with periodic communication campaigns, a comprehensive and sustained effort can be achieved, promoting widespread awareness, understanding, and acceptance of HPV prevention (vaccination) measures within the online community.

12. SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

A Social Media toolkit will be developed to assist you in effectively disseminating HPV related content on different social media platforms. The toolkit will include:

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):** A document addressing common questions and concerns about HPV and HPV vaccination. Including evidence-based answers to help healthcare professionals respond to inquiries from their followers.
- **Key Messages and Talking Points:** Bullet-pointed talking points to guide healthcare professionals in crafting their posts. Emphasize the benefits of vaccination, the link between HPV and cancer, and the safety of the vaccines.
- **Pre-Written Social Media Posts (samples):** Ready-to-use social media posts with engaging captions that healthcare professionals can share directly or customize. Including a mix of text, images, and hashtags to maximize reach.
- **Educational Videos:** Five different scenarios for educational videos that can be used for video production.
- **User Testimonials:** Real-life testimonials from individuals who have been vaccinated against HPV.

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- **Shareable Graphics and Templates:** Branded graphics and templates that healthcare professionals can use to create their own posts, stories, reels. Include space for personalization and customization.
- **Promotion materials:** Adaptable ads with space for personalization and customization.
- **Call-to-Action (CTA) Templates:** Templates for effective CTAs that encourage followers to get vaccinated, share their vaccination stories, or seek more information.
- **Community Management and Engagement Tactics:** Guidelines on managing followers' reactions and comments. Tips and tricks for enhancing engagement and organic reach, as well as practical information and advice on managing social media campaign and social media monitoring and listening tools.
- **Managing misinformation/disinformation:** Approaches to address misinformation/disinformation from social media users engaged in published content.
- **Sample Posting Schedule:** Information on general post scheduling – time of day, frequency etc.
- **Social Media Metrics and Analytics Guide:** Track metrics in the analytics page of each social media platform on a consistent basis and use that information to adjust strategy accordingly.