

# The “German Roundtable on HPV prevention” – an interdisciplinary circle - to achieve the WHO standard for cervical cancer elimination

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## Background

HPV vaccination prevents HPV-related precancerous lesions and protects against cervical cancer and other HPV-associated cancers<sup>1-3</sup>. Therefore, the World Health Organization (WHO) set the goal of achieving a 90% vaccination rate among 15-year-old girls worldwide by 2030<sup>5</sup>. In Germany, the HPV vaccination rate in 2020 was only 51% for 15-year-old girls<sup>4</sup>. Without additional inputs, Germany will not reach the goal set by the WHO.

## Methods

The Roundtable on HPV prevention aims to support strategies increasing vaccination rates in Germany and thus make a tangible contribution to achieve the WHO guidelines to eliminate HPV-associated cancer. The importance of this issue has brought together key stakeholders in HPV prevention annually since 2019. The method of the approach is outlined as follows (Figure 1):

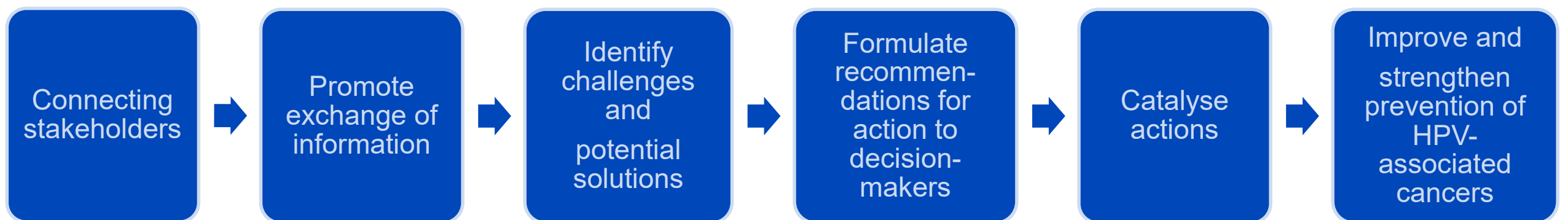


Figure 1: Approach of the HPV-Roundtable

## Results

Approximately 40 to 50 stakeholders participate in the Roundtable annually, with a significant proportion of participants working in research (30%), associations/non-profit institutions (29%) and public health (24%) (Figure 2).

The following actions have been undertaken so far:

**1) 2019 - Agreement on HPV-vaccination coverage target by 2024:** The participants of the first meeting agreed on a short-term target for Germany. An HPV vaccination rate of at least 70% is to be achieved by 2024 by pooling skills, resources and forces to catalyze action.

**2) 2019 - Setting of five work topics** by the participants of the first roundtable, which should work with the support of experts in the respective area:

- **Low-threshold access to HPV vaccination:** The HPV vaccination offer (education and vaccination) should be granted in such a way that this is linked to no or few conditions and prerequisites as far as possible.
- **School setting:** HPV vaccination programs in school settings are considered particularly successful worldwide and should be tested in the German context.
- **Ethics/law:** Ethical and legal frameworks for low-threshold HPV services should be established
- **Target group-specific communication:** Educational measures should be targeted to specific groups. Children aged 9 to 14, young people aged 15 to 17, parents/guardians, teachers and multipliers.
- **Electronic immunization record/reminder systems:** Invitation/reminder systems are to be established in connection with the introduction of the electronic immunization record.

**3) 2019 - Call for “consultation supplies” based prescription as a nationwide prescription of HPV vaccination.**

Prescription procedures were seen as hindrance for the vaccine uptake.

**4) 2021 - Memorandum**, endorsed by several stakeholders in HPV prevention: DKFZ, preventa Stiftung, Allianz gegen HPV, ÄGGF, BVKJ, Deutsche Krebshilfe, Hessische Krebsgesellschaft, HPV-Frauen-Netzwerk, Krebsverband Baden-Württemberg, Stiftung Lebensblicke, Stiftung Deutsche Krebsgesellschaft. It makes the following key calls to policymakers (Figure 3):

- Target group-specific education: children aged 9 to 15, adolescents aged 15 to 17, parents, etc.
- Intensive promotion of HPV vaccination and establishment as a standard vaccination as part of a promotion of a general “vaccination culture” in Germany.
- Integration of the topic “HPV-prevention” in the context of schools: embedding the topic in school lessons, holding HPV awareness evenings for parents, voluntary HPV offer in schools.
- Promotion of HPV vaccination education and vaccination by pediatricians, general practitioners, specialists, and the public health service.
- Concrete implementation of proposed measures, e.g. from the resolution of the Conference of Health Ministers of July 2021, including e.g. the establishment/further development of invitation and reminder systems, long-term educational campaigns on HPV vaccination, etc.

**5) 2022 - Mailing of the memorandum** to about 500 members of health committees of the federal parliament as well as state parliaments. This led to offers of support by some addressees as well as extensive exchange on the topic.

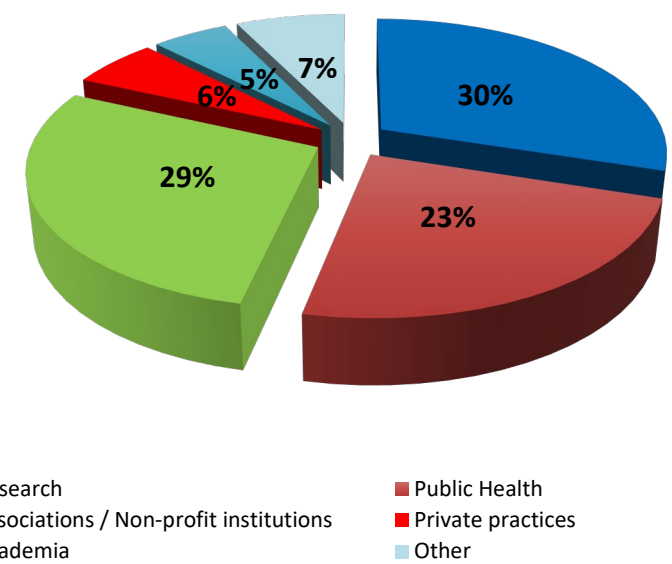


Figure 2: Areas of activity of the HPV-Roundtable participants



Figure 3: Memorandum from the 3rd Roundtable

## Summary

The HPV-Roundtable as interdisciplinary circle brought together key stakeholders and, for the first time, formulated concrete calls for improving HPV vaccination coverage. It is the basis for a continuous improvement process to reach the aim of the WHO to eliminate HPV-associated cancer. To achieve the targeted vaccination rate in Germany, stakeholders must act in a coordinated manner, and policymakers should adapt the social framework to ensure that proposed measures can be implemented in a legally secure and effective manner. The roundtable for connecting the relevant actors is a valuable means of driving this concept forward.

### Referenzen:

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- 5 World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) Launch of the Global Strategy to Accelerate the Elimination of Cervical Cancer.