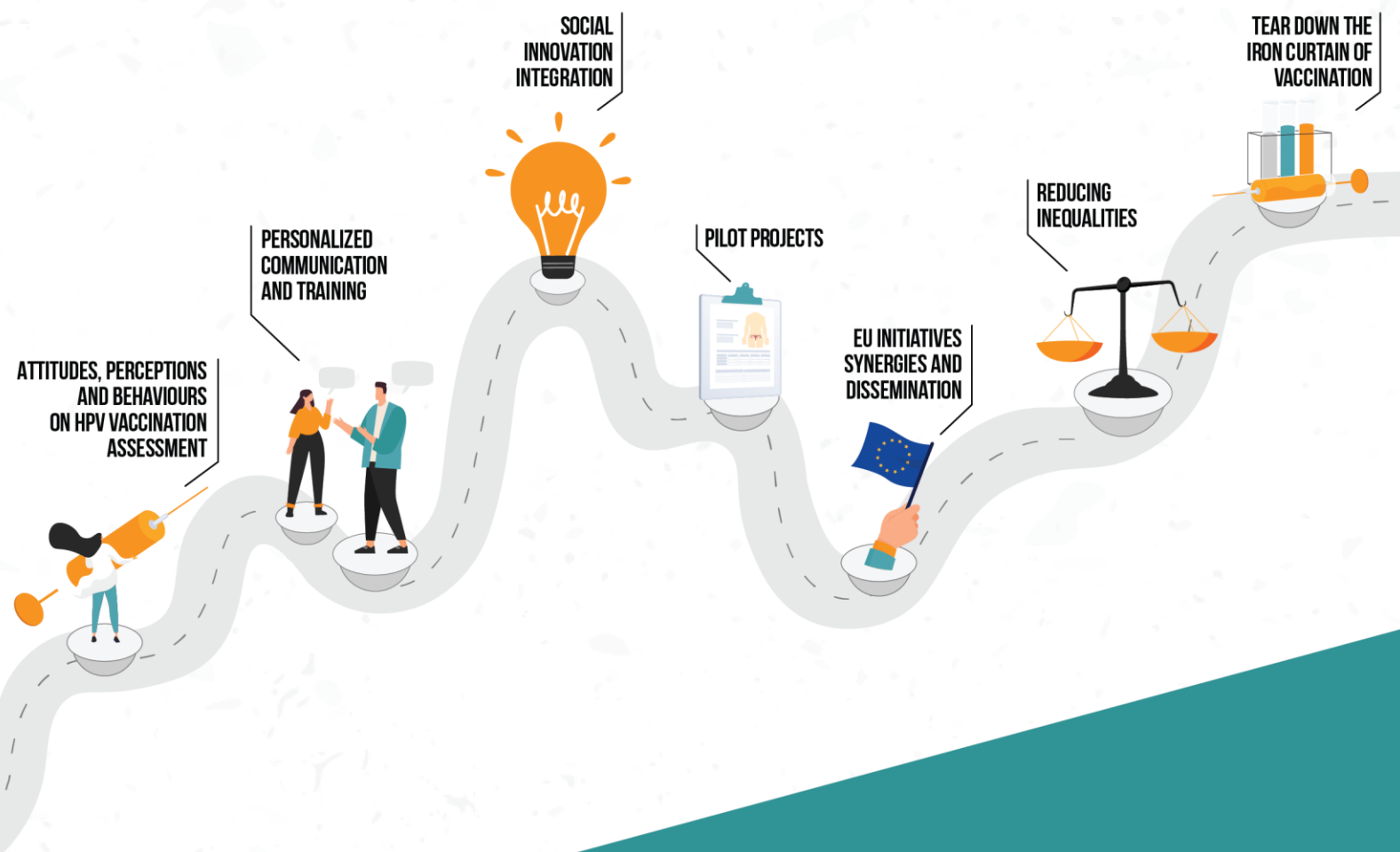


Rethink and Reduce inequalities in HPV vaccination through personalized communication and training, based on social innovation and behavioural determinants of health



D5.1. REPORT ON THE TRAININGS

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INTRODUCTION

The training sessions were designed to equip healthcare and social practitioners, including health assistants, physicians, health mediators, and social assistants, with the knowledge and tools to effectively discuss HPV vaccination and address related challenges. The objectives of the training were:

- To enhance understanding of HPV, its associated health risks, and the benefits of HPV vaccination.
- To strengthen communication skills for discussing HPV vaccination with patients and the general public.
- To provide strategies for debunking myths and misinformation about HPV vaccination.
- To foster collaboration among healthcare and social practitioners in promoting public health initiatives.

The sessions unfolded as follows:

1. **Introduction and Context Setting:** Participants were introduced to the trainers, each other, and the objectives of the session. The Rethink HPV project was briefly presented to provide an overview of its goals and relevance.
2. **Scientific and Medical Insights:** Dr. Gindrovel Dumitra delivered a detailed session on HPV, the HPV vaccine, and the pivotal role of physicians and other healthcare workers in raising awareness and preventing HPV-related diseases.
3. **HPV Burden Awareness:** Victoria Asanache discussed the significant public health impact of HPV infections and the diseases they cause, highlighting the necessity of vaccination in reducing this burden.
4. **Communication and Myth-Busting:** Associate Professor Dr. Alina Duduciuc led an engaging session on techniques for addressing common concerns and misconceptions about HPV vaccination. Practical methods for effective communication with diverse audiences were emphasized.

The training concluded with a Q&A session, where participants had the opportunity to clarify questions and reflect on the practical application of the material covered. The sessions were tailored to the unique roles and responsibilities of healthcare and social practitioners, ensuring the training's relevance and impact.

The trainings were conducted in collaboration with the County Health Inspectorates of Vrancea and Argeş, following agreements established with both organizations. Moreover, the Renasterea Foundation established a partnership agreement with the National Administration of Penitentiaries, resulting in the participation of 90 employees in the training sessions.

AGENDA

10:00-10:30 – Introductory Elements

Presenter: Alexandra Hosszu, representative of the Rethink HPV project

- Introduction of trainers
- Introduction of participants
- Presentation of the agenda and course objectives
- Brief presentation of the project

10:30-11:30 – Understanding HPV, HPV Vaccination, and the Role of the Physician

Trainer: Dr. Gindrovel Dumitra (National Society of Family Medicine)

11:30-11:45 – Break

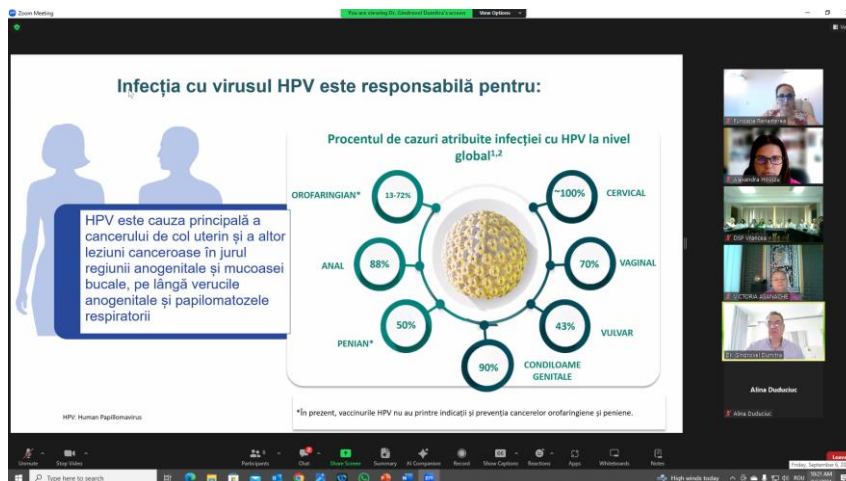
11:45-12:45 – The Burden of HPV Infections and Related Conditions

Trainer: Victoria Asanache (Patient Navigator)

12:45-13:45 – Communicating About HPV Vaccination and Debunking Vaccine Myths

Trainer: Associate Professor Dr. Alina Duduciuc (Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, SNSPA)

13:45-14:00 – Questions and Answers



CALENDAR

The training sessions, conducted between September and October 2024, included a total of 12 workshops aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of healthcare and social practitioners. The workshops focused on key topics related to HPV vaccination, such as understanding the burden of HPV-related infections, effective communication strategies, and dispelling myths surrounding vaccination. Participants were predominantly women, reflecting the gender distribution commonly seen in the medical and social care fields. These workshops were held in collaboration with regional health inspectorates and other institutional partners, ensuring broad reach and impact.

To assess the effectiveness of the training, both initial and final questionnaires were administered to participants. These evaluations measured changes in knowledge, attitudes, and skills, providing valuable insights into the progress achieved through the workshops. The structured approach, combining interactive sessions with assessment tools, ensured that the training was both engaging and results-driven. This comprehensive program highlighted the critical role of women in public health initiatives and underscored the importance of effective communication in addressing public health challenges like HPV vaccination.

Table 1. Training sessions

Date	No. of participants	County
06.09.2024	30	Vrancea
13.09.2024	20	Vrancea
16.09.2024	21	Vrancea
20.09.2024	22	Arges
23.09.2024	21	Arges
27.09.2024	18	Arges
30.09.2024	19	Arges
04.10.2024	19	Vrancea
07.10.2024	16	Vrancea
14.10.2024	28	Vrancea
21.10.2024	20	Arges
25.10.2024	105	Arges and national
TOTAL	339	

PARTICIPANTS

The data indicates that a total of 339 individuals participated in the program, with a significant majority of 305 women and only 34 men. The distribution by region shows that Vrancea had the highest number of participants (134), followed by Argeş (115), and the National level (90) - National Administration of Penitentiaries. This overwhelming representation of women aligns with broader trends in the medical and social fields, where women constitute the majority of the workforce. In both Argeş and Vrancea, women made up over 90% of the participants, while men accounted for only a small fraction across all categories. This highlights the gender imbalance that is often observed in these sectors, reflecting the pivotal role women play in healthcare and social services.

Table 2. Training participants

	Total	Women	Men
ARGES	115	106	9
VRANCEA	134	127	7
NATIONAL	90	72	18
Total	339	305	34



ANALYSIS OF THE INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRES

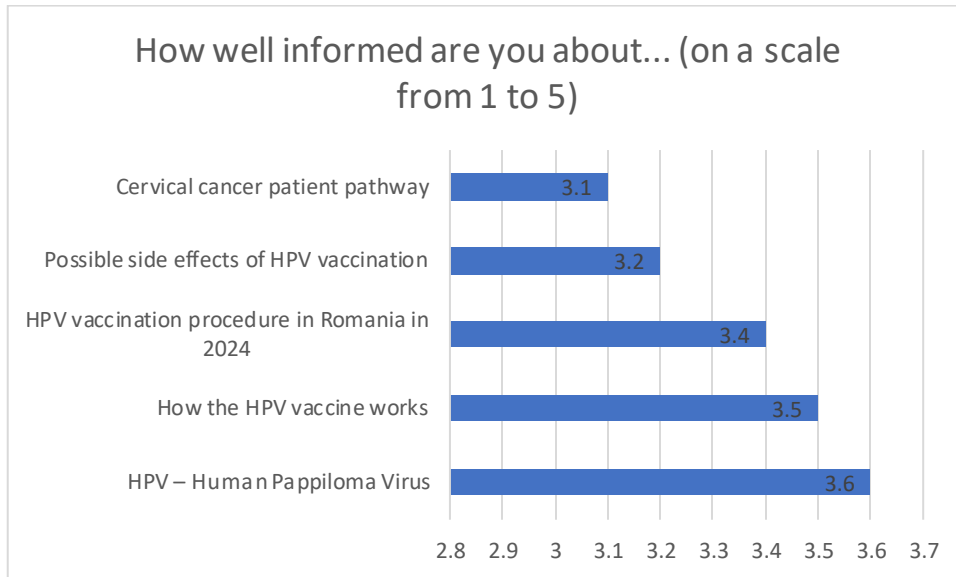
The initial questionnaires administered during the training program provided key insights into participants' baseline knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions regarding HPV vaccination. The data revealed varying levels of understanding among healthcare and social practitioners, with many participants demonstrating a general awareness of HPV and its associated risks but limited knowledge of specific medical and communication strategies related to vaccination.

Additionally, common misconceptions about HPV vaccination were identified, particularly around its safety and efficacy. The responses highlighted a need for targeted training to address these gaps, especially in areas such as debunking myths and effectively communicating with patients and communities. The initial assessment established a clear foundation for tailoring the workshop content to participants' needs, ensuring the training sessions could achieve maximum impact in improving knowledge and practical skills.

The analysis of the initial questionnaires revealed varying levels of self-reported knowledge among participants regarding HPV and its vaccination. Participants demonstrated the highest level of awareness about HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) itself, with an average score of 3.6 out of 5, followed closely by knowledge about how the HPV vaccine works (3.5). These results suggest that while participants have a foundational understanding of the virus and the vaccine's mechanism, there is room to deepen their knowledge further, especially in applied and procedural contexts.

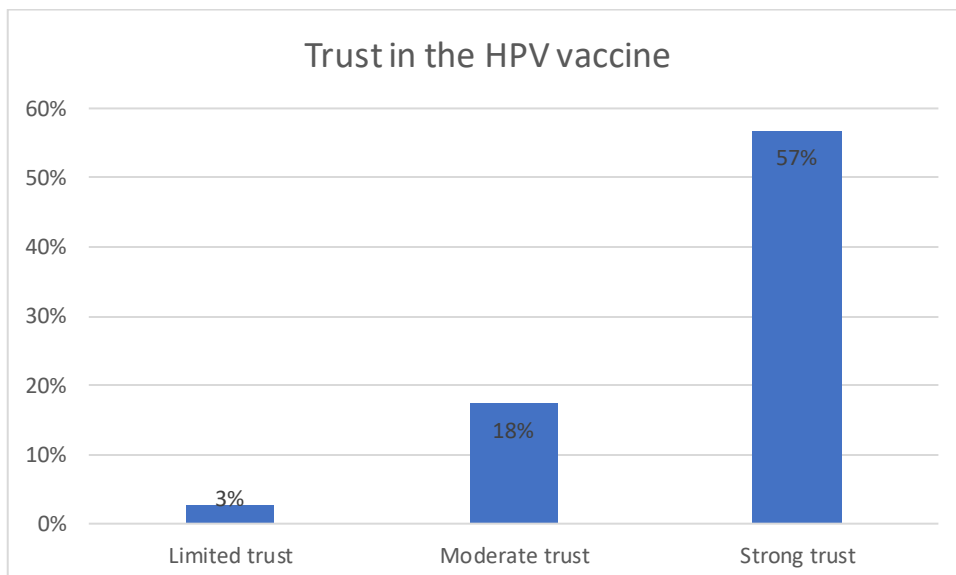
Areas with comparatively lower scores, such as the cervical cancer patient pathway (3.1) and the possible side effects of HPV vaccination (3.2), highlight gaps that require targeted interventions. The moderate score of 3.4 on the HPV vaccination procedure in Romania in 2024 indicates that more clarity is needed on the practical aspects of vaccine delivery. These findings underscore the importance of focusing future training sessions on these less familiar areas, particularly the integration of vaccination into cervical cancer prevention pathways and addressing concerns or misconceptions about side effects. By addressing these gaps, the program can ensure that participants are better equipped to communicate effectively and promote HPV vaccination.

Figure 1. Self-reported knowledge (initial questionnaires)



The data indicates that the majority of participants, 57%, expressed strong trust in the HPV vaccine, while 13% reported moderate trust, and only 3% indicated limited trust. On a scale from 1 to 10, the average level of trust was measured at 8.45, reflecting a generally high confidence in the vaccine among respondents. This suggests that most participants recognize the vaccine's importance and effectiveness in preventing HPV-related diseases. However, the presence of a small percentage with limited trust highlights the need for continued education to address concerns and build confidence in the vaccine.

Figure 2. Trust in the HPV vaccine (initial questionnaires)



The data highlights participants' varying levels of confidence in their ability to recommend and promote HPV vaccination, as well as their preparedness to address myths and skepticism. A majority of respondents (218) reported that they would recommend HPV vaccination to a very large or large

extent, indicating strong advocacy for the vaccine. Similarly, 163 participants felt prepared to respond to HPV vaccination myths and skepticism at this level, and 150 participants reported having strong communication skills to promote HPV vaccination. However, the number of participants confident in their communication skills is slightly lower than those confident in their knowledge and preparedness to counter myths, suggesting that communication remains an area where further support is needed.

Additionally, 31–34 participants reported feeling prepared or skilled to little or no extent, particularly in responding to myths and skepticism or promoting HPV vaccination. These gaps highlight the need for targeted training to strengthen participants' communication skills and ability to counter misinformation effectively, ensuring they are well-equipped to advocate for HPV vaccination in their communities.

Table 3. Participants' abilities to recommend vaccination and respond to myths (initial questionnaire)

	To what extent do you recommend HPV vaccination?	How prepared are you to respond to HPV vaccination myths and vaccine skepticism?	To what extent do you have communication skills to promote HPV vaccination?
To a very large or large extent	218	163	150
To some extent	42	73	82
To little or no extent	7	31	34

The responses to the open-ended question about the causes of low vaccination rates highlight several key factors. The lack of information is the most frequently mentioned cause, emphasized by many respondents. This is accompanied by misinformation spread through online platforms and other media sources, as well as public skepticism regarding the effectiveness and safety of vaccines. The lack of involvement from family physicians and the absence of effective information campaigns are also considered significant contributors to vaccine hesitancy. Additionally, insufficient health education and fear of side effects are seen as major obstacles to promoting vaccination.

Another frequently mentioned cause is the negative influence of vaccine-related myths and the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased general skepticism toward vaccines. Respondents suggest solutions such as increasing the involvement of family physicians, intensifying information campaigns and health education in schools, and using communication platforms, including social media, more effectively. These actions could help increase public awareness and trust, ultimately improving vaccination rates.

ANALYSIS OF THE FINAL QUESTIONNAIRES

The feedback from participants demonstrates an overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the training program, with strong and very strong agreement on all aspects assessed. Communication with the organizing team was rated highly, with 98% of respondents indicating that it was efficient, and 99% affirming that their questions were answered clearly. Additionally, participants praised the attentiveness and support provided by the organizers, reflecting a well-coordinated and participant-focused approach. These results indicate that the organizational aspects of the training were handled with exceptional professionalism, contributing significantly to the overall participant satisfaction.

The quality of the training itself received similarly high ratings. Participants expressed strong satisfaction with the trainers, with 98% agreeing that they stimulated discussion, provided clear information, and answered questions effectively. The course schedule, duration, and logical structure of the content were also rated highly, with 98% agreement in each category. Overall satisfaction with the training session stood at an impressive 98%, highlighting the success of the program in meeting participant expectations. This feedback underscores the effectiveness of both the content delivery and the organizational efforts in creating a positive learning experience.

Table 4. Participants' feedback (final questionnaire)

Feedback	Share of strong and very strong agreement (n=260)
Communication with the organizing team was efficient	98%
I received clear information about the course	98%
I received clear answers to any questions I had for the organizing team	99%
The organizers were attentive and offered support when I needed it	98%
The trainers stimulated thinking and discussion	98%
The trainers gave clear information	98%
The trainers answered participants' questions clearly	98%
Overall, I am satisfied with the trainers.	98%
The course schedule was well organized	98%
The course was of an appropriate duration	98%
The content of the training session was organized in a logical way	98%
Overall, I am satisfied with this training session.	98%

The responses to the open-ended question "Mention two aspects you learned during the training" reveal several key themes that participants found valuable during the training. A significant portion highlighted learning about the **importance of HPV vaccination** as a preventive measure against cervical cancer and other HPV-related conditions. Participants also noted gaining clarity on the **vaccine's safety, efficacy, and eligibility**, including the ability to vaccinate boys, adults over 19, and those already infected with HPV. Another frequently mentioned aspect was the **role of patient navigators**, which was a new concept for many, emphasizing their importance in guiding patients through the healthcare system and cancer treatment pathways. These findings underscore the success

of the training in providing concrete, actionable knowledge about HPV vaccination and cancer prevention.

Participants also emphasized the value of acquiring **communication skills**, particularly in addressing vaccine-related myths and engaging with hesitant patients or parents. Many respondents reported learning strategies for presenting clear and factual information to combat misinformation and skepticism, which were perceived as critical barriers to vaccination. Additionally, the training shed light on the broader **public health benefits of vaccination**, including its role in reducing the long-term burden of HPV-related diseases. Overall, these responses indicate that the training was effective in not only enhancing participants' technical knowledge but also equipping them with practical tools to advocate for and facilitate vaccination within their communities.

The responses to the open-ended question "What were the strengths of this course?" highlight several recurring themes. Participants appreciated the **clarity and conciseness of the information provided**, with many praising the well-structured presentations and the relevance of the topics discussed. The involvement of **highly skilled trainers**, such as Dr. Gindrovel Dumitra and Ms. Victoria Asanache (patient navigator), was frequently noted as a strong point. Respondents emphasized the trainers' ability to clearly explain complex topics, encourage engagement, and create a supportive learning environment. Topics like the role of the patient navigator, HPV vaccine benefits, combating myths, and the prevention of cervical cancer were identified as particularly impactful:

- "The information was clear and concise, and the presentation style was accessible to everyone."
- "I learned new things about the vaccine and cervical cancer, and the trainers were very well prepared."
- "The course was well-organized, the information was clearly communicated, and the open discussions helped us understand better."

Another major strength was the interactive and practical nature of the sessions. Participants valued the **opportunity for open discussions**, which allowed them to clarify doubts and deepen their understanding. They also noted the **holistic approach** of the course, which combined medical, communicative, and practical perspectives. The course was widely recognized as accessible, engaging, and well-organized, with an emphasis on evidence-based information. Overall, the feedback highlights that the course successfully met its objectives by equipping participants with valuable knowledge and tools to promote HPV vaccination and address related challenges.

The majority of participants indicated that they did not perceive any weaknesses in the training program, with numerous responses stating explicitly, "There were no weak points" or similar sentiments. This highlights the participants' overall satisfaction with the course's content, structure, and delivery. A small number of responses mentioned specific areas for improvement, such as the **large amount of statistical data**, which some participants found overwhelming, and **limited interaction due to the online format**, which restricted face-to-face engagement.

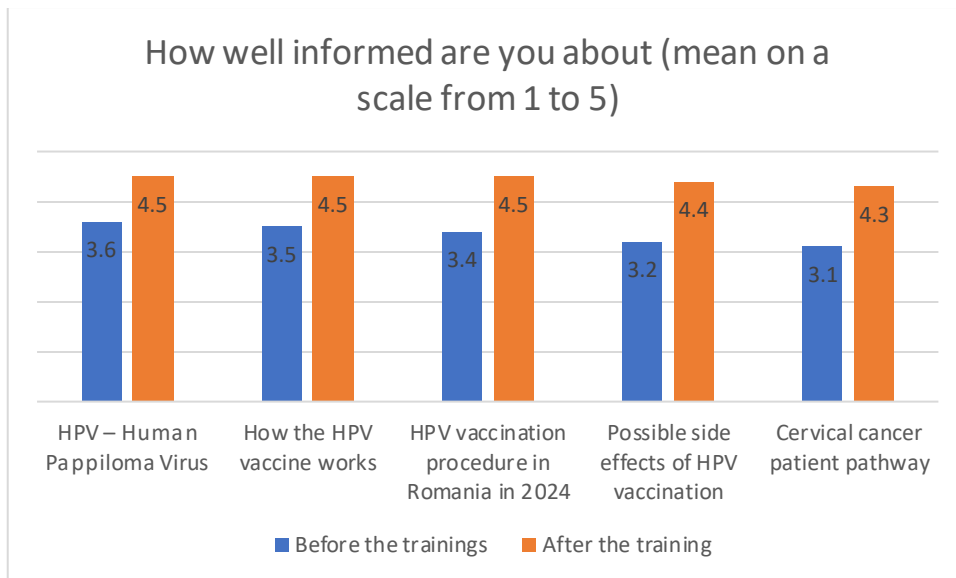
RESULTS AND IMPACT

The data demonstrates a significant improvement in participants' knowledge across all topics covered during the training sessions. Before the training, participants rated their knowledge of HPV-related topics as moderate, with average scores ranging from 3.1 to 3.6 on a scale of 1 to 5. After the training, the scores rose significantly to between 4.3 and 4.5, indicating a strong increase in confidence and understanding.

The most notable improvement was observed in participants' understanding of the **HPV vaccination procedure in Romania in 2024**, which increased from 3.4 to 4.5. Similarly, knowledge about the **possible side effects of HPV vaccination** improved from 3.2 to 4.4, reflecting the training's success in addressing myths and concerns about the vaccine. Additionally, participants reported a better understanding of the **cervical cancer patient pathway**, with an increase from 3.1 to 4.3, suggesting the training effectively highlighted the importance of prevention and care pathways.

Overall, the data underscores the training program's effectiveness in preparing participants with the knowledge and tools they need to promote HPV vaccination and address related challenges. By significantly enhancing their understanding in key areas, the program ensured that participants are better equipped to inform and support their communities in combating HPV-related diseases.

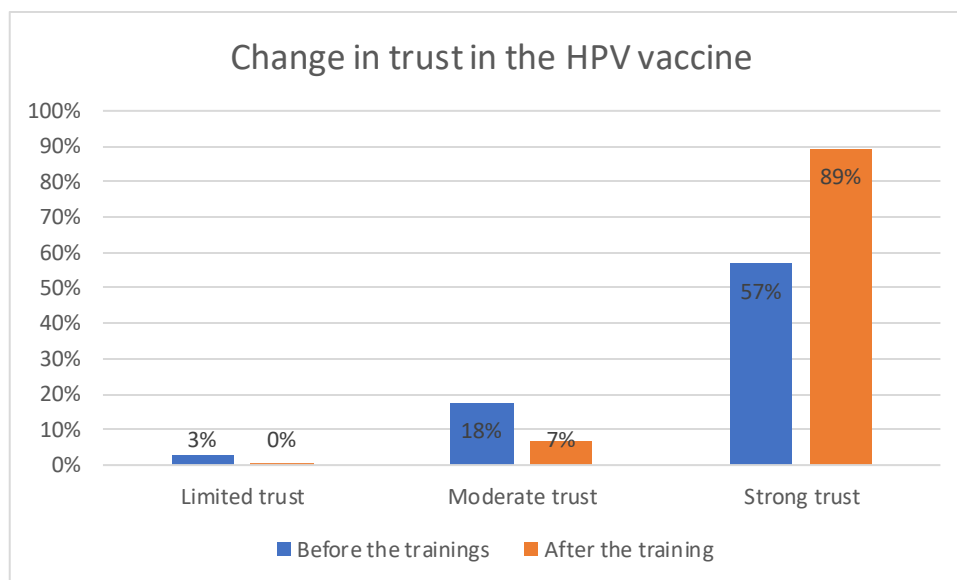
Figure 3. Change in self-reported knowledge about HPV after the training



After the training a substantial increase in participants' average trust in the HPV vaccine was noticed, as measured on a scale from 1 to 10. Before the training, the mean trust level was **8.45**, reflecting a relatively high baseline of confidence among participants. However, after the training, this value rose to **9.21**, indicating a notable improvement in trust.

This increase aligns with the observed shift in the distribution of trust levels, where the proportion of participants expressing strong trust grew from 57% to 89%, and limited trust decreased from 3% to 0%. These results highlight the effectiveness of the training in reinforcing participants' confidence in the HPV vaccine by providing clear, evidence-based information and addressing any concerns or misconceptions they may have held prior to the sessions.

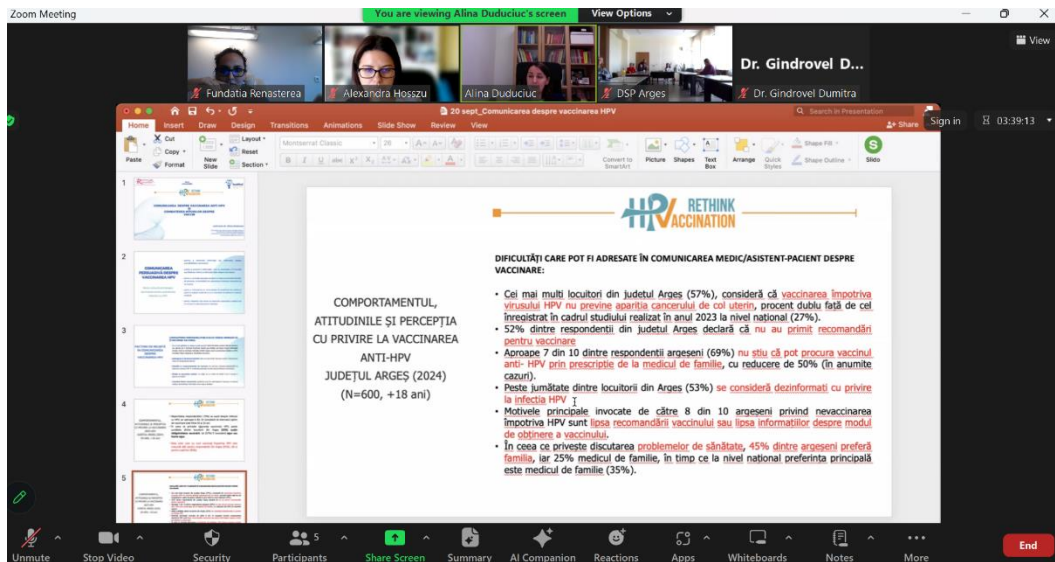
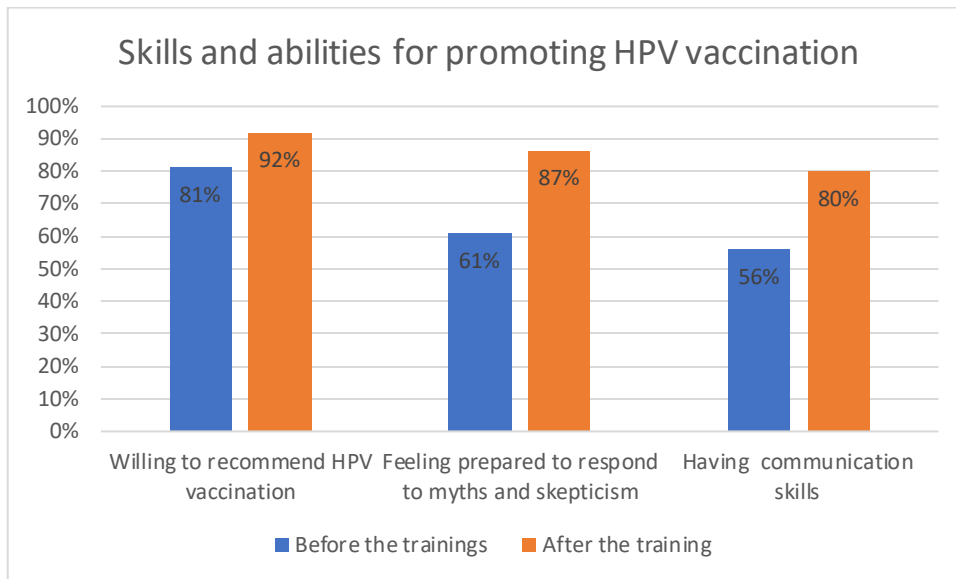
Figure 4. Change in trust in the HPV vaccine



Participants demonstrated notable progress in their willingness and readiness to advocate for HPV vaccination as a result of the training. Prior to the sessions, 81% of participants were willing to recommend HPV vaccination, a number that increased to 92% afterward. This growth reflects the training's ability to reinforce participants' confidence in the vaccine and their commitment to promoting its benefits.

In addition to willingness, the training significantly enhanced participants' preparedness to address common barriers to vaccination. The percentage of participants who felt equipped to counter myths and skepticism rose from 61% to 87%, while those who believed they had strong communication skills to promote vaccination increased from 56% to 80%. These improvements highlight the program's success in fostering both knowledge and practical skills, enabling participants to effectively engage with patients and address vaccine hesitancy within their communities.

Figure 5. Changes in skills and abilities for promoting HPV vaccination



CONCLUSIONS

The training program on HPV vaccination proved highly effective in enhancing participants' knowledge, trust, and preparedness to promote vaccination. A substantial increase in understanding was observed across all key topics, with participants reporting higher confidence in their ability to address HPV-related issues. For instance, knowledge of the HPV vaccination procedure, side effects, and cervical cancer patient pathways all saw significant improvement, with post-training ratings consistently reaching above 4.3 on a scale of 5. These results underscore the program's success in providing clear and evidence-based information, enabling participants to gain a deeper understanding of the importance and impact of HPV vaccination.

Participants' trust in the HPV vaccine also improved considerably. Before the training, the average trust level was 8.45 on a scale of 10, which increased to 9.21 afterward. Additionally, the proportion of participants with strong trust rose from 57% to 89%, while those expressing limited trust dropped to 0%. This shift highlights the program's ability to dispel myths and concerns surrounding the vaccine, bolstering participants' confidence in its efficacy and safety. The training not only reinforced individual trust but also strengthened participants' readiness to advocate for vaccination within their professional roles.

The program had a marked impact on participants' willingness and ability to promote HPV vaccination. The percentage of participants willing to recommend vaccination increased from 81% to 92%, and those feeling prepared to respond to myths and skepticism grew from 61% to 87%. Furthermore, participants who believed they possessed adequate communication skills rose from 56% to 80%. These findings demonstrate that the training equipped participants with the tools and confidence needed to effectively engage with their communities, address vaccine hesitancy, and advocate for HPV vaccination as a critical public health measure.