Long COVID in Europe: The Role of the Network of Expertise on Long COVID (NELC)

Workshop – Connecting primary and secondary use of data in the EHDS

European Commission

European Commission

Long COVID: A Cross-Cutting Challenge

- Persistent, fluctuating, often multisystem symptoms
- Affects health, work, education, social participation
- Tests how our systems respond to a novel, poorly understood condition

European Commission

Why a European Response?

- Challenges are similar across Member States
- Risk of fragmented, isolated national solutions
- Need to share experience and align approaches

European Commission

What Is NELC?

- Established by DG SANTE in 2023
- Network of national centres of expertise and key actors
- Supports Member States and the European Commission
- Regular exchange between clinicians, public health, and researchers

NELC: Main Objectives & Areas of Work

Objectives

- Build a coherent, evidence-informed EU response
- Share national experiences and promising practices
- Identify common challenges and gaps
- Advise the Commission on priorities

Key areas of work

- Recognition and diagnosis
- Clinical guidelines and care pathways
- Multidisciplinary care and rehabilitation
- Surveillance and research
- Social and economic consequences
- Patient support

European Commission

From Network to Action

- Discusses concrete national examples:
  - Long COVID clinics and primary care support
  - Rehabilitation models and funding
  - Adaptation of social benefits, school and work arrangements
- Identifies what can be scaled up or supported at EU level
- Informs EU initiatives (EU4Health, OECD/WHO work, research calls)

European Commission

Social and Economic Dimensions

- Focus not only on clinical care, but also:
  - Ability to work and return to employment
  - Education and support for children and adolescents
  - Access to social protection and benefits
- Aim: more equitable and comprehensive responses across Europe

European Commission

How You Can Contribute

- Share national experience via ministries and centres of expertise
- Engage in the Health Policy Platform & Open Stakeholder Group on Long COVID
- Connect innovative projects and pilots to NELC and EU-level discussions
- Bring patient and front-line perspectives into EU work on Long COVID