

After- LIFE Communication Plan

Public healthcare and plastic makers demonstrate how to remove barriers to PVC-free blood bags in the spirit of REACH

LIFE 10 ENV/SE/037



After- Life Communication Plan: September 2017

Life+ Environment Policy and Governance

 PVCfreeBloodBag.eu



PVC-free blood bag project

Aim

To demonstrate that public healthcare organisations and private plastic manufacturers can cooperate in removing barriers to a PVC-free blood bag.

Partnership

The four European companies participating in the project, Melitek A/S, Wipak Oy, Primo Profile and Haemotronic SpA, will work together to produce a PVC-free blood bag. Karolinska University Hospital is responsible for evaluating the bag. The hospital within Region Jämtland Härjedalen is in charge of the handling test of the bags.

Project management: Jegrelius Institute for Applied Green Chemistry, A part of Region Jämtland Härjedalen, Sweden

Duration

70 months (2011-2017)

Funds

Euro 2,204,464

Structure

Project management group consistent of all beneficiaries

Target sector

European Healthcare.

Outputs

The project has demonstrated that it is possible to produce a completely PVC-free set of four bags.

Also:

- A promising in vitro study of the bags ability to store red blood cells.
- Revealed by user tests that improvements still are required, but the potential problems identified in the pre-study were solved.
- A Life cycle assessment, indicating that PVC-free is better than PVC, regarding impact on health and that there are ways to lower the impact on environment.
- A gap analysis for CE-marking that shows what is left to do.
- Increased awareness and demand; The project has together with HCWH among others, worked for a stronger legislation regarding medical devices. The projects objectives are shared by many; with interest from for example EBA and UNEP.
- An Economic Feasibility Study that evaluates the economic viability of bringing a PVC-free blood bag to market. The study assess the investments required and the manufacturing costs.

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*The main **objectives of the project** are**

to demonstrate that it is possible to produce a PVC-free blood bag that fulfils requirement specification, including CE-labelling.

to increase demand by cooperation with European healthcare by dissemination knowledge and awareness.

Both these aims and objectives are included in the Communication Strategy and in this After-Life Communication Plan.

We have shown that it is possible to produce a completely PVC free set of four bags with the ability to store red blood cells. The bags have fulfilled our requirement specification including gap-analysis of CE-labelling.

Through various seminars, lectures, briefings and conferences and through digital channels we have disseminated knowledge and awareness. We have established networks and cooperation both within European healthcare and international organisations, companies and projects.

Publications in form of academic articles, reports and videos have strengthen the success in reaching different target groups.

The project has communicated on several different levels – with decision makers, NGOs, market and industry. With professors, employees and students. Within Europe and on broader international arenas.

There has been a large interest of the project, its progress and its achievements which has resulted in positive commends and nominations. The project and its members have been consulted in several issues within its field of competence.

Further improvements and evaluations are necessary before market introduction, but the increased awareness and demand will facilitate the next step for suppliers who want to be at the forefront. We have removed the barriers to introducing PVC-free blood bags on the market.

**Stated in the Grant Agreement the project has four objectives. Except mentioned above also - a fall-back alternative in case the bags becomes too expensive for general use and to offer a material that can be used to replace PVC in other medical applications. A fourth objective is to offer the new material for food industry applications. Further information regarding these objectives are to be read in the Executive summary in the Final report of the project.*

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There have been various communication activities and all of them have been important for the successful outcome of the project. The activities are thoroughly described in all the projects *Activity Reports* and in the *Output Indicator Table* which is an annex to the reports but it is also as an own Deliverable Product. Budget is accounted for in the Final Report. All these deliverables are available at the projects website pvcfreebloodbag.eu

In this After-LIFE communication plan we will concentrate on those activities which are most important in a strategy for those continuing to disseminate the results and knowledge from this project after LIFE.

The projects after LIFE communication activities

Website – To continue to disseminate the results and knowledge from this project the project website will be open, public and maintained for at least five years after the project has ended. The project has all its information at the website.

Beneficiaries – The success of this project spells together. Through all beneficiaries and their networks, their websites. From the medical - transfusion medicine –sector, through the different suppliers within the plastic to the healthcare sector this project and its brilliant results will be acknowledge and shown as a good example and best practice.

Layman Report – Dissemination to a broader public, of the results from the project through this report which is translated into Swedish, Finnish, Polish, French, Italian, Spanish, Danish, German and English – of course accessible at the website and it will also be disseminated through all beneficiaries websites.

Lectures – The results and lessons learned from the project will be disseminated through lectures around the world since the project members are invited to give lectures at conferences, meeting, seminars and panel debates. For example in November 2017 the project manager will give a lecture in Amsterdam.

Legislation – On the 6th of November a workshop will be organised by HCWH Europe and it is hosted by MEP Michèle Rivasi (Greens) in the European Parliament. The project manager will attend in the discussions. The main objective of this workshop is to look at how provisions included in the Medical Devices Regulation can be used to achieve the substitution of medical devices containing harmful chemicals with safer alternatives.

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel and the EU Ecolabel – We have supplied The Nordic Ecolabelling with complying information, since they are considering revising their criteria document for Medical devices to include blood bags.

Continuation project – There is formation which aims to continue to develop the work of this project in order to get closer to a market introduction. They have, in October, sent in an application for a project. One of our projects beneficiaries, Karolinska University Hospital, will take the lead and tie other actors from research, the industry and NGOs etc to the group.

Publications – In addition to the projects reports and information material there has been some other publications such as – Vox Sanguinis, Life cycle assessments, Monitoring of blood transfusion operations in EU-countries, 2015. These give their own rise for invitations to different events and also ideas for further research and studies.

Ambassadors – This is probably the most important channel for maintaining dissemination of results and knowledge from the project. Since the projects good results and fruitful collaboration structure gained a lot of attention, it has connected with persons and organisations worldwide that will continue to talk, discuss and refer to the project.

Strategies recommended for future success – good examples and lessons learned

Communication as a priority and equal part

One clear conclusion from this project is the importance of communication in everything that shall succeed in implementation and inherent outside an inner circle or specialist field. Communication cannot be regarded only as a service function, but shall be an equal part as one of the main objectives with its own true budget, agenda, instruments of power and incentives in order to have the same influence and importance as the other ingoing parts.



Communication with care

To increase demand by disseminating knowledge and awareness must, in a project like this, strike a careful balance between correct information and prevent frighten people. A blood bag is an essential medical device and we do not want anyone to abstain from an operation or treatment. It is therefore important that the communication activities are carried out by suitable educated persons with knowledge not only in communication but also in science.



Openness and transparency

Openness and transparency are keys to the successes in fulfilling the objectives of this project.

All documents, reports, minutes, manuals, results, newsletters, articles, films etc are accessible at the projects website – along with contact information to all project members and beneficiaries.



To continue to disseminate the results and knowledge from this project the project website has to be open, public and maintained for at least five years after the project has ended.



To achieve further improvements, awareness, demand and to reach a market introduction of PVC free blood bags a continued high degree of openness and transparency is very much recommended. As well as willingness to share both verified results but also conclusions and theories. There is a tendency to not dare to share results, even if it is in the form of discussions, until it is absolutely confirmed, which sadly delays the success since it requires input from different angels.

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Success factors to keep and develop - together

One success factor is that we did this together: Healthcare demanded and evaluated the bag, while the companies produced the bag. The knowledge and commitment from the members and all the participating organisations were also vital.



To continue forward on this successful path the collaboration between different sectors, different fields of specialty and different parts of society should not be ignored. Applicable innovations will become a reality only if we are being able to work and think in an interdisciplinary manner.



One of the most important keys to future success is the one to reach into the community of the medical staff and of most importance, the physicians, since they have the strongest impact on use of medical devices. The project made a significant step in this direction when with results published in Vox Sanguinis – International Society of Blood Transfusion.



Target groups

As well as it is important to continue to communicate with care, the communication has to be more and more direct and public, in step with a market introduction. Therefore you can identify primary and secondary target groups.



Primary

Within healthcare sector – purchaser, physician, specialist for example with in transfusion medicine, neonatal medicine, environmental chemistry.

Students: Information to the younger population that already have a better awareness and stronger interest in these kind of improvements within health and environment are necessary. They are the ones that will practice and be the patients in the future. To reach the medical students will have a huge impact. Possible ways are through guest lectures, demand education for a safer healthcare from their own sector, demand education regarding safer healthcare from government, by legislation or by the students own demand.



This sector has a tradition of closeness within its own community - this is slowly changing but still it is a challenge to increase the exchange and implementation of research and development results from outside.

Within public authorities - decision makers at all levels.

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One essential success factor is legislation. The project has started the process but it has to continue and it is an ever ongoing process. There has to be laws and restrictions to encourage to lead the development into right directions. Therefore work on all levels from International to local are necessary. Dissemination of information but also information and education. This is a group that more than others need indicators with confirm benefits –economical, health, environmental etc. Therefore calculations of indicators for comparison would be useful.

Within independent organisations – non governmental organisations, trusts, foundations and institutions within different fields that thrive against the same goals as the projects.

If we want reach a profound alteration we need to address on a broad front and these paths are very important. Many of them have the experience to handle both increase demand and meet the public with suitable information. They are also well known negotiating parties to decision makers.

The project has already started collaboration with The Nordic Swan Ecolabel and the EU Ecolabel in order to give labelling to medical devices and blood bags. This will reach both the public, the decision makers and purchases and increase the demand.

Within companies, supply- and trade associations already committed The collaboration with those parts of the industry that have a commitment to reach healthier and safer products must continue. It is of most importance that they are acknowledged and encouraged to be a part of the work and regarded as specialist within their fields.

To be able to make a market introduction the industry has to be a part of it.

Secondary

This is today's secondary target groups but they will eventually become primary.

Within companies, supply- and trade associations – The project has already influenced the market and the plastic industry. There has been a constant battle in proving to the industry that it is possible to make a PVC-free bag, that there is a demand and that PVC is not healthy. At the start of the project the industry lobby organization wanted the European Commission to close it. Now, after nearly six years they are curiously wondering how they can adapt and convert to a PVC free production in not only blood bags but other medical devices. They must survive and therefore they are a target group.

Within students – As written above this group already have a better awareness and stronger interest in these kind of improvements. The primary group within the student group are medical and nature science students, then comes university students in general, after that student in lower grades.



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The public – Eventually the public will be the strongest group regarding demand as in all other matters. But it is important that there is an alternative to choose before starting a campaign. This project could easily rise a massive demand through fear among the public, but it has never been on the table and should not be.

Digital technic – webinar

In the spirit of LIFE webinars are a good and growing arena for dissemination of information and exchange of results, arguments and best practices. It gives a lot of people from all over the world the opportunity to attend seminars, workshops and lectures without economical or ecological cost. The webinars conducted by the project were very successful.

Social Media

The project has had accounts at Facebook, twitter and LinkedIn. Of course are these channels and other channels very important in the information climate of today. They will play an important role in future dissemination and information from this project and it's after LIFE results. However they did not have a huge impact during the project and will not have a central role immediately after the project end since the primary target groups are not within the general public. Special groups and special digital communities are to be considered as primary.



