

EU WEBINAR



European Patients' Rights  
& Cross-Border Healthcare  
Member of the European Parliament Interest Group

**Waiting for the next Council conclusions:  
focus on adult vaccination**

**6th December 2022 | 14:30 – 16:00 CET**

#vaccinaction 2022

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## OPENING REMARKS

By Mariano Votta

**Responsible EU Affairs at Cittadinanzattiva, Director Active Citizenship Network**

Good afternoon and welcome back for this appointment which is realized in the framework of the VaccinAction2022 EU project, focused on supporting the need for strengthening & protecting the value of adult immunization and its gains.

As you know, building on the Council's Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases from 2018 and important lessons learned during the last years of the COVID-19 pandemic, during its semester the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU intended to address these challenges. In particular, the Expert Meeting on Vaccinations, held in [Prague last 21 and 22 November](#) - [opened also to PAGs representatives](#) - was an excellent opportunity to ensure that vaccines are seen as a lifelong saving rather than a cost.

There is a clear need to consider lifelong vaccination in these policy discussions and we appealed to EU institutions to support the need to prioritise adult vaccination to help ensure the protection of the most vulnerable and reduce the burden on healthcare systems.

From the information in our possession, although not yet official, the Council Conclusions on Vaccination go in the right direction of reserving the necessary attention that adult vaccinations deserved to have. Just as the fact that the dialogue with the population is considered crucial. In fact, in the so-called document "*Draft Council conclusions on vaccination as the most effective tool for preventing disease and improving public health*" - which is to be submitted for adoption by Health Ministers at the [EPSCO Council](#) on 8-9 December<sup>1</sup> - is reflected/has been highlighted that "*...Vaccination is not only important for children but also in **a life-course perspective***", and that "*there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and a sustainable investment effort in **improving dialogue with citizens**, understanding their concerns and developing tailored vaccination strategies, alongside targeted communication campaigns, is required*".

Moreover, the Council Conclusion on Vaccination will *invite the Member States to:*

- *Promote health education and health literacy in **a life-course perspective**.* And and first of all, to:
- *Promote **adult vaccination campaigns** to provide protection against transmissible infectious diseases that may be associated with serious outcomes, such as measles, diphtheria, tetanus, or poliomyelitis.*

We can only be happy about this and thank the Czech Presidency Semester which we have, in our small way, constantly encouraged on the point since the day after they took office. And we will continue to do the same during the upcoming [Sweden's Presidency of the Council of the EU](#), we

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<sup>1</sup> Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Employment and social policy), 8 December 2022.

know they will want to pay close attention to the healthy aging issue to which - obviously - vaccination policies for the benefit of the adult population are related.

With the experts we invited today we want to start from here to better understand what to expect and how we can activate in a synergistic way to implement these principles across Europe<sup>2</sup>.

The aforementioned meeting of November 21st and 22nd was preceded (it was November 18th to be precise) by the publication of data on the [State of Vaccine Confidence in the EU \(2022\)](#). EU Institutions informed us that vaccine confidence among the public and healthcare professionals is high across most populations, with some exceptions and caveats. Between 2018 and 2020, there was a large increase in public perception towards vaccines across the EU, particularly towards the seasonal influenza vaccine. Many of these 2020 gains have since been reversed. Perceptions towards the importance, safety, and effectiveness of vaccines have declined across the EU between 2020 and 2022. [Across the EU, the view that vaccines are safe remains higher than in 2018 levels](#). Yet, EU-wide changes in public perceptions towards the importance and safety of vaccines show that strong vaccine dependence and variability in vaccine confidence exist between countries and within sociodemographic characteristics.

An evaluation into the differences in public confidence between over 65-year-olds and 18-34-year-olds reveals key insights into an increasing 'vaccine confidence gap', which needs to be addressed.

The difference in vaccine confidence between 65-year-olds and 18-34-year-olds appears to be

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<sup>2</sup> Non abbiamo tempo per discutere dei temi al centro delle citate Conclusioni, quali:

- Building vaccine acceptance through communication
- The role of primary care in communication
- EU expert forum on tackling vaccine hesitancy
- Future of vaccination: accessibility and development of innovative vaccines
- Vaccination in digital age

widening over time across many EU member states, with 18-34-year-olds becoming less confident between 2018 and 2022.

Without a shadow of a doubt, these are valuable indications that should guide our commitment to support public vaccination policies.

At the same time, the Commission has launched a [communication campaign](#) on the lifelong benefits of vaccination against COVID, seasonal influenza, and HPV, called United In Protection, which we appreciate but in which, frankly, we would also have liked a reference to the active role played by part of civil society that spends itself in support of public vaccination policies, a reference that is **lacking** instead. From our point of view, it is fundamental to involve civil society actors in the discussions and to recognize our role in support of public policy and for the benefit of society. The fight to increase vaccination coverage can only be effective if the message reaches citizens. We need to identify how to better integrate PAGs & civil society actors in vaccination-related initiatives to ensure that the hard work and progress reach a more general audience.

Again about adult vaccination, in Italy, my organization Cittadinanzattiva published a few days ago, on December 1, 2022, some encouraging data. In fact, our annual report on the relationship between citizens/patients and pharmacists in our country has shown that on a sample of 1030 pharmacies interviewed, the anti-Covid-19 vaccination as well as the flu vaccination is provided in just under 40% of cases. In practice, the pharmacy in Italy has decided to open up to vaccinations and has wasted no time in making itself available to the national vaccination plan also on the side of the main vaccination for the benefit of adults. And the next challenge can only be greater involvement in so-called routine vaccinations: in this regard, more than half of pharmacists (from 54.5% to 58.1%) are in favor of introducing vaccination against Herpes Zoster, Papillomavirus (HPV) and Pneumococcus as well as 70% of citizens, who would see very well the involvement of pharmacies in the three routine vaccinations mentioned. Also, in this case, we are in the presence

of indications and guidelines to keep in mind in our common commitment to support public vaccination policies.

Before giving the floor again to the moderator Gary who has been supporting us for years now, and whom I thank very much for this, let me say hello and thank [MEP Fabio Massimo Castaldo](#), not only for agreeing to ideally be the host of this event but also– and above all – for the decision to officially support the MEPs Interest Group “European Patients' Rights and Cross-border Healthcare”. The MEP certainly needs no introduction, I only recall that MEP Castaldo was first elected to the European Parliament in 2014, where he was subsequently appointed Vice-President in 2017, as the youngest Vice-President in the history of the European Parliament. Congratulations!

With my congratulations to the MEP, I have finished my introduction. Thank you for your attention, I wish you an interesting webinar and I give Gary the floor again.