

Addressing the challenges of concomitant deployment of COVID-19 and influenza vaccination

17 of December 2021 from 11.00 to 12.30 CET

FINAL REMARKS

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Suggestions:

- My first reflection is that the data presented seem to overall show a good ability of the health systems of the various EU countries to **respond in the short - medium term** (for instance, about investing in HCPs training and communication on vaccination as well as in the supply, compared to last year) while we still need to work so that this capacity is consolidated also **in the long term**: the quite bad performance for investment in healthcare infrastructure, for planning to progressively invest in life-course immunization, for collecting data to enable "real time monitoring activities", for implementing a unique national immunization information system, etc., point to this.

In this regard, I believe it is crucial to give adequate attention and high priority, within the National Recovery Plans, to immunization policies: the fact that - to specific questions - many interlocutors do not know anything about it, is not reassuring. On the contrary, it suggests the urgency of thinking about specific ad hoc initiatives: if not in terms of priority setting, at least on what concerns the involvement of stakeholders during the implementation of planned activities of the National Recovery Plans.

- The second reflection is that also today's initiative, like the previous ones realized last June, July and September by Active Citizenship Network, is held in the framework of the cycle of EU Webinars «Health at the heart of the future of Europe», which my organization is holding to contribute to the debate of the Conference for the Future of Europe, the initiative that invites to speak up, to say what kind of Europe we want to live in, and to help shape our future. And we are happy to know that this initiative has been hosted in the EU portal [futureu](https://futureu.eu), the hub-platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe, with the hope that the suggestions emerged from today's event may reach the EU Institutions leading the Conference for the Future of Europe.

- The third reflection has to do with 3 intangible values: **courage, confidence and will**. The **will** that sometimes, more than the lack of resources, has slowed down the implementation of small innovations
 - Let's think, for example, of the progress in the **booking system** and how useful it can be to facilitate access to vaccinations for those who are convinced they want to get vaccinated: today it is much easier to book a flight from home to go 8000km away than to book an appointment at a vaccination center 8km from home for a routine vaccination. The smart procedures introduced at least in my country to book the anti-Covid-19 vaccination should be extended as soon as possible also to all the other vaccinations. The technologies are there, we just need to modernize a sector whose infrastructure has been neglected for too long. The same can be said for a more effective interaction between citizens and Healthcare Professionals.
 - Let's also think, for example, of the **cooperation** and usefulness of involving in a more systematic way the many healthcare workers in vaccination policies, as well as the intermediate bodies of civil society that are already working to increase vaccination coverage in the single countries. Now more than other periods it's time to work to build a proper vaccine culture and an updated civic health literacy, increasing community engagement and multi-stakeholder collaboration: the effort to affirm a life-course vaccination culture can only be effective if the message reaches the citizens. We need to ask ourselves how to better integrate civil society in the vaccination-related initiatives in order to make sure that the hard work and progress reach a more general audience. We do not get tired of repeating that "Together, as active and aware citizens, we can protect ourselves: education is the most important thing we can do to restore **trust** in vaccines".

It is a historical period in which we are certainly asked for a sense of responsibility, resilience, patience, **trust** in the institutions on which delicate decisions fall, but also to have and demonstrate **courage**: to test new solutions, as it has been done in some countries by involving pharmacists in vaccination campaigns, and as it is the case with the anti-Covid-19 vaccine for children: *luckily science does not retreat in the face of obstacles, and nor should our **trust** in science.*

Now please let me provide in one minute or little more our engagement and next steps on the topic to commit to the next year.

Follow up and possible next steps:

- 1) In coherence with the 2021 activities, we'll continue to balance Covid-19 vaccination with routine vaccination. In particular we have decided to increase our focus on adult immunization as now a paradigm shift needs to happen from pediatric vaccination calendars, which is working pretty well, to adult vaccination. There are numbers of adult vaccines which are available including flu, pneumococcal vaccination, shingles vaccination, pertussis vaccination, but when you look at coverage rates, they are very low across all European countries. About it, we'll work in the following 3 directions:
 - Targeted to the EU and national institutions, we'll try to utilize findings of our surveys to highlight some of the systematic barriers – lack of adult vaccination registries, recall and reminders, calendars, funding, etc. – and together we will try to contribute to find ways to overcome them.
 - Targeted to the intermediate bodies, we'll organize a training session, opened to the leaders of civic & Patients' Advocacy Groups linked with our network, with the involvement of high eminent experts.
 - Targeted to the broader public, a communication campaign will be developed with the contribution of the experts and associations involved in our activities. I am convinced that each one of us, when well-informed, represents a good antidote to the diffusion of fake news.
- 2) In continuity with the topic of today's event focused on influenza vaccination, we confirm also for 2022 our cooperation to affirm the «EU Flu Day», promoted by Vaccine Europe, in the EU & National agenda.
- 3) In the past few days, following an invitation received by the DG Sante, we have confirmed to the EU Commission our support to join forces in order to promote reliable information and raise awareness of the crucial role of vaccination in combating the pandemic, with particular attention to the East of Europe, involving our national partners.
- 4) Last but not least, I am happy to announce a new agreement that we have signed yesterday (are signing) with VAC4EU (Vaccine monitoring Collaboration for Europe), the sustainability solution of the ADVANCE project which was funded by the Innovative Medicines Initiative.

Finally, as always, I have my list of acknowledgements.

- Please let me thank our media partners: the specialized media “Vaccine Today” and the valuable platform to the health sector [Health Europa](#).
- Please let me also thank and the four companies: GSK, MSD, Pfizer and Sanofi Pasteur for supporting our “VaccinAction 2021” EU project, as well as all the experts involved in the steering committee of the project, starting from the HCPs at Bambino Gesù Children’s Hospital from Italy, the International Federation of Ageing, and the Coalition for Life-Course Immunisation.
- At the same time, please let me thank thanks to all the panelists and once again our moderator Gary Finnegan.
- As always, thank you to the staff of Active Citizenship Network (first of all congratulations Daniela, and thanks Maira, Bianca, Anastasia, Ana and Elisa) and to our communication office.
- I would like to remind you that this conference was kindly supported by the MEPs Interest Group "European Patients' Rights & Cross-Border Healthcare".

If we do not have another chance to be connected together before the winter break, I wish you all a lovely holiday. The document of the European Commission that "deletes" the word Christmas has been withdrawn after the controversies, and we, this year more than ever, would like to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and Happy New Year. See you in January. In the meantime, stay safe.

Thank you all again and goodbye from Rome.