



Supporting Active Aging Through Immunisation (SAATI)

Calling for a European life-course immunisation strategy

The SAATI Partnership is a coalition of healthcare professionals, academics and patient advocates, along with industry partners.

The SAATI partnership argues that vaccination should be part of **an age-based approach to health**.

To support this argument, the Partnership commissioned a report that consolidates existing research on the incidence of the main vaccine-preventable diseases in Europe, highlights **limited coverage, inconsistent policies** as well as **gaps in public awareness** across Europe, and brings new evidence on the **economic benefits of adult vaccination**.

On the basis of this evidence the SAATI Partnership calls for **immunisation to be part of an age-based health approach throughout all phases of life**.

In order to develop a robust life course immunisation strategy the SAATI Partnership calls for **the establishment of a European Health and Vaccination Platform as a matter of priority**.

Immunisation is considered one of the most cost-effective public health interventions. Vaccines can protect individuals from diseases caused by viruses and bacteria and shield society's more vulnerable members, such as children, pregnant women, older people and chronic disease patients from infections and the complications brought on by these infections.

Conquering some of the most serious infectious diseases, such as smallpox, polio and diphtheria, has been a formidable achievement of past centuries and contributed to the increased lifespan of Europeans. However, even today, infections still threaten the health and wellbeing of our populations. Alarming, many antibiotics, the traditional mainstay in treating complications from infectious diseases, have become ineffective, giving rise to a new threat to patient safety through anti-microbial resistance in hospitals and in the community.

Over the years, the EU has seen major changes leading to closer economic and political union, while growing from the founding 6 to 28 Member States. The EU's free movement of people allows citizens of one country, their families, workers, and healthcare professionals to move across national borders to live, work or retire in another member state.

Today's Europe is facing some key social and economic challenges: How to make Europe competitive in world markets and keep our health and social systems, based on equity and solidarity, sustainable at a time of a rapidly ageing population and dwindling workforce.

It is estimated that by 2025, nearly 25 % of Europeans will be 50 years or older, many of whom will have already experienced at least one chronic disease and, with increasing age, more people will be burdened by several chronic diseases at one time, running the additional risk of complications



brought on by infections.

According to OECD figures, currently 97% of the health budget is spent on care, with governments investing, on average, only 3 % in prevention. To better address the needs of an ageing population, our health systems will have to adapt and increase their investment in disease prevention across the life-course. This means continuing to provide adequate treatment and care for the ageing population, while remaining financially sustainable.

The EU Treaty provides for a high level of health protection for its citizens, however, the recent policy debate has mainly focused on tackling the chronic disease burden, without factoring in the complex interaction with infectious diseases.

Infectious diseases appear on the political radar only during major outbreaks, when prevention is too late.

Currently, the European Commission supports member states in maintaining or increasing rates of immunisation against vaccine-preventable diseases. Responsibility for preventing transmission of emerging pathogens and the resurgence of others, as well as enhancing the rapid and coordinated response capability to these threats, is shared by national health authorities and the European Institutions. However, a comprehensive strategy that covers the role of immunisation across the life-course and potentially helps to lessen the disease burden over time is lacking.

Vaccination policy and schedules vary greatly across the EU-28 member states and population coverage has been steadily decreasing for some vaccinations. Despite the fact that infections are not stopped at national borders, there has been no consistent European strategy for vaccination.

While the EU 2020 Strategy calls for healthy life expectancy to increase by two years, and the Commission's new EU Health for Growth programme aims to support a healthy population and workforce, vaccination has mostly been addressed at EU level in times of emergency, such as the H1N1 flu pandemic in 2009. Recent pockets of outbreaks of measles and whooping cough in children in some Member States' regions sound a wakeup call to address immunisation as part of a European life-course immunisation strategy.

SAATI members call on the European Commission, the European Parliament and Member States to work together with key stakeholders as a matter of utmost urgency to develop an up-to-date, effective and robust immunisation strategy that protects individuals and society from infectious diseases across the life-course.

SAATI members ask that:

- 1) The Commission, together with EU Member States, works to develop a strong and comprehensive life-course immunisation strategy to tackle infectious diseases, taking a lifespan approach, from childhood to older people, as well as vulnerable population groups;
- 2) A European Vaccination and Health Platform (Partnership, Joint Action) on infectious diseases is set up to shape the strategy, share best practice and improve the alignment of EU and national vaccination policies;
- 3) The role of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is strengthened to collect and share consistent and comparable epidemiologic data, disaggregated by age- and sex, and improve Europe's surveillance system;
- 4) Healthcare professionals are engaged with, and trained to improve medical and scientific leadership in immunisation across the life course, as well as improving their own vaccination rates;

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- 5) Robust communication programmes are developed to create a health literate public that understands the need to protect individuals and society from infectious diseases through immunisation, and which target specific messages at policy makers, the general public, patients and health professionals to improve vaccination uptake and coverage.
 - 6) Joint initiatives for vaccination of older adults are included under the European Innovation Partnership – Active Healthy Ageing.
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*The **SAATI Partnership** was set up by stakeholders committed to tackling low public awareness of the risk and burden of vaccine-preventable diseases in older adults in Europe and comprises patients' and professionals' associations, clinicians, think tanks, healthy ageing specialists and experts. More information on the partnership is available at www.saati-partners.eu*