**Vaccines Europe – Realising the full Value of Vaccination**

**Blog post (Sibilia Quilici)**

In the space of a little more than a year, vaccines, in combination with other public health measures, have allowed us to build a stronger response against the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of more contagious variants, allowing EU citizen to live a healthier, more active and more normal lives. [[1]](#footnote-28202)

Nearly half a million lives have been saved among those aged 60 years and over since the start of COVID-19 vaccination roll-out in 33 countries across the WHO European Region.

However, we should not forget that vaccines are more than just a tool to fight outbreaks of infectious diseases. Today, and despite their relatively short history, vaccines can protect individuals across their lifespan against more than 20 life-threatening infectious diseases.

Vaccines have demonstrated to be one of the most successful healthcare interventions of our time, saving up to 5 million lives globally each year. An additional 1.5 million could be saved by improving global coverage.[[2]](#footnote-10449)

Vaccines are also instrumental in the fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR). By preventing diseases and reducing the demand and misuse of antibiotics, thereby safeguarding their effectiveness, vaccines are a key ally against a threat so called the slide to pandemic, that could claim 10 million lives a year by 2050.[[3]](#footnote-30047)

And all this public health benefit at a very little cost! Vaccinating an individual against up to 17 diseases throughout its entire life is estimated to cost less than 3,500 Euros in Europe.[[4]](#footnote-30088) This number is much lower than the cost of many mass secondary preventive interventions.

Also, as we approach the peak of flu season, it is important to remind that influenza vaccination can save up to 332 million Euros in healthcare costs in Europe by freeing hospital beds and drastically reducing visits to healthcare professionals.[[5]](#footnote-3629)[[6]](#footnote-2886)

So, not only do vaccines and vaccinations save lives, but they also help economies stay afloat, and have bear the potential to make our healthcare systems more resilient and sustainable.

And yet, despite these obvious benefits, almost 80% of European governments spend less than 0.5% of their healthcare budget on immunisation programmes – to put that into perspective, that is less than 5€ per capita spent on ensuring access to vaccines and addressing the burden of vaccine-preventable diseases.[[7]](#footnote-6088)

Consequently, most European countries are not offering a comprehensive life-course immunisation programme to their population, are not reaching the 75% target vaccination coverage rate for influenza vaccination[[8]](#footnote-28828), are not managing the rise of vaccine hesitancy, are not benefiting from the full potential of vaccination.

There has rarely been a more important time than today to explain what vaccines and vaccination can do through clear scientific evidence. Therefore, the question we asked ourselves was a simple one: how can we showcase the true value of vaccines in a way that is simple and easy to understand? We have illustrated it in three factsheets each focusing on a key area:

* The impact of vaccines on public health
* The impact of vaccines on our economies
* Budgets for prevention (and immunisation) in Europe

While paging through figures and visualisations, you will walk through a European vaccines story: one that shows us how vaccines and vaccination have already brought an immense benefit to EU citizens, eradicating life-threatening diseases, and allowing people to lead safer and healthier lives.

However, it also tells us that, despite all the gains, we should not lower our guard, and that if we support stronger vaccination programmes, increase coverage through equitable access, and tap into the full potential of vaccine research and innovation, the future is even brighter.

Vaccination is an investment in health; Health is wealth!

Sibilia Quilici

1. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/who-ecdc-nearly-half-million-lives-saved-covid-19-vaccination> [↑](#footnote-ref-28202)
2. WHO (2019). Immunization. <https://www.who.int/news-room/facts-in-pictures/detail/immunization> (Accessed September 2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-10449)
3. Mantel C and Cherian T (2020). New immunization strategies: adapting to global challenges, Bundesgesundheitsblatt, Gesundheitsforschung, Gesundheitsschutz. 63(1):25-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-30047)
4. Ethgen O et al (2016). The cost of vaccination throughout life: A western European overview, Hum Vaccin Immunother. Vol. 12(8): 2029–2037. [↑](#footnote-ref-30088)
5. Preaud E et al (2014). Annual public health and economic benefits of seasonal influenza vaccination: a European estimate. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4141103/ (Accessed September 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-3629)
6. Largerin N et al (2015). Role of vaccination in the sustainability of healthcare systems, J Mark Access Health Policy. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4802702/ (Accessed September 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-2886)
7. Faivre P et al (2021). Immunization funding across 28 European countries, Expert Rev Vaccines. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14760584.2021.1905257 (Accessed September 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-6088)
8. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009H1019&from=HU> [↑](#footnote-ref-28828)