

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000105/25
to the Commission
Aldo Patriciello (Pfe)
(13 January 2025)**

Subject: Preventing heart disease and updating health regulations

Every year, around 300 000 sudden deaths occur in Europe — including 50 000 in Italy — mainly due to undiagnosed heart disease causing ventricular fibrillation and cardiac arrest.

Prevention is crucial, while survival is significantly more likely when timely interventions are made by performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation or using semi-automatic defibrillators, for example.

European sports screening models — and in particular the Italian one — have reduced the risk, but it is not enough to prevent the death of young sportspeople from heart disease.

Prevention — through thorough tests such as echocardiograms and genetic testing — is essential, but the current legislation may be obsolete and, especially in the field of sport, the distinction between those involved in competitive sport and those who are not now seems to have been lost.

Regulations need to be revised to include more comprehensive screening for all sportspeople, regardless of the competitive level, focusing on the specific cardiovascular risk for each sport. Primary prevention should start from the age of eight, with annual screening and advanced diagnostic tests.

In view of the above:

1. Can the Commission say what steps can be taken to update health regulations in the light of new knowledge?
2. How will it promote international collaboration to improve prevention of sudden cardiac death?

Submitted: 13.1.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(9 April 2025)**

The Commission recognises that cardiovascular diseases have a significant impact on many people, communities and health systems in the EU.

The ‘Healthier Together’ initiative ⁽¹⁾, co-created with Member States and stakeholders, provides the strategic framework to support Member States in tackling non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases.

The Commission supports knowledge sharing, such as the exchange of best practices ⁽²⁾ between Member States, and activities to improve health literacy.

Financial support is provided under the EU4Health Programme ⁽³⁾ to implement best practices that contribute to reducing preventable deaths caused by cardiovascular diseases.

The President of the Commission announced in her political guidelines that the Commission will step up work on preventive health, focusing on improving cardiovascular health through coordinated efforts, and entrusted the Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare with leading this work.

As it was announced by the Commissioner, the Commission is currently developing an ambitious Plan for European Cardiovascular Health, building on the success of Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan.

Work is ongoing through the joint action on cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, and with technical support from international partners, such as the World Health Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The Commission is working closely with the Expert Group on Public Health ⁽⁴⁾, the main forum for discussions with Member States on key public health challenges.

⁽¹⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases/healthier-together-eu-non-communicable-diseases-initiative_en

⁽²⁾ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dyna/bp-portal/>

⁽³⁾ EU4Health programme 2021-2027: https://health.ec.europa.eu/funding/eu4health-programme-2021-2027-vision-healthier-european-union_en; also replied in Answer to Written Question E-000092/2023 (ASW): https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2023-000092-ASW_EN.html

⁽⁴⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases/expert-group-public-health_en

Member States may also decide to organise specific awareness campaigns at national level with the aim of increasing knowledge on the prevention of sudden cardiac arrest in sportspeople.
