

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001594/25
to the Commission
Tomislav Sokol (PPE)
(22 April 2025)**

Subject: Immunosenescence

Immunosenescence, the age-related decline in immune function, increases the vulnerability of older adults to infectious diseases, such as influenza or COVID-19, as well as non-communicable diseases, including cancer. With one third of EU citizens projected to be over 65 by 2100, addressing this challenge becomes even more urgent as immunosenescence reduces both the immune response to infection and the protection provided by influenza vaccination. Despite this, national vaccination strategies often do not fully account for these age-related changes, limiting their impact. With Europe's ageing demographic, ensuring that vaccination strategies are optimised for older adults is critical for public health and economic sustainability.

In this context:

1. What actions will the Commission undertake to encourage the Member States to adapt their national vaccination programmes to better account for immunosenescence, ensuring older adults receive the most effective and appropriate vaccines available?
2. How does the Commission plan to work with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to develop more specific guidance on age-related vaccine recommendations, ensuring that national immunisation strategies reflect the latest scientific evidence on vaccine effectiveness in older populations?

Submitted: 22.4.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(4 July 2025)**

Vaccination programmes and services are a competence of national authorities. The Commission supports Member States in increasing and maintaining high vaccination coverage rates and in a lifelong approach to vaccination. It is a theme of #UnitedInProtection ⁽¹⁾, the Commission's campaign promoting safe and effective vaccines' benefits.

Immunosenescence is a scientific challenge. In general, a clear understanding of the protective human immune response to infection is key to selecting and designing the right vaccine antigens.

New or more specifically targeted formulations may be needed to improve response to existing vaccines in different population groups such as the elderly that may mount a suboptimal immune response to vaccination.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) regularly generates estimates of vaccine effectiveness for key vaccination programmes, such as seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccines ⁽²⁾, with specific attention towards older groups.

The ECDC also regularly provides summaries of scientific data available on the performance of newer vaccines ⁽³⁾ which may help to address some of the challenges related to immunosenescence.

This scientific evidence, together with existing complementary research in the field, can help to inform on where gaps exist, including areas where research and development for newer and more effective vaccines targeting specific population group needs is key.

The ECDC also regularly publishes overviews on the performance of national immunisation groups, such as for seasonal influenza vaccination in older age groups ⁽⁴⁾.

Such overviews include public health considerations on how Member States and stakeholders can strengthen the implementation of existing programmes.

⁽¹⁾ https://vaccination-protection.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

⁽²⁾ Please consult Vaccine Effectiveness, Burden and Impact Studies (VEBIS) on the ECDC website for an overview of ongoing studies and latest results available: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/infectious-disease-topics/related-public-health-topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/vaccine-0>.

⁽³⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/systematic-review-update-efficacy-effectiveness-and-safety-newer-and-enhanced>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/survey-report-national-seasonal-influenza-vaccination-recommendations>.