

**Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with
Commissioners Glenn Micallef, European
Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness,
Youth, Culture, and Sport, and Olivér Várhelyi,
European Commissioner for Health and Animal
Welfare, in presence of MEP Peter Agius**

“Tackling Diabetes Together”

2 July 2025, European Commission in Brussels

Introduction

The Youth Policy Dialogue brought together young diabetic people coming from eight different countries in Europe to discuss about diabetes with European Commissioners Glenn Micallef, responsible for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport and Olivér Várhelyi, responsible for Health and Animal welfare, in presence of Member of the European Parliament Peter Agius. Prior to the physical meeting, an online preparation meeting took place on 25 June 2025.

The meeting took place on 2 July 2025 in the Berlaymont building, in Brussels and was moderated by Antonio Parenti, Director for Public Health, Cancer and Health Security in DG SANTE. The Dialogue's aim was to exchange views and listen to participants' perspectives and ideas on how the European Union can strengthen its support for young people living with diabetes.

Nine young people with diabetes participated in the Dialogue. The participants were chosen with the help of the International Diabetes Federation Europe.

Summary of the Youth Policy Dialogue

Commissioner Micallef opened the Dialogue and emphasised the importance of addressing diabetes among young people in the EU. He highlighted key questions regarding specific actions to support youth with diabetes, enhancing support systems post-diagnosis, and promoting healthier lifestyles to reduce Type 2 diabetes risk. Commissioner Micallef stressed the importance of physical exercise in improving both physical and mental health, countering the epidemic of inactivity and obesity, and lowering depression rates among people with diabetes.

MEP Agius expressed gratitude for the opportunity to engage with participants and highlighted the importance of listening to their experiences and suggestions regarding diabetes. He emphasized the need for increased awareness and preparation for tackling diabetes across member states.

Finally, Commissioner Várhelyi pointed to the urgency of addressing rising cardiovascular and diabetes issues in Europe, highlighting the introduction of a new European cardiovascular plan. With over 33 million Europeans affected by diabetes, including increasing cases of type 2 diabetes among the youth, he stressed the need for immediate and effective intervention.

The discussion focused on the experiences of the participants as young people with diabetes. Several questions were asked to the Commissioners on concrete actions to be taken by the European Union to support and help the lives of young people with diabetes.

The key takeaways

The principal aim of this Dialogue was to provide young people with a platform to share their insights, personal stories, and challenges related to diabetes, and to discuss its impact on their daily lives, mental well-being, and social interactions. Additionally, the focus was on how EU policies and programs can encourage healthier lifestyles and better serve young individuals living with diabetes.

Overall, the discussion captured the concerns and perspectives expressed by many participants. The Dialogue was structured around various interactions, including testimonials and questions from attendees. This exchange of views, perspectives, ideas, and priorities on enhancing the European Union's support for young people living with diabetes resulted in several key takeaways.

The **key takeaways** from this Dialogue are:

- There is a significant **lack of awareness** about diabetes, leading to many misconceptions, particularly about how individuals with diabetes are perceived. Sports participation was highlighted as important by several participants. Some experienced difficulties once their diabetes became known, with educators and coaches either being unaware of how to manage potential health issues or afraid to deal with situations like hypoglycaemia. This lack of awareness is also tied to a lack of knowledge, which caused most of the participants to advocate for increased awareness and education. They suggested initiatives such as communication campaigns or including diabetes on the EU health agenda.
- The **mental well-being** of individuals with diabetes is just as crucial as their physical health. Some participants shared that dealing with depression and living in constant fear of possible health issues were part of their experiences.
- **Healthcare services must be adapted** and harmonized to better suit the needs of young people. People with Type 1 diabetes are often diagnosed at a young age and are not always taken seriously by their doctors. Several remarks from participants addressed this issue, stating that the healthcare system is not well-suited for those aged 16 to 25. Similarly, it was observed that although students have access to support and resources, these tend to decrease after graduation, even though they are still at a young age. This issue is closely linked to a disparity in access to medicines and technologies. Depending on the country, the price of diabetes medication can vary significantly, sometimes exceeding three times the actual cost.

- While primary prevention is important for people living with Type 2 diabetes, there is a **need to do more** for people already diagnosed. Secondary prevention is critical for both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes to prevent or delay life-threatening complications. Among the issues mentioned was the need for personalized, integrated care rather than fragmented services. Several participants also emphasized the support they receive from associations and organizations and highlighted how the EU could enhance its support for these associations. Additionally, there was a call for more early screening and a better focus on co-morbidity factors, such as cardiovascular diseases.

Annex

