

10th Anniversary of Societal Impact of Pain (SIP) - SIP 2019 Symposium

7 November 2019, 8:00 – 17:00

Concert Noble, Rue d'Arlon 84, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium

Introductory remarks: 'SIP 10th Years Anniversary: past, present and future'

*By Mariano Votta
Active Citizenship Network*

Welcome and good morning also from my side. I think it's at least the 5th participation of Cittadinanzattiva-Active Citizenship Network to the SIP Symposium.

As you probably know, the commitment in the area of pain by my organization is strictly linked with one of the principle stated in the "[European Charter Of Patients' Rights](#)", a milestone to advocate on health issues at the EU and national level, based on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The Charter has been drafted in 2002 by Active Citizenship Network together with many associations. Even if no one of us were only focused on pain, the high sensitive about the respect of the person allowed us to state, among the others, the **Patients' Right to Avoid Unnecessary Suffering and Pain**, as follows: "*Each individual has the right to avoid as much suffering and pain as possible, in each phase of his or her illness*".

Over the years, all together we have contributed to enrich the constituency of the advocacy groups across Europe active on the topic, and today it is really a pleasure to see in the panel of this Annual Symposium some advocacy groups that 18 years ago were not still born or not involved at all in the area of pain.

All together we have also contributed to increase the commitment of the European institutions on the issue: the last European Council, Parliament and Commission has been probably the Institutions that, in the history of the European Union, have shown with facts to be more attentive to the needs of the European citizens suffering from chronic pain, and this attention represents an important heritage for the new European Institutions that are called to give continuity and, hopefully, to improve on what their predecessors have done.

Without any doubt, much of what has been achieved at least in the last five years is due to the great work done with transparency and respect for the institutions by the SIP - Societal Impact of Pain.

According to me, the decision, taken years ago, to officially involve patients and citizens in the process represented the sliding door for the development of SIP.

As always, expectations are increased with respect to any successful initiative. After achieving a goal, there are many others to be reached and – about it - we will discuss today.

For sure, is still valid the message underlined during the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2014: "It is of fundamental importance to guarantee access to pain therapy (...) to reduce the

existing inequalities in healthcare between regions and Member States of the European Union in the area of equal rights to health”¹.

The wish that I address to the SIP, on the eve of its tenth birthday, is to continue with renewed enthusiasm in its commitment that led the founders, Grunenthal and Efic, to establish it in 2009.

A commitment that can be translated as working towards the respect of the patients' right to avoid unnecessary suffering and pain.

A commitment that recognizes the key role of the civic society as a whole, totally in line with the message widespread in occasion of the above mentioned Informal Council of EU Health Ministers, 2014: "It is important to remember the contribution of non-profit associations toward the development and growth of the palliative culture; and the promotion of initiatives to strengthen and support civic organizations in their work to help patients suffering from pain and patients requiring palliative care. It is vital that patients are of their rights and able to make informed choices”².

I wish you a fruitful Symposium

¹ Beatrice Lorenzin, IT Minister of Health, in occasion of the Informal Council of EU Health Ministers, 2014.

² Ibidem.