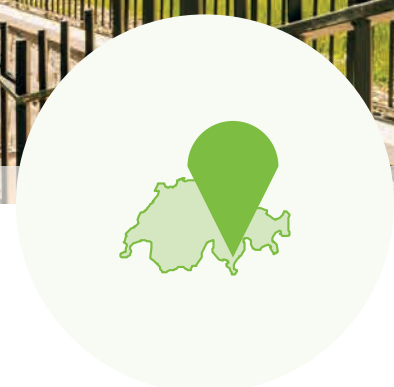




The Sassellina funicular, Lugano

Canton Ticino, Switzerland



General overview

Ticino, one of the 26 cantons of the Swiss Confederation, is situated in the southernmost part of the country. It benefits from a strategic geographic position between the Swiss Alps and Italy, representing a crucial corridor for road traffic on Europe's north–south axis. This situation, however, negatively impacts the quality of the environment, as well as mobility, in the canton.

Covering an area of 2812 km², which is home to 350'000 people, Ticino is the only canton in which the official language is Italian, rather than German, French or Romansh. It comprises 106 municipalities; the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is Sw.fr. 89 248 (€86 930); and life expectancy at birth for males and females, respectively, is 82.7 and 86.5 years (1).

As a consequence of Swiss federal principles, Ticino and the other cantons have always had the

privilege of shaping their own internal policies and regulations to some extent. In relation to the health system, all cantons are regulated by the Swiss Federal Law on Health Insurance, though minor adaptations to cantonal contexts are allowed as the cantons play a significant role in financing, organizing and delivering health-care services. In this sense, Switzerland owns a very well-developed health system, specific to the country. Its main features are the compulsory provision by private health-insurance companies of health-insurance coverage for everyone residing in Switzerland, and the competition-based market of these health-insurance companies. Despite this competition-based model, health costs are increasing. Though this means a rise in health expenditure, the percentage of GDP granted by the Swiss Confederation to disease prevention and health promotion (2.3%) is lower than the average for the other countries in the WHO European Region.

Regional activities linked to the WHO European Programme of Work

The following activities are linked to the three core priorities of the European Programme of Work (EPW) ((i) moving towards Universal

Health Coverage (UHC); (ii) promoting health and well-being; and (iii) protecting against health emergencies).



Moving towards UHC

One of the priorities of Canton Ticino is the development of health promotion, particularly in the context of Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (good health and well-being) and the EPW. Over the years, a series of international, national and local surveys have followed various areas, including the perception of health in the population and the quality of nutrition, mental well-being and some favourable behaviours (such as physical activity) and at-risk behaviours (such as consumption of tobacco, alcohol and drugs). Given the specificity of some aspects, the indicators used also describe the health of the population in terms of age groups. For example, in the case of the prevalence of falls among older people, or binge drinking among youth, these indicators have made it possible to define both the targets and the specific needs of the population. Subsequently, two cantonal action programmes (PACs 2021–2024) have been developed. The focus of the first is the promotion of health among children and older people through the development of balanced diet, physical activity and mental well-being in specific life settings (2). The second PAC is based on the prevention of risk behaviours, such as the consumption of tobacco and alcohol, taking the characteristics of such consumption in the different age groups of the population into consideration (3).



Promoting health and well-being

The Ticino cantonal action programmes aim to promote health regardless of gender, religion, culture or sexual orientation. To further this vision, dedicated projects have been developed to foster the integration of families living in difficult socioeconomic conditions, and to increase migrants' health skills and their awareness about their rights and duties as patients.



Protecting against health emergencies

Canton Ticino was one of the Swiss regions most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, both in terms of impact on the health system and number of deaths. This exceptional situation was managed through a network of diversified expertise, which was able to analyse the situation, make rapid decisions and communicate them effectively to the population through traditional and social media. A continuous flow of data between laboratories, hospitals and vaccination centres was implemented, and a series of indicators developed to follow the trend of the epidemic in real time.

The region also experiences non-pandemic emergencies, however. These include air pollution, and/or heat waves in the summer, which can severely affect the population, especially the most vulnerable. Therefore,

Canton Ticino established the Health and Environment Operational Group (GOSA), another dedicated network of experts, which brings together climatologists, physicians, biologists and communication experts to manage critical environmental situations and inform the population.

Actions linked to the EPW flagship initiatives

(The Mental Health Coalition; Empowerment through digital health; The European Immunization Agenda 2030; Healthy behaviours: incorporating behavioural and cultural insights.)

Initiatives linked to the Mental Health Coalition

Canton Ticino has introduced mental health and well-being as a priority theme in its 2021–2024 health-promotion programme. It is also pursuing a national awareness-raising campaign aimed at strengthening resources and removing prejudices concerning mental health through various

concerted activities with the French-speaking cantons (4). At the same time, it is promoting and supporting specific promotion and prevention measures related to the pandemic, as well as the networking of stakeholders to meet the needs of the population.

Initiatives linked to the European Immunization Agenda 2030

In pursuit of adequately protecting the population against vaccine-preventable diseases, the Confederation, the cantons and other stakeholders have drawn up the National Vaccination Strategy (NVS) and action plan.

NVS represents a framework within which vaccines can be administered to protect the population in a coordinated, effective, and efficient manner. It has three main goals, namely, to:

1. encourage stakeholders to take the issue of vaccination seriously;
2. ensure that the public has a good enough understanding of the issue to make an informed decision;
3. simplify access to vaccinations.

The aim of the action plan is to optimize cooperation between the different stakeholders (5). Like the Strategy itself, the action plan is the result of a process in which all the organizations and institutions involved in NVS participated. It defines 28 measures needed to fulfil the NVS goals. These can be grouped into different subject areas, such as provision, training and communication. It also provides all parties involved in vaccination with an implementation logbook.

Initiative specific to Canton Ticino

Several projects are dedicated to the training of professionals and caregivers with the aim of positioning the concept and principles of health promotion and disease prevention in relation to ambulatory care and community centres for older people. The projects use a coaching approach

and/or hold brief motivational events to encourage stakeholder networking. They encourage the direct and active participation of the patients with the shared objective of patients promoting their own health.

The three most important topics for collaboration within the Regions for Health Network

These are:

1. strategies and actions aimed at the prevention of smoking and binge-drinking and the promotion of physical activity in youth;
2. strategies and actions to foster mental well-being;
3. the development of indicators of health status, health perception and risk behaviour.

Main partners and collaborators

These are:

- the Federal Office of Public Health (Bern)
- the Federal Office of Statistics (Neuchâtel)
- the Tobacco Control Fund (c/o Federal Office of Public Health)
- the Swiss Health Promotion Foundation (Bern and Lausanne)
- other Cantonal departments (in particular those dealing with education, welfare, environment and transport)
- many stakeholders and nongovernmental organizations at the regional and cantonal levels.

Contact list

Dr med. Giorgio Merlani
Chief Medical Officer
Cantonal Medical Office
Email: Giorgio.Merlani@ti.ch

Dr med. Martine Bouvier Gallacchi
Chief Medical Officer, Health Promotion and Evaluation Office
Cantonal Medical Office
Email: Martine.BouvierGallacchi@ti.ch

Mr Ottavio Beretta
Data Analyst
Health Promotion and Evaluation Office
Cantonal Medical Office
Email: Ottavio.Beretta@ti.ch

References¹

1. Ufficio di Statistica [Bureau of Statistics]. In: ti [website]. Bellinzona: Repubblica e Cantone Ticino; 2022 (in Italian) (<https://www4.ti.ch/dfe/dr/ustat/ufficio/>).
2. Bouvier Gallacchi M, Antonietti A, Tomada A, Vanolli M. Programma d'azione cantonale "Promozione della salute 2021–2024" [Cantonal action programme "Health promotion 2021–2024"]. Bellinzona: Cantonal Medical Office, 2020 (in Italian) (https://www4.ti.ch/fileadmin/DSS/DSP/SPVS/PDF/Pubblicazioni/PAC_Promozione_salute_SPVS_2021-2024.pdf).
3. Bouvier Gallacchi M, Beretta O, Tomada A. Programma d'azione cantonale "Prevenzione alcol, tabacco e prodotti affini 2021–2024" [Cantonal action programme "Prevention of alcohol, tobacco and related products 2021–2024"]. Bellinzona: Cantonal Medical Office, 2020 (in Italian) (https://m4.ti.ch/fileadmin/DSS/DSP/SPVS/PDF/Pubblicazioni/PAC_alcol_tabacco_2021-2024_Versione_WEB.pdf).
4. SalutePSI.Ch [website]. Lausanne: Coraasp; 2022 (in French, German, Italian) (<https://www.santepsy.ch/fr/>).
5. National Vaccination Strategy (NVS). In: Federal Office of Public Health FOPH [website]. Bern: Federal Office of Public Health; 2019 (<https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/en/home/strategie-und-politik/nationale-gesundheitsstrategien/nationale-strategie-impfungen-nsi.html>).

¹ All URLs accessed 20 October 2022.