

Blood Donation, Policy Initiative

in "[Volt's Mapping of Policies](#)" - "Smart State - Make high quality healthcare available for everyone"

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Context: Blood donations bear the risk of transmitting infections and diseases. As testing all blood donations against those requires a significant amount of resources, many countries try to ease that task by generally excluding parts of the population in the assumption that e. g. certain sexual orientations automatically imply a much higher infection risk than others.

For instance, in Germany, Czech Republic and Croatia impose a general 1-year deferral period (Croatia currently even an indefinite one) for gay men. Similar rules exist for transgender people.¹

This is often seen as a fatal sign of "legitimate" discrimination against those parts of the population. But Volt clearly stands against discrimination in all forms by its manifesto describing "The elimination of prejudices [...] that cause the sufferance and discrimination of people who belong to minorities and groups historically discriminated against" as one of the central goals of Volt.

Current research - see as quoted - shows that the alleged higher risk does not (any more) exist to make such rules necessary. Of course, an individual risk assessment (IRA) is necessary, but this should not be biased, and not generally be refused to certain groups.

Countries like Italy and Spain have much less discriminating rules, and especially Italy's situation was subject to extensive research. We thus quoted some important research sources in our following text proposal.

Position in MOP before initiative:

The policy is to be added in the MoP between p.28f. "Raise public awareness of the need for organ donations" and p.29 "Harmonise information and guidelines on lifestyle choices that lead to lifestyle diseases"

¹ Many links to sources about the current situation in many countries - here in particular towards blood donations by gay men - are collected here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_donation_restrictions_on_men_who_have_sex_with_men

I. Blood donation regulation

- **Prevent discriminatory exclusion of potential blood donors with unbiased Individual Risk Assessments.** Donations of blood and its components enables health care providers in the European Union to deal with trauma or major surgery, to treat chronic blood diseases, and to manufacture medicinal products². Despite our dependence on these voluntary blood donations, exclusion criteria that have been introduced to ward off donations of blood with transmissible diseases such as HIV have not been sufficiently updated. As a result, they still categorically detain large groups of the population, e.g. parts of LGBTIQ+ and commercial sex workers. Current criteria and long lasting deferral periods are often discriminating and have led to non-compliance³. In line with Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights about Non-discrimination⁴, Volt urges to base the eligibility to donate blood on an Individual Risk Assessment (IRA) that is independent of sex, gender and sexual orientation, similar to the one that has been used in Italy since 2001 without having any measurable impact on the HIV epidemic⁵. We want the IRA to consist of a questionnaire followed by a face-to-face interview with a medical professional. Following international safety standards, we demand a deferral period after risky behaviour that does not exceed three months⁶.

²European Commission about Blood, available at https://ec.europa.eu/health/blood_tissues_organs/blood_en

³Sturrock BR, Mucklow S. What is the evidence for the change in the blood -donation deferral period for high-risk groups and does it go far enough?. *Clin Med (Lond)*. 2018;18(4):304-307. available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6334046/> -

⁴Article 21, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights available at <https://fra.europa.eu/en/eu-charter/article/21-non-discrimination>

⁵Suligoi B, Pupella S, Regine V, Raimondo M, Velati C, Grazzini G. Changing blood donor screening criteria from permanent deferral for men who have sex with men to individual sexual risk assessment: no evidence of a significant impact on the human immunodeficiency virus epidemic in Italy. *Blood Transfus*. 2013;11(3):441-448. available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3729137/>

⁶ See above: Sturrock BR & Mucklow S. *Clin Med (Lond)*. 2018.