A COMIC BOOK TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE RISKS OF THE PAPILLOMAVIRUS.

MSD AND LUCCA COMICS & GAMES JOIN FORCES TO RAISE AWARENESS OF HPV, WHICH IS ESTIMATED TO CAUSE OVER 5,700 CANCERS EVERY YEAR IN ITALY, IN BOTH MEN AND WOMEN.

'Il Quinto' is an original comic book created through a collaboration between MSD and Lucca Comics & Games to raise public awareness of the Papillomavirus (HPV) through the universal language of comics.

The work was created thanks to the combined efforts of some of the most important authors on the international comics scene.

Lucca, 28 October 2026 **- Lucca Comics & Games**, Europe's largest festival dedicated to comics, games and the fantasy imagination, and **MSD**, a biopharmaceutical company committed to innovative research and the promotion of public health, **join forces to launch 'Il Quinto'**, a new communication project that, **through an unpublished comic book and an original story**, aims to spread greater **knowledge and awareness of the Papillomavirus (HPV)**, recognized worldwide as **the second leading infectious cause of cancer, in both men and women**.

The work brings together a group of great artists: **Peach Momoko**, who drew the cover; **Luca Enoch**, who wrote the script; illustrators **Giacomo Bevilacqua** and **Paolo Barbieri**, the stars of the interior pages; and **Valerio Amilcare**, who devised the artistic content and the interactive experience linked to the initiative **at the MSD stand in Piazza San Martino**.

The pages tell a deeply felt story of friendship, memories and promises never forgotten, interwoven with the theme of the Papillomavirus.

The initiative is built around **spreading its message through the medium of comics**, chosen as its cornerstone for its universal and engaging language. Through the work itself, it aims to promote awareness of a virus that is still little known but has a very significant impact on the health of men and women, in Italy and worldwide.

"The aim of this comic is not just to entertain, but to stimulate curiosity and awareness." Said **Luca Enoch, internationally renowned Italian writer and cartoonist**. *"Through the power of storytelling, we want to invite readers to learn more about HPV, to talk to their doctor, and to access informative content through the experiences available at the festival. Because a story can move us, but it can also help us make more informed choices about our health."*

The launch of the project will be **one of the key elements of the 60th edition of Lucca Comics & Games** and includes a rich program of events for festival visitors, with talks, in-

depth sessions and experiential activities, both at the MSD stand and at some of the festival's main venues.

The **public presentation event** will take place at **6:00 p.m. on 28 October at Teatro San Romano**, in the presence of the team that worked on the comic. They will explain how the language of comics can become an effective tool for engaging people with topics of major public health importance, such as raising awareness of the Papillomavirus.

The comic will be **distributed free of charge** at the dedicated events, at the MSD stand, and at other distribution points across the festival.

The experience will also continue beyond reading, with an interactive activity and an original stamp that unlocks unique activations waiting to be discovered. Many of these will start from the MSD stand in Piazza San Martino and will connect visitors to a path of discovery of the original story online at www.hpvitalia.it during the festival and in the days following it, including through the Lucca Comics & Games app.

Emanuele Vietina, General Manager of Lucca Crea and Director of Lucca Comics & Games, commented: *"Comics have a unique ability to turn complex topics into stories that engage and move us, more than other forms of expression. We are proud of this collaboration with MSD Italia, because Lucca Comics & Games has always placed culture at the center as a tool for awareness and for understanding the present. We know that HPV-related cancers are an important health issue for both women and men, and we believe that the ninth art can make complex topics accessible and bring new audiences closer to accurate health information. Through the power of storytelling, we want to stimulate curiosity and awareness, encouraging people to get informed, to talk to their doctor, and to make informed choices about their health."*

"With 'Il Quinto' we want to go beyond the boundaries of traditional scientific communication and reach people in the places they love, where their passions live," said **Nicoletta Luppi, President and Managing Director of MSD Italia**. *"Our collaboration with Lucca Comics & Games gives us a unique opportunity to engage with young adults aged 18 to 30, a segment of the population that is often not fully aware of the risks and consequences associated with HPV. Our goal is to close the gap, promote accurate information, and encourage people to talk to their doctor with confidence. Health and prevention begin with awareness, but they only generate real impact when they turn into personal, responsible choices, with an impact that also becomes significant for society, as well as for the sustainability of public healthcare."*

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common virus that can affect women and men of all ages, including adults, and often causes no symptoms. In most cases, the infection is cleared spontaneously by the body, but when it persists over time it can be associated with the development of various diseases and some cancers. In Europe, HPV is estimated to be responsible for around 100% of cervical and anal cancers, 78% of vaginal cancers, 51% of penile cancers, 37% of oropharyngeal cancers and 31% of vulvar cancers. The infection can affect both women and men, and the risk of acquiring it does not disappear with age. For this reason, it is important to learn about the Papillomavirus and its impact on health, and to talk to your doctor to receive accurate and up-to-date information.

Carlo Signorelli, Full Professor of Hygiene and Public Health, Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan, commented on the initiative: *"For over twenty years I have been committed to supporting prevention and scientific information as fundamental tools for tackling HPV, an infection that can affect women and men at different stages of life and that is the origin of several forms of cancer. Today we have the knowledge, strategies and tools needed to concretely aim at eliminating cervical cancer and other HPV-related cancers, but to achieve this goal it is essential to involve the entire population in a major public health challenge. That is why it is crucial to invest in initiatives capable of speaking to people in accessible and engaging ways. Greater knowledge of HPV can help people make more informed choices and talk to their doctor, who is an essential point of reference for navigating prevention. Only through accurate information and dialogue can we aspire to write 'The End' on HPV-related cancers."*

Professor **Caterina Rizzo, Full Professor of Hygiene and Preventive Medicine, University of Pisa,** concluded: *"HPV-associated cancers can be effectively addressed through an integrated strategy based on information and prevention, aimed at both men and women. Initiatives like this one help bring people closer to their doctor, encouraging a useful discussion from the outset to identify the most appropriate prevention pathway. Communication is essential to turn scientific knowledge into awareness. Through engaging languages such as comics, we can bring the public closer to complex topics like HPV, stimulating curiosity and interest in reliable information. Il Quinto shows how science and storytelling can work together to foster greater awareness and promote an informed dialogue with one's doctor."*

About Lucca Comics & Games

Lucca Comics & Games is Europe's leading festival dedicated to comics, games, illustration, fantasy, animation, video games and pop culture. Founded in 1966, it has been an international point of reference for creatives, authors, publishers, companies and enthusiasts for sixty years, transforming the city of Lucca each year into a great space for meeting, sharing and cultural innovation. The 2026 edition, which celebrates the prestigious milestone of 60 editions, has "Legacy" as its theme, a tribute to the cultural and creative heritage built together with its community over six decades of history. Today, Lucca Comics & Games is recognized as one of the most significant cultural events in the world in its field, capable of drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors and promoting the value of imagination, creativity and inclusion.

About MSD

MSD is a multinational biopharmaceutical company and a world leader in the Life Sciences sector. We use the power of leading-edge science to save and improve lives around the world, and for over 130 years we have brought hope to humanity through the development of important medicines and vaccines. We aspire to be the premier research-intensive biopharmaceutical company in the world, and today we are at the forefront of research to deliver innovative health solutions that support the prevention and treatment of diseases in people and animals. We

promote a fair and inclusive work environment globally and operate responsibly every day to enable a safe, sustainable and healthy future for all people and communities.

For more information, visit www.msd.com, www.msditalia.it and www.msdsalute.it.

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