

Highlights of European Immunization Week 2017

Narrative report





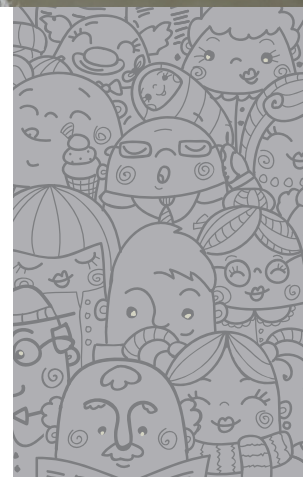
Photo: A Syrian refugee girl stands outside a vaccination centre in Gaziantep, Turkey, near the border with Syria. On 28 April, vaccination teams celebrated Immunization Week with balloons and more for the children.

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This report presents a limited selection of the countless discussions, activities and publications that took place or were launched during European Immunization Week 2017 to raise awareness of the benefits and importance of vaccines throughout life.

Keywords

Immunization Vaccines Europe



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Highlights of European Immunization Week, 24–30 April 2017

European Immunization Week (EIW) celebrates immunization and all that it has achieved. Immunization stakeholders use this opportunity to launch new resources and to inspire action, whether that's an individual catching up on a missed vaccination or a public health authority responding to gaps in immunization coverage. From giant teddy bears in Ukraine to catch up clinics in France, 2017 lived up to the track record established by EIW campaigns over the last 12 years with energy and innovation.

Focusing on the joint theme **#VaccinesWork** to protect health throughout life, Immunization Week campaigns were organized in simultaneously in all regions of the world.

Highlights from countries

A shared responsibility

Achieving the immunization goals set out in the European Vaccine Action Plan and realizing their potential contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals requires engagement throughout government and society. EIW 2017 reflected this, with various stakeholders working together towards a common goal – to **#ImmunizeEurope**. WHO/Europe country offices, technical experts and partners teamed up with national public health institutions, ministries of health, education and finance, professional associations and parent groups .



Photo: Open Door Day at vaccine storage facility in Republic of Moldova.

©National Center of Public Health,
Republic of Moldova

Focus on immunizers

A key emphasis of this year's campaign was the crucial role played by health professionals: as role models, champions and providers of immunization. Many events thus focused on raising awareness, exchanging experience and training of health professionals. These included a lecture for medical students and a training workshop with pediatricians and nurses in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, various symposia in **Croatia**, including a roundtable on immunization with the Croatian Medical Chamber and the Institute of Public Health, annual conferences in the **Netherlands** and **United Kingdom**. In **Poland** a national conference on the topic of vaccination throughout the life course was jointly organized by the WHO Country Office, Ministry of Health, Chief Sanitary Inspectorate and the National Institute of Public Health.

Reaching out to sustain high coverage

Maintaining demand for immunization is just as important as ensuring equitable and sustainable access to vaccines. EIW was used in many countries to educate and remind people of all ages about the importance and benefits of vaccination. An interactive immunization check was offered as part of Germany's 'Deutschland sucht den Impfpass' campaign. Film was the medium of choice in Ireland with a film on protection by Vaccines Today, and in Kyrgyzstan an EIW video was shown on national television. Georgia conducted a web-based survey to inform future activity. Norway created two animations, which were posted on the Facebook feed of the National Institute for Public Health. Italy reached out to the public making vaccine experts available to answer parents' questions by phone, organizing events in schools and printing and distributing EIW campaign materials in Italian.

Switzerland communicated to the public through popular media such as parenting magazines; Turkey used billboards and online posters while the Republic of Moldova got moving for EIW with a flashmob and lively debates on immunization. The Austrian Medical Students' Association held a range of events including a panel discussion, an information evening on dealing with vaccine hesitancy and a special information booth at the Teddy Bear Hospital. Volunteers were mobilized in Tajikistan to hand out information to the public reinforcing the importance of timely immunization; and similar materials were developed in Azerbaijan. Special events in Romania were attended by the WHO Regional Director and included participation of schoolchildren and health workers.



Photo: EIW materials in Ukraine. © WHO

In Belgium information materials were sent directly to all vaccinators and disseminated online and through social media. In France an even more direct approach was taken with the city of Nice holding catch up vaccination clinics on the Promenade du Paillon.

Hundreds of articles and online programmes featured across the Region

Working with the media is an important way to amplify the campaign's key messages. Press conferences were held in many countries, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova and Serbia. Slovenia spiced its press event up with a flashmob and also opened the doors of the national vaccine storage facility to the public. Montenegro arranged live broadcasts on a variety of television and radio stations. Events supported by the WHO Country Office, Ministry of Health and responsible health institutions in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia also generated comprehensive media attention. These efforts together accounted for a huge presence in all forms of media during the week.

EIW is not only a call to action but also a joyous celebration—of the huge health gains achieved through vaccines. © WHO





NGOs support government efforts in Ukraine

Ukraine has the highest number of un- and under-vaccinated children in the Region. Trust in immunization is low and the immunization programme remains weak despite efforts of the Ministry of Health and partner agencies to improve its performance. Two recently established nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Ukraine, 'Parents for Vaccination' and the 'Ukrainian Academy of Pediatrics' (UAP), utilized EIW to reach out to parents and health workers with much-needed information and training.

Parents for Vaccination developed and initiated an innovative project to build public trust in immunization, called Change Agents, with support of WHO and Rotary International. Project activities included:

- a flash mob on the first day of EIW to attract the attention of mass media and raise awareness among the public and stakeholders;
- training of 120 change agents from 22 oblasts on key immunization facts and messages;
- advocacy and communication materials;
- awareness and trust building activities spread throughout Ukraine;
- a large-scale parents' meeting led by the well-known paediatrician Dr Yevgeny Komarovskiy;
- a press conference with leading specialists of the Ministry of Health, partner agencies and NGOs.

Ukrainian Academy of Pediatrics (UAP) focuses on reaching paediatricians—who are key immunization service providers. With WHO support, UAP conducted 1-day training courses for a large number of paediatricians in various cities in Ukraine, conveying key information on immunization to improve immunization service delivery and to strengthen participants' commitment to immunization. UAP also initiated establishment of summer and winter schools on immunization to create new immunization advocates capable of effectively communicating the benefits and value of immunization. The first summer school will start in July 2017.



Photos above and left: Several public events raised awareness about immunization in Ukraine.

© Parents for Vaccination

Support from WHO/Europe

To support EIW campaigns in countries, WHO/Europe developed a suite of leaflets with key information and WHO recommendations on childhood immunization, vaccines for teenagers, adult immunization and health worker immunization. These brochures, a communications package, social media package, posters and an infographic were available for downloading in several languages on the WHO/Europe website and the Immunize Europe Forum.

Personal stories posted on the WHO/Europe website brought the campaign's key messages to life. They featured a doctor dealing with a measles outbreak, nurses working to increase flu vaccine uptake, a blogger who counters vaccine hesitancy with science, survivors of cervical cancer and polio, and doctors in Gaziantep Turkey who are working to provide vaccination to the children of northern Syria.

The first edition of a new WHO EpiBrief series was also launched during the week, providing information on epidemiological characteristics and response measures related to measles outbreaks in several countries and to a pertussis outbreak in Denmark in 2016.

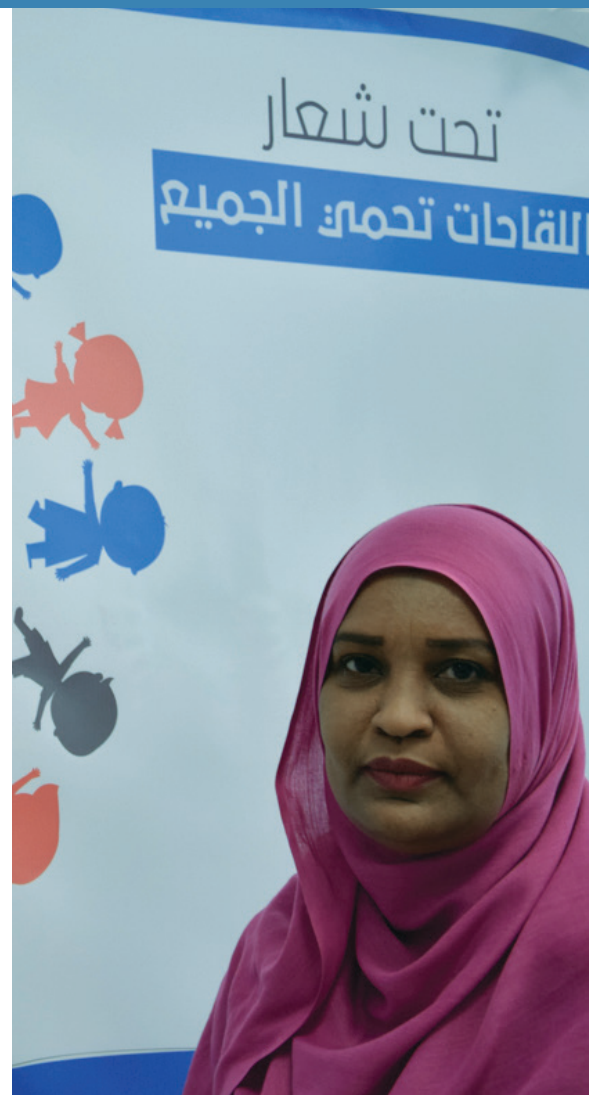


Photo: Dr Azza El Fadel, EPI Consultant for WHO Gaziantep, Turkey, stands near a poster celebrating Immunization Week 2017. WHO Gaziantep coordinates teams that vaccinate millions of children in northern Syria each year.

© WHO/Sheahan

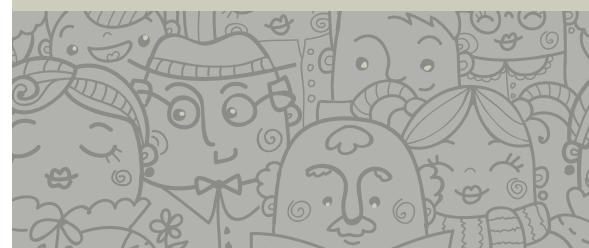
World Health Organization
Regional Office for Europe

European Immunization Week

Vaccines work to protect health at every age

- Infants and young children** should be vaccinated according to their country's routine schedule to receive the best possible protection when they need it most.
- Adolescents** may be eligible for the HPV vaccine, a diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis booster shot, and in special cases hepatitis and meningococcal vaccines (if not already in the routine schedule).
- All adults** are advised to be fully vaccinated against polio, measles, rubella, diphtheria and tetanus.
Adults at special risk due to their health, profession or lifestyle may in addition be advised to receive annual flu shots as well as relevant meningococcal and/or hepatitis vaccines.
- Pregnant women** may be advised to be receive the seasonal influenza vaccine to protect themselves and their unborn babies, and the pertussis vaccine close to the end of the pregnancy to protect their newborns in the first vulnerable weeks of life.
- Health professionals** should be immune to measles, rubella and polio and are advised to receive the seasonal flu shot every year and a diphtheria booster every 10 years. They may also be eligible for hepatitis B and meningococcal vaccines if at special risk.
- Older adults** may be eligible for the annual seasonal flu vaccine, pneumococcal and/or herpes zoster vaccines.

Ask your healthcare provider for advice on which vaccines are right for you and make sure to save all vaccination records.
#VaccinesWork #ImmunizeEurope
For more information on WHO recommendations for routine immunization see: http://www.who.int/immunization/policy/immunization_tables/en/



The Immunize Europe Forum was lively leading up to and during EIW with updates of activities around the Region and technical contributions from partner organizations such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA). With 8500 page views and 780 document downloads during the month of April, the Forum was utilized more than ever as a valuable resource.

ECDC introduced a number of publications during EIW on the Forum, including new data on measles and rubella in Europe, a catalog of

interventions on vaccine hesitancy, and a survey report on immunization information systems.

EMA posted the results of a survey on what teenagers think about vaccines. Other contributions included pieces on the legacy of loss due to diphtheria, countering vaccine hesitancy with scientific knowledge, a new video on protection by Vaccines Today and a pilot project to increase vaccination among pregnant women.



Social media

Each year the value of EIW in promoting immunization grows thanks to ever-increasing engagement on social media. Using the hashtags #VaccinesWork and #ImmunizeEurope and focusing on the same life-course theme as WHO headquarters this year allowed EIW key messages and posts to blend with those spread by global partners and stakeholders. The 60 tweets sent out by the @WHO_Europe_VPI just in the 11-day period from Friday 21 April through Monday 1 May earned 83.2k impressions and an engagement rate of 2.1%. This was more than three times the number of impressions and almost double the engagement rate compared to the equivalent 11-day period for 2016. The WHO Regional Office for Europe also posted tweets in Russian, and key messages and graphics on Facebook and Instagram.

WHO/Europe Regional Director in Brussels and Romania

Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe, joined forces with Dr Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, European Commission to get EIW off to a good start, with a joint statement “Vaccination—we must not take the benefits for granted”.

Noting the blessings and the achievements of immunization in the fight against disease, the statement concluded: “Our joint resolve to protect the health and well-being of all of our communities now and in the future is stronger than ever. By endorsing the European Vaccine Action Plan, the European Health 2020 policy framework and most recently the Sustainable Development Goals, our Member States have signalled their strong commitment to promoting vaccination as a driving force for improved health in Europe and the wider world. We invite everyone to join in their country’s celebration of vaccines and in helping to spread the word that #VaccinesWork for us all.”

Later in the week, Dr Jakab visited Romania to provide high-level support to national efforts to control the largest measles outbreak recorded in recent years in the country. She participated in a policy dialogue on immunization, which brought together politicians, specialists, family doctors, representatives of the Presidential Administration and academia to highlight the urgent need to control the current measles outbreak, increase immunization coverage and improve the vaccine supply system in the country.

Presenting the European Vaccine Action Plan goals, including Regional elimination of measles and rubella, Dr Jakab said, “Measles and rubella can be eliminated in Romania. There is no lack of means, tools or strategies to ensure that Romania joins the growing list of countries that have crossed the line to elimination. What we need to move forward is government leadership and engagement of health professionals, communities, parents, media and other important players”.



Photo: WHO Regional Director Zsuzsanna Jakab and Prime Minister Sorin Grindeanu meet the press in Romania.

© WHO/Calin Dumitrescu

HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark addresses the public

WHO/Europe's Patron, Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, continued her tireless support of immunization with a video address that received more than 18 000 views in its first week online. She emphasized the important contribution vaccination has made to good health in the European Region and its vital role in advancing the 2030 Global Goals for Sustainable Development. She noted that immunization is a life-long responsibility, and that no anti-vaccination rumour can be as compelling "as the simple truth that vaccines save lives."



Photo: Video statement by WHO/Europe's Patron HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark
© WHO

International collaboration

In addition to collaborating with national health authorities, professional associations and other stakeholders, WHO/Europe is proud to work with many international partners to make EIW a success, including the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Measles and Rubella Initiative (MRI), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Commission, the European Medicines Agency (EMA), Rotary and the Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (COMO).



Photo: Dr. Amiran Gamkrelidze, Director General of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) at the European Immunization Week press conference in Tbilisi, Georgia on 24 April 2017

© NCDC Georgia



Photo: Ministry of Health, UNICEF and WHO kick of EIW in Bosnia and Herzegovina

© WHO



Photo: Roundtable in Tajikistan was conducted with participation of key Ministry of Health officials, stakeholders and development partners

© WHO

EIW information and materials on Immunize Europe Forum

<http://www.immunize-europe.org/download-campaign-material/>

Campaign materials in multiple languages: poster, social media toolkit, communications pack, brochures, infographic and social media banners and graphics

World Immunization Week campaign materials

<http://www.who.int/campaigns/immunization-week/2017/en/>

Videos launched by WHO/Europe

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2017/04/european-immunization-week-2017/video-gallery>

- Video statement by Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark for European Immunization Week
- HPV and cervical cancer – a personal story
- How the HPV vaccine works
- Surveillance of side effects of the HPV vaccine

News items

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2017/04/european-immunization-week-2017/news/news/news>

- Analysis of measles and pertussis outbreaks and response in 2016 (launch of WHO EpiBrief)
- Regional Director commits continuing support to Romania to stop measles outbreak and improve immunization performance
- Regular vaccination of migrant population protects most vulnerable and helps Turkey maintain momentum towards measles elimination
- Hepatitis B vaccination has dramatically reduced infection rates among children in Europe, but more is needed to achieve elimination
- Vaccinating Syrian children: there's an app for that
- Vaccination – we must not take the benefits for granted
- Vaccination protects health at every stage of life
- Measles outbreaks across Europe threaten progress towards elimination
- European Immunization Week 2017 promotes a life-course approach to immunization
- Strengthening collaboration between WHO/Europe and Romania in addressing health emergencies and communicable diseases
- Joint efforts to heighten immunization coverage in the Republic of Moldova
- NGOs join efforts to increase immunization coverage in Ukraine

Vaccines for teenagers
A smart investment in a healthy future

Детская вакцинация
Самое безопасное начало жизни

24-30 Aprile 2017
I vaccini funzionano
Proteggono la salute in ogni fase della vita

"There is a need for a concerted effort from all public health bodies and associations of healthcare professionals to restore trust in vaccines."
Dr Enrica Alteri, Head of Human Medicines Research and Development Support, EMA

#ImmunizeEurope #VaccinesWork

NEW: 40 examples of interventions addressing #vaccine hesitancy
#vaccineswork #immunizeurope
bit.ly/2phajSr

TECHNICAL REPORT
Catalogue of interventions addressing vaccine hesitancy

Childhood immunization
The safest start to life

#VaccinesWork #ImmunizeEurope

Vaccines work
Vaccination protects health at every stage of life

24-30 April 2017

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Europe

"What concerns me as a family physician is a strong resistance against even the obligatory vaccines for diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. This didn't happen 20 years ago."
Dr Nena Koppavav Gucek, Family Physician, Slovenia

#ImmunizeEurope #VaccinesWork

Вакцинация против ВПЧ - это разумная инвестиция в здоровое будущее
#ВакциныПрививкиРезультат! #ПрививкиЕвропу!

Immunized health workers protect themselves and their patients from dangerous diseases
#VaccinesWork #ImmunizeEurope

HOW TO SPOT MENINGITIS
Learn these typical symptoms

Fever	Stiff neck
Vomiting and/or diarrhoea	Dislike of being handled
Irritable, drowsy or difficult to wake	Unusual high-pitched cry
Blank, staring expression	Dislike of bright lights
Seizures, fits or convulsions	Dislike of being handled
Severe headache	Dislike of being handled
Rapid breathing	Dislike of being handled
Cold hands and feet	Dislike of being handled
Rash or spots that don't fade with pressure	Dislike of being handled
Stiff neck	Dislike of being handled
Dislike of bright lights	Dislike of being handled
Muscle, leg or joint pain	Dislike of being handled

THE IMPORTANCE OF VACCINES
Vaccines are available to protect against the most common cause of meningitis caused by Bacteria. Some childhood vaccines, such as MMR, can provide protection against some meningitis-causing Viruses. There are currently no vaccine available to protect against meningitis caused by Fungi.

ECONOMIC IMPACT
Meningitis can be a successful and cost-effective way to protect the whole population.
\$63B USD (2010) could be saved in treatment & productivity cost of childhood vaccines are rolled out against 10 meningitis & tetanus diseases from 2011-2020.

LOWER MORTALITY RATES
Current available vaccines could prevent more than 90% of cases of bacterial meningitis.

90%

SPEAK TO YOUR LOCAL HEALTHCARE PROVIDER TO FIND OUT WHICH VACCINES ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU

Do research and TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS when it comes to vaccinating your family

Looking ahead

EIW will be celebrated 23-29 April 2018.

Keep in touch

We are keen to hear about your immunization activities and future plans. Have you evaluated the results of any of your initiatives? Are you planning something innovative? It's always a pleasure to highlight good practice, so keep in touch.

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