



Written statement on ‘Vaccine-preventable diseases and immunization: realizing the full potential of the European Vaccine Action Plan’ - agenda point of the 68th session of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee for Europe

September 2018

The European Public Health Association (EUPHA) and the undersigned, European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations (EFNNMA), welcome the decision to place the topic “Realizing the full potential of the European Vaccine Action Plan” on the agenda of the 68th session of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee for Europe. EUPHA and the undersigned organisations welcome the midterm report presenting progress towards the goals and objectives against the agreed the European Vaccine Action Plan targets. We now submit for consideration a series of comments on this important paper.

The evidence-base remains important

In order to reach the full potential of the European Vaccine Action Plan, the midterm review stresses the importance of good quality coverage and surveillance data. We would like to add that the full evidence-base remains important.

In January 2018, EUPHA published an E-collection to the European Journal of Public Health¹, highlighting recent research in this area and highlighted the current challenges:

- In 2016, immunization coverage in the World Health Organization European Region did not reach the target of 95% (only 92% for DTP (diphtheria, tetanus, poliomyelitis) and 93% for measles).
- There are stark inequalities in immunization coverage within and between countries in the European region.
- Hesitation, uncertainty, and opposition concerning vaccines are emerging challenges to vaccination programmes that endanger the achievement of a high level of protection against vaccine preventable diseases.

Furthermore, the E-collection identified groups in which childhood immunization uptake is typically lower, i.e.:

- Migrants and minority ethnic and religious group,
- Groups with high religious or ideological objections,
- Lower socioeconomic status,
- Families with a high number of children,
- Low level of education of parents, and
- Families living in densely populated, urban areas, particularly in inner cities, which also tend to show high levels of deprivation.

¹ https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/pages/vaccination_issues, last accessed 4 September 2018.

Vaccination policies should take into consideration these risk groups and target them specifically, adjusting the messages according to the needs of each specific group.

EFNNMA believes that greater effort is needed to reach unvaccinated and under-vaccinated populations, and nurses and midwives are well-positioned to contribute to improve coverage for vulnerable and neglected populations. EFNNMA urges Member States to ensure that laws, regulation and policies are in place that support the optimal use of immunisation programmes and specific investments are in place for a wide-range media campaigns in support of vaccination.

In August 2018, EUPHA published a document² where the 6 goals of the European Vaccine Action Plan were compared to recent scientific data and reports. We see a number of points that need addressing in more detail:

- Vaccination coverage of the high influx of migrants arriving in Europe needs to be a priority to prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as polio, measles and rubella;
- The increase in vaccination hesitancy requires updated training for health care professionals, as well as a political commitment to address the reasons for hesitancy.
- The European Vaccine Action Plan needs to be flexible enough to take into account new challenges and threats, such as vaccine supply and shortages, financial sustainability of immunization programmes and newer vaccine-preventable diseases, such as Human Papilloma Virus.
- European collaboration and continued commitment is necessary to reach the goals of the European Vaccine Action Plan by 2020. This commitment should include all actors in the field of vaccine-preventable diseases and immunization, more specifically non-governmental actors representing health professions, trainers, and the consumers.

EUPHA and the undersigned organisation will continue to support the European Commission, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the World Health Organization Europe and our networks.

Co-signatory:



European Forum of National
Nursing and Midwifery Associations

² Available here: https://eupha.org/repository/advocacy/European_Vaccine_Action_Plan_-_update_on_the_evidence-base.pdf



The European Public Health Association, or EUPHA in short, is an umbrella organisation for public health associations in Europe. Our network of national associations of public health represents around 20'000 public health professionals. Our mission is to facilitate and activate a strong voice of the public health network by enhancing visibility of the evidence and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals. EUPHA contributes to the preservation and improvement of public health in the European region through capacity and knowledge building. We are committed to creating a more inclusive Europe, narrowing all health inequalities among Europeans, by facilitating, activating, and disseminating strong evidence-based voices from the public health community and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals to achieve evidence-based change.

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