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Narrative report: **European Immunization Week 2016**



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Cover image: Students in Romania receiving a special lesson on immunization during EIW ©WHO/M. Bring

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Narrative report: European Immunization Week 2016

Entering its second decade, European Immunization Week (EIW) has become a widely recognized opportunity to promote health in the WHO European Region.

Each year in April, WHO, its international partners, national health authorities, professional associations and other stakeholders join forces to raise awareness of the benefits of vaccines and the need to close immunity gaps.

Preparations

At WHO and in many countries, planning for EIW begins months in advance. Materials are developed and immunization stakeholders come together to share information and plan the campaign. For example, this year in France, representatives of local health authorities attended a national planning meeting to receive updates on vaccination schedules, the epidemiologic situation, immunization coverage rates, vaccine supply, promotion of immunization and health, and press relations. Materials to make flyers, fact sheets and question and answer sheets were provided. A preparedness workshop was also organized in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Public Health Institute and UNICEF in collaboration with WHO.

EIW planning in the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany brought together representatives of 38 public health offices to review EIW 2015 activities, concepts for activities in 2016, and data about population immunization coverage. Each public health office received a tailored package of material, including EIW logos, templates for local press releases and graphs about local and general immunization coverage. This preparation led to activities implemented throughout the Federal State, including: press releases sent out by 19 public health offices, several telephone “vaccination hotlines” opened during the week, free vaccination consultations at local health offices, exhibitions on vaccination and pneumococcal vaccine, information flyers on vaccinations, an information booth in three schools, e-mail and newsletter campaigns, a talk show on vaccinations and a discussion forum with experts at a local high school.

Promotional materials were produced in many languages, including Albanian, Croatian, English, French, German, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Slovakian and Ukrainian.



Top image:
EIW takes over UN City, Denmark ©WHO

Middle image:
WHO Office in Pristina ready for EIW ©WHO

Bottom image:
EIW materials in Republic of Moldova ©WHO

Social media: Reaching new heights and audiences

Social media plays an ever-increasing role in engaging and informing the public. WHO/Europe produced a social media package including suggested messages and hashtags, sample graphics and sample posts for Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. This package in English and Russian was shared ahead of the week with WHO country offices, an EIW focal point in each Member State and partners. The prepared graphics were posted by WHO/Europe and others and were shared widely before and during the week.

In Georgia, photo and video material were placed on the website and social media channels of the National Center for Disease Control. Belgium maintained a dedicated website about measles infection and prevention (<http://www.vaccinatieweek.be>). Spanish-language EIW messages and graphics were very popular on Twitter.

As in previous years, various forms of traditional media were also used to communicate to the general public. A documentary on immunization was aired in the Russian Federation. Newspaper, television and/or radio spots were broadcast in Albania, Austria, Croatia, Georgia, Republic

of Moldova and Tajikistan. Press releases and/or press conferences drew extra media attention in Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Monaco, Romania, Russian Federation and Tajikistan.



Press conference, Azerbaijan ©UN

Innovative approaches to catch the public's attention

Innovative approaches were developed to reach people wherever they ventured during the week. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, WHO supported a public event in the City Zoo, with performances by local celebrities and children from elementary schools. A flash mob and mini-play were conducted in the Republic of Moldova in front of the Mother and Child Health Institute and in the Stefan cel Mare Public Garden. Kazakhstan hosted sports events and a special hotline with professional advice for anyone with questions about immunization. Activities in apothecaries were held in Austria, including help in installing a vaccination app, and cinema-goers watched commercials about immunization on the big screen.

As a special reminder that measles is still about, measles spots could be seen on a vintage bus driving through Austria; on Wandsworth town hall in the United Kingdom and covering the outside of a hospital in Berlin, Germany (<http://bmg.bund.de/en/ministry/news/measles.html>).

Information, images or videos were displayed in public transport in Austria, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation. A mobile scientific exhibition in the Russian Federation demonstrated vaccine manufacturing technologies, quality control and the impact of vaccines on the human body. Shoppers in Lithuania could stop at stands offering interactive information; and many of the country's residents received text messages about the HPV vaccine.



Top image: Flash mob in the park, Republic of Moldova ©A Filip

Middle image: Campaign to raise awareness about measles, Austria ©Medical Univ. Innsbruck

Bottom image: Illuminated hospital in Berlin, Germany ©Federal Ministry of Health

Reaching out to specific target groups

To help overcome remaining barriers to full immunization and sustain high demand for vaccines in the years to come, some activities aimed at reaching specific target groups:

- In Albania, Georgia, Poland and Tajikistan, awareness raising workshops were held with journalists and representatives of the mass media.
- In Austria, activities focused on raising awareness among apothecaries.
- In Belgium, a catch-up campaign offered measles/mumps/rubella vaccine free of charge to undervaccinated young adults and asylum seekers.
- In Georgia, parliamentarians were offered an update on immunization programme achievements and activities.
- In Greece, a vaccination campaign targeted refugees.
- In Romania, the family physicians association organized a meeting with parents and school students.
- In Slovakia, various activities focused on healthcare workers, Roma communities, students and parents.

Paediatricians and other health care workers play a key role in communicating the benefits of immunization to patients and parents. As frontline influencers, they are a priority target group for EIW activities. Conferences, symposia and meetings to raise professional awareness and capacities were held in Austria, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, Serbia and Tajikistan. Visits to clinics were also conducted in Azerbaijan and Romania.

Unlike generations before them, most children living in the European Region today have never seen cases of vaccine-preventable diseases like polio, measles or tetanus, and may not understand the importance of vaccines in keeping them healthy and strong. To maintain demand for immunization in the coming years, today's children and teenagers need to be well informed; and more and more countries have been using EIW to reach this critical group. A programme in Austria focused on debunking myths among adolescents. In Croatia lectures were organized for students; in Cyprus, immunization cards were checked at schools; in the Russian Federation, children of various ages learned about immunization through comic books with popular characters and teenagers were offered a computer game on immunization. In Serbia, a debate was organized for young people on "Challenges in immunization in Serbia today".



Top image: EIW at the zoo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ©WHO

Bottom image: Parents discussing immunization with a panel of experts, Romania @WHO/M.Bring



Immunize Europe Forum

Launch of Immunize Europe Forum

The EIW campaign website (<http://eiw.euro.who.int>) showcased EIW activities for the past five years. On 4 April 2016, it was replaced by the new Immunize Europe Forum (www.immunize-europe.org), hosted by WHO/Europe as a year-round platform for the immunization community to share information, resources and insights on a broad range of topics.

In its first month, the Forum gained nearly 50 members, was visited by 1594 users and received 9443 page views. It showcased EIW activities organized across the Region, including EIW photographs and materials in several languages.

Highlighting specific topics

In some countries, EIW is utilized to inform the public about a specific topic, such as the introduction of a new vaccine. Germany highlighted its new National Action Plan on measles and rubella elimination in a scientific bulletin and online newsletter. Israel raised awareness of the decision to immunize both girls and boys against human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine and the shift in the regular immunization schedule for HPV from 3 to 2 doses. Comprehensive campaigns in Slovakia and the United Kingdom aimed to increase uptake of the MMR vaccine and in Luxembourg, the focus was on adult immunization. Serbia took the opportunity to

initiate a teleconference with neighbouring countries to discuss shared challenges related to maintaining demand for immunization. The Danish Health Authority (DHA) in Denmark launched its first annual reports on the country's childhood vaccination programme. The 2014 and 2015 reports, both launched during EIW 2016, focused especially on the challenge of reversing a recent decline in HPV vaccination rates (<https://sundhedsstyrelsen.dk/en/news/2016/childhood-vaccination-programme-it-works,-but-there-is-room-for-improvement>). The DHA plans to continue launching annual reports each year during EIW.

Resources

EIW information and materials

Immunize Europe Forum

<http://www.immunize-europe.org/>

WHO/Europe: European Immunization Week

<http://www.euro.who.int/eiw>

WHO: World Immunization Week

<http://www.who.int/campaigns/immunization-week/2016/en/>

UNICEF: World Immunization Week

http://www.unicef.org/immunization/index_81467.html

Video

European Vaccine Action Plan 2015-2020

www.euro.who.int/evap

What am I?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Co9Ns0Ey1bo>

Infographic

Europe is closer than ever to eliminating measles and rubella

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/measles-and-rubella/data-and-statistics/infographic-status-of-measles-and-rubella-elimination-in-the-who-european-region-2016>

Fact sheets

Measles in the WHO European Region

www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/fact-sheets/2015/measles-in-the-who-european-region

Rubella in the WHO European Region

www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/fact-sheets/2015/fact-sheet-rubella-in-the-who-european-region

Polio in the WHO European Region

www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/fact-sheets/2015/fact-sheet-polio-in-the-who-european-region

Hepatitis B in the WHO European Region

www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/fact-sheets/2015/fact-sheet-hepatitis-b



Special lesson on vaccines taught by local paediatrician, Romania ©WHO/M. Bring

News items

Republic of Moldova part of the European success in interruption of transmission of rubella and measles viruses

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2016/04/european-immunization-week-2016/news/news/2016/05/european-immunization-week-republic-of-moldova-part-of-the-european-success-in-interruption-of-transmission-of-rubella-and-measles-viruses>

EIW in Azerbaijan dedicated to maintaining progress in disease prevention

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2016/04/european-immunization-week-2016/news/news/2016/04/european-immunization-week-in-azerbaijan-dedicated-to-maintaining-progress-in-disease-prevention>

Polio vaccine switch and EIW in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2016/04/european-immunization-week-2016/news/news/2016/04/polio-vaccine-switch-and-european-immunization-week-in-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia>

Greece extends vaccination to refugees and migrants

www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2016/04/european-immunization-week-2016/news/news/2016/04/greece-extends-vaccination-to-refugees-and-migrants

EIW 2016 celebrates progress in controlling vaccine-preventable disease

www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2016/04/european-immunization-week-2016/news/news/2016/01/european-immunization-week-2016-celebrates-progress-in-controlling-vaccine-preventable-disease

Recent publications

Immunization advocacy library

Workbook and supplemental tools to help stakeholders mobilize resources for immunization

www.euro.who.int/immunization-advocacy-library

WHO/Europe staff contributions to external publications

Articles on polio eradication, measles and rubella elimination, hepatitis B vaccination, vaccine hesitancy and more.

www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/vaccines-and-immunization/publications/whoeurope-staff-contributions-to-external-publications



“Together we call on Member States to identify new ways to measure and communicate the full impact and value of vaccination.”

Joint statement by Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark and Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe

(<http://www.euro.who.int/eiw2016-jt-statement>)

Looking ahead

EIW 2017 will be celebrated on 23-29 April 2017.

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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