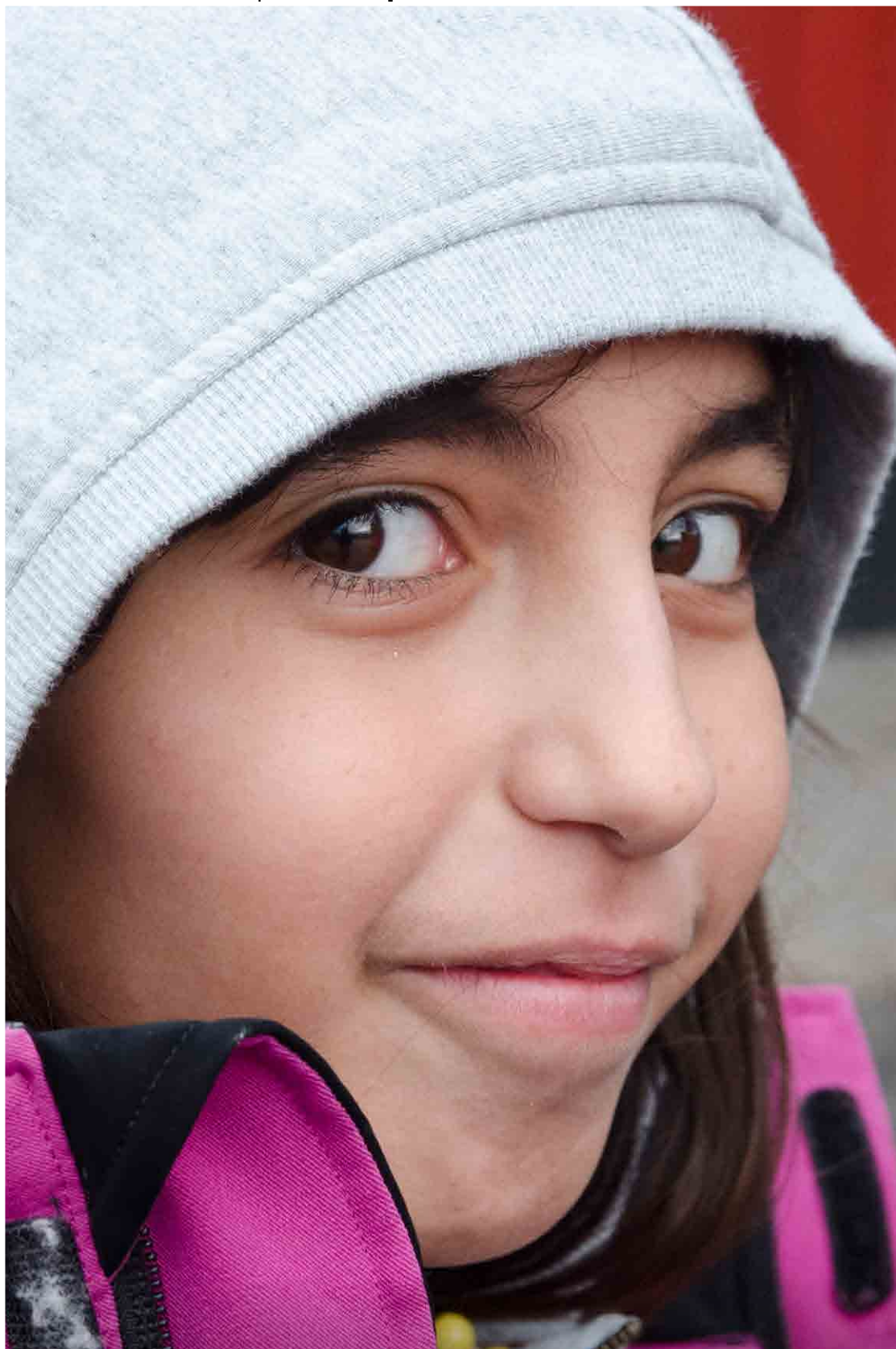


Narrative Report: **European Immunization Week 2015**



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR

Europe

European Immunization Week:

10 years young!

Since its establishment 10 years ago, EIW has served as a flexible platform for Member States in the European Region to mobilize support for immunization. From its humble beginning in 2005 with eight pilot countries, EIW expanded each year to become a truly Region-wide campaign encompassing all 53 Member States. Together with Immunization Week in the Americas, EIW was a forerunner of World Immunization Week, established in 2012.

Along the way, EIW's important messages have been heard at clinics, hospitals, parliaments, universities, research institutes, parks, shopping malls and airports, and been broadcast on television, radio and social media, attracting global media attention. Several countries have planned supplemental immunization campaigns to coincide with EIW, thereby ensuring greater visibility and the highest possible uptake in the campaigns.

EIW has benefited greatly over the years from the steadfast support provided by WHO/Europe's Patron, Princess Mary of Denmark, and WHO Regional Director Zsuzsanna Jakab. Their participation at high-level regional events and engagement during country visits have helped bring the importance of immunization to the attention of decision-makers and parents alike.

EIW stands today as one of the most visible annual health campaigns in the WHO European Region. As such, it is an important asset for national authorities in their efforts to achieve and maintain high immunization coverage. Strategic and innovative use of EIW as a powerful advocacy and awareness-raising tool promises to be the hallmark of the initiative's second decade.



Promotional materials produced for EIW 2015 included a lapel badge (in English, Russian and German), awareness-raising pamphlets, posters and banners.

EIW 2015: maintaining commitment

With the new European Vaccine Action Plan (EVAP) in place, regional elimination of measles and rubella in sight and the global endgame strategy for polio entering its final stages, every country in the European Region is challenged to stay on course or accelerate efforts to meet its regional and global commitments. The focus of EIW 2015 was therefore on maintaining “Commitment to immunization – at political, professional and personal levels”.

High-level advocacy: starting at the top

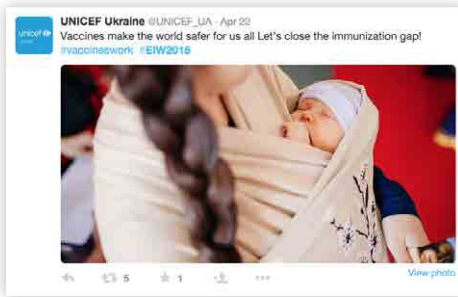
Commitment at the political level to prioritize immunization in policies and budgets is a prerequisite to achieve EVAP's goals and objectives. A ministerial conference in Bosnia and Herzegovina brought together several ministries to reaffirm their support for strengthening the country's immunization programme. A major international conference in Lithuania organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Health Care Committee of the Parliament focused on experiences, future plans and challenges related to the introduction of new vaccines.



Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark during a visit to a paediatric hospital in Tajikistan

As patron of the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, I applaud the success achieved over the past 10 years in protecting more children from more diseases than ever before.

Her Royal Highness Crown Princess of Denmark, Patron of the WHO Regional Office for Europe.



Social media: driving public demand for vaccines

As an increasingly important means to engage and inform the public, social media has become a crucial tool for driving public demand for vaccines. Not surprisingly, EIW's 10th anniversary year was the most interactive ever.

Between 26 March and 11 May, over 1900 tweets with the hashtag #EIW2015 were sent or retweeted by over 800 contributors, reaching the accounts of 1.1 million Twitter users. A Twitter chat was conducted in Spain and text messages about immunization were sent out nationwide in Albania and Turkmenistan. The Russian Federation's Ministry of Health opened a hotline to answer questions about vaccines; and authorities in Switzerland launched an online quiz to encourage adults to check their measles immunization status and get vaccinated if needed.

The EIW campaign forum (<http://eiw.euro.who.int>) welcomed 70 new members, bringing the total membership to 467. Over 25 bloggers and other vaccine advocates shared their insights, for example on Gavi Alliance's Art of Saving a Life project, the role of health care workers and the difficulty of ensuring that they get vaccinated, the importance of surveillance data in closing immunization gaps, why London falls below WHO-recommended herd immunity levels for childhood immunization and questions surrounding mandatory vaccination.

Training and seminars: keeping health care workers informed and on board

All countries recognize the key role played by health care workers in promoting and implementing immunization. Seminars, awareness raising or training activities were organized for health professionals in Albania, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. These focused for example on new vaccine introductions and efficacy, identifying immunization gaps and capacity building to strengthen communication with parents about immunization.

A meeting of government chief nursing officers and national nursing and midwifery associations in the WHO European Region held on 8–9 April 2015 in Latvia was utilized as an opportunity to highlight EIW and reach out to leading nurses and midwives in the Region.

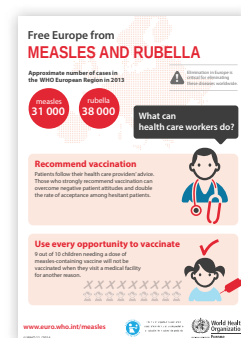


The message of European Immunization Week is clear: maintaining commitment to the Region's immunization goals is now more important than ever.

Zsuzsanna Jakab, Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Today our joint efforts in providing immunization are needed more than ever. Populations confronted with multiple opinions need to be supported in making the choices on immunization, and be properly and adequately informed.

Valentina Sarkisova, Chair of the European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations.



Videos: an effective way to raise awareness

Taking advantage of a good opportunity to address parents, France introduced an informative video on immunization for use in patient waiting rooms. In Romania patient testimonials were posted on different social media platforms and in Tajikistan health authorities broadcasted a video clip on national, regional and local television. Belgium launched a humorous campaign called “Measles, no childhood disease!” depicting a fictitious measles sufferer who spoke to the audience through a video posted on YouTube and a Twitter profile. The Regional Office posted a video in English and Russian, illustrating the impact and value of immunization through the children’s riddle “What am I?”.



“Measles man” in Flanders, Belgium, encouraged viewers to check their immunization status and get vaccinated so they don’t have to experience what it is like to have measles.



Robb Butler of WHO/Europe was featured in a Swedish national TV news spotlight on immunization (above) and a video message on immunization at the ECCMID conference (<http://waidid.org/site/news/49>).

In light of recent outbreaks of, for example, measles and pertussis, EIW is now even more necessary than ever before.

**Ronald de Groot,
President of the European Society for
Paediatric Infectious Diseases**



EIW promotional video: “I am a right, a personal decision and a collective responsibility... What am I?”

Vaccinations: EIW as an opportunity to reach the underserved

While some countries focused on new vaccine introductions, other countries utilized EIW to reach out to those who may have been missed through regular immunization programme activities. This year, Uzbekistan conducted supplementary immunization of the elderly with seasonal influenza and hepatitis B vaccines and conducted a catch-up campaign for unimmunized children up to 3 years of age. Azerbaijan conducted measles/rubella vaccination among unimmunized adults, and local health facilities provided immunization services to children who had missed routine vaccination for any reason. With the help of first aid health societies, residents of Switzerland could check their health records and be vaccinated against measles without an appointment and in some areas free of charge.

Media: amplifying the message

Despite traditionally high vaccination coverage in the European Region, circulating myths related to vaccines can impact vaccine acceptance as the diseases they prevent become more scarce. For one week each year, EIW offers health authorities a joint platform through which to remind the public of the health benefits of vaccines and the risks of complacency.

Press conferences were conducted with national and international immunization experts, including Regional Office staff and consultants, in Albania, Austria, Czech Republic, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland launched press releases

using EIW as a backdrop for stressing the need for continued commitment to immunization. Expert interviews focused on a variety of topics such as vaccine hesitancy, the status of measles and rubella elimination in Europe and debunking vaccine-related myths. In Turkmenistan a competition among journalists for the best article devoted to immunization was held; and in Germany EIW messages were covered by several media, including in sign language.

EIW was also featured in national and local radio, television, online and print news channels in Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, France, Germany, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uzbekistan, among other countries.



Press conference in Austria.



Press conferences in Lithuania.



Conferences and seminars: bringing together key public and private stakeholders

Expert conferences on topical issues such as new vaccine introductions, disease surveillance and strengthening the role of national immunization technical advisory groups were held across the Region in Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Lithuania, Germany, Georgia, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan. EIW and World Immunization Week were also highlighted in the 25th European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID) held in Denmark and the European Forum of Medical Associations held in Azerbaijan.



Press conference in Republic of Moldova.

Partners

European Immunization Week is part of a global initiative celebrated in each of the six WHO Regions. Member States and WHO are joined in this effort by immunization partners including the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), PATH, the Measles and Rubella Initiative, Gates Foundation and many others. This year for the first time, Lions Clubs International also teamed up with the Regional Office to spread the word that with sufficient commitment measles and rubella elimination can soon be achieved in the European Region.

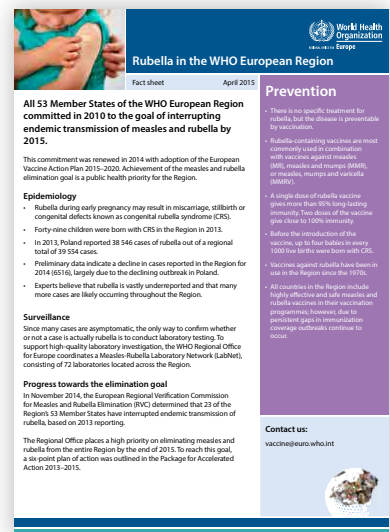


Resource mobilization workbook and tools

An immunization advocacy library (www.euro.who.int/immunization-advocacy-library) was launched, containing a broad range of tools for programme managers and other stakeholders to advocate for prioritization of immunization in political agendas and public health budgets.

Information materials

As in previous years, the Regional Office launched several information materials during the week.



Involvement of the public, of health professionals and of policy makers is important to jointly recognize the importance of saving both children and adults from preventable disease through vaccination.

John Ryan
Head of Unit, Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection, European Commission

Resources

EIW information and materials

Online campaign forum

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

Video

'What am I?'

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2015/04/european-immunization-week-2015/multimedia/video-what-am-i>

Infographics

Measles is bouncing back

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2015/04/european-immunization-week-2015/multimedia/infographic-measles-is-bouncing-back>

Rubella remains a threat

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2015/04/european-immunization-week-2015/multimedia/infographic-rubella-remains-a-threat>

Fact sheets

Measles in the WHO European Region

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

Rubella in the WHO European Region

<http://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

<http://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

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

Photo gallery

Measles immunization campaign in Kyrgyzstan

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2015/04/european-immunization-week-2015/multimedia/photo-gallery-preparation-and-perseverance-key-to-success-of-vaccination-campaign-in-kyrgyzstan>

Web pages

WHO/Europe: European Immunization Week

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

WHO: World Immunization Week

<http://www.who.int/campaigns/immunization-week/2015/en/>

UNICEF: World Immunization Week

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

Recent publications

Immunization advocacy library

Workbook and supplemental tools to help stakeholders mobilize resources for immunization

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/vaccines-and-immunization/publications/2015/workbook-mobilizing-resources-for-immunization>

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

Enterovirus surveillance guidelines

Guidelines for enterovirus surveillance in support of the Polio Eradication Initiative

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/vaccines-and-immunization/publications/2015/enterovirus-surveillance-guidelines.-guidelines-for-enterovirus-surveillance-in-support-of-the-polio-eradication-initiative>

WHO/Europe staff contributions to external publications

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

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/vaccines-and-immunization/publications/who-europe-staff-contributions-to-external-publications>

Looking ahead

EIW's 10th anniversary was a perfect time to celebrate past achievements and reflect on how EIW can help tackle the collective challenges that lie ahead. The annual Immunization Programme Managers Meeting, to be held this year on 1-3 September in Antwerp, Belgium, will extend this opportunity, by setting aside an afternoon for programme managers to share their EIW experiences and ideas, and identify new ways to tap EIW's potential as an advocacy tool.

EIW 2016 will be celebrated on 24-30 April 2016.

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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