

Narrative Report: European Immunization Week 2011



European
Immunization
Week

Prevent Protect Immunize



A child in Dushanbe, Tajikistan gets a fingernail mark to show that she was immunized during polio supplementary immunization activities in April 2011. ©WHO/Igor Sergienko



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR

Europe

Raising awareness at a critical moment

From 23–30 April 2011, the sixth European Immunization Week (EIW) provided a platform for WHO Regional Office for Europe and Member States to raise awareness of immunization and increase the Region's commitment to maintaining high immunization coverage. A total of 52 Member States joined EIW 2011, compared with 47 in 2010.

Spreading the word to the media and public

An unprecedented amount of media coverage set EIW 2011 apart from previous European Immunization Weeks. EIW 2011 took place against the backdrop of alarming measles outbreaks, with more than 11,000 cases reported from 1 January to 23 April 2011.

Recognizing the worldwide concern over measles outbreaks, WHO/Europe distributed a press release just prior to European Immunization Week, covering both the measles situation and the initiative. The press release led to media coverage around the globe, including stories on high-profile international media outlets such as CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera. More than 25 participating Member States also used the week of EIW to launch media outreach campaigns and these efforts resulted in 550+ stories about measles outbreaks and EIW across all types of media (print, online, broadcast), spanning nearly every country of the WHO European Region.

Other participating countries developed information campaigns targeting health workers and/or the general public. Romania organized a total of 154 activities in 10 districts as part of its EIW information/education campaign, while national health agencies in countries such as Denmark, Italy, Slovenia and Sweden highlighted EIW on their homepages. Countries shared both EIW materials and original immunization information materials online during the week.

Media coverage of measles and EIW 2011. ▼



Dr. Amiran Gamkrelidze from the WHO Country Office in Georgia talks with reporters at an EIW press conference, which the First Lady of Georgia also attended. A video clip featuring high-profile figures was also aired on television to promote immunization during EIW. ▼



Partnering at the regional level

The week opened with the regional launch of EIW 2011 in Brussels, Belgium, hosted by Mrs Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe, and attended by Her Royal Highness Princess Mathilde of Belgium, WHO/Europe's Special Representative for Immunization. High-level representatives at the launch included Mr Steven Allen, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Director, Dr Johan Gieseke from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and Mr John Ryan of the European Commission. The launch was followed by a round-table discussion moderated by Professor Pierre Van Damme, Chairperson of the European Technical Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization in the WHO European Region (ETAGE). Participants included health officials from Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland who shared experiences in controlling the ongoing measles outbreaks and lessons learned to prevent future outbreaks. All participants agreed that health care professionals are a critical factor in successful and timely vaccination. The participants also renewed their commitment to the goal of eliminating measles from the Region by 2015.

Millions of children immunized

More than 10 countries used EIW 2011 to launch widespread immunization campaigns. Bulgaria, for example, mobilized outreach teams to immunize against polio in Roma populations and geographically remote villages, reaching more than 18 000 children during the week. Synchronized supplementary immunization activities (SIAs) were conducted before, during and after EIW in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, to close any remaining immunity gaps after the importation of wild poliovirus into the Region in 2010. More than 10 million children were immunized against polio in these countries during the month of April, with millions more reached during additional SIAs in May. Other countries made free immunization available during the week of EIW or engaged in catch-up immunization programmes to ensure full coverage.

HRH Princess Mathilde of Belgium and WHO Regional Director for Europe Zsuzsanna Jakab at the EIW 2011 regional launch in Brussels. ▼





Advocating for “shared solutions to common threats”

Countries across the WHO European Region planned and held meetings, workshops, conferences and training sessions on immunization throughout EIW. Several of these meetings focused on the 2011 theme of “shared solutions to common threats.” A meeting hosted by Albania with the participation of 10 neighbouring Member States addressed subregional cooperation to reach high immunization coverage rates among vulnerable populations in southeastern Europe. In Serbia, the Ministry of Health, the Institute of Public Health and the WHO Country Office organized a scientific conference to discuss immunization issues under the theme of “working together against common threats”. More than 50 specialists from all public health institutes convened in Belgrade during EIW to review the status of the national immunization programme and to identify challenges facing the programme. Additionally, several prominent supporters of EIW, including WHO/Europe Patron HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, issued statements highlighting the 2011 theme.

“For a Healthy Future of Our Children - Childhood immunization” Venue: Museum of Ethnography, Budapest Introductory presentation. ▼



Focus on multimedia and social media

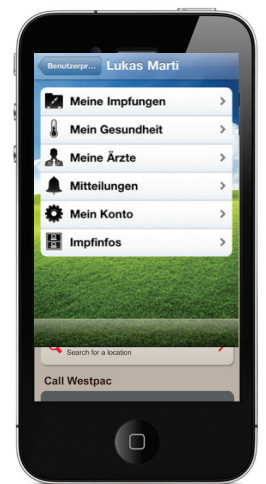
The WHO Regional Office for Europe and countries of the European Region placed a particular emphasis on multimedia during EIW 2011. Many countries used the initiative as an opportunity to launch online tools, such as a web-based test to check immunization status in Luxembourg. Other countries, including Ireland and Switzerland, introduced iPhone applications for tracking and managing immunization status. For the first time, WHO/Europe produced a two-part podcast series on measles outbreaks and the shared threat from vaccine-preventable diseases, which were made available during EIW. Additionally, WHO/Europe produced pro-immunization promotional videos and made these available on the WHO/Europe web site, the EIW campaign site and YouTube. Thousands of people listened to, viewed and/or downloaded these materials throughout week.

The presence and value of the EIW campaign site, established in 2010, continued to grow during EIW 2011. This interactive social media tool allowed EIW focal points from participating countries to share their EIW experiences directly with an online EIW community by posting blogs, comments and pictures from events. WHO/Europe also utilized the social networking and microblogging tool Twitter to provide real-time updates from key EIW activities throughout the week.



▲ Screen shot of EIW campaign site.

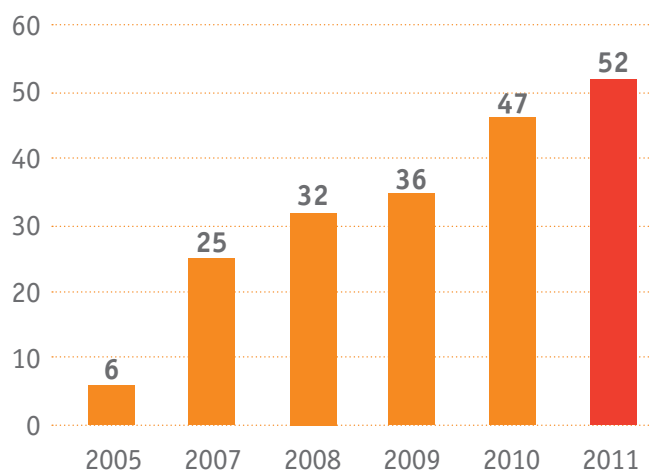
► My viaVac iPhone application, launched in Switzerland during EIW 2011; available via Swiss iTunes.



EIW by numbers

- 52 participating Member States
- more than 10 million children immunized through campaigns in 10+ Member States
- 25+ countries launched media outreach campaigns
- 25+ countries held meetings, round tables, and conferences, while others conducted immunization trainings for public health workers
- 25+ countries developed and implemented information campaigns through a variety of mediums
- 550+ media “hits” across the European Region and globally
- 2200+ views/listens/downloads of EIW multimedia materials
- 145+ members contributed dozens of blog posts, comments and pictures to the EIW campaign site

EIW country participation 2005–2011



Promotional EIW 2011 video with soccer star Ronaldinho.

Looking ahead

The seventh annual European Immunization Week will be held 21-27 April 2012. For the first time, all WHO regions of the world will simultaneously celebrate World Immunization Week in 2012. WHO/Europe looks forward to having the participation of all 53 Member States of the European Region in EIW 2012 to provide a compelling display of the Region's unified commitment to raising awareness about immunization and spreading the initiative's central message: Prevent. Protect. Immunize. Other key messages of the 2012 initiative will focus on frontline health workers, continuing to prioritize measles immunization ahead of the 2015 elimination goal and working to close immunity gaps that have led to outbreaks across the Region.

Visit the EIW campaign site: <http://eiw.euro.who.int>



Health minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bujar Osmani, with children at an EIW 2011 event.