



History of malaria elimination in the European Region

In 2015, for the first time, the WHO European Region reported zero indigenous malaria cases, in line with the goal of the Tashkent Declaration to eliminate malaria from the Region by 2015.

The European Region was malaria free in 1975

Until the end of the Second World War, malaria was endemic throughout much of southern Europe. The Balkans, Italy, Greece and Portugal were particularly affected.

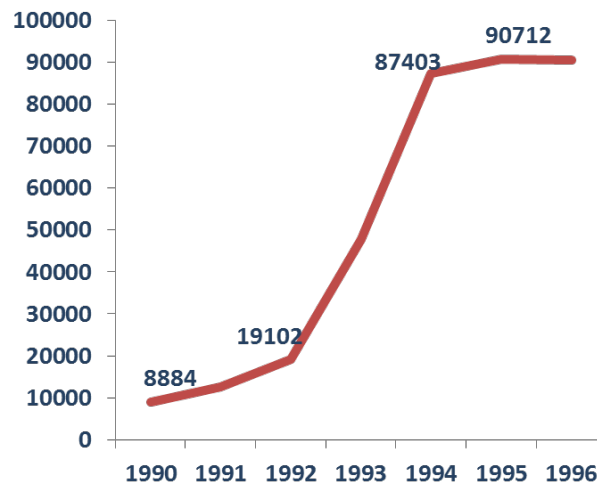
In 1955, the Eighth World Health Assembly agreed “that the World Health Organization should take the initiative, provide technical advice, and encourage research and coordination of resources in the implementation of a programme having as its ultimate objective the worldwide eradication of malaria” (Resolution WHA8.30).

On this basis, WHO launched the Global Malaria Eradication Programme, which was highly successful in eliminating malaria from several regions of the world, including Europe. The last indigenous cases at that time occurred in Macedonia in 1974.

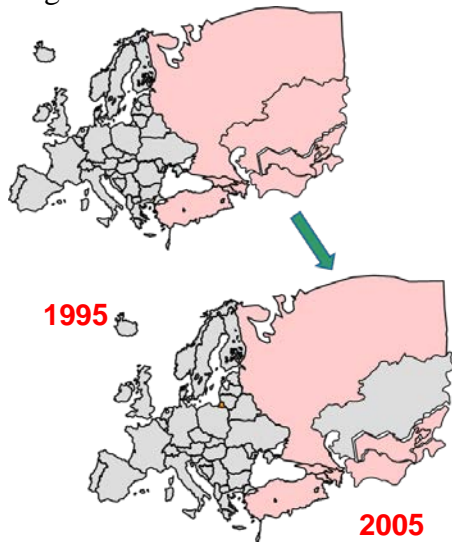
Malaria comes back to Europe

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, local malaria transmission had been re-established in the Caucasus, the Central Asian republics and, to a lesser extent, the Russian Federation, following the war in Afghanistan and the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. In Turkey, a sharp increase in the number of malaria cases in the 1990s was linked to a large influx of Iraqi refugees during the First Gulf War; in 1994, the country reported a peak of over 84 000 cases of malaria.

Political and socio-economic challenges, mass population migration and interruption of malaria prevention and control activities were conditions favourable for malaria



reintroduction and transmission. In 1995, 90 712 malaria cases were officially reported in the Region.



Introducing Roll Back Malaria

In response to the increasing number of indigenous cases and outbreaks of malaria, the Roll Back Malaria strategy was introduced in affected European countries in 1999.

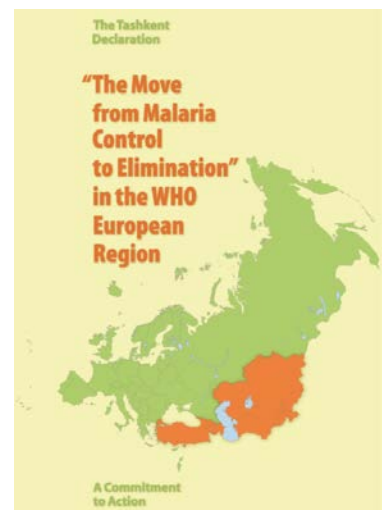
Between 1995 and 2005, malaria control activities succeeded in greatly reducing the burden of the disease across the European Region. In 2000, eight countries reported just over 32 000 cases of malaria, while, in 2005, only 5000 cases were reported Region-wide. The goal of malaria elimination was within reach.

The turning point: the Tashkent Declaration

In 2005, the number of new cases of malaria was at a level that made the goal of interrupting transmission feasible.

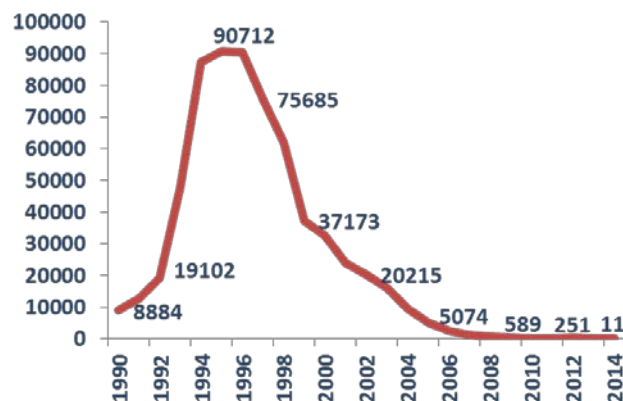
With this goal in sight, the affected European countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – made a commitment through the Tashkent Declaration in 2005 to eliminate malaria in the Region by 2015.

The Declaration led to the new *Regional strategy: from malaria control to elimination in the WHO European Region 2006–2015*, which guided these countries in reducing the number of indigenous malaria cases to zero.



Falling to zero

By 2010, only 179 cases of malaria were reported in six countries. However, 2011 and 2012 saw renewed malaria transmission – in Georgia (isolated cases) and in Greece and Turkey (localized outbreaks) – due to importation from endemic countries (Afghanistan, India and Pakistan).



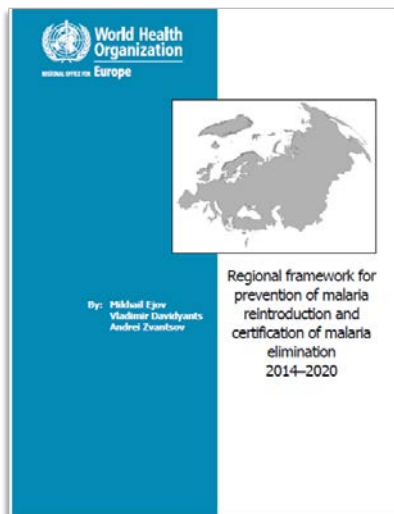
This resurgence was brought under control, and, in 2014, indigenous transmission was confined to Tajikistan.

In 2015, for the first time, all the countries in the European Region reported zero indigenous cases of malaria.

The winning factors

The European Region is the first in the world to have achieved interruption of indigenous malaria transmission. Elimination in the European Region was made possible by high-level political commitment, intense programme activities in the affected countries, WHO technical support and a combination of domestic and external funding.

Key elements were heightened detection and surveillance of malaria cases, integrated strategies for mosquito control, with community involvement, cross-border collaboration with neighbouring countries and communication to people at risk.



Staying at zero

The achievement of zero indigenous malaria cases in the WHO European Region is extraordinary but fragile. The Region is prone to continual importation of cases from endemic regions, with the threat of re-establishment of transmission.

Maintaining zero cases in the European Region will require sustained political commitment, resources and constant vigilance. Any new cases of the disease must be promptly identified and treated. Health systems should be strengthened to ensure that any resurgence is rapidly contained.

The Regional framework for prevention of malaria reintroduction and certification of malaria elimination

2014–2020 is available for European countries and should be fully implemented. It outlines ways to avoid resurgence of malaria, prevent its re-introduction and aspects of the process for certification of malaria-free status.

Links

- The countries of WHO/Europe <http://www.euro.who.int/en/countries>
- Tashkent Declaration: the move from malaria control to elimination in the WHO European Region <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/vector-borne-and-parasitic-diseases/publications/pre-2009/tashkent-declaration-the-move-from-malaria-control-to-elimination>
- Regional strategy: from malaria control to elimination in the WHO European Region 2006–2015 <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/vector-borne-and-parasitic-diseases/publications/pre-2009/regional-strategy-from-malaria-control-to-elimination-in-the-who-european-region-2006-2015>
- Regional framework for prevention of malaria reintroduction and certification of malaria elimination 2014–2020 (2014) <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/vector-borne-and-parasitic-diseases/publications/2014/regional-framework-for-prevention-of-malaria-reintroduction-and-certification-of-malaria-elimination-20142020-2014>
- Eliminating malaria: case study 5. The long road to malaria elimination in Turkey (2013) http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/94961/1/9789241506403_eng.pdf?ua=1
- Malaria in the European Region <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/vector-borne-and-parasitic-diseases>
- Global Malaria Programme <http://www.who.int/malaria/en/>
- Roll Back Malaria <http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/>
- Malaria. Certification process <http://www.who.int/malaria/areas/elimination/certification/en/>

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