European Immunization Week
24-30 April 2017
Communications package
Vaccines work
Vaccination protects health at every stage of life

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Vision and objective

“A European Region free of vaccine-preventable diseases, where all countries provide equitable access to high-quality, safe, affordable vaccines and immunization services throughout the life course”

Vision of the European Vaccine Action Plan 2015-2020

The European Vaccine Action Plan (EVAP) is a roadmap towards a future in which everyone lives free of the burden of vaccine-preventable diseases. While progress toward this vision is clear, including in the effort to eliminate measles and rubella from the European Region, challenges remain. Coverage with childhood immunizations has not reached optimal levels across all populations and is even declining in some countries. Adolescents and adults are often not aware that they need vaccines too to protect themselves and those around them from potentially dangerous and preventable diseases. Gaps in coverage have led to avoidable disease outbreaks in the European Region affecting people of all ages.

The objective of European Immunization Week 2017 is to increase awareness of the importance of immunization throughout life and thereby help build and sustain herd immunity in all communities throughout the Region.

The week will also be celebrated in other WHO regions and globally as World Immunization Week (WIW):
European Immunization Week 2017 activities and materials will seek to:

- remind policy-makers of the importance of immunization throughout the life course and the need to make vaccines available to people of all ages (EVAP Objective 3: The benefits of vaccination are equitably extended to all people through tailored, innovative strategies);

- make people of all ages aware of the vital importance of keeping their children’s and their own immunizations up to date. In particular, health workers will be encouraged to communicate the benefits of vaccination to parents and caregivers and to be fully vaccinated themselves to protect their own and their patients’ health (EVAP Objective 2: Individuals understand the value of immunization services and vaccines and demand vaccination).
Key messages

This communications package is designed to support EIW stakeholders, by providing them with consistent messages with which to develop EIW materials and communicate with the media, health professionals, decision-makers and the general public.

Please select the messages that apply to your particular immunization priorities and/or challenges – or use alternative messages that are more relevant to your specific needs.

More information on WHO recommendations for routine immunization are available on the WHO website: http://www.who.int/immunization/policy/immunization_tables/en/
Key messages 1 - Childhood immunization

- Every child deserves an equal opportunity to lead a healthy life, and vaccination is one of the vital first steps to achieving this.

- Children below 5 years of age are at special risk of developing serious complications or even dying from vaccine-preventable diseases. Vaccines given according to each country’s routine immunization schedule provide the best possible protection for children when they need it most.

- By blocking the further spread of diseases, vaccinated children help shield those around them. This includes siblings too young to be vaccinated, classmates with special health conditions and elderly grandparents.

- Immunizing children against hepatitis B in their first year of life and against human papillomavirus (HPV) in their pre-teen years will help protect them from several forms of cancer.

- Immunizing children against pathogens that can cause pneumonia helps reduce the use of antibiotics and thereby also the threat of antimicrobial resistance.

- Wild poliovirus is endemic in only 3 remaining countries in the world. Global eradication of the disease is within reach, but it will require vigilance and continued high immunization coverage everywhere to ensure the virus has nowhere left to go.
Key messages 2 - Adolescent immunization

• Vaccination is not just for kids. Immunization, with booster doses and the HPV vaccine, continues in adolescence to protect children far into the future.

• Immunity to diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis can decrease over time, so booster doses of the combined diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis vaccine is needed during adolescence and again in adulthood to stay protected.

• Early adolescence (9-13 years of age) is the preferred time to receive the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which helps protect against cervical cancer and other HPV-related diseases. HPV is a widespread sexually transmitted virus, and cervical cancer has become a leading cause of death among women. The HPV vaccine, administered preferably before a person’s first sexual activity, is the first step in comprehensive cervical cancer prevention and control.

• Adolescence is also the time to catch up on any vaccines against diseases that are dangerous at any age, including measles, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria and meningitis. Girls should be especially aware of the danger rubella infection poses to the unborn child and be sure to receive rubella vaccination before ever becoming pregnant.
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Key messages 3 - Adult immunization

• Vaccines offer protection at all ages. Staying up to date with vaccinations protects you and those around you from serious and potentially fatal diseases.

• Many people are susceptible to measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases without realizing it. Routine immunization schedules have expanded over time and many of today’s adults were not offered currently available vaccines when they were young.

• The protection provided by some vaccines wanes over time. Booster doses of diphtheria and tetanus in adulthood are needed to ensure life-long protection.

• Several vaccines are recommended for groups at special risk because of their age, profession, lifestyle or health status. This includes vaccination against influenza, pertussis and tetanus for pregnant women; vaccination against influenza and in some countries herpes zoster for older adults; and vaccination against hepatitis B and meningococcus bacteria for health workers at risk of exposure.

• Healthy adults who contract vaccine-preventable diseases can pass them on to other susceptible individuals who may be at high risk of serious complications, such as babies, people who are immunocompromised and adults older than 65.

• If you are not fully immunized according to your country’s current routine immunization schedule, or you are not sure of your immunization status, ask your doctor for advice on which vaccines are right for you.
Key messages 4 - Immunization of health workers

- Immunized health workers protect themselves and their patients from vaccine-preventable diseases.

- Health workers are at special risk of contracting contagious diseases and passing them on to their patients. WHO advises health workers to:
  
  - be fully immunized against measles, rubella and polio;
  - receive the annual seasonal influenza vaccine;
  - receive a booster for diphtheria every 10 years;
  - be vaccinated against hepatitis B and meningococcus bacteria if they are at risk of exposure.

- By staying up to date with their own vaccines, health workers demonstrate the importance of vaccination to their patients.

- A health provider’s attitude toward vaccination has a strong influence on patient/parent decision-making. Doctors, nurses and midwives play a vital role in advising their patients about the value of vaccines.
Campaign materials

Poster:

Brochures:

Social Media Banner:

More resources and standard EIW materials are available on the WHO/Europe website: euro.who.int/eiw2017
The following additional resources to support EIW campaigns in countries will be posted on the Regional Office website in the weeks leading up to EIW 2017:

- folders providing more information on immunization at each life stage
- personal stories about immunization and vaccine-preventable diseases
- social media toolkit (#vaccineswork #immunizeEurope)

The WHO Regional Office for Europe encourages immunization stakeholders at national and local levels to get involved in EIW by joining or organizing campaigns. The following resources (available at www.euro.who.int/eiw2017) can help you get started:

- Background document: Why is EIW important?
- EIW guidelines for planning, PR and working with the media
- EIW meeting folders, posters and other materials
- Information materials for health workers and the general public
- Advocacy tools for policy-makers and health authorities

Global materials with the “Vaccines work” theme are available on the WHO headquarters website: http://www.who.int/campaigns/immunization-week/2017/event/en/
To promote your EIW initiatives, see what is being planned near you and connect with other EIW stakeholders, visit the Immunize Europe Forum: www.immunize-europe.org

For more information please contact eueiw@who.int