



PRESS RELEASE

29 January, 2018

E-collection: *Facing the facts: challenges in vaccinating Europe*

Today the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) is publishing its E-collection: 'Facing the facts: challenges in vaccinating Europe'. This E-collection reflects on challenges in vaccination in the European region and includes a selection of scientific peer-reviewed articles recently published in the European Journal of Public Health. The E-collection is accompanied by an editorial written by the president of the EUPHA section on Infectious diseases control, Dr Aura Timen, and colleagues. The E-collection is available [here](#).

Key facts related to vaccination uptake that are highlighted by the e-collection are:

- In 2016, immunisation coverage in the World Health Organization European Region did not reach the target of 95% (only 92% for DTP (diphtheria, tetanus, poliomyelitis) and 93% for measles).
- There are stark inequalities for immunisation coverage within and between countries in the European region.
- Hesitation, uncertainty, and opposition concerning vaccines are emerging challenges to vaccination programmes that endanger achieving a high level of protection against vaccine preventable diseases.

The e-collection identifies groups in which childhood immunisation uptake is typically lower, i.e.:

- Migrants and minority ethnic and religious group,
- Groups with high religious or ideological objections,
- Lower socioeconomic status,
- Families with a high number of children,
- Low level of education of parents, and
- Families living in densely populated, urban areas, particularly in inner cities, which also tend to show high levels of deprivation.

Vaccination policies should take into consideration these risk groups and target them specifically, adjusting the messages according to the needs of the specific groups.

The implementation of existing European Union (EU) legislation on hepatitis B virus (HBV) vaccination varies greatly from country to country. Current EU legislation requires employers to assess the risks of healthcare workers regarding exposure to the HBV and offer them vaccination. Countries implement this legislation in different ways which results in suboptimal vaccine uptake. To increase HBV vaccine uptake and support the vaccination efforts of countries, consultations among key actors at EU level should be organised.

For these vaccination related challenges, including vaccination uptake in children and healthcare workers, a European approach is necessary. Reaching mobile populations, and underserved populations such as migrants, minority ethnic and religious groups is already a formidable task. This has recently been compounded by an increasingly vocal and visible anti vaccination movement that has had an impact on vaccination programmes in some European countries. As some countries struggle with vaccine hesitancy and falling trends in vaccination rates, European collaboration is of added value to address these issues which transcend national borders. .

In 2018, vaccination is on the agenda of key European institutions. The European Commission is planning to take forward activities on vaccination and is planning for a Council Recommendation. A Joint Action on vaccination will also be launched. WHO/Europe will hold a South-eastern Europe health ministers' meeting to discuss the importance of vaccination as a critical public health intervention and a public good on 20 February in Podgorica, Montenegro. The European Immunization Week will be celebrated on 23–29 April, thereby raising awareness about immunisation being vital to prevent diseases and protect life.

“New studies focused on vaccination challenges should be urgently promoted in order to aid decision-making, resolve public concerns about vaccine safety and increase vaccine coverage. Having a strong research-base, EUPHA will continue to support the European Commission, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) Europe and our national members.” – Aura Timen, President of the EUPHA Section on Infectious diseases control.

For more information, please contact Dr Natasha Azzopardi Muscat, EUPHA president, president@eupha.org, or Dr Dineke Zeegers Paget, EUPHA executive director, office@eupha.org.



The European Public Health Association, or EUPHA in short, is an umbrella organisation for public health associations in Europe. Our network of national associations of public health represents around 20'000 public health professionals. Our mission is to facilitate and activate a strong voice of the public health network by enhancing visibility of the evidence and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals. EUPHA contributes to the preservation and improvement of public health in the European region through capacity and knowledge building. We are committed to creating a more inclusive Europe, narrowing all health inequalities among Europeans, by facilitating, activating, and disseminating strong evidence-based voices from the public health community and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals to achieve evidence-based change.