



**21 April 2015 – Yesterday, European Immunization Week kicked off across the [World Health Organization's](#) (WHO) Europe region. Focusing on renewed commitment to immunization at political, professional and personal levels, this year marks the event's 10th anniversary, and coincides with World Immunization Week, to be held from April 24-30.**

Despite the fact that the [WHO European Region](#) was certified polio-free in 2002 and measles cases in the Region were reduced by more than 90% between 1993 and 2007, our continent still faces challenges in terms of immunization efforts. This is exemplified by the latter bouncing back, with cases of measles more than doubling between 2007 and 2014 (see [Infographic](#) ).

### **Immunization challenges in Europe**

Nearly 650 000 of the 10.7 million infants born each year in the European Region do not receive

the complete three-dose series of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine by age one. Furthermore, the fact that immunization has made many infectious diseases rare or almost unheard of can lead to the opinion among parents and health professionals that vaccines are no longer necessary.

Moreover, “increasing globalization means easier and more frequent movements of both populations and diseases. Each outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease in the European Region highlights common vulnerabilities and the importance of strengthening European surveillance and health systems,” says Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe.

It is within this context that this week’s campaign is of vital importance.

### **Why European Immunization Week?**

The goal of European Immunization Week is to raise awareness of the importance of immunization and to increase vaccination coverage. The slogan *Prevent. Protect. Immunize.* promotes the core message that vaccinating every child is vital to prevent diseases and to protect life.

This year’s theme is *commitment*, with special attention paid to the [European Vaccine Action Plan](#) (EVAP). EVAP was adopted in September 2014, with the goal of complementing, regionally interpreting and adapting the [Global Vaccine Action Plan](#) in harmony with [Health 2020](#) and other key regional health strategies and policies.

In a [statement](#) on EVAP, Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark says, “it is the action we take to implement that plan and the degree to which we stand beside our commitment that will define our success and indeed our legacy”.

## Looking ahead to World Immunization Week

The [World Immunization Week](#) will be held from 24-30 April 2015.

Under the slogan *Close the Immunization Gap*, the campaign focuses on closing the immunization gap and reaching equity in immunization levels as outlined in the Global Vaccine Action Plan, which is a framework to prevent millions of deaths by 2020 through universal access to vaccines for people in all communities.

### More information

To stay abreast of developments at a European level this week, do follow [the updates on the WHO/Europe website](#) to learn more in a daily blog post by stakeholders from a variety of countries and professions.

You can also consult the online resources, concerning e.g. [the continued threat of rubella](#) in Europe.

Do tweet using the hashtag [#EIW2015](#) or follow the WHO Regional Office for Europe's [Facebook page](#).