

# IMMUNISATION AS A RIGHT OF EUROPEAN CHILDREN

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Protective Immunisation is one of the most important effective and preventive goals available in medicine: Immunisation is the greatest single health advance for children. WHO and UNICEF support immunisation programmes worldwide. Vaccines usually protect the vaccinated person against the respective disease. Additionally, diseases which are spread only from one human to another (e.g. Poliomyelitis, Hepatitis B, Measles, Rubella) can be eradicated if a high immunisation coverage of the population can be sustained as promoted by the WHO – eradication programmes.

Therefore, WHO has declared that no child should be denied immunisation without careful thought as to the consequences for that child and the community:

**Every child in the world has the right to receive all possible vaccination against all vaccine preventable diseases**

While many developed and developing countries report vaccine uptake rates in excess of 95 per cent, for many of the world's children immunisation still remains unavailable.

This resolution seeks to have the right to safe and efficacious vaccines as a stated right of children and for that right to be added to the UN Declaration on the **Rights of the Children**. The resolution does not intend to specify which vaccines children ought to receive, recognising that the schedule will vary between countries.

The resolution should emphasise the rights of children to have access to vaccines which have been shown to be safe and efficacious. The resolution should assist in efforts to ensure that Governments make available agreed and accessible schedules of immunisation for children in their countries.

Immunisation procedures should be free of charge at the point of delivery. The resolution should impress on parents the importance of bringing their children to immunisation. The resolution should help to convince governments and in particular their Departments of Health, to assess the cost-economics of immunisation, to produce an agreed schedule and to make available resources to ensure the delivery of immunisation schedules to all children.

It is an important task of any physician to give his patients sufficient protection through immunisation. This includes that primary immunization of new-borns and infants is started on time, is not unnecessarily delayed and is concluded on time.

It has to be ensured that catching-up and necessary booster doses are administered to people of all ages.

According to WHO's recommendations, each contact with a physician should be used to check the immunisation record and to administer a booster dose if necessary (regardless of how long the recommended immunisation interval has been exceeded).

**Parents share the responsibility for protective immunisation  
of their children.**

Immunisation has clearly shown benefits in preventing serious diseases not only for children but also for the community.

Prevention rather than cure must be one of the primary forces of medicine.

European paediatric associations like ECPCP, EAP, EPA are working on widespread vaccination lobbying to raise the acceptance of vaccination programmes. There are many tasks of harmonisation required within the European Union. ECPCP believes that harmonisation of immunisation of European children is one these tasks together with highlighting the role and responsibility of primary care paediatricians.

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