



# WHO/UNHCR/UNICEF guidance on vaccination of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in the WHO European Region



**World Health  
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR

**Europe**



**Organisation  
mondiale de la Santé**

BUREAU RÉGIONAL DE L'

**Europe**



**Weltgesundheitsorganisation**

REGIONALBÜRO FÜR

**Europa**



**Всемирная организация  
здравоохранения**

**Европейское** региональное бюро

**Antons Mozalevskis**

WHO Regional Office for Europe

**VHPB MEETING  
10-11 March 2016  
Ljubljana, Slovenia**

# The unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants to Europe: *a public health challenge*

---

# Refugees and migrants: common health problems

- Similar to those of the rest of population
- Injuries, hypothermia, chronic diseases, psychological stress and violence
- Vulnerable groups: women and children

# Migration and communicable diseases: no systematic association

- Communicable diseases associated with poverty
- Tuberculosis – risk of being infected depends on the country of origin, living and working condition in the country of immigration, e.g.
  - Incidence in Syria: 17/100 000
  - Incidence in Nigeria: 338/100 000
  - Incidence in WHO-EURO: 39/100 000
- Vector-borne diseases (malaria, Dengue etc.): some threat of reintroduction
- Risk of Ebola, Lassa, MERS is extremely low

# Risk of increased transmission of communicable diseases

---

- Mass movement, lack of shelter, insufficient sanitation
- Increased risk of respiratory diseases, diarrhoea and skin infections

# Risk of increased transmission of VPI

## Refugees and migrants:

- Most coming from countries with good vaccination coverage
- Small children at risk of not being vaccinated

## Host communities:

- Many remain susceptible («anti-vaxxers», underserved groups)

Most outbreaks of VPI (measles, pertussis) independently of migrant population, and risk of polio outbreaks remains in some countries

# Provision of health services and vaccines

- Many international regulations state the need for universal health coverage and equitable access, irrespective of legal status
- This includes immunisation, particularly against measles and polio
- Intervention that requires follow-up – need for cooperation among the countries of origin, of transit and of destination

# Recommendation for vaccination

- Priority – MMR and polio
- In the country of destination – migrants to be incorporated into routine programmes
- Authorities to provide documentation of the vaccination given to avoid unnecessary revaccination
- The refugee crisis should incite countries to review any immunity gaps and ensure services, strong communication and social mobilisation



# Considerations for viral hepatitis, incl. vaccination

- WHO does not recommend obligatory screening of refugee and migrant populations for diseases, because there is no clear evidence of benefits; furthermore, it can cause anxiety in individual refugees and the wider community
- WHO strongly recommends, however, that health checks be offered, respecting the human rights and dignity, to ensure access to health care for all refugees and migrants requiring health protection
- Protection of health care workers – HBV vaccination (and measles)
- Mass migration impact on the prevalence – vaccination strategies?

# Thank you!

---

[www.who.euro.int/hepatitis](http://www.who.euro.int/hepatitis)

[amz@euro.who.int](mailto:amz@euro.who.int)