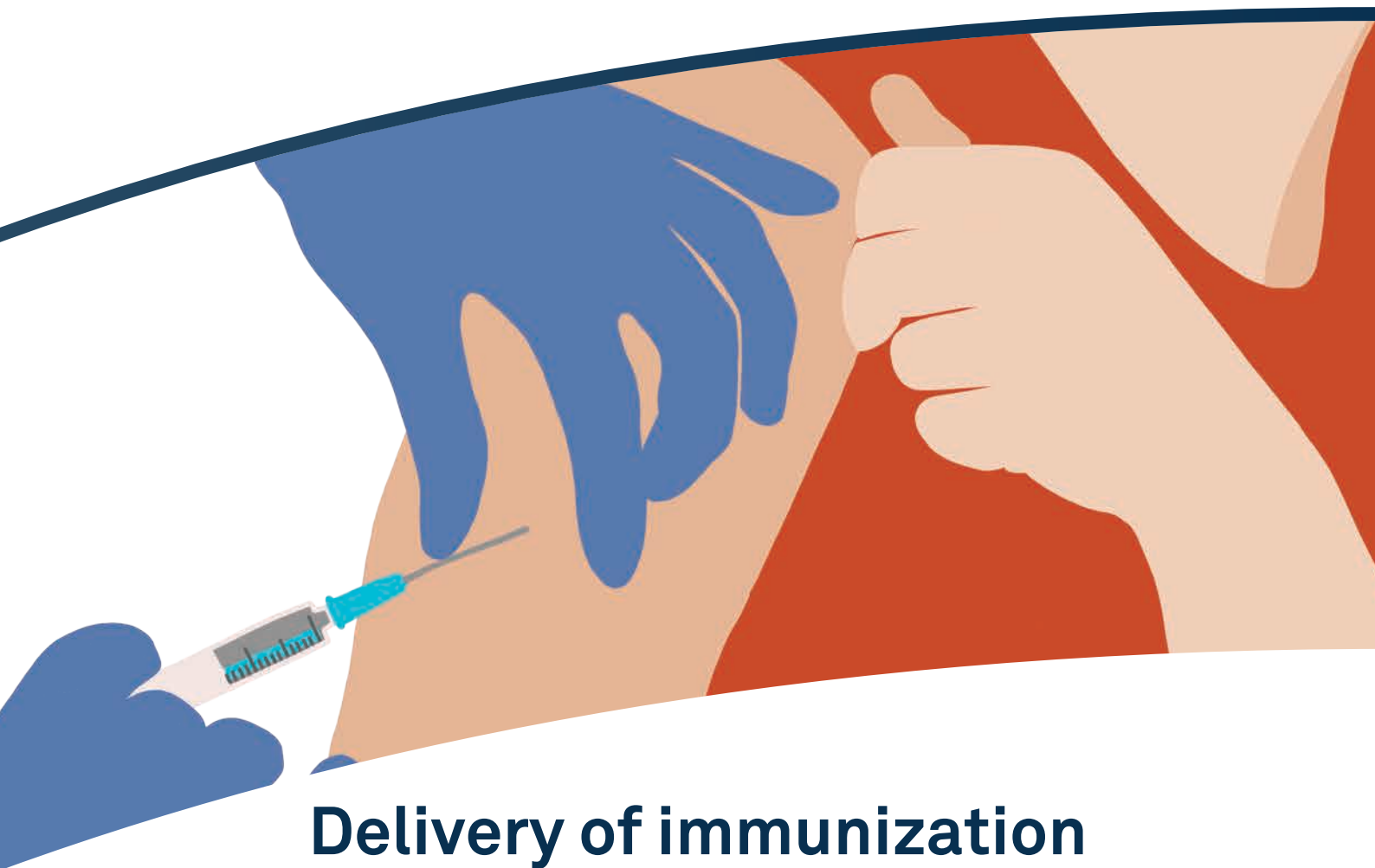




World Health
Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Europe



Delivery of immunization services for refugees and migrants

Technical guidance



The Migration and Health programme

The Migration and Health programme, the first fully fledged programme on migration and health within WHO was established at the WHO Regional Office for Europe to support Member States to strengthen the health sector's capacity to provide evidence-informed responses to the public health challenges of refugee and migrant health. The programme operates under the umbrella of the European health policy framework Health 2020, providing support to Member States under four pillars: technical assistance; health information, research and training; partnership building; and advocacy and communication. The programme promotes a collaborative intercountry approach to migrant health by facilitating cross-country policy dialogue and encouraging homogeneous health interventions along the migration routes to promote the health of refugees and migrants and protect public health in the host community.

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Technical guidance

Abstract

This technical guidance outlines current best practice, evidence and knowledge in order to support policy and programme development for vaccination of refugees and migrants in the WHO European Region. It highlights key principles, summarizes priority actions and challenges, maps available resources and tools, and provides practical policy considerations to improve vaccination coverage and immunization service delivery for these groups. In particular, it highlights the provision of immunization services to newly arrived refugees and migrants, the incorporation of routine delivery of immunization for refugees and migrants into mainstream health services, and tailoring of programmes for more targeted delivery. The intended audience includes those with a central role in policy-making at local, national and regional levels, and across all sectors of governance, not just those within the health, migration or immunization sectors. Clinicians, fieldworkers and other practitioners are invited to draw upon this publication; however, it is not intended to inform daily programme work.

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Abbreviations

ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
EVAP	European Vaccine Action Plan 2015–2020
Hib	<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (vaccine)
IIS	immunization information systems
MMR	combined vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella
NIP	national immunization programme
PIRI	periodic intensification of routine immunization (services)
TIP	tailoring immunization programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VPD	vaccine-preventable disease

Summary

Successful implementation of large-scale vaccination across the WHO European Region over decades has resulted in significant reductions in illness, disability and death from many vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs). All 53 Member States of the WHO European Region have maintained polio-free certification since June 2002, a result achieved through strong national immunization systems, sustained high vaccination and high-quality disease surveillance. However, outbreaks of VPDs do continue to occur, and there has been a recent resurgence of some VPDs in the Region. In 2017, for example, the Region observed a four-fold increase in the number of measles cases from the previous year, with pockets of susceptible individuals in affected countries contributing to recent transmission events. In the same year, however, only 15 of 53 Member States reached the target of 95% vaccination coverage for the two doses of measles-containing vaccine required to stop transmission.

Concurrent to suboptimal vaccination coverage of host populations in the Region, there is continued high levels of migration to and within the Region. This presents a key public health challenge. Seroprevalence studies show suboptimal immunity to various VPDs among refugees and migrants in the Region, and lower vaccination coverage of these groups compared with local host populations has also been observed. Refugees and migrants often originate from countries with different disease epidemiological profiles and/or where access to health care and routine immunization may have been interrupted because of various sociopolitical challenges. As such, refugees and migrants are often more susceptible to contracting the VPDs circulating in the Region and may face greater risks for illness, disability and death from such diseases than host populations. Consequently, sustained efforts to increase vaccination rates among refugees and migrants are essential for protecting their health and well-being and should occur as part of equitable provision of immunization services and extension of equal rights to health care.

This technical guidance outlines three critical elements for ensuring high levels of vaccination coverage among refugees and migrants:

- provision of appropriate vaccination services to newly arrived refugees and migrants;

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