

# AUTHORS' REPLY: NATIONAL PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINATION PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN IN EUROPE, 2001-2007 – UPDATED TABLE

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**To the editor:** With reference to our article “Use of seven-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV7) in Europe, 2001-2007” (<http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ViewArticle.aspx?ArticleId=19159>), published on 26 March 2009, we would like to present an updated table showing the characteristics of national pneumococcal vaccination programmes for children in 32 European countries (Table) with additional information from Ireland and Turkey received following the publication of the article.

This update will only reflect changes made until March 2009, when data on PCV7 vaccination programmes were collected for the purposes of the article. However, the table also includes an update on the Hungarian PCV7 vaccination programme that had already been announced in the original article, and has now come into effect in April 2009. An addition has been made to the entry for Spain to clarify that the vaccine is free to all children under the age of five who belong to at-risk groups.

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TABLE

## Characteristics of national pneumococcal vaccination programmes for children in 32 European countries

Country	Extent of PCV7 vaccination programme	Date of implementation	Vaccination regimen <sup>a</sup>	Catch-up programme	Reimbursement	Comments
Austria	Universal	September 2004	3+1	No	No	Free of charge for children under the age of two years in risk groups.
Belgium	Universal	January 2005	2+1	Yes <sup>b</sup>	Total	Free of charge for children under the age of two years since January 2007.
Bulgaria	None	-	-	-	-	Inclusion of PCV7 as a recommended vaccine on an individual voluntary basis is being considered based on a decision of the expert committee on national immunisations (24 July 2008).
Croatia	Risk-based	November 2006	3+1	n/a	Total	Since August 2008 free of charge for children at the ages of two, four and six months, with a booster dose at the age of 12-15 months (3+1). In addition, a catch-up programme is implemented for children up to the age of 59 months.
Cyprus	Universal	August 2008	3+1	Yes	Total	Free of charge for children under the age of five years since January 2007.
Czech Republic	Risk-based	January 2007	3+1	n/a	Total	
Denmark	Universal	October 2007	2+1	Yes <sup>c</sup>	Total	
Estonia	None	-	-	-	-	
Finland	Risk-based	January 2009	2+1	n/a	Total	Since January 2009, free of charge for children under the age of five years in risk groups. In addition, one dose of pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine is given to children over the age of two years in risk groups.
France	Universal	June 2006	2+1	Yes <sup>d</sup>	Cost sharing/ Total	In October 2008, the vaccination regimen changed from 3+1 to 2+1. 65% of the price of PCV7 is reimbursed by social security. The rest is reimbursed by private insurance (for the 80% of the population that have one). The vaccine is free of charge in mother and child care services.
Germany	Universal	July 2006	3+1	Yes <sup>e</sup>	Total	Since January 2008, reimbursement of all recommended vaccinations has been regulated on a national level.
Greece	Universal	March 2006	3+1	Yes <sup>b</sup>	Total	Fully reimbursed since March 2008.
Hungary	Universal	April 2009	2+1	Yes <sup>b</sup>	Total	Since April 2009, PCV7 has been given on a voluntary basis and free of charge to children at the ages of two and four months, with a booster dose at 15 months of age (2+1 regimen). From October 2008 to March 2009, PCV7 was given on a voluntary basis and free of charge to children under the age of two years with the 3+1 regimen.
Iceland	Risk-based	December 2006	2+1	n/a	No	
Ireland	Universal	September 2008	2+1	Yes <sup>b</sup>	Total	Vaccine is given at the age of two, six and 12 months; for catch-up, one or two doses are given (age-dependent). Recommended vaccines are free.
Ireland	Risk-based	October 2002	3+1	n/a	Total	In 2002, vaccine recommended for at risk children up to 24 months of age (two or three doses, plus/minus booster, depending on age). In 2008, the age group 'at risk' was expanded to include children up to five years of age (one to two doses, depending on age and risk factor). Recommended vaccines are free.
Italy	Universal/ Risk-based	May 2005	2+1	No	Cost sharing/ Total (Regional variation)	In 15 of 20 regions, PCV7 is offered to all children either free of charge or with cost sharing. In five regions, PCV7 is recommended to children at risk only and is free of charge.
Latvia	None	-	-	-	-	Voluntary vaccination of children in risk-groups is planned for 2009.
Lithuania	None	-	-	-	-	
Luxembourg	Universal	October 2004	3+1	Yes <sup>d</sup>	Total	
Malta	Risk-based	January 2007	3+1	n/a	Total	
The Netherlands	Universal	June 2006	3+1	-	Total	
Norway	Universal	July 2006	2+1	Yes	Total	PCV7 was introduced in the national childhood vaccination programme on 1 July 2006, with a catch-up programme for children born after 1 January 2006.
Poland	None	-	-	-	-	

Portugal	None	-	-	-	-	The Portuguese National Vaccination Committee is in the process of discussing the implementation of PCV7 into the national vaccination programme.
Romania	None	-	-	-	-	
Slovakia	Universal	April 2008	2+1	n/a	Cost sharing	Universal: recommended to children under the age of two years as complementary (optional) vaccination for optimal individual protection. 96% of the costs are reimbursed by the national health insurance.
	Risk-based	January 2006	2+1		Total	Free of charge to children under the age of two years belonging to risk groups.
Slovenia	Risk-based	September 2005	3+1	n/a	Total	Fully reimbursed since September 2005.
	Risk-based	June 2001	3+1	n/a	Total	Since June 2001, free of charge for children under the age of five years belonging to risk groups.
Sweden	Universal	January 2009	2+1	n/a	Total	Since January 2009, PCV7 has been part of the national childhood vaccination programme and is recommended to all children born from October 2008 onwards.
Switzerland	Universal	November 2005	2+1	Yes <sup>d</sup>	Total	Universal: recommended as complementary (optional) vaccination for optimal individual protection; fully reimbursed since August 2006.
	Risk-based	July 2001	3+1			Risk-based: fully reimbursed since July 2001.
Turkey	Universal	November 2008	3+1	Yes <sup>f</sup>	Total	Since November 2008, PCV7 has been part of the national childhood vaccination programme and is recommended at the ages of two, four and six months with a booster dose at the age of 12 months.
United Kingdom	Universal	September 2006	2+1	Yes <sup>b</sup>	Total	Free to all children.

n/a = not applicable;

a Number of PCV7 doses given during first year + number of booster doses;

b Until 23 months of age for all children;

c Until 18 months of age for all children;

d Until 23 months of age for all children and until 59 months of age for children with particular co-morbidities;

e Until 59 months of age for children with particular co-morbidities;

f Administered to infants born from May 2008 to November 2008.

Source: EUVAC.NET