

Spotlight on measles 2010

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Eurosurveillance is committed to highlight issues around measles and facilitate the rapid exchange of information that may help to implement measures that prevent the further spread of the disease. Since March 2007, we have published over 50 papers on various aspects of measles, mainly as rapid communications reporting on ongoing outbreaks but also in the form of surveillance reports and perspective papers focussing on disease trends and policy issues.

In order to support all those who tackle measles and their elimination, we have introduced a special series for the year 2010, highlighting articles that describe ongoing measles outbreaks. Under the running title *Spotlight on measles 2010* we report on ongoing outbreaks relevant for Europe with the intention to demonstrate that measles is not a problem of any one country individually, and to show creative solutions of how to deal with the challenges impeding elimination such as low coverage in various population groups and opposition to vaccines. It is true that most of the facts on measles and the reasons for their continued circulation in the European Union (EU) are well known. However, instead of entering in a measles fatigue, vigilance across Europe is needed. The fact that many outbreaks in the EU in 2009 started after importation of a case from another Member State and that cases were exported to the measles-free Americas further illustrate the potential international implications of national measles outbreaks [1].

Another occasion for the international spread of measles are mass gatherings. The 2008 European Football Championships for instance took place in Austria and Switzerland at a time when large outbreaks of measles were ongoing in both countries, a situation that required particular vigilance [2]. Curiously enough, the Football Championships seem to coincide with measles outbreaks. Currently, an outbreak is ongoing in South Africa [3], and during the 2006 International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) World Cup football tournament in Germany, a large outbreak was ongoing in parts of the country where matches were played [4]. In Canada, a community outbreak of measles started after the Winter Olympic Games in 2010 [5].

The *Spotlight on measles 2010* series started in February with a report from Ireland [6], followed by one

from Germany [7]. The two articles showed the variety of aspects and approaches that need to be considered when aiming at stopping outbreaks and increasing vaccination coverage in areas where pockets of unimmunised people exist.

Much progress has been made in the fight against measles, and the goal of eliminating the disease is within reach, but to finally achieve measles elimination within the European region, all those concerned with public and individual health will now need to go the extra mile. We hope that progress is being made and that we will have to report less and less frequently on measles in the years to come. Meanwhile we hope to be able to track down outbreaks wherever they occur and look forward to receiving your contributions reporting measures taken to stop them.

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