



EVM SUPPORTS WHO EUROPE IMMUNIZATION WEEK'S GOAL OF IMPROVING CHILDHOOD VACCINATION ACROSS THE REGION

BRUSSELS, Belgium - 28 April 2010 – The European Vaccine Manufacturers group (EVM) welcomes and supports WHO Europe's 5th European Immunization Week (24 April to 1 May), which promotes the vaccination of every child to prevent diseases and protect life. This year the focus is on national immunization efforts that will help meet the regional goal of eliminating measles and rubella by the end of 2010. In recognition of this important initiative, EVM is supporting an expert debate in the European Parliament focused on enhancing European vaccination, hosted by Karin Kadenbach MEP.

"Childhood immunization represents one of the most successful public health interventions," explains **Karin Kadenbach, MEP**; "Diseases that once killed or caused disability in thousands of children each year have been virtually eliminated".

Indeed the successes of vaccines in eradicating certain vaccine preventable diseases has been so significant that parents and even healthcare providers forget about the benefits of vaccination every so often. In addition, new communication channels, such as social media allowing the rapid spread of information and opinion, create new challenges for the effective implementation of the vaccination programmes. Yet in order to stop transmission, Europe needs a very high vaccination coverage, which in the case of measles has fallen below the 95% mark recommended by WHO, causing the return of disease outbreaks in many western European countries.

"Public health strategies require strong political commitment and societal support to tackle 'routine immunisation fatigue' ", Kadenbach asserts, "and we therefore need to work together to find new approaches to engage parents, health professionals and decision-makers across the EU".

Commenting on the importance of immunization in Europe, **Patrick Florent, President of EVM**, underlines that "Vaccination has had a major and positive impact across Europe and the rest of the world. Thanks to constant investment in innovative technology we can now protect against many diseases which, in the past, were killers. In recent years, manufacturers have developed innovative new vaccines for prevention of cervical cancer caused by the human papilloma virus, pneumococcal disease and gastroenteritis due to rotavirus. We continue to invest in development of vaccines to protect against diseases for which no vaccines currently exist, such as meningitis B, malaria, dengue, TB and HIV. EVM applauds the European Immunization week initiative which will help to extend the benefits of vaccination to more European children. It is important however to work together to further strengthen immunization efforts and enhance trust in the benefits of vaccination across Europe; this is why EVM strongly supports initiatives, such as the European Immunization Week, that aim to extend the benefits of immunization, prevention of disease and protecting lives, to all the children across the Region."

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Notes for Editors

Debate on enhancing European vaccination

Karin Kadenbach MEP is hosting an expert debate entitled, '*Childhood Immunization: Tackling Challenges and Protecting our Future*', which is held in the European Parliament on 28 April 2010. Expert speakers included:

- **Pierre Van Damme**, University of Antwerp, Director of the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Institute, and Chairman of the European Technical Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (ETAGE) within WHO Europe
- **Dr Heidi Larson**, Principle Research Fellow, Institute for Global Health, Imperial College, London
- **Dr Antoon Gijssens**, Policy Officer Unit C3 Health Threats, DG SANCO.

**About EVM**

European Vaccine Manufacturers (EVM) is a specialised group within the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA). EVM brings together Europe's major vaccine producers: AstraZeneca, Baxter, Crucell, GSK, Novartis Vaccines, sanofi pasteur, sanofi pasteur MSD, Abbott and Pfizer. EVM was created in 1991 to build and maintain a supportive environment in Europe, improve public health through extended vaccination and support the industry's investment in innovative new vaccines against a range of major diseases.

For more information please visit www.evm-vaccines.org.

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