



Statement of Ireland

77th session of the World Health Assembly

Item 11.4 Immunization Agenda 2030

27 May 2024

Honourable Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

It is widely agreed that vaccination is one of the most cost-effective and successful public health interventions. Ireland strives to increase vaccine uptake across all national immunisation programmes to lower instances of vaccine preventable disease and protect the health of the population. Ireland also commends the work of the WHO in advancing vaccination as a key tool in the global health space, in line with SDG Target 3.b to “support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines”

We have welcomed the European Immunisation Agenda 2030 (EIA 2030) as an important initiative for driving improved vaccine uptake and to address inequalities in vaccination coverage where they exist.

Like other countries, there has been a downward trend in vaccine uptake rates across immunisation programmes in Ireland over recent years. Ireland is actively involved with the promotion of the World and European Immunisation Week each year and in recent years has put in place vaccination catch up campaigns to

encourage parents to bring their children for immunisations if they missed out during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response, Ireland continues to explore new initiatives to reverse that trend.

In line with the objectives outlined in EIA 2030, and ‘the Big Catch up’ initiative, I would like to briefly mention two vaccination catch up opportunities offered in Ireland.

Ireland is committed to women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights. Ireland has experienced the effects of vaccine misinformation, following a confidence crisis with the HPV vaccine a number of years ago. Fortunately, the uptake rates have recovered since that time but we are mindful of the impact of misinformation. In 2022, we launched the Laura Brennan HPV Catch-up Vaccination Programme in honour of the late Laura Brennan who was a tireless campaigner for HPV vaccination. It is providing another opportunity to individuals who missed out on the vaccine in 2016 and 2017. It is the combination of HPV vaccine uptake as well as screening and treatment services, that has put Ireland on track to eliminating cervical cancer by 2040.

The second initiative is an MMR catch-up programme. MMR uptake in Ireland is currently suboptimal and, nationally, uptake has declined below the 95% target recommended by the WHO. With the recent rise in measles cases in the UK and Europe, we have taken measures to maximise vaccine uptake.

It is through initiatives like this as well as continuing to increase uptake rates across all vaccination programmes, particularly the primary childhood programme, that Ireland will reduce the prevalence and impact of vaccine preventable diseases.

Ireland remains committed to the objective of maximising vaccine uptake rates and thereby providing the best protection from vaccine preventable diseases for our population.

ENDS