

## **STATEMENT**

**Prof. Franz X. Heinz**

### **Fighting TBE – an Austrian Story of Success**

Austria is the country with the highest TBE vaccination rate in Europe. According to representative surveys, 88 percent of Austrians have had at least one TBE vaccination, and 58 percent are within the officially recommended vaccination schedule. This is in sharp contrast to the low vaccination rates in Austria's neighboring countries with a similarly high risk of infection, ranging from 24 percent in Germany, 17 percent in Switzerland, and 16 percent in the Czech Republic.

In a recently published study we showed that, compared with vaccinations for other diseases, TBE vaccination has a very high protective effectiveness of about 99 percent. As a result, the annual numbers of new TBE infections in Austria have dropped to about 10 percent of the levels registered in the pre-vaccination era - even though Austria's neighboring countries have witnessed a dramatic increase in TBE infections. Between 2000 and 2006, at least 2,800 TBE cases in Austria – about 20 of them lethal – were prevented by vaccination. Unfortunately, the high vaccination coverage has no effect on the circulation of the TBE virus in nature, because humans are only accidental hosts and the virus does not depend on humans for survival.