

STATEMENT

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Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is a preventable disease, which is rapidly becoming a growing public health problem in Europe and other parts of the world. So far no causal treatment is known but a very efficient and well-tolerated vaccination is available for protection against the disease.

At least 10,000 cases of TBE are referred to hospitals each year, yet the incidence of TBE is so far not fully recognized. The reason for this is that TBE produces clinical features similar to those of many other types of meningitis and/or encephalitis.

Until recently TBE was believed to be a rather limited problem in a few well-defined endemic areas; however, this notion has now been revised. In addition, the increasing mobility of people exacerbates the risk of infection.

In order to provide an effective contribution to public health in general and, in specific, to encourage the control of TBE, an international effort has now been launched, with the aim to alleviate this situation. As a first step towards this objective, renowned international experts on TBE have created a new body:

The International Scientific Working Group (ISW-TBE) is comprised of internationally recognized scientific experts from endemic countries with extensive personal expertise in the field of TBE and a high level of commitment to improving the regional knowledge of and response to the issue TBE.

"TBE is endemic in regions of 27 European countries and we are discovering new risk areas every year. Vaccination is recommended to everyone living in or travelling to areas where it is endemic, children as well as adults."

The main aims of the ISW-TBE are:

- To promote national and international collaboration on TBE: scientific, medical and regulatory
- To stimulate and co-ordinate applied and basic research on TBE
- To contribute to training and educational programmes in the field
- To provide high-quality information on TBE and promote appropriate distribution
- To promote and align international standards on epidemiological TBE surveillance
- To define and promote proposals to harmonize national and international policies on TBE prevention
- Through the above activities to gain recognition as an independent advisory committee to national and international health authorities as well as to scientific and medical professions

For more than ten years, the ISW-TBE has been actively involved in the fight against the life-threatening disease tick-borne encephalitis. On the occasion of its tenth anniversary the ISW-TBE has now issued a Celebration Brochure covering the major activities and achievements of the ISW-TBE (annual meetings, press workshops, publications, information brochures, websites) over the last more than 10 years.