

## **„A gift for Europe“ – Europe’s Battle against TBE („Tick-Borne-Encephalitis“)**

**Immunization rate important!** „In the battle against TBE, Austria has shown, what a successful public campaign followed by an immunization rate up to 90% is able to deliver,“ explains Prof. Michael Kunze, Head of the Institute for Social Medicine, Medical University Vienna the key issue of tick transmitted TBE. „Since the development of the vaccine by Austrian Professor Kunz, the incidence of TBE in Austria decreased by 90%.

Austria therefore can be used as showcase for the successful fight against TBE”.

In contrary the development of the disease with 10.000 new cases in Europe is quite dramatic. While the incidence decreased in Austria due to vaccination from 700 to 100 cases a year, the number rose by 400% in 11 European countries.

But not only the infection rates rise, but also more people travel through endemic regions.

“Despite increasing tourism in Europe, the public is still not informed sufficiently and inhabitants from non-endemic regions are not aware of the danger by travelling to endemic parts of Europe.” Prof. Kunze summarises. This shows the importance of TBE also in travel-medicine.

### **Why is Austria so successful in fighting TBE?**

The answer is easy, it is teamwork. When it was discovered 30 years ago, that TBE is not only a disease of lumbermen, but also a “leisure-time-disease”, that can affect nearly everybody, an Austrian wide vaccination campaign was launched.

Thanks to an exemplary common action of the Austrian Doctors’ and Pharmacists’ chamber, the ministry of health and the vaccine manufacturer Baxter, the TBE-vaccination gets financially supported since 25 years. It is therefore 30% cheaper for the customer.

This cost support is an essential factor, which can be proven at the Czech Republic example, where there is no financial support and only high risk groups can get vaccination for free; the incidence of TBE is growing steadily!

Further on a broad information campaign was launched, which is still on air. The campaign informs doctors as well as pharmacists and the public about the danger of ticks and TBE as a disease.

Due to this campaign the vaccination rate in endemic areas in Austria is around 90%.

In Germany the rate is between 11-20% in dangerous areas, everywhere else between 6 and 10%! In 2005, 433 people were registered with TBE, which is the highest incidence since the start of disease registration.

But not only incidence increases, also the numbers of high risk areas get more and more. From 63 areas in Germany in 1993 the number raised up to 97 areas in 2006.

### **TBE symptoms and protection still not known sufficiently.**

Once infected, the patient can only be treated in terms of symptoms. There is no chance to prevent the outbreak of the disease.

Symptoms are flu-like at the beginning, but the infection can cause Meningitis, Encephalitis or Myelitis, which can cause death or result in long term neurologic damages like Ataxie, Cognitive Disfunctions, Dysphasia, Delusions or Tremor.

### **Experts want vaccination- and travel recommendations for TBE.**

A true recession of the problem can only be achieved through common European activity.

Therefore the international TBE-working group has developed a catalogue of requirements, which engages the responsible officials of the single countries to improve the awareness for TBE as a great health-political challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **New: International TBE – patient platform in 16! languages.**

Under [www.tick-victims.info](http://www.tick-victims.info) patients find from now on valuable information on TBE as a disease and the prevention in 16 European languages.  
This pan-European network is a platform for tick-victims and provides support and service.

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