



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Action Plan against antimicrobial resistance: Commission unveils 12 concrete actions for the next five years

Brussels, 17 November 2011 – With about 25,000 patients dying per year in the EU from infections caused by drug resistant bacteria and related costs of over 1.5 billion euros in healthcare expenses and productivity losses¹, antimicrobial resistance is a growing health problem in the EU. Today, on the eve of European Antibiotic Awareness Day, the European Commission has tabled a comprehensive Action Plan on Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) which unveils 12 concrete actions to be implemented in close cooperation with the Member States.

European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, John Dalli said: *"We need to take swift and determined action if we do not want to lose antimicrobial medicines as essential treatment against bacterial infections in both humans and animals. The twelve concrete actions for the next five years, that we present today, could help limit the spread of anti-microbial resistance and help develop new anti-microbial treatment. Their success requires joined efforts from the EU, the Member States, healthcare professionals, industry, farmers and many others"*.

European Commissioner for Research and Innovation, Máire Geoghegan Quinn, added: *"Finding the next generation of antibiotics is crucial if we are to stay ahead of the curve in the face of bacteria and other pathogens which are resistant to drugs. Investment in research and innovation will mean the best possible care for patients, and the Commission is working with industry and EU Member States to make this a priority. This commitment will continue under Horizon 2020, our future funding programme for research and innovation"*.

Increasing resistance

EU-wide data published today by the **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control** (ECDC) on antibiotic resistance shows that resistance to last-line antibiotics is increasing in Europe. For example, resistance to pathogens which frequently cause pneumonia and urinary tract infections in hospitals is increasing across the EU and is now established in several countries.

¹ ECDC/EMA Joint Technical Report "The bacterial challenge: time to react". Estimates based on bacteria most frequently isolated from blood cultures in Europe (http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Report/2009/11/WC500008770.pdf)

Key actions

The Action Plan covers seven areas, where measures are most necessary:

- Making sure antimicrobials are used appropriately both in humans and animals
- Preventing microbial infections and their spread
- Developing new effective antimicrobials or alternatives for treatment
- Cooperating with international partners to contain the risks of AMR
- Improving monitoring and surveillance in human and animal medicine
- Research and Innovation
- Communication, Education and Training

The proposal also sets out 12 concrete actions to:

- Improve awareness raising on the appropriate use of antimicrobials
- Strengthen EU law on veterinary medicines and on medicated feed
- Introduce recommendations for prudent use of antimicrobials in veterinary medicine, including follow-up reports
- Strengthen infection prevention and control in hospitals, clinics, etc.
- Introduce legal tools to tighten prevention and control of infections in animals in the new EU Animal Health Law
- Promote unprecedented collaboration to bring new antimicrobials to patients
- Promote efforts to analyse the need for new antibiotics in veterinary medicine
- Develop and/or strengthen multilateral and bilateral commitments for the prevention and control of AMR
- Strengthen surveillance systems on AMR and antimicrobial consumption in human medicines
- Strengthen surveillance systems on AMR and antimicrobial consumption in animal medicines
- Reinforce and co-ordinate research
- Improve communication on AMR to the public.

Background

Antimicrobials comprise **antibiotics**, which are essential medicines for humans and animals, and can also be used as **disinfectants, antiseptics and other hygiene products**. They have substantially decreased the threat of infectious diseases. Antibiotics are an indispensable tool in medicine and are used in common procedures such as transplantation and chemotherapy.

However, over the years bacteria have become resistant to antibiotics. This resistance has manifested itself in hospital-acquired infections, respiratory tract infections, meningitis, diarrhoeal diseases and sexually transmitted infections. Resistant bacteria can be transferred from animals to humans via the food chain or through direct contact.

Since the 1990s, when AMR was recognised as a serious threat to public health, the Commission has launched various initiatives and actions across sectors, i.e. human and veterinary medicine, food and feed and scientific research. The Action Plan announced today is the latest in a series of measures taken by the Commission to tackle AMR.

For more information please visit:

[MEMO/11/792](#)

http://ec.europa.eu/health/antimicrobial_resistance/policy/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/research/health/infectious-diseases/antimicrobial-drug-resistance/index_en.html

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/amr.htm>

<http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/Pages/home.aspx>

Commissioner Dalli's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/dalli/index_en.htm

Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/geoghegan-quinn/index_en.htm

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