



HEALTH POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Insights on the challenges facing the health policy agenda

Taking action on AMR – an EU and global overview



THE AMR CHALLENGE

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) represents a serious threat to public health worldwide. It compromises our ability to treat infectious diseases and puts people everywhere at risk.

AMR is already responsible for an estimated **25,000 deaths per year in the EU**. Current worldwide mortality from AMR is estimated at **700,000 deaths per year**.

AMR also carries a heavy economic cost, with higher costs of treatments and economic losses due to reduced productivity caused by sickness. In the EU alone it is estimated that AMR annually costs **EUR 1.5 billion in healthcare costs and productivity losses**.

Further background information regarding AMR is available in the EU factsheet on AMR: [A major European and Global challenge](#).



THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION STEPS UP THE FIGHT WITH NEW ACTION PLAN

On 29 June 2017, the European Commission adopted a new Action Plan to tackle AMR.

The [Action Plan](#) is underpinned by a [One Health approach](#) that addresses resistance in both humans and animals. In parallel, the European Commission adopted the first deliverable of the plan: [EU Guidelines](#) on the prudent use of antimicrobials in human health.



“Antimicrobial Resistance is a global growing threat, and if we do not step up our action and commitment now, by 2050 it could cause more deaths than cancer.”

Vytienis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

The plan includes guidelines to promote the prudent use of antimicrobials in people. The guidelines target all actors – doctors, nurses, pharmacists, hospital administrators and others – who play a role in antimicrobial use. They complement infection prevention and control guidelines which may exist at national level.

In addition, the plan foresees more than 75 actions built on three main pillars:

- **Pillar 1: Making the EU a best-practice region**

Making the EU a best-practice region will require better evidence, better coordination and surveillance, as well as better control measures.

- **Pillar 2: Boosting research, development and innovation**

Actions under this pillar aim to boost research and further incentivise innovation, provide valuable input for science-based policies and legal measures to combat AMR and address knowledge gaps such as the role of AMR in the environment.

Funding and partnership programmes will focus on improving knowledge on effective infection control and surveillance including new diagnostics, and developing new therapeutics and preventive vaccines. Actions within these priority areas will help to improve public health and deliver economic and societal benefits throughout Europe and beyond.

- **Pillar 3: Shaping the global agenda**

The EU will work towards reinforcing engagement and collaboration with multilateral organisations, and intensifying cooperation with the most affected developing countries.

The new action plan builds on the first AMR Action Plan which ran from 2011 to 2016. The new plan draws on the recommendations of an independent [external evaluation](#) and views of stakeholders gathered through a [public consultation](#) that took place earlier this year.

ACTION AT A GLOBAL LEVEL

The EU is not alone in recognising the threat of AMR and is addressing this issue at the highest political level. Many countries outside of the EU, as well as international organisations, are tackling this issue. International cooperation is a key element of the AMR action plan.

At a global level, the European Commission works closely with the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#). The EU actively contributed to the development of the [Global Action Plan](#) on AMR by the WHO and is now engaged in the process of rolling it out.

World Antibiotic Awareness Week, 13-19 November 2017

[World Antibiotic Awareness Week](#), organised by the WHO, aims to increase awareness of this important issue and to encourage best practices among the public, health workers, farmers, food producers, veterinarians and policymakers to avoid the further emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance.

The Davos Declaration 2016

The [Davos Declaration](#) signed by companies and trade associations in January 2016, called for collective action to create a sustainable and predictable market for antibiotics, vaccines and diagnostics, that encourages appropriate use for new and existing treatments.

In the Declaration, signatory companies call on governments to work with them to develop new and alternative market structures that provide more dependable and sustainable market models for antibiotics, and to commit the funds needed to implement them.

The Declaration also sets out a commitment to further action on drug resistance by: reducing the development of drug resistance, increasing investment in R&D that meets global public health needs and improving access to high-quality antibiotics for all.

Later that year, a number of pharmaceutical companies at the UN High-Level Meeting adopted an [Industry Roadmap](#) on Combating AMR.

New Industry Alliance on AMR

In May 2017, the [AMR Industry Alliance](#) was launched. It brings together research-based pharmaceutical companies, generics, biotech and diagnostic companies, to drive and measure industry progress to curb AMR.

The Review on AMR

The [Review on AMR](#), was commissioned in July 2014 by the UK Prime Minister, who asked economist Jim O'Neill to analyse the global problem of rising drug resistance and propose concrete actions to tackle it internationally. The Review on AMR was jointly supported by the UK Government and Wellcome Trust, although operated with full independence from both. Established as a two-year, time-limited process, the Review engaged widely with international stakeholders to understand and propose solutions to the problem of drug-resistant infections from an economic and social perspective, and produced its final report and recommendations in the summer of 2016.

The report on AMR outlines the Review's final recommendations. It first discusses the mounting problem of resistance and why action is needed to combat it and then provides an overview of the solutions that the Review thinks should be implemented to curtail unnecessary use and increase the supply of new antimicrobials. It then looks at the role of public awareness campaigns, the need to improve sanitation and hygiene, reduce pollution from agriculture and the environment, improve global surveillance, introduce rapid diagnostics and vaccines, the need to increase the number of people in this area, and use of market entry rewards and an innovation fund to generate more drugs. Finally, the paper examines how these solutions can be funded and looks at ways to build political consensus around them.

NEXT STEPS

Resistant bacteria and infectious diseases do not respect borders. No country can tackle the problem on its own. Given that inaction is projected to cause yearly millions of deaths globally and by 2050 AMR has the potential to become a more common cause of death than cancer, it's clearly in the hands of Global and European policymakers to ensure that actions are properly implemented. Moreover, a truly collaborative effort between all various stakeholders from governments, global organisations, scientific societies, patients to industry across both human and veterinary health is needed.

To watch out for:

The latest [WHO newsletter](#) on the Implementation of the Global Action Plan on AMR makes reference to a public, online consultation which will run until the end of September 2017. This will build upon the meeting of 8-9 June 2017, which gathered a group of technical experts from around the world at WHO Headquarters to discuss indicators for monitoring and evaluating country and global efforts to tackle AMR, as part of the Global Action Plan on AMR. The primary purpose of the meeting was to identify a set of indicators that can be used to track and communicate progress at country and global levels.

On 4 September 2017, a [European Parliament workshop](#) on 'An urgent strong antimicrobial action plan' will be held.



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Health Policy Perspectives has been initiated by Anna Dé and Neha Dave, independent health policy consultants in London and Brussels, to provide overviews / updates on various Global and European health policy related topics.

Watch this space for forthcoming articles!

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