

Veterinary drug residues: compliance still high

Data on the presence of residues of veterinary medicines and contaminants in animals and animal-derived food show high rates of compliance with safety levels set by the European Union, according to EFSA's latest report. The report summarises monitoring data collected in 2019.

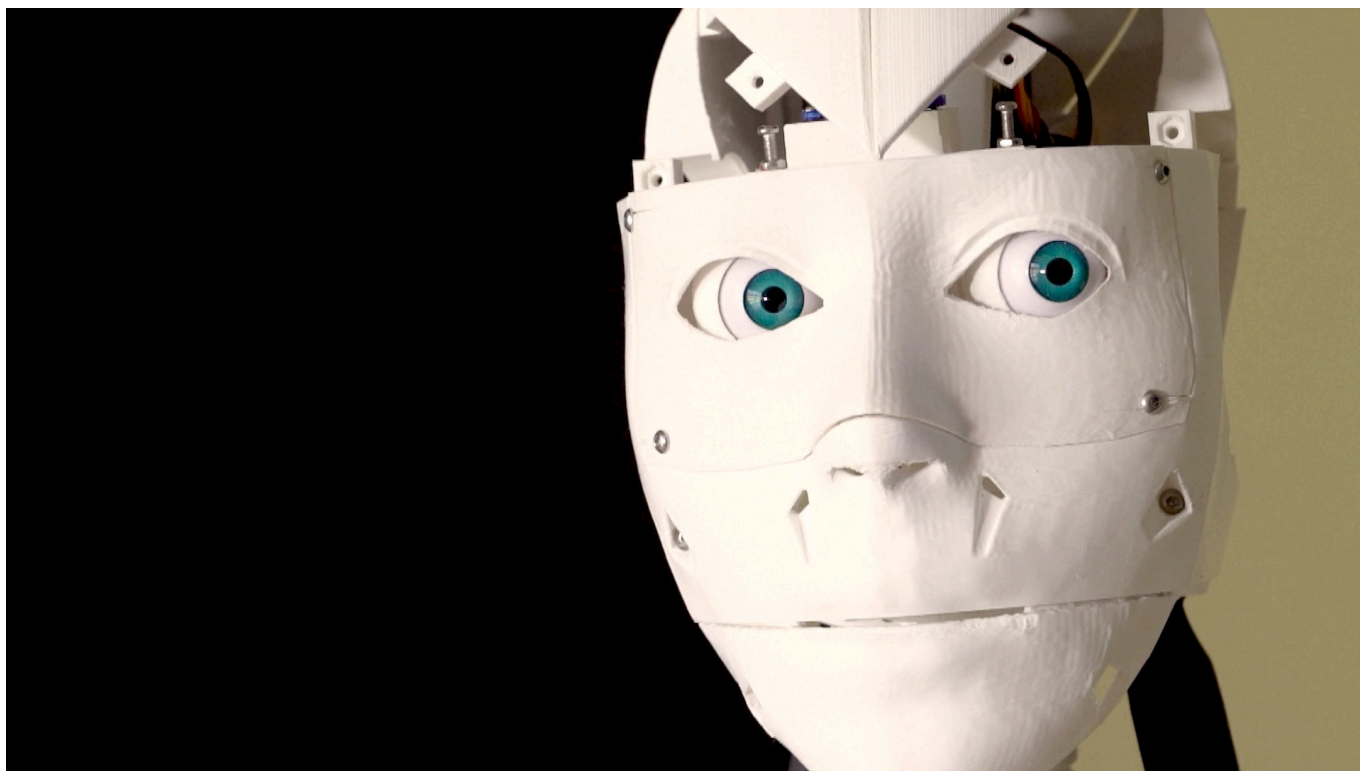
A total of 671,642 samples were reported by Member States, Iceland and Norway. The percentage of samples that exceeded maximum levels was 0.32%. This figure is within the range of 0.25%-0.37% reported over the previous 10 years.

Compared to the previous two years, non-compliance increased slightly for antithyroid agents and steroids and decreased slightly for resorcylic acid lactones, prohibited substances, antibacterials, anticoccidials, and dyes.

For chemical elements (including metals), non-compliance was higher than in 2018, but lower than 2017.

[The data are available on Knowledge Junction](#), EFSA's curated, open repository, which was set up to improve transparency, reproducibility and reusability of evidence in food and feed safety risk assessments.

Article – Dual-use goods: what are they and why are new rules needed?



What are dual-use goods?

Dual-use products are goods designed for civilian use that in the wrong hands could be used to suppress human rights or launch terrorist attacks. They can be anything from drones to chemicals.

Although these goods can improve people's lives, they can be misused. Authoritarian regimes might use them to keep the population under control, while terrorist groups could use them to stage attacks.

Why are new rules needed?

To prevent dual-use goods being repurposed in ways that violate human rights, the EU wants to make sure strict export rules prevent them being sold to people or organisations wanting to misuse them.

The EU is currently working on an update of the existing rules to take into account recent technological developments, including new cyber surveillance tools, and beef up protection of human rights.

What is the next step?

The Council and the Parliament have [provisionally agreed on the new rules](#), but both need to officially approve them before they can enter into force.

MEPs will debate the new rules and vote on them on Thursday 25 March.

Read more about [how the EU's trade policy helps to promote human rights](#)

Motorised transport: train, plane, road or boat – which is greenest?

Traveling by plane, train or automobile: the most environmentally sound choice may not always be clear. The latest annual [Transport and Environment Report 2020 \(TERM\)](#) addresses the issue assessing the value of travel by train and plane, amid efforts to put in place the European Union's green deal. The European Green Deal includes the objective of reducing greenhouse gas emission from transport by 90% by 2050 compared with 1990. Shifting to more sustainable transport can make an important contribution to reaching this objective. For passenger transport, a shift from air to rail travel can play a key role, the report says.

Environmental impact of trains and planes

Transport accounted for 25 % of EU greenhouse gas emissions in 2018. This sector's emissions come primarily from road transport (72 %), while marine transport and aviation represent shares of 14 % and 13% of emissions, respectively, and rail a share of 0.4% (emissions by diesel trains only). Apart from their direct contribution to global warming and air pollution, emissions that take place during the production, transmission and distribution of energy used by trains and aircraft are also considered. Transport also causes non-exhaust emissions of air pollutants, for example from the abrasion of brakes, wheels and tyres or railway tracks.

Train or plane?

The report specifically looks into the impacts of rail and air travel, both of which are a big part of Europe's passenger transport sector. The assessment concludes that rail travel is the best and most sensible mode of travel, apart from walking or cycling. Aviation's emission impacts are much higher on a passenger-kilometre basis. But the report notes that flying is not necessarily the most harmful choice. Travel by a petrol or diesel-powered car, especially if traveling alone, can be more harmful.

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The report notes however, that over longer distances, the environmental costs of travelling by air increase less because the environmental costs of landing and take-off do not change with distance on a direct flight. The assessment is based on a comparison of travel between 20 city pairs across Europe.

A separate [EEA briefing](#), based on a study commissioned by the EEA also published today, says both rail and shipping are the least carbon-intensive choices for motorised transport. Rail and waterborne transport have the lowest emissions per kilometre and unit transported, while aviation and road transport emit significantly more.

While the efficiency of rail and aviation improved markedly during the 5-year period covered by the study, the efficiency of other modes appears to have stagnated. Shifting to rail and waterborne transport should be encouraged while at the same time improving the greenhouse gas efficiency of all motorised forms of transport, the briefing says.

[Invitation letter by President Charles Michel to the members of the European Council ahead of their video conference of 25 and 26 March 2021](#)



Given recent developments with regard to the epidemiological situation in Member States, we will hold our meeting by video conference on Thursday and Friday.

Following extensive consultations with all of you, we will discuss COVID, international relations, as well as our economic and digital agenda.

I am also delighted that we will be able to virtually welcome President Biden on Thursday evening, who will share his views on our future cooperation.

On COVID, our top priority is to speed up vaccination campaigns across the EU. To this end, the ongoing work to boost vaccine production, increase vaccine deliveries and ensure more transparency and predictability of supplies should be intensified. In addition, we will address COVID certificates and the international dimension.

On international matters, we want to defend our interests, uphold our values and actively contribute to shaping the global future. Our unity is a precondition to asserting our influence. As regards Russia, I propose to have an information point and will share with you the outcome of my latest contacts with President Putin in advance of a more strategic debate on the matter at our next physical European Council meeting.

In relation to the Eastern Mediterranean, we will consider, with a view to

our meeting in June, stepping up our engagement with Turkey in a phased, conditional and reversible manner.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the case for our digital transition even stronger, and the need for a resilient European industry more acute. It has also shown us, once again, how crucial the Single Market is to our economies. We will further develop our approach on these issues following our discussions last autumn. On digital we want to strengthen our ambition. We aim to strike the right balance between building our digital sovereignty and maintaining an open economy, while ensuring that nobody is left behind.

As to the practical proceedings, our videoconference will start at 1 p.m. on Thursday with the traditional exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament. After a report by Prime Minister Costa on the work in the Council, we will address COVID-19 and relations with Russia and Turkey.

On Friday, we will start our video-conference at 9:30 a.m. and discuss the economic and digital agenda. For the subsequent VTC in inclusive Euro Summit format, we will be joined by the Presidents of the ECB and of the Eurogroup to discuss the international role of the euro. I look forward to seeing you all.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

[Press release – Wirecard: MEPs call for new audit rules, protection for whistle-blowers and EU supervision](#)



MEPs quizzed Dan McCrum, Financial Times investigative journalist, Katja Langenbucher, Professor at Goethe University Frankfurt, Daniela Bergdolt, spokesperson for the Deutsche Schutzvereinigung für Wertpapierbesitz e.V. (DWS) and Matthias Hauer, member of the Deutsche Bundestag (MdB) and member of the Committee of Inquiry on Wirecard.

The Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) committee members focused their questions on changes that need to be made to the supervisory and regulatory systems to address innovation and technological changes in the financial sector. They underlined that audit rules have to be revised in order to break the monopoly created by the four major companies, address conflicts of interest, shorten the rotation period for an audit company and introduce co-auditing. Numerous members called for EU supervision to be enforced more effectively and better implementation of the existing laws, in particular those on anti-money laundering and banking supervision.

The Legal Affairs (JURI) committee members addressed the need for a quality system that would allow information on EU companies to be collected, focusing on those with new business models. They stressed that smaller shareholders should be able to initiate joint legal action and asked about collective redress rules at EU level and how companies such as audit firms can be held directly liable for gross negligence. MEPs stressed that the whistle-blower directive is being implemented at national level, but they wanted to know whether it should be advanced, and whether the level of protection provided for in the directive goes far enough.

MEPs from both committees asked numerous questions about provisions that allow shareholders, supervisors and journalists to access information. Referring to the harassment endured by Mr McCrum, MEPs reiterated their commitment to protect journalists and to provide them with the tools to do their job.

Dan McCrum focused on a series of grave errors made by auditors who gave Wirecard a clean bill of health, regulators who ignored whistle-blowers, investment banks that helped Wirecard to raise capital, and finally investors who did not understand or care about a business in which they were investing. Ms Langenbucher underlined major weaknesses in the oversight system, such as lack of enforcement and accountability as well as national bias. She stressed that national supervisory agencies should be kept, but that they should report to one EU hub. Ms Bergdolt spoke for smaller shareholders who suffered damages. They should be able to take collective action and organisations should be held accountable, she said. Finally, Mr Hauer focused on steps to be taken in order to make auditing companies more competitive, the need for increased liability for gross negligence, a new organisational structure for financial supervisors with more protection for consumers and a stronger role for whistle-blowers.

Background

Wirecard AG is a German FinTech company that provided electronic payments processing services and operated internationally. On 25 June 2020, Wirecard filed an application to open insolvency proceedings. The insolvency follows

the revelation of a multiyear accounting fraud. The Financial Times (FT) has reported inconsistencies in Wirecard accounting since 2015, and whistleblower allegations of fraud followed in 2019. In June 2020, the company announced that EUR 1.9 billion, supposedly held by an escrow account at Singapore's OCBC Bank, did not exist and the fraud was exposed.