

European Antibiotic Awareness Day 2018: we must join our forces to stop the unnecessary use of antibiotics

The study shows that there has been a positive evolution in the use of antibiotics: 32% of people said they had taken antibiotics in the last twelve months, compared to 40% in the 2009 survey. However, many of these antibiotics were taken unnecessarily: 20% of antibiotics were taken for flu or a cold and 7% took them without a medical prescription. 66% of the respondents know that antibiotics are of no use against colds, and 43% are aware that antibiotics are ineffective against viruses. Over two thirds of people would like to have more information about antibiotics.

In reaction to these figures, and on the occasion of the **European Antibiotic Awareness Day** Commissioner Vytenis **Andriukaitis** said: *“This Eurobarometer shows that more effort is needed to raise awareness and knowledge on antimicrobials among fellow citizens. Moreover, the latest estimates of 33 000 deaths per year in Europe due to antimicrobial resistance must serve as a wake-up call to us all. Most of these deaths are avoidable by stopping the unnecessary use of antibiotics and through better diagnosis and prevention of infections in hospitals and communities. I call on everyone who has influence in the prevention and treatment of infection to redouble their efforts to combat the threat from antimicrobial resistance. On top of raising awareness and improving knowledge, we must join forces and tackle antimicrobial resistance from the animal health and environmental perspectives, as well as the human health angle. In a few days, the Council will give its green light for a new European legislation on veterinary medicines and medicated feed, a major breakthrough in this field.”*

The results of the Eurobarometer and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control ([ECDC](#)) report will be presented today in Brussels at the **European Antibiotic Awareness Day 2018 conference**: [“One Health to Keep Antibiotics working”](#).

Over the last 15 years, the EU has stood at the forefront of addressing antimicrobial resistance. Last year, a new and comprehensive [EU action plan](#) on antimicrobial resistance was adopted, setting the Commission’s objectives to tackle it in human health, animal health and environment policies.

An important milestone will be the forthcoming European legislation on veterinary medicines and medicated feed, which lays down a wide range of concrete measures to fight antimicrobial resistance and to promote the prudent and responsible use of antimicrobials. As of 2022 in the EU, the use of antimicrobials for growth promotion in animals will be prohibited, as well as the preventive use of antimicrobials via medicated feed and in groups of animals. There will also be restrictions on metaphylactic use of antimicrobials, and the possibility to reserve certain antimicrobials for human use only. In addition, for their exports into the EU, non-EU countries

will have to respect the ban on antimicrobials for growth promotion, as well as the restrictions on antimicrobials reserved for human use. The new EU regulations will thereby improve the protection of European consumers against the risk of spread of antimicrobial resistance through imports of animals or of products of animal origin.

Given that antimicrobial resistance is a serious challenge on both the EU and global level, international collaboration is of utmost importance. The EU continues to support collaboration and strengthen guidance on antimicrobial resistance in relevant international organisations (such as [WHO](#), [OIE](#), [FAO](#)), as well as continuing to take an active and leading role in the work of the [G20](#).

Background

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the resistance of a microorganism to an antimicrobial medicine to which it was originally sensitive. AMR occurs naturally but the phenomenon is hugely increased by excessive and inappropriate use of antimicrobial medicines and poor infection control and hygiene practices in humans and animals. A study of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the 'AMR Collaborative Group', recently published in the Lancet, estimated that infections with antibiotic-resistant bacteria would have caused 33 000 deaths in 2015 in Europe.

Fighting AMR does not only lead to better health, it also has major economic benefit. The OECD's report published earlier this month (with the support of the Commission and ECDC), estimates that by stepping up our efforts to fight AMR, we can save up to 4.8 billion dollars a year in Europe, North America and Australia.

The European Antibiotic Awareness Day is a European health initiative coordinated by the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC), in partnership with the European Commission, which aims to provide a platform and support for national campaigns on the fight against AMR and more particularly on the prudent use of antibiotics.

For further information

[Special Eurobarometer 478 on AMR](#)

EU policy on AMR: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_food-safety/amr/index_en.htm

Awareness-raising: <https://antibiotic.ecdc.europa.eu/en>