

Statement ahead of World Tuberculosis Day by Commissioners Andriukaitis, Moedas, Thyssen and Mimica

On the eve of World Tuberculosis Day, we underline our commitment to ending the tuberculosis epidemic by 2030. We call on governments all over the world to redouble their efforts and make this happen.

Globally, tuberculosis remains the single most deadly infectious disease. In 2016, there were over 10 million new tuberculosis cases and 1.7 million deaths worldwide. The European Union fully supports the international effort to address this, including the commitment made in Riga in March 2015 to fully eradicate tuberculosis by 2050; the 2017 “Berlin declaration”; and the 2017 “Moscow declaration to end Tuberculosis”. Building on the work of the United Nations and the World Health Organisation, in summer through a policy paper the Commission will address ways to eliminate tuberculosis, as well as HIV/AIDS, and significantly reduce viral hepatitis, in line with the objectives set out in the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). In September this year, the EU will be represented at the United Nations General Assembly which will convene for the first time, specifically to discuss tuberculosis. This is a crucial opportunity for health ministers to stand together and reaffirm our commitment to eradicating tuberculosis forever. The EU is also financially supporting the international effort. For the period 2017-2019, we provided €475 million to the [Global Fund against Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#), to support the most vulnerable people, including those living with tuberculosis and HIV, and those who do not have sufficient access to quality services. Thanks to our support, more than 53 million lives were saved between 2000 and 2016.

We are also working to address antimicrobial resistance, which is inextricably linked to tuberculosis. In 2016, 600 000 of new cases of tuberculosis were also multi drug-resistant (MDR-TB), underlining the extent of the global antimicrobial resistance (AMR) [\[1\]](#) crisis. Unless we take decisive action now, by 2050, antimicrobial resistance could cause 10 million deaths per year, up to a quarter of which could be caused multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis [\[2\]](#). It is precisely to eliminate the possibility of this unthinkable future, that the Commission adopted an [EU Action Plan against antimicrobial resistance](#) last June, which includes infection prevention and control measures within vulnerable groups, to tackle resistant tuberculosis strains. To make matters worse, there is also still no effective vaccine for tuberculosis. Treatment is complicated, and where available, it can be very toxic. This is why we are investing in research to find better diagnostic tools, more effective treatments and safe and effective vaccines. The EU is currently investing over €100 million in the development of new vaccines and new drug regimens.

But this is far from enough. Tuberculosis is also frequently associated with poverty and poor living conditions. This is why we must pay particular

attention to addressing the social conditions that encourage the disease to spread. This is not just a question of financing. We strongly urge leaders in Europe to ensure access to preventative and good quality curative healthcare for everyone, in line with the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) and the values Europe stands for.

There is a light at the end of the tunnel. The number of cases is actually decreasing in most parts of the world. The overall number of new cases within the EU continues to decline by 5-6% each year and globally by 1.5% per year. While small, these figures bode well for the future. They show that with political will, determination and sufficient funding, we can save lives. Together we can #EndTB.

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For more information

<https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/tuberculosis>

[\[1\] Global Tuberculosis Report 2017, World Health Organization](#)

[\[2\] "Tackling a crisis for the health and wealth of nations", Review on AMR, December 2014](#)