



# European Health Union EU Action against Antimicrobial Resistance

***Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) occurs when microbes evolve over time, rendering them resistant to the drugs intended to eliminate them. This makes infections increasingly difficult to treat.***

***Antimicrobial resistance is among the top three health threats in the EU today, and within a generation could be responsible for 10 million deaths a year worldwide.***

## ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE. THE CHALLENGE

- Antimicrobial resistance causes **more than 35,000 deaths every year** in the EU/EEA.<sup>1</sup>
- Antimicrobial resistance contributes to complications that **cost EU/EEA health systems €1.5BN annually**.<sup>2</sup>
- Each year, **4.3 million patients in hospitals** in the EU/EEA acquire at least one healthcare-associated infection during their stay in the hospital.<sup>3</sup>
- Only half of EU citizens are aware that antibiotics are **ineffective against viruses**, such as winter colds and flu.<sup>4</sup>
- Misuse of antibiotics in **agriculture and aquaculture** can lead to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which can affect humans via the food chain and direct and indirect contact with animals.

## ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE. THE SOLUTIONS

Antimicrobial resistance is a problem that warrants a **One Health Approach**: the principle that human, animal and environmental health are intrinsically linked. An effective One Health approach requires cooperation and collaboration between relevant sectors and disciplines, such as agriculture, environment, human and veterinary medicine, all working together.

Over the past 20 years, the EU Commission has put forward **several successful initiatives** in response to antimicrobial resistance and in June 2023 **new Council Recommendations**<sup>5</sup> were adopted to step up actions. **Its primary goals include:**

- To reduce **human antibiotic consumption by 20%** by 2030.
- To ensure that 65% of antibiotic consumption comes from the **WHO Access Group**, which has a lower potential for antimicrobial resistance (AMR) development.
- To **decrease bloodstream infections** caused by 3 key antibiotic-resistant bacteria.
- **Incentives for manufacturers** to develop new antimicrobials and improve patient access to these new drugs.

<sup>1</sup> [https://health.ec.europa.eu/antimicrobial-resistance/eu-action-antimicrobial-resistance\\_en](https://health.ec.europa.eu/antimicrobial-resistance/eu-action-antimicrobial-resistance_en)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/human-regulatory-overview/public-health-threats/antimicrobial-resistance>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/each-year-43-million-patients-hospitals-eueea-are-affected-healthcare-associated>

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_6951](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_6951)

<sup>5</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023H0622\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023H0622(01))

- To **enhance surveillance** and monitoring of antibiotic use.
- To **halve EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals** and in aquaculture by 2030.
- To **strengthen regulations on veterinary medicinal products** and medicated feed.
- To **strengthen EU rules for wastewater treatment** and waste management, in order to prevent antibiotic residue contamination in soil and water.
- Communication and information campaigns, to **raise awareness** amongst the general public of the role we all play in tackling antimicrobial resistance.
- Build **International partnerships** to improve the global fight against antimicrobial resistance.

Millions of euros in **EU funding have been** made available to EU Member States to implement measures agreed to in the Recommendations. These cover research and technological innovation aimed at curbing antimicrobial resistance.

## ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE. WHERE WE ARE NOW

- Antimicrobial resistance is a multi-faceted health threat that **does not stop at borders**. Cooperation between countries at a global level is key to finding solutions.
- Antimicrobial resistance is at the **centre of the EU Global Health Strategy**. It is also high on the



agenda for global authorities such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

- The **total consumption of antibiotics in humans**, both in EU community and hospital sectors, decreased by 2.5% from 2019 to 2022, showing slow progress towards the 20% reduction target.<sup>6</sup>
- Currently, **only nine EU Member States** have met or exceeded the target of 65% 'Access Group' antibiotic consumption, with the EU's overall rate at 59.8%.
- **Empowering young people** with a true understanding of antimicrobial resistance and guiding them to responsible antibiotic use is crucial to mitigating it.
- Schools, universities, Parent-Teacher Associations, and community and leisure organisations must **boost antimicrobial resistance awareness** in their health education activities.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/AER-antimicrobial-consumption.pdf>