

European Antibiotic Awareness Day 2018 statement | Health Care Without Harm Europe

The world is running out of effective antibiotics; resistant diseases such as gonorrhoea and TB are on the rise and may soon become unstoppable, undermining modern medicine. Health Care Without Harm Europe works with the healthcare sector and a wide range of stakeholders to keep antibiotics working – whilst current EU policies seemingly underestimate the threat posed by AMR.

The European Commission continues to quote an out-dated figure from 2007 – attributing 25,000 annual deaths to AMR. Yet we still do not have an accurate estimate of the AMR mortality rate across the EU as reporting is not legally required for Member States. This is likely a gross underestimation as reliable French and British government sources alone report 12,500 and 12,000 annual AMR deaths respectively. This has to change, by continuing to rely on this 2007 figure, the Commission are giving an inaccurate account of the scale and seriousness of the problem.

Furthermore, in **1999, the European Commission's own Scientific Steering Committee proposed** measures such as phasing out the use of antimicrobials as growth-promoting agents, and tighter controls on the sale, supply, and distribution of antimicrobials by eliminating financial incentives that encourage inappropriate use of antibiotics.

Whilst some of the Scientific Steering Committee recommendations have now been implemented, in many respects we are moving backwards – as most of the proposals suggested in 1999 have not yet been adopted or even addressed almost two decades later. **The Commission's second EU Action Plan** against AMR put forward in 2017 lacks the specific measurable policy recommendations proposed in 1999.

Health Care Without Harm Europe works to raise awareness on some of these policy gaps through our advocacy and campaigning work. We lead the only EU-wide campaign on pharmaceuticals in the environment – *Safer Pharma* (www.saferpharma.org) - which aims to ensure that the EU becomes the first region to legislate on pharmaceutical pollution.

Currently, pharmaceuticals in the environment are mainly addressed in legislation on veterinary medicinal products but not fully tackled in legislation on medicinal products for human use. The **European Commission's long-awaited Strategic Approach** on pharmaceuticals in the environment is meant to cover this legislative gap and HCWH Europe, supported by our members, is pushing the **Commission for it's timely publication.**

Whilst there is growing debate and media attention around the issue of pharmaceutical pollution and AMR - now is the time for political action. We believe that all stakeholders – including policy makers, the healthcare sector, pharmaceutical manufacturers, and civil society – have a role to play to keep antibiotics working for us and for future generations.