

The fight against Antimicrobial Resistance is closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals

Why pay attention to antimicrobial resistance (AMR)?

Antimicrobial agents like antibiotics are essential to treat some human and animal diseases. Microbes, such as bacteria, can develop resistance to antimicrobials meaning that a drug such as an antibiotic is no longer effective in treating the infection. The development of resistance is caused by the incorrect use of these drugs, for example, using antibiotics (which help to treat bacteria) for viral infections like flu, or as a growth promoter in agriculture.

As a result, the world is running out of effective antibiotics to treat infectious diseases, and unless appropriate action is taken, decades of progress in health and medicine risk being undone. AMR not only costs a lot of money but also generates a lot of suffering. This has been also recognized by leaders around the world at the United Nations General Assembly in 2016.

In May 2015, the World Health Assembly (WHA) endorsed a global action plan on AMR and urged all Member States to develop national action plans. WHA72 (May 2019) called for an accelerated implementation of the national action plans (NAP).

Why focus on the Sustainable Development Goals?

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the world's best plan to build a better world for people and our planet by 2030. Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, the SDGs are a call for action by all countries – poor, middle-income and rich – to promote prosperity while protecting the environment. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, equality and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

AMR impacts the achievements of several of the 17 SDGs, and in particular SDG 3: “Good health and well-being”.



How can work on SDGs and AMR benefit from each other?

AMR is now specifically referred to under SDG 3 and achieving many SDGs is also conditional on addressing AMR effectively. First – with effective antibiotics – maternal, neonatal and childhood deaths can be prevented and epidemics of communicable diseases, such as HIV, gonorrhoea and tuberculosis, can be managed (SDG 3). Second, antibiotics are essential for humans as well as for food/animal production and for livelihoods (SDG 8, 2, 1). Third, poorly managed health care waste and wastewater can contaminate groundwater, drinking water and soils with antibiotics or resistant bacteria (SDG 6, 12). Finally, partnership is a prerequisite to tackle AMR. The Tripartite, an entity which includes WHO, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), has adopted the One Health approach to addressing AMR (SDG 17).

What are WHO/Europe's priorities regarding AMR and the SDGs?

SDG Indicator on AMR – 3.d.2

Initially there had been no explicit mention of AMR in the SDGs, although implementation of AMR-related work had commenced long before. Through various advocacy measures over the years, AMR was recognized as a threat to people's livelihoods, lives and environment, and as impacting the achievements of many SDGs.

In March 2020, a new SDG indicator addressing AMR, “Percentage of bloodstream infections due to selected antimicrobial-resistant organisms”, was approved by the UN Statistical Commission.

This new indicator will help catalyse the establishment of national AMR surveillance systems and address critical elements of SDG target 3.d: “To strengthen the capacity of all countries for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks”. The surveillance and diagnostics data thus generated will help countries give early warning for public health preparedness, and for appropriate response measures.

Support to Member States to contain the spread of AMR

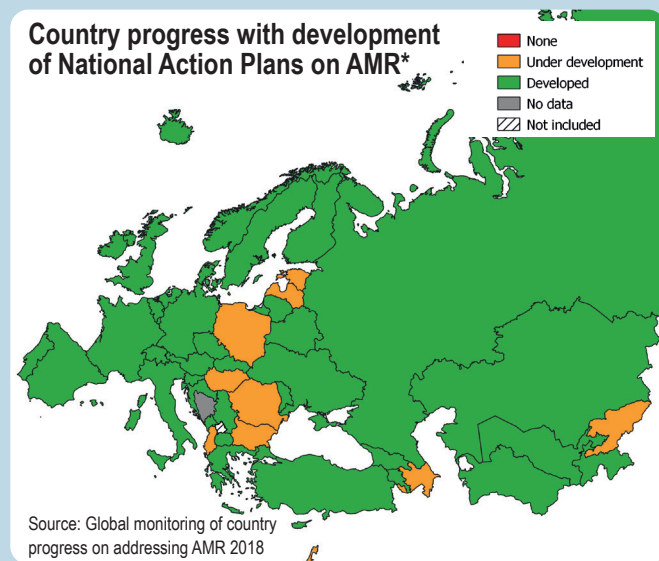
WHO/Europe, together with a broad range of partners, works actively to contain the spread of AMR in the WHO European Region through a multidisciplinary and organization-wide approach. It supports Member States in the development and implementation of comprehensive national action plans (NAPs) to combat AMR by:

- facilitating intersectoral coordination;
- providing policy advice and technical guidance;
- building capacity for the surveillance of antimicrobial resistance and use/consumption;
- promoting antimicrobial stewardship and prudent use;
- supporting the implementation of core components for infection prevention and control programmes in health care facilities, including WASH; and
- raising awareness among professionals and the public.

Achievements so far

Support to Member States:

Country progress with development of National Action Plans on AMR*



SDG Indicator on AMR:

The recently added SDG indicator on AMR aims at reducing the percentage of bloodstream infections due to *Staphylococcus aureus* resistant to the antibiotic methicillin (MRSA) and *Escherichia coli* resistant to 3rd-generation cephalosporin antibiotics. Effective control of these two types of AMR pathogens will ultimately preserve the capacity to treat infections with available antimicrobials while new prevention and treatment solutions are developed. This new indicator, while providing data to monitor global trends, will also be very effective for tracking progress in enhancing country capacity to effectively implement national action plans on AMR, and national action plans on health security.

Many WHO European Region Member States have developed NAPs on AMR (see map) which focus on awareness raising, monitoring and surveillance, infection prevention and control as well as a prudent use of antimicrobials. WHO/Europe supports the implementation process with laboratory training and quality assurance, monitoring or awareness raising (i.e. World Antimicrobial Awareness Week).

*The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full arrangements.

“The National Action Plan is obviously not only for the health care sector, but for Tajikistan in general.”

In 2015, Tajikistan responded to the challenge of AMR by appointing a national AMR coordinator to coordinate national work and to contact WHO/Europe on this topic, by order of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Population (MoH). In May 2016, with the goal of developing a national action plan, an intersectoral and interagency working group was established under the coordination of the State Sanitary and Epidemiological Surveillance Service and the MoH. With technical assistance from WHO/Europe, several seminars, consultation meetings and workshops were conducted to identify the country's priority areas and required actions for AMR containment and control of antimicrobial consumption.

In May 2018, the Tajik National Action Plan on AMR was endorsed by the MoH, Ministry of Agriculture and Committee on Food Security.

To start the implementation process, three existing epidemiological, pharmaceutical, and medical surveillance services were abolished and replaced by a new single State Surveillance Service.

“The main goal of these workshops is to bring together all key actors and to design one joint plan with particular steps to follow. The benefit of such an approach is obviously not only for the health care sector, but for the country in general.” (Dr Samariddin Aliev, Head of Scientific and Research Center for Preventive Medicine, MoH, Tajikistan)



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The fight against AMR requires everyone's commitment. Support us by giving this important issue the high priority it deserves, by taking the appropriate decisions and implementing effective measures and always in line with the SDGs!

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Resources and contact
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>
www.euro.who.int ► Health topics ► Antimicrobial resistance

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