

Stepping up the involvement of the patient community in the fight against AMR

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The European Patients' Forum (EPF) welcomes the publication of the [Commission's proposal](#) for a Council Recommendation on stepping up EU actions to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in a One Health approach.

Antimicrobial resistance is a vital issue for patients with chronic diseases. They are particularly vulnerable to antimicrobial resistance because they have to spend more time in healthcare settings and because many routine healthcare procedures often require the use of antibiotics to prevent or treat infections.

EPF supports the comprehensive approach to tackling AMR outlined in the proposal, with measures focused on encouraging the prudent use of antimicrobials including through reduction targets, improving infection prevention and control, strengthening surveillance and monitoring, and improving public awareness, education and training. EPF also recalls that this proposal comes together with the revision of the EU pharmaceutical legislation, whose AMR-related measures should encourage research and development (R&D) of new antimicrobials and ensure equitable access to life-saving medicines across the EU.

However, we regret not seeing a more meaningful involvement of the patient community in the proposed Council Recommendation. Patient organisations and individual patients play an important role in these cross-cutting actions, notably by raising awareness of the problem, ensuring a patient-centred approach to care, and contributing to improving health literacy. We call on Member States to ensure that the patient perspective is better taken into account in the following three key areas:

1. Improving health literacy

The proposed Recommendation does not sufficiently address the issue of health literacy, even though it is a key aspect of any strategy to reduce the use of antimicrobials. Many people do not know that antibiotics do not cure infections caused by viruses, such as colds or flu, or that it is important to take antibiotics exactly as prescribed and not to self-medicate. Similarly, patients are not informed about the rates of resistant bacteria and healthcare-associated infections in hospitals and measures to address them.

Reliable, relevant and understandable information is not only a patient's right, but also contributes to empowerment and increased awareness of the risks of antibiotics' misuse. Informed, shared decision-making has been shown to reduce antibiotic prescribing. Good health literacy and patient empowerment can therefore contribute effectively to the fight against AMR. We call on Member States to take action to improve health literacy and, on the Commission, to develop a comprehensive EU strategy for patient-centred information, including on antimicrobials.

2. Raising awareness of AMR in collaboration with patient organisations

While we welcome measures to improve communication about AMR and prudent use of antimicrobials, more emphasis is needed on the involvement of patient organisations as active partners and multipliers in public awareness campaigns. Patients' input is crucial to ensure that awareness campaigns meet patients'

needs, whether it is about adequate disposal of unused antimicrobials or hand hygiene prevention campaigns.

In addition, EU and national guidelines, including the proposed EU guidelines for the treatment of the main common infections, should be developed in collaboration with patient organisations. This is essential to ensuring their effectiveness in a clinical setting and to supporting patients' adherence. We call on Member States to support the true implementation of a patient-centred approach to healthcare, which contributes to a better quality of care and a more effective response to patients' individual needs.

3. Including patients in incentives for innovation and access to antimicrobials

EPF notes that health promotion and healthy-living strategies, which improve patients' resilience, should be an integral part of a comprehensive approach to AMR. In parallel, access to old and new antimicrobials that meet patients' and public health needs is essential. Incentives for the development of new antimicrobials should take into account the specificities of antimicrobials and the need for better antimicrobial stewardship by decoupling revenues from sales volumes. They should also ensure that R&D efforts focus on areas of highest need. EPF welcomes the consideration of four financial incentive mechanisms, including the annual revenue guarantee scheme. An ongoing pilot in Sweden and the UK suggests that this model improves availability of newly marketed antimicrobials for patients. From the designation of antimicrobials to the definition of access and stewardship stipulations, patient involvement will be crucial to ensure that these mechanisms truly meet their needs.

ABOUT EPF

EPF is an umbrella organisation of patient organisations across Europe and across disease areas. Our 79 members include disease-specific patient groups active at EU level and national coalitions of patients representing 19 countries and an estimated 150 million patients across Europe. www.eu-patient.eu

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