



Policy brief: The need for a reinforced AMR One Health Network

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), known as the ability of microorganisms to resist antimicrobials, is a global and major issue that threatens human and animal health as well as the environment. These three sectors are all interrelated, as microorganisms can spread in all sectors. The issue of AMR thus requires a holistic and trans-sectoral approach, known as the One Health approach.

Following the 2016 and 2019 Council Conclusions on AMR, the EU-JAMRAI calls for an extension and strengthening of the mandate of the AMR One Health Network (OHN), to wholly address all components of the One Health trans-sectoral and integrated approach required to obtain a full impact of the EU action plan against AMR.

The global threat of AMR

At the international level, AMR is recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as being one of the major global threats and is listed as a top priority for action on the global health agenda. The figures published by the WHO and the OECDⁱ are alarming:

- 33 000 patients die annually in the European Union as a result of infections caused by multi-resistant bacteriaⁱ.
- Antibiotic use and infection prevention and control practices vary a lot between countries. By 2050, Southern Europe will be the most strongly impacted by AMR: Italy, Greece and Portugal are forecasted to be the countries with the highest mortality ratesⁱⁱⁱ from AMR by the OECD.

Concerning the animal sector, in the EU / EEA, about two thirds of total antimicrobial use is for food producing animalsⁱⁱ. Globally, if no effective action is put in place, antimicrobial use in food-producing animals will rise by 67% between 2010 and 2030ⁱⁱⁱ. Across the EU, between 2011 and 2016, it has been estimated that sales of veterinary antimicrobials were reduced by 20 %ⁱⁱⁱ, but use still remains too high.

The EU AMR One Health Network

In 2016, the Council Conclusions on the next steps under a One Health approach to combat AMR^{iv} recognised the importance of cooperation between Member States and called on the European Commission to create an EU AMR One Health Network (OHN). The main purpose of the OHN created in 2017 was to facilitate and enhance regular discussions between Member States MS on AMR policy options, exchange information and sharing of best practices and keep each other updated on the progress made on the implementation of NAP and the implementation of the EU Action Plan. It is composed of government experts from the human health and animal health sectors, as well as EU agencies representatives (ECDC, EMA, and EFSA)^v.

The 2019 Council Conclusions on the next steps towards making the EU a best practice region in combatting antimicrobial resistance^v underlined the importance of the regular meetings of the OHN. They called for a reinforced cooperation, through the OHN, to address AMR by implementing bilateral and multilateral sharing of best practices in order to provide support to Member States in the establishment of the National action plans (NAPs) and the national strategies on Antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) and Infection prevention and control (IPC).

A pressing need to extend and strengthen the mandate of the AMR One Health Network identified by the EU-JAMRAI

Using regular meetings such as the OHN and sectorial discussions at the EU level has also been identified by the EU-JAMRAI stakeholders and Member States as a priority^{vi} and the most important element to sustain the fruitful cooperation in the fight against AMR. Indeed, during the three-year duration of the project, one of the main objectives of the EU-JAMRAI has been to strengthen a network of all the actors involved in the fight against AMR (general objective 2). Particularly, the Work Package 5 worked on sharing of best practices between MS, for example using country-to-country visits. The WP5 has also set up a network of supervisory bodies responsible for controlling activities related to AMR (e.g. control of the level of implementation of national policies, the level of compliance with legislation or adherence to guidelines or recommendations). The EU-JAMRAI underlined how essential networking is to continue improving and sustaining this EU-wide collaboration between MS. Strengthening the role of the OHN would build further on the work done during the Joint Action.

Acknowledging the importance of communication and coordination between European Member States to tackle the urgent issue of AMR, the **EU-JAMRAI calls for the extension and the strengthening of the mandate of the EU AMR One Health Network by:**

- **Focussing also on the environmental sector:** including inviting environmental sector representatives to join the AMR One Health Network. The work achieved within the EU-JAMRAI, and lately the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted the need to consider the AMR issue within a large One Health perspective.
- **Preparing the agenda of the meetings with the EU Presidency** in order to reflect Member States' priorities and issues to be discussed.
- **Developing dedicated IT tools** (or extend functionalities of existing ones) that will allow participants to share information during and between the meetings, to drive improvement of national activities. A password-protected web-based dynamic platform accessible to all MS representatives could be put in place, with interactive functionalities such as: repository of tools and documents, allowing sharing of success stories regarding AMR/HCAI-related interventions, contact list, forum of discussion. This platform would allow discussing common problems, sharing experiences information and best practices. This would allow more interactions between the MS representatives, ultimately leading to greater engagement and collaboration during the bi-annual meetings.
- **Extending the duration of the bi-annual meetings** of the OHN to two full days, so as to foster networking, give MS the possibility to contribute to the agenda, and allow more in-depth discussions around complex issues related to AMR at the European level.

ⁱ Cassini A. et al (2019). Attributable deaths and disability-adjusted life-years caused by infections with antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the EU and the European Economic Area in 2015: a population-level modelling analysis, *The Lancet*, 19:1.

ⁱⁱ European Court of auditors (2019). Addressing antimicrobial resistance: progress in the animal sector, but this health threat remains a challenge for the EU, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

ⁱⁱⁱ Van Boeckel, T. et al. (2015), "Global trends in antimicrobial use in food animals", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 112/18, pp. 5649-5654.

^{iv} ECDC, OECD (2019), AMR tackling the burden in the European Union. Briefing note for EU/EEA countries. Paris.

^v Council of the European Union (2019). Conclusions on the next steps towards making the EU a best practice region in combatting antimicrobial resistance n° 36,37.

^v Council of the European Union (2019). Conclusions on the next steps towards making the EU a best practice region in combatting antimicrobial resistance, 9765/19, n° 35, 56, 57.

^{vi} EU JAMRAI WP4 (2019). Survey of Members States and Stakeholders' priorities.