

14th edition of the European Patients' Rights Day. ONE health approach, MULTIPLE answers: citizens' engagement & stakeholders' actions to tackle antimicrobial resistance and sustain EU progress

Dear friends,

It is a pleasure for me to be able to address you again in the context of the European Patients' Rights Day 2020. I always enjoy witnessing your activism and your successful leadership of what has become an invaluable network of stakeholders that come together every year to share ideas and raise awareness on topics that touch every citizen's life.

Today is a very important day, and as a politician I have a great responsibility to support this important cause given the health situation that the whole world is experiencing due to the coronavirus. In this regard, on **6 October 2020**, together with our colleagues from the AMR interest group, we wrote a **letter** to Vice President Schinas and Commissioner Kyriakides welcoming the initiative taken by the European Commission to release a new Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe by the end of the year to create a future-proof pharmaceutical regulatory framework that promotes research and innovation.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a key cross-border health issue for Europe and the world. This silently growing pandemic is already affecting our health today and will increasingly do so in the future. Without effective action, AMR will take us back to a pre-antibiotic age when death by infection was much more common.

Each year, 750,000 people die globally as a consequence of drug-resistant bacteria – with 33,000 annual deaths in Europe. If AMR remains unchecked, the annual death toll could climb to 10 million by 2050 and the economic impacts could be on par with the 2008 financial crisis.

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the weaknesses of our healthcare systems and revealed underlying inequalities, but these are not new and have long been recognised in the fight against AMR. The Pharmaceutical Strategy provides a momentum to bring positive change.

In line with the recently adopted EP resolution on the EU's public health strategy post-COVID-19, we asked the European commission to adopt the following recommendations:

- Strengthen the EU's role in global discussions about antibiotic shortages, with a focus on making supply chains resilient to disruptions.
- Address the market failures in antibiotic research and innovation, particularly in the later stages of clinical research.
- Reduce our dependence on antibiotics through prevention activities, research into alternatives, and consumption targets.
- Ensure transparency in the pharmaceutical industry throughout the value chain
- Mitigate environmental risks from production, use and disposal of antibiotics.

The **MEP Interest Group on Antimicrobial Resistance** is the only group dedicated to AMR in the European Parliament. As members we are committed to ensuring that AMR is high on the EU's political agenda and that the European Parliament plays a key role in promoting antimicrobial action.

Certainly it is also important to underline how the European Commission has given a strong response through the New health programme.

EU4Health is the EU's response to COVID-19, which has had a major impact on medical and healthcare personnel, patients and health systems in Europe. Investing € 9.4 billion, making it the largest health program ever in terms of financial resources, EU4Health will provide funding to EU countries, health organizations and NGOs.

The commission has as a priority, in addition to fighting cancer and increasing vaccination rates, **reducing the number of antimicrobial resistant infections**

Unfortunately, it is clear that antibiotics are not sufficiently known in the European Union, they are not always prescribed or used correctly, thus their effectiveness decreases as bacteria become more and more resistant and spread rapidly among communities **ignoring borders**. countries alone cannot prevent the increase in antimicrobial resistance, but **together** we can succeed and each of us has an important role to play.

With this very important health action plan, the European union supports the member states and promotes collaboration across sectors and societies to:

- To share experiences and evidence on awareness and consumption
- Promote proper use of antibiotics
- Strengthen infection prevention and control
- Promote research on new antibiotics and innovative alternatives

We must also take advantage of the growing commitment of the international community and continue to combat this global threat.

I thank Active Citizenship Network again for its constant commitment in enforcing patients' rights and I hope we will continue to work together for a healthier Europe.

My wish is, for next year, to return to host this important event in the European Parliament, as we have done in past years.