

AESGP Position on antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

AMR is as urgent as climate change

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a **pressing public health threat** that can affect anyone globally. 33.000 people (the equivalent to a small town total number of inhabitants) die every year from antibiotic resistant infections (1).

AMR occurs when bacteria become resistant to the action of the antibiotic(s) used to kill them. Misuse and overuse of antibiotics have been identified as leading causes of AMR.

According to OECD, AMR is already a major public health tragedy that compromises the **sustainability of health systems** and poses a threat of a post-antibiotic era in the future (2).

The European Union aspires to be a global leader in the fight against AMR and has developed an ambitious **Action Plan on AMR** (3). One of the main objectives of the Action Plan is to support and assist Member States in developing and implementing national action plans.

According to the latest Eurobarometer, 57% of Europeans are not aware that **antibiotics are ineffective against viruses** and that 44% do not know that antibiotics are not effective against the common cold and flu. Also, 56% of people prescribed with antibiotics have not taken any **specific test to confirm the probable cause of infection**. Therefore, it is as important as ever to improve general knowledge and raise population's health literacy on this topic (4). These figures demonstrate the continuing need to increase education around AMR.

Action on AMR is as urgent as on climate change. Only if all relevant stakeholders act together, can we avoid that, by 2050, more than 10 million people die every year as a result of drug-resistant infections (5).



The self-care industry is part of the solution

Investing in public awareness and systems for the correct disposal of medicines

The self-care industry is addressing this global threat by developing **public health and health literacy campaigns** at Member State level that aim to educate European citizens on appropriate management of common winter illnesses such as cold and flu and on infection prevention. These are often developed in partnership with public institutions and healthcare professionals.

The self-care industry, through AESGP, is a partner of the #MedsDisposal campaign. This pan-European interdisciplinary stakeholder collaboration is a joint initiative that raises awareness on the **appropriate disposal of expired or unused medicines, including anti-**

biotics in Europe and includes associations representing European healthcare professionals, industry, student organizations and civil society.

An important feature of the project is an interactive **map of Europe** with direct links to the official websites providing information on the appropriate way of disposing medicines in each country in the national language (s). <http://medsdisposal.eu/>



Self-care products are useful to prevent infections and avoid need for antibiotics



Being in good health, with a strong immune system, can help to **prevent infections**. This can be achieved with healthy lifestyle choices, good personal hygiene, regular exercise and a **good nutrition**.

Handwashing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of many types of infection, which helps reduce the need for antibiotics.

This also holds true for safe sexual intercourse. Using condoms is a proven method to avoid the spread of sexually transmitted infections, such as gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and E. coli (some with resistance strains).

The use of over-the-counter (OTC) or non-prescription medicines, self care medical devices and food supplements (including minerals and vitamins) enables people to maintain good health and treat the symptoms of common **winter illnesses**. They contribute significantly in case of viral illnesses that are often **wrongly perceived as treatable by antibiotics**.



Self-care products, an untapped potential

- Up to **80% of winter illnesses** (such as common cold, flu, sinusitis, bronchitis, etc.) **are caused by viruses**.
- Most **symptoms can be alleviated with the use of non-prescription medicines**, enabling people to carry on with their day to day lives, go to work, carry out household tasks and **shortening recovery times**.

Self-care empowers patients by increasing health literacy on AMR

A wide range of health conditions can be self-diagnosed, self-treated, self-monitored and/or resolved by self-care products or services.

Within the promotion of self-care, there is an opportunity to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider (6).

The self-care agenda includes raising awareness about responsible use of antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance.

The self-care industry is committed to lead and champion the self-care agenda with a mission to advance responsible self-care enabling citizens to take better care of their health needs and **contribute to the sustainability of European healthcare systems**.

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About

The **Association of the European Self-Care Industry (AESGP)** is a non-profit organisation which represents the manufacturers of non-prescription medicines, food supplements and self-care medical devices in Europe, an area also referred to as consumer healthcare products.

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(1) *Attributable deaths and disability-adjusted life-years caused by infections with antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the EU and the European Economic Area in 2015* (ECDC, November 2018) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(18\)30605-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(18)30605-4/fulltext)

(2) *Averting the AMR crisis: What are the avenues for policy action for countries in Europe?* (OECD, November 2016) <https://www.oecd.org/health/health-systems/AMR-Policy-Insights-November2016.pdf>

(3) *EU Commission One Health Action Plan against AMR (COM(2017)339)* (EC, November 2018) https://ec.europa.eu/health/amr/sites/amr/files/amr_action_plan_2017_en.pdf

(4) *Special Eurobarometer 478 – Wave EB90.1 – Report on Antimicrobial Resistance* (EC, November 2018) <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/84386>

(5) *No time to wait: securing the future from drug-resistant infections*. (WHO, April 2019) https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/no-time-to-wait-securing-the-future-from-drug-resistant-infections-en.pdf?sfvrsn=5b424d7_6

(6) *Self care for health* (WHO, 2014) <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/205887>

