



Press Release

Luxembourg, 26 February 2019

Auditors examine EU fight against superbugs

The European Court of Auditors is conducting an audit of EU action against superbugs, including bacteria which have become resistant to antibiotics. In particular, the auditors will examine how the European Commission and relevant agencies manage the key activities and resources in this domain. They will also assess the relevance and effectiveness of EU contributions and support.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occurs in both humans and animals when microbes such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi, develop resistance to medicines which previously provided effective treatment. Each year in the EU, infections caused by drug-resistant bacteria lead to the death of about 33,000 people and result in economic losses of around €1.5 billion. The World Bank has warned that, by 2050, such infections could cause as much global economic damage as the 2008 financial crisis.

The auditors have today published an Audit Preview on EU action to fight AMR. Audit Previews provide information on an ongoing audit task. They are designed as a source of information for those interested in the policy or programmes being audited.

“AMR is one of the most serious health threats we face”, said Janusz Wojciechowski, the member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the audit. “Our audit will examine EU actions to support the more prudent use of existing antimicrobial treatments, as well as research to develop new ones.”

The EU has developed several policy initiatives to combat AMR, including the One Health action plan, the EU framework for monitoring antimicrobial resistance in the veterinary sector, the Joint Action on Antimicrobial Resistance and the New Drugs for Bad Bugs programme to support R&D.

The audit will cover actions and programmes managed by relevant Commission Directorate Generals and EU agencies, such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the Joint Undertaking Innovative Medicines Initiative, or the Consumer, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency.

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors’ audit preview. The full preview is available at eca.europa.eu in English.

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In particular, the auditors will examine whether the Commission and EU agencies:

- o manage key activities and resources well;
- o make an effective contribution towards reducing AMR and promoting the prudent use of antimicrobial treatments in animals;
- o have appropriate mechanisms to coordinate and evaluate EU support for AMR research.

Note to Editors

The audit report is expected to be published in the first half of 2020.