



## EFN POSITION PAPER ON NURSES COMBATting ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR)

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a professional and political concern that has been high on the European and global health agenda. The European Commission estimates that antibiotic-resistant bacteria have been associated with the death of 25.000 people in the European Union (EU) alone; while the extra healthcare costs and productivity losses associated with AMR cost the EU at least €1.5 billion each year. AMR has many aspects that can be dealt with and a lot of emphasis has until now been put on reducing antibiotics used in animal husbandry at a European level, while at a global level the focus is on education of the public and professionals on the matter.

AMR is an area stimulating significant activity at the European and global level. Previously it has been highlighted together with Ebola by the [G7 Health Ministers Meeting](#) in 2015 where the [OECD work](#) on the topic was presented and the issue was taken up in the final [Declaration](#). The issue was taken even further in the [declaration](#) of the last G7 meeting and [concrete actions](#) were concluded. At the European level the role of ECDC is central to understanding the epidemiology of resistant micro-organisms and their spread. In addition to their management and reporting of surveillance systems, they support a number of work programmes to compliment the use of data such as the development of Core competencies for infection control specialist practitioners and the development of 'generic' guidelines on prudent use of antimicrobials.

Although a big part of the work on AMR is carried out by the ECDC, DG SANTE revised its EU [Action Plan against the rising threats from AMR](#) for which a [progress report](#) was made available in early 2015. Furthermore, DG Sante encourages NGOs to submit frontline practices Fighting Antimicrobial Resistance for the [EU Health Award 2016](#). Next to the work of the Commission, it is important to make reference to the work of Council Presidencies and the [Council Conclusions](#) which often relate to a veterinary and food perspective, also promoted in the [One Health](#) approach, which complements the WHO final [report](#) published in April 2015 providing an analysis, by region and globally, of the initiatives under way to address antimicrobial resistance and identifies areas in which more work is needed.

So, where are the nurses in this political debate? And how can 3 million nurses working in hospital and community settings, across multiple health speciality areas, contribute to the reduction of AMR within the EU?

From a nursing perspective, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) sees AMR as one of the biggest threats to global health today, which leads to longer hospital stays, higher medical costs and increased mortality. The ICN believes that nurses have an important role to play in educating the public, preventing and controlling infections. Although EFN strongly supports all those initiatives, it encourages the European Commission to take up more concrete solutions taken forward by frontline nurses in the EU.

Nurses, specialist infection control nurses in particular, lead and manage many quality improvement and patient safety programmes across EU member states including those that address AMR and the prevention of infection. Their leadership and contribution to multi-disciplinary teams adds both impact and balance to the delivery of care and reduction of poor patient outcomes.

Building on the [EFN Position Statement](#) on the Council Recommendations on Patient Safety and Healthcare Associated Infections, which stresses "*Investing in Nurses - Investing in Safety*", the EFN proposes to develop at EU level further specialist and advanced roles for nurses (i.e. stewardship and coaching) and design further eHealth services for combatting AMR (i.e. ePrescribing on which [guidelines](#) have been developed in the framework of an EU project). As frontline staff, nurses have closer and more frequent contact with patients and carers and they are often in a

unique position to influence decisions on antibiotic prescribing. Nurses are able to influence in their role as care coordinator (meaning that they mediate between the different health professionals responsible for the patient and the patients themselves or their social environment (carers, social workers, family etc.) as well as at the point of decision making - for example in the use of rapid diagnostics when patients consult healthcare teams for treatment. Because of these roles nurses often have a better overview of all the treatments of the patient.

Nurses can make a huge contribution. The importance of recognising the role nurses play in combatting antibiotic resistance through traditional roles as well as [advancing and specialist roles](#) such as nurse prescribing is key, acknowledging the importance of a team approach to address antimicrobial resistance and promoting the prudent use of antibiotics. It is within this context that the EU Health Programme should provide better opportunities for nurses to advance practice.

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