[EU report: more evidence on link between antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance]

The European Food Safety Authority, the European Medicines Agency and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control are concerned about the impact of use of antibiotics on the increase in antibiotic-resistant bacteria. A new report from the three agencies presents new data on antibiotic consumption and antibiotic resistance and reflects improved surveillance across Europe.

Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: “To contain antibiotic resistance we need to fight on three fronts at the same time: human, animal and the environment. This is exactly what we are trying to achieve in the EU and globally with our recently launched EU Action Plan on antimicrobial resistance.

“This new report confirms the link between antibiotic consumption and antibiotic resistance in both humans and food-producing animals.”

A diverse picture

The Joint Interagency Antimicrobial Consumption and Resistance Analysis (JIACRA) report highlights that there are still important differences across the EU in the use of antibiotics in animals and humans. Reducing their unnecessary use will have an impact on the occurrence of resistance.

Overall antibiotic use is higher in food-producing animals than in humans, but the situation varies across countries and according to the antibiotics.

In particular, a class of antibiotics called polymyxins – which includes colistin – is used widely in the veterinary sector. It is also increasingly used in hospitals to treat multidrug-resistant infections.

Other antibiotics are more often used in humans than in animals. These include third- and fourth-generation cephalosporins and quinolones, antibiotics that are also considered critically important for human health.

Links between antibiotic use and resistance

The report notes that resistance to quinolones, used to treat salmonellosis and campylobacteriosis in humans, is associated with use of antibiotics in animals. The use of third- and fourth-generation cephalosporins for the treatment of infections caused by *E. coli* and other bacteria in humans is associated with resistance to these antibiotics in *E. coli* found in humans.

Cooperation spurs better reporting and analysis

The report is the result of close cooperation between the three EU agencies, each drawing on their specific expertise and data from monitoring of antibiotic resistance and antibiotic consumption in animals and humans.

The conclusions are in line with those of the first report published in 2015. However, the availability of better quality data allowed for a more sophisticated analysis.

Experts of the three agencies recommend further research to better understand how the use of antibiotics and resistance affect one another.

Pyrrolizidine alkaloids in tea, herbal infusions and food supplements

Exposure to pyrrolizidine alkaloids in food, in particular for frequent and high consumers of tea and herbal infusions, is a possible long-term concern for human health due to their potential carcinogenicity, say EFSA's experts.

The consumption of food supplements based on pyrrolizidine alkaloid-producing plants could also result in exposure levels causing short-term toxicity resulting in adverse health effects.

EFSA has updated its 2011 advice on the risks for human and animal health from pyrrolizidine alkaloids, a large group of toxins produced by different plant species that can unintentionally enter the food chain.

The European Commission requested the updated risk assessment, which takes account of exposure estimates using more recent data on the levels of these toxins in honey, tea, herbal infusions and food supplements.

In 2011 EFSA concluded there were possible long-term health concerns for toddlers and children who are high consumers of honey, the only food category for which sufficient data were then available.

EFSA's experts identified 17 pyrrolizidine alkaloids in food and feed that should continue to be monitored and recommended further studies on the toxicity and carcinogenicity of those most commonly found in food.

[Aides d’État: déclaration concernant un accord de principe entre la commissaire Vestager et le gouvernement britannique sur l’engagement de Royal Bank of Scotland]

Roaming charges ended in the European Union on 15 June 2017. Europeans travelling within EU countries will ‘Roam Like at Home’ and pay domestic prices for roaming calls, SMS and data. …

On 23 June 2016 citizens of the United Kingdom (UK) voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 29 March 2017 the UK formally notified the European Council of its intention to leave the EU by…

Over the past 20 years, the European Union has put in place some of the highest common asylum standards in the world. And in the past two years, European migration policy has advanced in leaps and…

‘Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan.It will be built through concrete achievementswhich first create a de facto solidarity.’Robert Schuman9 May 1950On 25 March 2017,…

In response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and deliberate destabilisation of a neighbouring sovereign country, the EU has imposed restrictive measures against the Russian Federation.Overview…

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker delivered his annual State of the Union speech at the European Parliament on 14 September 2016, just two days ahead of the informal meeting of 27…

Enlargement is the process whereby countries join the EU. Since it was founded in 1957, the EU has grown from 6 member countries to 28.Any European country that respects the principles of liberty,…

[Werner Hoyer re-appointed as President of the European Investment Bank Group]

President Werner Hoyer is going to lead the European Investment Bank (EIB) for another six-year term, starting at the 1st of January 2018. He was reappointed today by the Board of Governors of the EIB, consisting of the Economy and Finance ministers of the 28 EU Member States.

Werner Hoyer started his tenure as President of the EU bank on 1 January 2012, and is also the Chairman of the EIB's Board of Directors. Over the last five and a half years he has overseen a huge expansion and transformation of the Luxembourg-based bank, with the EIB Group's annual financing increasing from EUR 55bn to EUR 84bn since 2012. The annual investment supported by this financing increased from EUR 169bn to EUR 287bn over the same period.

This increase in business was partly triggered by the Investment Plan for Europe – the Juncker Plan. Jean-Claude Juncker and Werner Hoyer worked in close cooperation to develop this concept, which has made a strong contribution to growth and job creation in the EU since its inception. Under the Juncker Plan, the EIB Group has approved EUR 44bn in financing so far, supporting EUR 225bn in investment across the EU.

"It has been a privilege to serve as President of the EU bank in these challenging times, financing thousands of projects that have improved millions of people's lives. We have helped EU countries hit hardest by the eurozone debt crisis, lent our financial muscle to the efforts of the EU to stabilise Ukraine and begun to address the root causes of migration in Northern Africa", said Werner Hoyer. "New challenges lie ahead for us, not least coping with the loss of the United Kingdom as member of the EU bank. But I'm sure the ingenuity and expertise of the 3 000-strong EIB staff will help us to find solutions to these challenges. We will continue to deliver EU policies in the Union and worldwide."

Before joining the EIB, Werner Hoyer was a member of the German Bundestag for the liberal party FDP for 25 years, specialising in foreign and security policy as well as European and budget affairs. He was also the Minister of State (Deputy Foreign Minister) at the German Foreign Office. He held various positions during his long, distinguished political career, among them General Secretary of the FDP, Whip of the FDP Parliamentary Group and President of the European Liberal Democratic Reform Party.

[CV]

Background information:

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is the European Union's bank. The EIB is the long-term lending institution of the EU and is the only bank owned by and representing the interests of the [European Union Member States]. It makes long-term finance available for sound investment in order to contribute towards EU policy goals. The EIB works closely with other [EU institutions](#) to implement EU policy.

As the largest multilateral borrower and lender by volume, the EIB provides finance and expertise for sound and sustainable investment projects which contribute to furthering EU policy objectives. More than 90% of EIB activity is focused on Europe but it also supports the EU’s external and development policies.

State aid: Statement on agreement in principle between Commissioner Vestager and UK Government on Royal Bank of Scotland commitment

Commissioner Margrethe Vestager has reached an agreement in principle with the Exchequer of the United Kingdom, on the design of the alternative package proposed by the UK authorities for Royal Bank of Scotland (“RBS”).

This alternative package would replace RBS’s commitment to divest its UK retail and SME banking operations, Williams & Glyn (also known as “Rainbow”), as required as part of RBS’s restructuring plan submitted in 2009 and amended in 2014. The objective of this alternative package is to remedy the distortion in the UK’s SME banking market resulting from the state aid to RBS, with greater speed and certainty than would the divestment of Williams & Glyn. Today’s agreement in principle follows intensive and constructive contacts between the Commission and the UK authorities.

In April 2017, the Commission opened an in-depth investigation to assess whether the alternative package proposed by the UK authorities is an appropriate replacement for the original commitment to divest Williams & Glyn.

The Commission can only accept modifications to existing commitments by Member States and aided banks that were given to obtain approval for restructuring aid (such as the one leading to the existing RBS restructuring decision), if the new commitments can be considered equivalent to those originally provided.

In this context, the opening of the in-depth investigation also gave interested parties the possibility to submit to the Commission their views on the new commitments. The UK authorities considered the feedback and proposed some enhancements to the package:

- RBS will provide more financing and set up an independent fund that

grants funds to challenger banks to increase their small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) banking capabilities. The funding will be more targeted in order to increase challenger banks' chances of driving competition.
- RBS will commit more financing to support the switching of a higher number of clients. In particular, the package targets a transfer of a 3% market share in the UK SME banking market from RBS to challenger banks. Challenger banks will receive "dowries" that they can use to incentivise SMEs to switch their business current accounts, funding to facilitate the switching of related loans and funding to cover customers' switching costs.

The Commission considers that, in combination with the elements brought forward by the UK authorities in the initial proposal, the improved package is considered sufficient to replace the divestment commitment. The improved alternative package will increase competition in the UK SME banking market going forward.

The United Kingdom will proceed to notify the improved alternative package to the Commission. On this basis, the Commission will adopt its formal decision under EU State aid rules.

Background

RBS is one of Europe's largest financial services groups and had a balance sheet of £799 billion at the end of 2016. During the financial crisis, in late 2008, RBS was on the verge of collapse and has benefitted from the following state aid measures:

- a recapitalisation of £45.5bn and an (eventually unused) five year contingent recapitalisation of £8bn
- an impaired asset measure covering excess loss (which was terminated with RBS not having received any payments from the State, but instead paid a cumulative fee of £2.5bn for the participation) and
- guarantees and other liquidity measures (now fully repaid).

These aid measures resulted in the nationalisation of RBS (the UK Government currently holds 71.3% of RBS shares) and were accompanied by the restructuring of RBS approved by the Commission in 2009 and amended in 2014.

As part of this restructuring, the UK committed RBS would undertake a significant balance sheet and risk reduction. RBS has already delivered on those commitments to ensure the bank's long-term viability, in line with the Commission decision. It also delivered on all its other divestment commitments (sale of RBS insurance, transaction business, commodity trading, US banking subsidiary), which were made to ensure adequate own contribution by the bank to the financing of the restructuring of the core UK banking operations and to limit the distortion of competition. The divestment of Williams & Glyn, to be completed by end-2017 is the last outstanding commitment, with the objective to mitigate the distortion of competition in the UK SME banking market.