



TB EUROPE COALITION

WORLD TB DAY CALL TO ACTION

DRUG RESISTANT TUBERCULOSIS A CROSS BORDER THREAT: EU MUST ACT NOW!

With an estimated 74,000 cases of multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) in 2012, the European region carries nearly a quarter of the global burden of drug-resistant cases and hosts 15 of the 27 high MDR-TB burden countries in the world, five of them being EU Member states.

Many governments in the region often do not have the resources or the political will to adequately fight TB and are often dependent on external support to finance their TB programmes. However, the largest international donor for TB programmes, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, is phasing out its support to the region, leaving an important financial vacuum. If European countries do not immediately step up their response we will be faced with an increased risk of MDR-TB spreading throughout the region on an even greater scale.

Particularly concerning are the increasing rates of drug resistance among new TB cases and the low treatment success rates of the region: some of the most worrying in the world. According to a recent study, TB costs the EU €5.9 billion every year in medical costs and lost productivity. With rising rates of drug-resistant TB, treatment for which can be up to 400 times more expensive than standard TB, action needs to be taken **now** to avoid further human suffering and economic burden.

While the main responsibility for the provision of healthcare in the EU lies with national governments, there are cases when member states cannot effectively act on their own. In these situations, regional political leadership can complement and strengthen efforts already in place at the country level.

We call on the European Commission and the Member States to take responsibility for protecting the health of European citizens from drug-resistant tuberculosis by:

- Demonstrating strong regional political leadership on the issue in the EU and the greater European region;
- Recognising drug-resistant TB as a cross-border health threat;
- Complementing responses of member states at the national level by setting up a regional political mechanism with the aim of eliminating MDR-TB in the region.

Editor's note:

- The TB Europe Coalition is an informal advocacy network of non-governmental organisations and individuals that share a commitment to raising awareness of TB and to increasing the political will to control the diseases throughout the WHO European Region and worldwide; www.tbcoalition.eu