

PRESS RELEASE

New report by ECDC and WHO/Europe: tuberculosis rates and treatment remain a concern

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Today, the two leading organizations dealing with health surveillance in Europe – the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) – have released their second annual joint report *Tuberculosis surveillance in Europe 2008*.

Across the WHO European Region, 461 645 tuberculosis (TB) cases were reported in 2008, representing about 6% of the TB cases reported to WHO worldwide. After an increase in overall TB notification rates between 2004 and 2007, the WHO European Region has reported a decrease of 2.6% since 2007. These trends are driven by 18 high-priority countries (18 HPC), which account for 87.6% of the TB burden in the Region.

In the European Union (EU)/European Economic Area (EEA), the new figures show that 82 611 TB cases were reported in 2008. While the declining trend continues, the report notes that the decrease recorded between 2007 and 2008 is the smallest decline over the past four years (1.2%). The decline is mainly attributable to the decrease in incidence in high- and intermediate-burden countries.

Across the WHO European Region, the treatment success rate among the newly detected laboratory-confirmed TB cases in 2007 decreased to 70.7% (compared with 73.1% for cases registered in 2006). In the 18 HPC, the treatment success rate was only 69.2% of newly detected laboratory-confirmed TB cases.

The EU, over the past five years, has seen no significant improvement in the TB treatment success rate. In the EU/EEA, only 51.8% of previously treated TB cases, and just 79.5% of newly confirmed pulmonary cases, were successfully treated.

Acting Director of ECDC, Professor Karl Ekdahl, underlines the point: “The slowing down in the decline of TB within the EU/EEA highlighted by the report, along with the underachievement in terms of treatment success among TB patients, are matters of concern. Progress towards elimination can only be sustained by ensuring that pillars of TB control such as treatment monitoring and reporting are strengthened and optimised.”

“The report released today shows a serious situation with regard to TB in Europe. The WHO European Region, with just over 70% of new TB cases successfully treated, has the lowest treatment success rate in the world compared to other WHO regions, and the highest levels of drug resistant TB,” says Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe.

“TB hits the poorest and most vulnerable hardest. Together with our partners we must address this as a matter of urgency. I call upon Member States to put TB control among the highest public health priorities and make available appropriate resources, in order to effectively implement the Stop TB strategy,” Ms Jakab says.

Notes to editors

1. The *Tuberculosis surveillance in Europe 2008* report can be downloaded from the web sites of ECDC (www.ecdc.europa.eu) or WHO/Europe (www.euro.who.int/tb). These web sites also contain detailed data on and analysis of the TB situation across the wider European continent.

2. In the *Tuberculosis surveillance in Europe 2008* report, data on the WHO European Region refer to 50 Member States of the WHO European Region (no data were available for Austria, Monaco and San Marino), plus Liechtenstein.

3. In the WHO European Region, the 18 HPC are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Of these, five are members of the EU.

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Links

Tuberculosis surveillance in Europe 2008

http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/1003_SUR_tuberculosis_surveillance_in_europe_2008.pdf

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (www.ecdc.europa.eu)

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is an EU agency tasked with identifying assessing and communicating threats to human health posed by infectious diseases. It supports the work of public health authorities in the EU and EEA/EFTA Member States.