

## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

# New ECDC-WHO report: tuberculosis on the retreat in Europe. Concerns about drug-resistant TB and treatment failure.

Stockholm/Copenhagen, 19 March 2012

To mark World Tuberculosis Day on 24 March 2012, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe publish their joint report, *Tuberculosis surveillance and monitoring in Europe 2012*. For the first time, the report provides an overview of progress on tuberculosis (TB) control. The report introduces the monitoring frameworks for the follow-up of the Berlin Declaration on Tuberculosis and the Consolidated Action Plan to Prevent and Combat M/XDR TB for the 53 countries of the WHO European Region and presents the measures of twelve indicators linked to the Follow-up of the Action Plan to fight TB in the European Union for the EU/EEA. In 2010, 309 648 new tuberculosis cases were notified in the WHO European Region, indicating a decline of 2.6% to 2009. This confirms the general decrease in reported TB cases over the last five years across Europe. However, rising numbers of multidrug- and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (M/XDR TB) pose a serious threat in the attempt to eliminate TB, highlighting the importance of early detection and adequate treatment of tuberculosis patients in the region.

In 2010, the EU/EEA countries reported nearly 74 000 tuberculosis cases – around 7% less than 2009. While the MDR TB notifications have been stable over the past 5 years, the proportion of extensively drug-resistant patients among this group rose from 8.2% in 2009 to 13.2% in 2010 in the EU/EEA possibly due to increased reporting. The new report analyses four epidemiological indicators that allow to measure recent advancements in TB elimination: TB and MDR TB notification rates, the ratio of cases in children versus adults and age distribution. It also assesses trends in eight strategic areas outlined in the [Framework Action Plan to fight TB in the European Union](#) in order to successfully monitor strengths and weaknesses of the existing TB control measures in the EU/EEA.

On the occasion of [simultaneous Urban TB Control events in Barcelona, Milan, London and Rotterdam](#) this week, **ECDC Director Marc Sprenger**, stresses: “Countries with low incidence of TB – which means less than 20 patients per 100 000 population – face a particular challenge in taking the final step towards elimination of the disease as TB often concentrates in big cities. In this setting, key populations like people who inject drugs, homeless people and migrants are disproportionately affected by TB. That is why we have to exchange best practices from across Europe: if TB services are not tailored towards the needs of urban risk groups there is a continuing risk of higher rates of TB in general and drug-resistant TB in particular.”

From 2005 to 2010, the **WHO European Region** has constituted a decline of 15.2% in the notification rates of TB. The treatment success rates have continued to decrease over those years and are

dramatically low now at 68.7% and 47.6% among new and previously treated TB patients, mainly due to presence of MDR TB (13.7% and 48.7% respectively). In addition, the report introduces monitoring frameworks for follow-up of [Berlin Declaration on Tuberculosis](#) and [Consolidated Action Plan to Prevent and Combat M/XDR TB](#).

“Our Region has the lowest TB treatment success rate and the highest M/XDR TB rate in the world,” says **Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe**. “TB has not spared any country in our Region, but has hit hardest in the 18 high priority TB countries mainly in the eastern part of the Region<sup>1</sup>. This is something we must address as a matter of urgency. Special attention should be paid to timely diagnosis and adequate treatment of all types of the disease with particular attention to vulnerable populations.”

The data in the report shows that TB in children is still a great concern for the WHO European Region. About 10 000 cases of TB among under 15-years-olds were reported last year. In 20 countries of the Region children represented more than 5% of all TB cases. In ten countries<sup>2</sup>, more than half of those cases were detected in children under five years of age.

The WHO European Region has established a special project to prevent and combat M/XDR TB. In close consultation with partners, a five-year consolidated Action Plan has been developed and endorsed by all 53 countries of the Region. The Plan aims at containing the spread of drug-resistant TB by achieving universal access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of M/XDR TB throughout the Region by 2015. [More information on the WHO European TB programmes and on the Consolidated Action Plan.](#)

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**Notes to editors:**

**World TB Day:** 24 March every year marks World Tuberculosis Day in an attempt to raise public awareness about the epidemic. On that day in 1882, Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of the TB bacillus paving the way for diagnosis and treatment of TB.

**WHO European Region:** The region comprises 53 countries plus Liechtenstein, with a population of 894.5 million with more than 504 million people (56 per cent) living in **the EU/EEA region** (27 EU Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).

[Questions? Ask us during our joint Twitter chat with WHO/Europe on 20 March, 3 – 4 pm UTC, #TBchat](#)

Download the report [Tuberculosis surveillance and monitoring in Europe 2012](#)

ECDC report [Towards TB elimination A follow-up to the Framework Action Plan to fight TB in the EU](#)

ECDC Guidance *Management of contacts of MDR-TB and XDR-TB patients* at <http://ecdc.europa.eu> (to be published 20 March 2012)

[More information on the ECDC Tuberculosis activities](#)

[Find out more about the ECDC initiative “Metropolitan TB Control in Europe”](#)

[Visit the WHO website](#)

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**On the occasion of World Tuberculosis Day on 24 March, ECDC and WHO/Europe are jointly hosting a [live Twitter chat on Tuesday, 20 March 2012](#) to focus on issues like Urban TB control and Childhood TB, sharing and analysing the latest surveillance data.**

Send your questions in the form of tweets to @ECDC\_EU or @WHO\_Europe, using the **hashtag #TBchat**. If you are unable to join the live chat, you may leave questions for the experts on our Facebook pages:

[WHO/Europe on Facebook](#)

[ECDC on Facebook](#)

After the live chat, a summary of the discussions will be available [here](#)

**Topics**

- Joint ECDC/WHO TB report 2012
- Childhood TB
- Urban TB control: the new challenge of elimination
- General information about TB

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.

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<sup>1</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

<sup>2</sup> Switzerland, Slovenia, Greece, Israel, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Latvia, France, Austria