Ladies and gentlemen,

Today is the launch of the 4th European Antibiotic Awareness Day

We have heard today that prudent use of antibiotics is one of the key factors that are essential to slow down the development of antibiotic resistance.

We also know that resistance to antibiotics will not be brought under control without paying attention to infection control, and especially to hand hygiene in healthcare settings. We also need to pay attention to more research and development of new antibiotics with new mechanisms of action.

The European Antibiotic Awareness Day in Europe aims to tackle the first of these three factors; to encourage a more prudent use of antibiotics.

By providing a platform, and information for national campaigns on prudent antibiotic use, ECDC is supporting this European objective.

Antibiotic consumption in Europe, 2009

I would now like to highlight two aspects; the overall consumption of antibiotics in Europe and the trends that we are currently seeing concerning resistance of certain bacteria. Let me start by talking about the situation of antibiotic consumption.
The map on the previous page shows European data for 2009 on the total consumption of antibiotics in patients in the community. *

As you can see, antibiotic consumption in Europe varies widely depending on the country. Countries in southern and eastern Europe usually report the highest consumption whereas consumption is much lower in northern Europe.

The European-wide network, ESAC, provides reference data on antibiotic consumption. This data is a good indicator to monitor efforts towards a more prudent use of antibiotics.

Concerning the issue of antibiotic resistance, ECDC also coordinates a European-wide surveillance on antibiotic resistance (EARS-Net).

Today at the Midday briefing of the European Commission, ECDC released new data that shows that antibiotic resistance is increasing across the EU.

*(expressed in Defined Daily Doses per 1 000 inhabitants and per day)*

**Trends for meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), 2009-2010**

But if we start with the good news. The two maps in this slide show trends for meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, the so called “hospital super-bug” MRSA.

The greens and yellows show countries with lower rates of MRSA, the reds countries with higher rates. You can see that last year some countries managed to decrease their rates of MRSA.

This means that it is indeed possible to change the trend.

However, for many bacteria, such as *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, the situation is still going in the wrong direction. This is the bad news.

**The situation of *Klebsiella pneumoniae***

*Klebsiella pneumoniae* is another bacterium commonly found in hospital infections such as pneumonia and urinary tract infections.

The bad news is that it is increasingly becoming resistant to a last-line class of antibiotics: the **carbapenems**.

On the nex page, the smaller map on the left hand side shows you the percentage of *Klebsiella* that are resistant to carbapenems in the EU for 2009.
Countries in green are finding resistance in less than 5% of hospital samples, while countries in red have it in up to 50% of samples.

What is very worrisome is the increase and spread of carbapenem resistance which you see here if you compare the two maps from 2009 and 2010. And options for treatment of patients with such infections are limited to only a few antibiotics. These few antibiotics are often old and have treatment limitations and toxic side-effects.

The stories of Lill-Karin and Paolo

Now I would like to share with you a newly produced film by ECDC for Euronews that tells the story of Lill-Karin from Norway who was admitted to hospital with a variant of the bacterium *Klebsiella pneumoniae* in her urine.

And the story of Paolo from Italy, who developed a complicated urinary tract infection from an *E. coli* isolate while on holiday.

Click on link to start the film
So what can we do to avoid situations such as the ones experienced by Lill-Karin and Paolo?

ECDC would like to urge countries to:

Perform **active screening** on any hospital patient transferred across borders, upon admission to another hospital or other healthcare facility. And if resistant bacteria are found, hospitals need to make sure that patients are isolated and other appropriate infection control measures are taken to stop further transmission and prevent an outbreak.

We need to be aggressive and rapid at controlling these resistant bacteria, before it is too late. Otherwise, we will certainly have difficulties to control their spread in Europe. We therefore need to **declare a war against these bacteria.**

Secondly, ECDC would like to urge countries to **actively report cases** by making confirmed cases notifiable to public health authorities.

The above measures should be part of a **national guidance** on how to stop the spread of these bacteria within their country.

As we saw in the case of Paolo from Italy, it is important to **treat patients with the right antibiotic,** since these types of highly resistant bacteria can cause patients to be sicker and to have a worse outcome if not treated correctly.

An **important message for patients** is that the right antibiotic needs to be prescribed for treatment. It is therefore necessary to see a doctor and not to self medicate. At the same time a sample should be taken to identify the bacterium and the resistance profile.

**European Antibiotic Awareness Day highlighted all over Europe**

Tomorrow, on the 18 November, the European Antibiotic Awareness Day will take place in the whole of the EU.

This European health initiative coordinated by ECDC aims to support Member States in their efforts to promote prudent use of antibiotics.

Similar to last year, 37 European countries, including all EU Member States, are participating.

I would like to highlight two great examples of national initiatives happening this week:

In the **Czech republic**, different scientific conferences on prudent use of antibiotics are being organised this week, a public campaign is ongoing and information material is being disseminated through hospitals and through a network of 60 “antibiotic centres”. 
And in Belgium, the 11th national campaign is ongoing and several media activities are planned. These are also based on Commission funded projects such as GRACE and E-BUG; Educational material with posters and leaflets have been sent to general practitioners and pharmacists.

Events like these are not only happening in Europe. In the U.S. and Canada similar campaigns are being launched simultaneously this week.

**Antimicrobial resistance is one of the most serious public health threats**

My take home message to you is that antimicrobial resistance is one of the most serious public health challenges that we face in the EU. This underlines the critical importance of the Commission’s Action Plan.

Control of antimicrobial resistance including prudent use of antibiotics and hand hygiene is a responsibility for everybody – patients, doctors, all healthcare personnel, veterinarians, policy makers... you and me.

Thank you for your attention