

Press release

European Antibiotic Awareness Day is a welcome step in encouraging the responsible use of antibiotics and sustaining effective therapeutic options

Brussels, 18 November 2008 - EFPIA, the voice of the research-based pharmaceutical industry in Europe, and the European Vaccine Manufacturers group, both acknowledge the growing problem of anti-microbial resistance and welcomed the launch of European Antibiotic Awareness Day in Strasbourg today. This new annual initiative from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is designed to raise awareness of the appropriate use of antibiotics as part of efforts to counter the growing trend of antibiotic resistance. The responsible use of antibiotics is a crucial factor in ensuring that medical professionals continue to have effective therapeutic alternatives available against emerging threats to Europe's citizens.

"Antibiotics are hugely important life-saving medicines that have transformed the treatment of bacterial infections and we are equally aware of the growing threat of antibiotic resistance", said Brian Ager, Director General of EFPIA. "Antibacterial vaccines can also play an important complementary role in reducing the circulation of some antibiotic resistance pathogens. Therefore, a programme to combat antibiotic resistance will need to combine a number of different approaches and actors, including rational use initiatives, the prevention of underlying infections through vaccination and the development of new antibiotics. He continued "EFPIA applauds the decision of the Commission to include measures against antimicrobial resistance in their work plan for 2009; however we also urge them to consider potential strategies to help stimulate innovation in this sector".

Antimicrobial resistance has risen sharply in recent years. This has led to fears that some previously treatable infectious diseases are now more difficult to treat, as existing antibiotics become less effective. Both natural causes and societal pressures drive bacteria, viruses, parasites, and other microbes to continually change in an effort to evade the drugs developed to kill them.

According to European Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (EARSS) presented by the ECDC, levels of resistant MRSA and E. Coli have risen in almost all European countries since 2002. At the same time, there is a clear correlation between levels of antibiotic use and resistance in the community. Encouragingly, there have been decreases in antimicrobial resistance following media-driven awareness campaigns in a number of countries.

Contact	Useful links
Colin Mackay, Tel: (+32) 2 626 25 71 E-mail: colinmackay@efpia.org	www.efpia.eu www.evm-vaccines.org

About EFPIA

EFPIA represents the pharmaceutical industry operating in Europe. Through its direct membership of 32 national associations and 43 leading pharmaceutical companies, EFPIA is the voice on the EU scene of 2,200 companies committed to researching, developing and bringing to patients new medicines that will improve health and the quality of life around the world.

The pharmaceutical industry accounts for no less than 19,3% of global business R&D expenditure. It is the sector with the highest ratio of R&D investment to net sales (15,9%). However, between 1990 and 2007, R&D investment in United States grew 5.2 times whilst in Europe it only grew 3.3 times, and there is rapid growth in the research environment in emerging economies such as China and India.

Today around 645,000 people work in this sector and it is estimated that three to four times more employment is generated indirectly both upstream and downstream. A significant proportion of people employed are highly skilled and 107,000 work in research and development. The European research-based pharmaceutical industry generates a substantial trade surplus, which was estimated at about €49,000 million for 2007. It has contributed significantly to reducing the European Union's trade deficit in high-tech products – today almost a quarter of the EU's high-tech exports are pharmaceutical products.