Parliament demands smarter use of antibiotics

Plenary sessions

Tighter controls on the use of antimicrobials - such as antibiotics - are needed to fight growing bacteria resistance, says a resolution adopted by Parliament on Thursday. Virtually untreatable “superbugs” claim the lives of around 25,000 people in the EU each year, a figure that MEPs fear could grow.

Parliament’s resolution (adopted by a show of hands) makes non-binding recommendations for the EU and Member States.

“The growing ineffectiveness of antibiotics is already a serious problem today and a potential health time bomb for the future. We need a clear EU and international strategy to prevent misuse in agriculture and medicine, as well as to encourage the development of new antibiotics.” said Parliament’s Public Health Committee chair Jo Leinen (S&D, DE).

Healthcare information campaigns and research

Parliament wants the European Commission and Member States to improve information to the public, around half of whom mistakenly believe that antibiotics can treat viruses or colds. MEPs also want the Commission to propose incentives to boost pharmaceutical research, which has produced few new antibiotics in recent decades.

Agriculture

The EU already bans the use of antibiotics to boost animal growth, but it should also phase out their pre-emptive “prophylactic” use, say MEPs. Active ingredients used in veterinary and human medicines should be kept as separate as possible to reduce risks of resistance transferring between animals and humans. The EU should also restrict agricultural use of so-called “last resort” antibiotics, to ensure these are prioritised for fighting the most resistant infections in human healthcare.

In Wednesday’s plenary debate, Health Commissioner John Dalli said the European Commission would be proposing a five-year action plan in November to address the issues.

Contact :

Christopher COAKLEY
BXL: (+32) 2 28 44859
STR: (+33) 3 881 76853
PORT: (+32) 498 98 33 26
EMAIL: envi-press@europarl.europa.eu

Paola BUONADONNA
STR: (+33) 3 881 74256
PORT: (+44) 7 786 060 531
EMAIL: Press-en@europarl.europa.eu
EMAIL: paola.buonadonna@europarl.europa.eu
ADDINFO: (+44) 207 227 43 35