



World Tuberculosis Day 2019: more needs to be done to #EndTB by 2030

March 24 marks World Tuberculosis Day. In 1882 on this day, Dr Robert Koch announced the discovery of the bacteria that causes tuberculosis (TB), and paved the way towards diagnosing and treating it. Thanks to years of efforts, better diagnostics tools and more effective treatment regimens give hope to TB patients, their families and communities.

Ahead of World Tuberculosis Day, the [Commission announced](#):

"On the World Tuberculosis Day taking place on Sunday 24 March, the European Commission aims to raise awareness about the burden and prevention of tuberculosis as well as to mobilise efforts in the fight against the disease. Although every hour, 30 people are diagnosed with tuberculosis in Europe, overall, the decrease in tuberculosis cases observed in most countries is reassuring. Still, sustained efforts are needed to reach the 80% reduction target in the tuberculosis incidence rate in 2030 compared to 2015.

Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *"On World Tuberculosis Day, my thoughts are with all the people who are suffering from the deadliest infectious disease in the world. The EU Member States have reiterated their commitment to end the tuberculosis epidemic by 2030 at a high-level United Nations meeting in September 2018. Therefore, I call on leaders in the EU and beyond, to boost their public health measures against tuberculosis hand in hand with other sectors. Existing tools and good practices should be better implemented, and focus on people's needs. Together with our agencies, the Commission will continue to support such efforts from different policy angles including funding, research, fight against antimicrobial resistance, prevention, early diagnosis and linkage to treatment and care. So let's make tuberculosis history!"*

The EU policy initiatives and activities to help Member States meet the Sustainable Development Goal of ending the AIDS and tuberculosis epidemics by 2030 and to fight hepatitis and other communicable diseases are outlined in the 2018 "[Commission Staff Working Document on combatting HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and tuberculosis in the European Union and neighbouring countries](#)". Under Horizon 2020, the EU research and innovation programme, the Commission has already invested over €120 million in tuberculosis research. EU-funded projects are delivering new innovative tools and strategies to combat tuberculosis, including rapid diagnostic tests and more effective vaccines and treatments."

Three actions with a budget of almost 4 million are currently ongoing under the EU Health Programme. For example, the project [Early Detection and Integrated Management of Tuberculosis in Europe \(E-DETECT TB\)](#) aims to strengthen care integration by using a "one-stop-shop" outreach approach, bringing together innovative TB screening and social support to high risk populations in Romania. A mobile health unit aiming to screen 12,500 people per year was launched in Bucharest in November 2018 and screened 1,784 in 2018. Besides, the project has developed a first-ever TB screening protocol in temporary settled migrants and checked almost 5,000 people in Catania and Brescia. This work is covered in a paper "[Building a European database to gather multi-country evidence on active and latent TB screening for migrants](#)" published in the [International Journal of Infectious Diseases](#) to mark World Tuberculosis Day 2019, as well as in a recent [webinar](#) available on the European Respiratory Society website.

The latest joint report by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe "*Tuberculosis surveillance and monitoring in Europe 2019 (2017 data)*" indicates that, despite the continuing decline observed in TB notification rates, the EU/EEA countries face a number of challenges in reaching the SDG target. However, this is by no means an impossible feat. It will simply require concerted efforts for robust surveillance and reporting on one front, and on another improved diagnosis, enhanced treatment and the provision of care for all TB patients, including those in vulnerable populations. See the ECDC [World Tuberculosis Day 2019 page](#) listing the latest news and resources on TB.