

Tuberculosis in the WHO European Region: FACT SHEET 2012

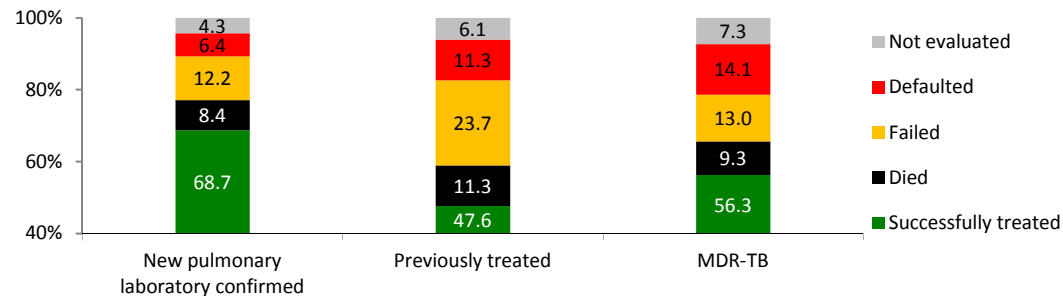
- Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious disease which spreads from one person to another by breathing the same air. This disease is mainly caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. One third of the world's population is infected with mycobacterium; however, only one tenth of people infected become sick with the disease during their life time. The symptoms differ, depending on the area of the body infected. In pulmonary TB, common symptoms are a cough with sputum production (sometimes with blood), shortness of breath and chest pain. There are also general symptoms, such as fever in the evening, night sweats, loss of weight, loss of appetite, fatigue and muscle weakness. People living with HIV or suffering from other conditions that lead to a weak immune system (e.g. diabetes, immunosuppressant therapy) are at much higher risk of developing the disease.
- Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is a form of the disease which is resistant to two of the most potent anti-TB drugs. MDR-TB is a man-made phenomenon that emerges as a result of inadequate treatment of TB and/or poor airborne infection control in health care facilities and congregate settings. Extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) is a form of MDR-TB which is resistant to the most important first and second-line drugs and has very limited chances for cure.
- TB can affect everyone. However, it is seen most frequently among young adults in the eastern part of Europe and among migrants and the elderly native population in the western countries. TB is particularly linked to social determinants, such as migration, imprisonment and social marginalization. Every year in the WHO European Region, about 10 000 children (under 15 years of age) are reported as having TB. In Western Europe 41% of the 2761 children who fall sick with tuberculosis are younger than five years of age.
- In the European Region, it is estimated that annually there are about 418 000 new TB patients and 60 000 deaths due to TB, out of which, in 2010, 309 648 patients were reported as newly detected and 38 941 deaths were notified, the vast majority of them from Eastern and Central part of the Region (Figure 1).
- A decrease in notification from 40 to 34 TB cases per 100 000 population was recorded in the Region in the period 2005–2010. Despite this encouraging trend, notification rates in 18 high priority countries remained almost eight times higher (69 per 100 000 population) than in the rest of the Region (8 per 100 000 population).
- TB in the Region is becoming more and more difficult to treat. Over the last five years, treatment success rates have continued to decrease, falling from 72% and 50% in 2005 to 69% and 48% in 2010 among new and previously treated TB cases, respectively. The treatment success rate among MDR-TB patients was 56% in 2010 (Figure 2).
- TB is a leading killer among people living with HIV and this deadly combination is increasing in the Region, so timely detection and appropriate treatment are extremely important. Almost 16 000 out of an estimated 20 000 HIV co-infected TB patients were detected in 2010 and only 70% of them were offered antiretroviral treatment. The prevalence of HIV among TB cases increased from 3.4% in 2008 to 5.4% in 2010.
- Every year, around 81 000 individuals fall sick with MDR-TB in the WHO European Region. Due to limited access to diagnosis, only 29 000 of them were diagnosed in 2010; furthermore, 15 out of the 27 high MDR-TB burden countries in the world are in the Region. A recent study made in the Region shows the highest rate of MDR-TB documented in the world among new cases (32%) and previously treated cases (76 %).

- In 2010, out of 7500 XDR-TB cases that are estimated to occur annually in the Region, only 212 cases were detected due to limited diagnostic capacity.
- In response to this alarming public health threat, the WHO Regional Director has established a Special Project to Prevent and Combat M/XDR-TB in the WHO European Region. In close consultation with experts, partners and communities, the WHO Regional Office for Europe has developed a five-year Consolidated Action Plan, which was endorsed by all the Member States of the Region¹. The Action Plan aims to contain the spread of drug-resistant TB by achieving universal access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of M/XDR-TB in all Member States of the WHO European Region by 2015.
- The WHO Regional Office for Europe, in collaboration with other partners, is providing support to Member States in prevention and control of TB and M/XDR-TB. This includes setting norms and standards, providing technical assistance, fostering partnerships, capacity building, creating and disseminating evidence, monitoring and evaluation.
- For further information, please visit <http://www.euro.who.int/tb>

Figure 1. Notification rate of new and previously treated TB cases per 100 000 population, WHO European Region, 2010².



Figure 2: Treatment outcome among new, previously treated and MDR-TB cohorts, WHO European Region in 2010.



¹ The Consolidated Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Multidrug- and Extensively Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis in the Who European Region, 2011-2015. World Health Organization, 2011. ISBN 978-92-890-0246-2

² European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO Regional Office for Europe. Tuberculosis surveillance and monitoring in Europe, report 2012. Stockholm: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2012. ISBN 978-92-9193-335-8