



Innovative Medicines Initiative

**For immediate release**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**UNITING EUROPEAN RESEARCHERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE**

**IMI LAUNCHES €223.7 MILLION PROGRAMME FOR COMBATTING ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE**

- **Major threat of antibiotic-resistant bacteria causes 25 000 deaths in EU every year.**
- **IMI offers historic opportunity to speed up research for new antibiotics.**
- **IMI calls public and private research teams to collaborate and share knowledge.**

**BRUSSELS, 24 May 2012** – Today the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) is launching a **€223.7 million** programme which will see leading academics and five major pharmaceutical companies join forces to tackle antimicrobial resistance and to speed up the delivery of much-needed new antibiotics to patients.

Antibiotic resistance poses a major health threat to society and despite the recognised need for new antibiotics, the reality is that only two new classes of antibiotics have been brought to market in the last 30 years. As well as significant scientific challenges and complex regulatory requirements, antibacterial drug development is no longer a financially viable option for a pharmaceutical company as the cost of development is often greater than the potential return on investment. As a result of this, too few companies remain dedicated to addressing this essential societal need. If this situation continues with no intervention, we risk leaving society in a situation where prescribers will have few, if any, therapeutic options to treat bacterial infections. To avoid a real public health challenge it is essential that action be taken now.

IMI's programme is part of the [European Commission's Action Plan against the rising threats from Antimicrobial Resistance](#), which was launched in November last year. Today sees the launch of the first set of projects to be funded in this area. Announced today in IMI's 6<sup>th</sup> Call for proposals, a joint budget of up to **€223.7 million** is foreseen for the projects (€109 million of IMI funding + €114.7 million through in kind contributions by participating EFPIA companies).

This major programme on antimicrobials (which is estimated to utilise up to €600 million in funding over the next 7 years) offers an antidote to the fragmentation and lack of incentives which are currently holding back antibiotics research. The initial projects will focus on building and training networks of researchers, facilitating and increasing the exchange of research data, and improving the efficiency of clinical trials on new antibiotics through better laboratory tests and better trial design. The novel trial design will be applied in clinical trials testing experimental antibiotics to fight particularly resistant bacteria. For instance, trials will target the notorious methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), which causes difficult-to-treat infections that are of particular concern in hospitalised patients. In addition, new methods will be explored to improve antibiotic uptake by a specific group of ('Gram-negative') resistant bacterial pathogens. Antibiotic uptake is the key challenge in the development of drugs against these life threatening infections.

Commenting on the latest IMI call, **Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Máire Geoghegan-Quinn** said: "Antimicrobial resistance is one of the biggest health challenges we face. It puts lives at risk and severely disrupts hospital services. The research from this initiative will result in much-needed new antimicrobials and improve our arsenal in the fight against dangerous superbugs."

**Richard Bergström, Director-General of EFPIA** said: "Our researchers and the scientific community have realised that we can only deal with this urgent threat by working together and pooling our knowledge. IMI is perfectly suited for such open innovation. And by co-funding clinical trials, policy makers in Europe have created a strong incentive for companies and investors to come back to this field of research."

**Michel Goldman, IMI's Executive Director** commented: "This is a historic opportunity for Europe to overcome a public health problem which threatens millions of lives worldwide. For researchers in universities, hospitals and small and medium-sized enterprises it is also a unique opportunity to speed up their research in the area of antimicrobial resistance, as the collaboration will give them access to the knowledge and expertise of the pharmaceutical industry."





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Investigators interested in becoming involved in this exciting initiative are being encouraged to register for one of **IMI's webinar sessions** to be held on **24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> May** or to meet the NewDrugs4BagBugs (ND4BB) team in person at the **IMI Stakeholder Forum on 30 May in Brussels**. These meetings will provide an opportunity to learn more about the projects, meet potential new collaborators and find out how to get involved. Full details can be found on the IMI website ([www.imi.europa.eu](http://www.imi.europa.eu))

### **Simplified rules and improved funding for project participants**

The participants in IMI projects will benefit from the administrative simplifications and changes in the IMI financial rules that were announced in December 2011. The improvements have reduced the administrative burden for participants and make participation more attractive from a financial point of view. In addition, IMI has optimised the application procedure and the evaluation process, resulting in a faster time to grant.

#### **More information:**

- 6<sup>th</sup> Call for proposals: <http://www.imi.europa.eu/content/6th-call-2012>
- Simplified rules and improved funding: [www.imi.europa.eu/content/documents#grant\\_agreement](http://www.imi.europa.eu/content/documents#grant_agreement)

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#### **Press contact:**

Kim De Rijck – External Relations Manager  
Tel: +32 484 89 62 27 - [kim.derijck@imi.europa.eu](mailto:kim.derijck@imi.europa.eu)

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#### **Facts & Figures on Antimicrobial resistance**

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a major global public health threat and a problem in both humans and animals. Resistance can also spread from animals to humans through the food chain or direct contact. Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MSRA) is a major threat worldwide.

In Europe, 25 000 deaths were reported in 2007 as a result of AMR. This clinical burden is associated with soaring treatment and societal costs, with the cost of AMR being estimated at around €1.5 billion per year in Europe ([ECDC/EMA joint technical report "The bacterial challenge: time to react", 2009](#)).

Despite the recognised need for new antimicrobials for clinical use, the reality is that only two new classes of antibiotics have been brought to market in the last 30 years and many drug developers have left the field.

Key barriers to the development and delivery of effective antibiotics are:

- 1) Discovery and development of novel antibacterial agents is scientifically challenging;
- 2) Substantial regulatory challenges to the introduction of novel antibacterial agents;
- 3) Low return on investment relative to other medicines making it an unattractive area for drug developers therefore limiting the future antibiotic pipeline.

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#### **About IMI**

IMI is the world's largest public-private partnership in health care. IMI is improving the environment for pharmaceutical innovation in Europe by engaging and supporting networks of industrial and academic experts in collaborative research projects. The European Union contributes €1 billion to the IMI research programme, which is matched by in kind contributions worth at least another €1 billion from the member companies of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA).

The Innovative Medicines Initiative is currently funding 30 projects, many of which are already producing impressive results. The projects all address major bottlenecks which will lead to accelerate the development of safer and more effective treatments for patients.

More info: [www.imi.europa.eu](http://www.imi.europa.eu)

