

A new toolkit to support National TB Programmes in the EU and EEA

Ending TB by 2030: what needs to be done?

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control data for 2018 show TB notification rates of 10.2 per 100,000 in the European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) countries.

Although the rates have been declining steadily, more action needs to be taken if we are to meet WHO “End TB Strategy” targets by 2030 – in low- as well as higher-incidence countries. This will require a robust and coherent response.

There are significant variations with the progress of developing and implementing national strategic plans and guidelines across the EU/EEA. The WHO and some European member states have previously published a toolkit, aimed at providing the methodological approaches to draft national strategic plans. However, more targeted and supportive approaches are needed which include bold and European context-specific goals to support delivery.

To support this vital objective, we have produced a European TB Strategy Toolkit, commissioned by CHAFEA, which is freely available and accessible to all.

A TB Strategy Toolkit for European Countries

The Toolkit supports national TB plan development or improvement by providing up-to-date guidance on core components of a TB Action Plan or TB Strategy. It consolidates the latest EU/EEA-focused evidence and expert opinions from 31 EU/EEA Member States.

It serves as a practical instrument for developing country-specific TB Strategies or TB Action Plans and to facilitate TB strategy implementation drawing upon principles from the previously published WHO generic toolkit, the Collaborative TB Strategy for England and The National TB Plan for The Netherlands. This TB Strategy Toolkit aims to:

- Provide a point-of-reference for EU and EEA-specific priority areas for intervention to improve TB control and prevention;
- Support national level planning and resource allocation based on peer-reviewed evidence and primary data;
- Provide support for mobilising high-level commitment and for engaging with stakeholder groups

Getting and using your copy of the Toolkit

The European TB Strategy Toolkit is a practical tool which is aimed at all professionals dealing with TB, to inform the development of national strategic TB plans and to move countries and Europe towards TB elimination.

It is expected that the Toolkit will be validated further in the European context for which it was designed, for example in settings which do and do not have an existing TB Action Plan or TB Strategy, in settings of low to medium-high TB incidence, and in geographically varied regions (e.g. East and West EU/EEA settings). The Toolkit is expected to be piloted in different settings.

You can download a copy of the toolkit via our website e-detecttb.eu. Please email dominik.zenner@ucl.ac.uk for further information.



How we produced the Toolkit: the collaborative process

The developmental process and content of the E-DETECT TB Strategy Toolkit focused on prioritising key areas of TB control and was underpinned by a portfolio of evidence, within the context of the EU/EEA. The evidence portfolio consisted of:

- A pan-European survey of national TB Control Plans and TB Strategies, including prioritisation of action areas and barriers to the implementation of interventions for TB control and prevention
- A systematic review of systematic reviews of the evidence base for interventions to control and prevent TB
- A systematic review and evidence synthesis of barriers and enablers to the implementation of policies, strategies and guidelines for TB control and prevention
- Expert opinion from EU/EEA programme representatives and national focal points obtained during a key Stakeholder meeting, convened in October 2018 in Leiden, the Netherlands, and follow-up dialogue with stakeholders.

We collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders including the official National Focal Points and TB control programme leads from all EU/EEA, European Commission, European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC), WHO Europe, other TB experts and civil society representatives, academia, and the non-governmental and civil society sector.

How we produced the Toolkit: Building consensus and Findings

Despite the availability of WHO's methodological guide to developing a national strategic plan from 2015, findings from our pan-European survey identified substantial gaps in strategy development and implementation, in that 14 of 31 EU/EEA member states did not have a TB control strategy in place.

After considering the findings from the evidence portfolio, experts agreed on nine core components for a National TB Plan or TB Strategy:

- Raising awareness of TB amongst health professionals and other providers
- Targeted BCG vaccination
- Improve multidrug-resistant TB care and prevention
- Contact tracing
- Management of HIV-TB coinfection
- Tackling TB in underserved groups
- Targeted TB screening in high risk groups
- Surveillance and monitoring
- Training and developing a specialist TB workforce

Of these core components three were worked on further, these were:

- Raising awareness of TB in the community and primary care
- Reaching under-served groups
- Targeted TB screening in high risk groups

These areas were interrogated further not because they are more important than the other core components but because of the practical barriers to deliver them. These three components, and possible solutions, were discussed at the October 2018 meeting in Leiden and are covered in more detail in the Toolkit.

Decision-making as to which core components to include in a national strategy or action plan should be guided by local epidemiology and the local knowledge of stakeholders of their communities. Data-driven approaches which utilise national and sub-national epidemiological analysis of TB case registries for routine and enhanced surveillance are explored in the Toolkit.

DISCLAIMER: The content of this document represents the view of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European Commission and/or the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (CHAFEA) or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information that it contains.

