

A European TB Strategy Toolkit: supporting the development and strengthening of national TB programmes in European Union and European Economic Area member states

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Introduction

Under the auspices of the global TB strategy and post-2015 milestones and goals, including TB elimination in low incidence settings, a coordinated and coherent approach to national TB control is fundamental to delivery.

A more targeted and supportive approach is required to ensure that EU/EEA member states develop evidence-based national action plans or strategies. These should include ambitious, context-specific goals, which account for EU/EEA-specific TB epidemiology and some of the structural, financial and political barriers.

TB incidence continues to decline across the EU and EEA and this can in part be attributed to timely diagnosis and prompt initiation of treatment of infectious TB cases.

Despite this, projected trends suggest that an intensification of TB control efforts is needed to improve access to high quality care, which will primarily improve health outcomes for treated patients, and indirectly achieve public health impact.

EU member states are affected by changes in migration patterns into and within EU/EEA settings, bringing increasing social and political impact. Programmes and interventions which support integrated care and prevention and target immediate health and social needs highlights the importance of targeted screening programmes to identify TB and LTBI in high risk groups.

Aim

This TB Strategy Toolkit aims to assist national TB plan development or refinement by providing up-to-date guidance on core components of a TB Action Plan or Strategy by bringing together the latest EU/EEA-focused evidence and expert opinion.

Methods

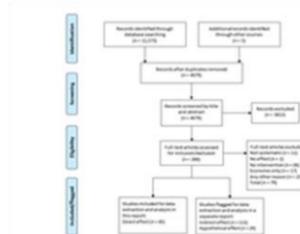
Survey of plans and strategies

Evidence review

Expert meeting

TB strategy toolkit

Online survey of 31 EU/EEA member states



Effectiveness of interventions and barriers to implementation

National TB programme leads and other TB experts



Based on evidence, expert views and experience in EU/EEA countries

Results



Figure 2. Core components of national TB strategy (size of cogs unrelated to scale of problem)



Figure 3. Priority areas for TB Action Plans or TB Strategies.

The option number relate to those described here. This plotted options which are relevant to TB control and prevention and ease of implementation on a continuous scale. 1. BCG vaccination; 2. Contact tracing and outbreak investigation; 3. Raising awareness of TB in the community and primary care; 4. Establishing and managing local TB control boards; 5. HIV-TB co-infection in high risk groups; 6. Multidrug-resistant TB in high risk groups; 7. TB control in prisons; 8. Reaching under-served groups; 9. Screening for active TB in migrant from high incidence settings; 10. Targeted screening for active TB in high risk groups; 11. Latent TB infection screening in high risk groups; 12. Training and developing a specialist TB workforce; 13. Staffing and expertise for national TB surveillance; 14. Publishing and disseminating guidelines; 15. Ensuring continuity of TB drug supplies; 16. External quality assurance for laboratory services; 17. Introducing and implementing new tools for TB control; 18. Implementing electronic TB case registries.

FOUR options were selected as they are both relevant to TB control and prevention action plans and strategies but difficult to implement: 3. Raising awareness of TB in the community and primary care; 8. Reaching under-served groups; 9. Screening for active TB in migrant from high incidence settings; 11. Latent TB infection screening in high risk groups

Discussion

National strategic planning is a core component of a national TB programme and provides the over-arching framework for the operationalisation of key activities and functions to tackle TB control and prevention priorities.

This TB Strategy Toolkit focuses on helping to prioritise core components of TB control, such as reaching out to under-served groups, targeted screening for active TB and latent TB infection in high risk groups, implementing electronic TB case registries and tackling MDR-TB care and control. This TB Strategy Toolkit should:

1. provide a point-of-reference for EU and EEA-specific priority areas of intervention for TB control and prevention to facilitate implementation
2. support national level planning and resource allocation based on peer-reviewed evidence and primary data
3. provide support for mobilising high-level political commitment and for engaging with stakeholder groups

As part of their national TB strategy, each Member State will need a consolidated approach to stimulate actors and key implementers who are pivotal to implement locally-relevant solutions in areas where there is high unmet need and where greatest reductions in incidence can be achieved. The development of national plans are dependent on well-budgeted plans to strengthen cases for national and international financing. Involving all stakeholders with budgetary responsibilities for TB prevention and care, including social protection, national surveillance, and research will support the mobilisation of resources, upon which to implement the goals and vision of a national strategic plan.