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# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Nobel Laureate and UK Chief Medical Officer join major EASAC-led initiative on overcoming stagnation in development of new antimicrobial drugs**

**European science academies believe impending disaster can only be averted by radical new approaches.**

As part of a major new initiative, the European Academies' Science Advisory Council (EASAC) is co-organising a workshop on "Antimicrobial Drug Discovery, Greater Steps Ahead" together with the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina. The meeting will take place in Hannover, Germany, on 6-8 March 2014, and is partly supported by the Volkswagen Stiftung. The agenda includes, among others, contributions by Nobel Laureate Professor Ada Yonath (Israel) and Professor Dame Sally Davies, the UK Chief Medical Officer.

The workshop will attempt a radically different approach to antimicrobial drug research and will explore new paths by bringing together a group of outstanding European scientists who are not specialists in antibiotic research. Together with a group of selected experts in the field they will spend an intensive and relatively unstructured 2-day brainstorm seeking new impetus and direction for antimicrobial treatment. To foster a totally open discussion during this encounter, scientists employed by the pharmaceutical industry are not invited to this workshop.

On numerous occasions, EASAC has voiced concern over the stagnation in the development of new antimicrobial drugs and the dramatic increase in the number and distribution worldwide of pathogens resistant to antimicrobial drugs. EASAC agrees with the Chief Medical Officer in the United Kingdom that the antibiotic crisis

“poses a catastrophic threat”. Dame Sally Davies has also stated that she considers the antibiotic crisis to be a greater threat to mankind than climate change. Worldwide, the resistance of microorganisms to the ‘miracle drugs’ antibiotics has increased to such an extent that even patients suffering from relatively simple infections sometimes cannot be treated anymore.

In addition, the latest G8 Science Ministers Statement of May 2013 focused on the global challenge of antimicrobial resistance and the World Health Organisation (WHO) expressed concern that this rapidly growing problem may impede progress towards the Millennium Development Goals 2015. The crisis is being exacerbated by a relative lack of innovation in generating new antibiotics creating the danger of returning to a pre-antibiotic era.

Jos van der Meer, President of EASAC, said: “The National Science Academies of the EU, united in EASAC, feel that it is time to act and time for thinking-outside-the-box. We have therefore organised this brainstorming workshop. It will result in a statement identifying key research priorities, addressing funders of research, particularly in Europe. It will also address the research community and public policy-makers who have roles in supporting the environment for basic research and its translation into innovation.”

*EASAC is formed by the national science academies of the EU Member States, to collaborate in giving advice to European policy-makers. EASAC provides a means for the collective voice of European Science to be heard. Through EASAC, the academies work together to provide independent expert, evidence-based advice about the scientific aspects of European policies to those who make or influence policy within the European institutions.*

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