

Take control to ensure access to medicines in the EU

Joint call of public health organizations ahead of the European Parliament elections in June 2024

When you are ill, you want to receive the care and treatment you need. Health is everyone's most valuable asset. However, proper access to medicines is increasingly under pressure, even in the European Union. Prices of medicines are rising rapidly, particularly for innovative new treatments. As a result, treatments for life-threatening infections and diseases are becoming unaffordable for European citizens and unsustainable for national healthcare systems.

Need for urgent measures

Today's alarming reality is the result of an inefficient and costly research and development (R&D) model that rewards medicines with fixed-term monopolies (patents), encouraging excessively high prices and profits. Moreover, governments do not yet attach appropriate conditions to public financing of R&D that could guarantee fairer prices. The EU must take urgent measures to ensure that people can afford the medicines they need.

Key principles

A group of public health organizations from across the EU are calling on current and prospective Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to take the opportunity and responsibility to guarantee access to affordable medicines for all. While the European Parliament has just adopted its position on the reform of the European Pharmaceutical legislation, we are raising its attention to safeguard the key principles below to ensure access to life-saving treatments.

Enhance affordable access

As health is a fundamental need, it is established as a human right in international and European conventions. This means that governments are responsible and accountable for ensuring the conditions to achieve optimal access to healthcare for all. This includes the availability and affordability of safe, effective and high-quality essential medicines.

→ Policymakers should promote efficient and transparent pricing, payment and procurement policies to improve the affordability and cost-effectiveness of medicines and the sustainability of national healthcare systems.

Promote greater transparency

Transparency and good governance of the pharmaceutical system are critical to enhance access to affordable medicines. Pharmaceutical companies get a monopoly on new treatments, which gives them the ability to ask any price they want. The net prices negotiated for these products are rarely, if ever, made public. The Covid-19 pandemic has painfully shown the disproportionate power of these companies. This leads to limited and unequal access to life-saving medicines, even if these were partly developed with taxpayers' money.

→ Transparency on R&D costs, disclosure of net prices and conditions to public funding of R&D are crucial to rebalance the negotiating power between pharmaceutical companies and governments. This is needed to ensure fair pricing and public return on public investment.

Foster global equity

Equity should be at the core of European and global access to medicines policies, which means unhindered, fair, equitable and timely access to safe, effective, quality and affordable medical products.

→ Governments should ensure that the required intellectual property, knowledge and data to produce medical countermeasures are globally shared and foster regional production to increase national sovereignty and self-reliance of low- and middle-income countries.

→ Global equity, along with solidarity, should be firmly anchored in all legislative proposals.

List of signatories

Access to Medicines Ireland

Asociación por un Acceso Justo al Medicamento (Spain)

Association of European Cancer Leagues (EU)

Consumers' Association 'The Quality of Life' (Greece)

European AIDS Treatment Group (EU)

European Fair Pricing Network (EU)

Health Action International (Netherlands)

Pharmaceutical Accountability Foundation (Netherlands)

Romanian Association Against AIDS (Romania)

Salud por Derecho (Spain)

Universities Allied for Essential Medicines Europe (EU)

Wemos (Netherlands)

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