How to make medicines affordable?

Looking at COVID-19 and beyond

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted how fragile our health care systems are when it comes to fighting deadly diseases. Effective vaccines and treatments to overcome COVID-19 are urgently needed. To do so, the EU has allocated millions of euros to support research activities.

More generally, the EU is spending a fortune on health research. Even though public research is paid with taxpayers' money, the price tags of medicines can still be sky-high.

To make sure society reaps the rewards of its investment,
we need to re-think how we finance health research.

The situation now

What it needs to become

How the money is handed out

1

Both the EU and national governments use taxpayers' money to fund health research. A blank cheque is usually given to research with no conditions to ensure affordable prices.

Funding is provided only if the beneficiary pledges the price will be fair for society. Alternatively, generic production could be made easy, by allowing pharma companies to market sooner a cheaper medicine.

Consumers get their medicine

2

Consumers end up overpaying for their medicines: once as taxpayers, and again by footing a high bill at the pharmacy. Prices can be prohibitively expensive.

Medicines are reasonably priced so healthcare systems can reimburse them more easily, reducing consumers' costs.

Let's re-think the way we finance health research, both for COVID-19 treatments and all other diseases.