

Contact: Ophélie Spanneut: +32 (0)2 789 24 01
Date: 11/10/2011
Reference: PR 2011/036

New proposal on prescription medicines: EU consumers still not reassured

Today the European Commission published revised legislation on pharmaceutical industry information to patients on prescription medicines. BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation, acknowledges the efforts made by the Commission to improve the original proposals, but remains concerned that patients could be potentially exposed to some forms of promotional information.

The initial 2008 proposal opened the door to the advertising of prescription medicines in the EU. Facing strong opposition from the public health community, the massive redrafting of the text by the European Parliament and the Council's reluctance to even open discussions on it, the Commission decided to revise. These new proposals are in our view a first tangible effect of the shift of competence on pharmaceutical policies from the Directorate responsible for industry to the Directorate responsible for health (DG SANCO).

Gone are the most detrimental provisions for consumers such as printed communication. The Commission has introduced some positive elements on the safety of medicines. But there are still a number of provisions which could leave room for 'disguised advertising'.

We are particularly concerned by the following:

- The possibility for companies to decide which medicines and which diseases they will provide information on. This would introduce a bias in favour of the most profitable medicines and against non-drug therapies.
- The possible derogations from the general principle of pre-approved information by competent authorities will lead to inequalities in the quality of information consumers receive in different member states.
- The distribution from doctors' surgeries and pharmacies of brochures and other printed material prepared by industry.
- The approval and monitoring system will be very burdensome and costly. If the European Medicines Agency does not validate the material within 60 days, the information submitted will be considered approved. But what will happen if they are suddenly overloaded by material to assess?

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC commented:

"We urge European legislators to guarantee the consumer's right to high quality and unbiased information on health, medicines and diseases. The ball is again in their court to better clarify the distinction between information and promotional communication from a commercially interested party".

ENDS

BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation
+32 2 789 24 01 - press@beuc.eu
Want to know more about BEUC? Visit www.beuc.eu
www.twitter.com/beuctweet

 [EC register for interest representatives: identification number 9505781573-45](#) 