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Pharma group Aspen accepts to cut prices of cancer drugs

BEUC applauds the EU Commission for achieving that pharma company Aspen is now ready to lower the price of six anti-cancer drugs by on average 73% in Europe for the next 10 years. [Today's commitments](#) come after the EU Commission opened an antitrust investigation in May 2017 into whether Aspen breached EU antitrust rules' ban on dominant companies imposing unfair prices.

BEUC, representing the interests of consumers in 32 European countries, [intervened](#) in the European Commission's case as a third party. This intervention took place after Italian consumer group [Altroconsumo](#) – a member of BEUC – initially alerted the Italian competition authority about this case.

BEUC Director General Monique Goyens said:

"These commitments show that high prices for off-patent anti-cancer drugs are unjustified and have no place in the EU. Sky-high prices put patients' lives at risk and cause serious financial harm to healthcare systems. These commitments will rightly benefit patients and healthcare systems as soon as the EU Commission renders them binding, without years of legal wrangling in the courts."

Background

Aspen manufactures and markets life-saving drugs containing the active pharmaceutical ingredients chlorambucil, melphalan, mercaptopurine, tioguanine and busulfan. They are used in the treatment of some forms of cancer (e.g. hematologic tumours), especially among children and elderly people, and are sold under multiple brand names. These drugs do not have a direct therapeutic substitute and, although their patents expired long ago, there are hardly any generic versions available either. Aspen acquired these medicines after their patent protection had expired.

On 29 September 2016, the Italian Antitrust Authority already [fined Aspen 5 million euros](#) for abusing its dominant position and fixing unfair prices for life-saving cancer drugs following a complaint from BEUC Italian member [Altroconsumo](#). As a result of Aspen's unjustified practices, the anti-cancer drugs reappeared in the market with a price increase of up to 1,500%. Being the only supplier of this type of drugs, Aspen Pharma abused its position.

ENDS

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