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EU unveils ambitious Pharma Strategy to make medicines affordable and available for consumers

The EU Commission [published its Pharmaceutical Strategy today](#), aiming to ensure patients timely access to safe and affordable treatment and to support medical innovation and pharma competitiveness. The Strategy brings momentum to effectively address medicine shortages and high prices, a long-standing issue in the EU.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

“Everyone should have access to safe and effective treatment, at the right time and at affordable prices. Today’s strategy provides a solid basis for the EU and Member States to make this happen everywhere in Europe.”

On availability:

“Medicine shortages are sadly nothing new, and the Covid-19 pandemic has only made the situation worse. Consumer groups report that shortages disrupt consumers’ lives in many ways. Patients may, for example, see their disease get worse, face higher costs for alternative treatments or have to travel abroad to buy their medicines.

“It is great news that the EU aims to secure medicines to patients when and where they need them. We strongly support the Commission’s plans to address shortages through stricter supply obligations for the industry, enhanced transparency of stocks and better coordination between Member States.”

On prices:

“Skyrocketing prices of medicines are impeding and threatening consumer access in the EU. It is high time the current system to incentivise drug research and development is revisited, to ensure that pharma companies market new treatments and that they are also affordable. The Strategy rightly flags the need to shed light on research and development costs, which is crucial for fair medicines pricing.”

Background

[The Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe](#) aims to “ensure patients have access to innovative and affordable medicines and to support the competitiveness, innovative capacity and sustainability of the EU's pharmaceutical industry”. It is articulated around four pillars:

- Ensuring **access to affordable medicines** for patients and addressing unmet medical needs.
- Supporting **competitiveness, innovation and sustainability** of the EU's pharmaceutical industry and the development of high quality, safe, effective, and greener medicines.
- Enhancing **crisis preparedness and response** mechanisms and addressing security of supply.
- Ensuring a **strong EU voice in the world**, by promoting a high level of quality, efficacy, and safety standards.

More BEUC info

- Proposal for a '[Consumer-centred EU pharmaceutical strategy](#)', Sept 2020
- '[Addressing medicines shortages during the covid-19 pandemic and beyond: the consumer check list](#)', May 2020
- Press release, '[COVID-19 is a wake-up call to end sky-high medicine prices](#)', April 2020
- '[Manifesto for the 2019 European elections](#)', Feb 2019.

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