



# FACTSHEET

## Health Technology Assessment

### What is it?

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) is the scientific analysis into the added value of treatments such as medicines, vaccines, medical devices or surgeries.

National and regional HTA authorities provide Member States with data to help them choose which therapy to reimburse and avoid investing in treatments which have only marginal benefits for patients. There are about 50 of such authorities grouped under the European network for HTA ([EUnetHTA](#)), established in 2009.

### Why is HTA necessary for consumers?

HTA leads to wiser public spending, because it performs the background check that reimbursement authorities can base themselves on to decide what to pay for. This benefits all society as it channels money towards more innovative treatments and research.

HTA is about making sure consumers get value for their money, whether they buy a pregnancy test at the pharmacy or when they receive cancer treatment at the hospital.

### What is the state of play?

Unfortunately, HTA is not working well.

#### **More and more drugs get approved but with low or even uncertain value.**

These are used by patients and many are reimbursed by healthcare systems. For example, in 2009-2013 the EU Medicines Agency authorised new cancer drugs in most cases without clear evidence that they improved patients' quality of life and their life expectancy.<sup>1</sup>

**Some medicines' price tags are too high for what they offer.** An increasing number of medicines do not offer sufficient benefits compared to what already exists but still, industry asks for very high prices. For instance, some HTA bodies concluded the price asked for Orkambi - a drug used to treat a severe lung condition - was too high for what it was offering. Still, it reached the market.

**The current system creates inequalities around Europe.** Consumers who live in Member States with a capacity to assess the added value of treatments have a greater likelihood of accessing effective medicines<sup>2</sup> They have advantages compared to those who live in countries where such a system is not in place, or where authorities assess only some health technologies.

Belgian consumer group Test Achats/Test Aankoop tested the effectiveness of about 6,500 medicines. 11% could not be proven to be effective and 2% were to be avoided.

*Test Santé Magazine n°132, 2016*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28978555>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eunetha.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/WP7-Activity-1-Report.pdf>

