

MEDICINES SHORTAGES

during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

THE CONSUMER
checklist

Drug shortages are a major public health threat in Europe and affect supplies of all kind, from painkillers to cancer treatments. This is a longstanding problem, but the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted even more the weak links in the supply chain.

Here are BEUC's asks for the EU to ensure consumers get the medicines they need when they need them.

URGENT COVID-19 MEASURES TO ROLL OUT:

- 1. BEEF UP THE EU INFORMATION SHARING SYSTEM** so Member States can rapidly exchange data about missing medicines and available stocks.
- 2. PRIORITISE STOCKPILING OF ESSENTIAL MEDICINES AT THE EU LEVEL** over national approaches, with the Commission transparently allocating stocks to countries in short supply.
- 3. MAKE JOINT PURCHASES EFFECTIVE** so governments can buy medicines at lower prices in a timely manner.
- 4. IMPROVE GLOBAL COOPERATION** to make medicines available everywhere, when patients need them.

BEYOND COVID-19:

- 1 COMMON TERMINOLOGY**
A general definition and criteria of what constitutes drug shortages should be included in EU pharmaceutical law. Making sure everyone is on the same page will make coordination and joint action more effective.
- 2 BETTER PREVENTION AND MONITORING**
Competent authorities should require pharmaceutical companies to submit drug shortage prevention plans, so they can identify risks and promote mitigation measures.
- 3 STRENGTHENING SANCTIONS... AND APPLYING THEM**
Member States should ensure that sanctions are dissuasive when companies do not comply with supply obligations – and apply them.
- 4 EARLY NOTIFICATION**
All Member States must oblige pharmaceutical companies to notify them of drug shortages at least two months in advance, as the EU law says.
- 5 EASY CONSUMER REPORTING**
Medicine users are the main victims of drug shortages. It should be possible and easy for consumers to report shortages to competent authorities, so we better understand the health and societal impact.
- 6 EFFECTIVE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION**
Consumers must be timely informed about shortages, their starting date, duration, and alternative treatments. The European Medicines Agency's listing of shortages should be turned into a comprehensive, user-friendly EU-wide database.
- 7 ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTION MODELS**
The European Commission should map alternative production models, by public hospitals for instance. The EU should then promote best practices to increase the availability of medicines.

See our full position at: <https://bit.ly/BEUCshortages>

