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EU Commission plans to improve medicines' availability for patients

Today the European Commission [published](#) its Critical Medicines Act which is set to tackle shortages by addressing supply chain vulnerabilities, including through diversification and international partnerships. BEUC considers the proposal goes in the right direction tackling shortages but should go further to ensure consumers pay a fair price.

The proposal foresees:

- EU funding and State Aid to boost the EU pharmaceutical sector's competitiveness and reduce dependencies on China and India for active substances.
- Promoting that tender winners of public procurement will have to prove their supply chain's strength on top of providing affordable prices.
- It will also facilitate joint procurement beyond cross-border health threats, by allowing Member States to buy other types of medicines together. For example, for rare diseases.

Agustín Reyna, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"When consumers need antibiotics, insulin or cardiovascular medicines, they must be able to find them easily in pharmacies. This is exactly what this Act aims to do which is good news for consumers who still face shortages in many European countries.

"If pharmaceutical companies are to get public money, this must be made conditional to ensure medicines are both available and affordable for consumers. They shouldn't have to pay twice: as taxpayers and at the register. We are happy that it will be easier for Member States to buy medicines together and get a better deal for rare diseases medicines which can be extremely expensive. We also expect to see this in practice for other innovative treatments, such as cancer medicines for which companies ask thousands of euros.

BEUC, The European Consumer Organisation

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Background

Shortages are a major public health issue in Europe causing problems for consumers in need of their medicines and imposing additional costs in times of high inflation. Between 2023 and 2024, [40% of surveyed households had to deal with shortages, among which 53% faced health issues, and 27% additional costs.](#)

Medicines included in the scope of the Critical Medicines Act's chapters on supply security are included in [the Union List of critical medicines](#). The chapter on joint procurement also covers medicines for which there are specific accessibility challenges, for example due to small volumes.

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