10 take-away messages

Many people struggle to get the medicines they need. High costs and drug shortages affect European patients – and are a huge strain on people's private and the public purse. What is more, an increasing number of new medicines, sold at high prices, do not offer enough benefits compared to those which already exist on the market.

The following messages emerged from the conference BEUC organised together with the **Portuguese Ministry of Health** and the **Portuguese National Authority of Medicines and Health Products.**

1. PUBLIC RETURN ON PUBLIC INVESTMENT: MYTH OR REALITY?

- ✓ **Need to improve transparency on the R&D costs:** If high price of medicines results from high cost of R&D, these costs should be transparent. This is even more important if the public contributes to the development of new treatments through medical research and clinical trials.

- ✓ **National and EU players allocating public funds for research must be accountable towards society:** Both public and private funds are necessary for developing medicines. Yet, today public money spent on R&D is not tracked. Institutions should allocate public funds under strict conditions, which the company would have to meet when setting the price.

- ✓ **Need to ensure that medical research addresses public health needs:** To ensure that funds allocated to medical research meet public health needs, Ministries of Research, responsible for allocating public funds, should step up collaboration with Ministries of Health, in charge of negotiating the price of medicines. The same dialogue should apply also at EU level, between European Commission's Directorates Generals for Health and Research & Innovation.

2. HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

- ✓ **Consumers need to get good value for the money they spend on health treatments:** Today, many medicines that consumers take do not prove to be efficient or, even worse, should not be taken at all. This is neither acceptable nor sustainable. That's where Health technology assessment (HTA) can help to make sure that only efficient medicines, surgeries or medical devices with an added value reach the market.

- ✓ **A strong European HTA mechanism can benefit all countries:** Today some countries in Europe do not have a robust HTA mechanism in place, thus they cannot take informed decisions when negotiating medicines' price.

- ✓ **An EU HTA mechanism must be independent and transparent:** Governments and ultimately consumers would benefit from a harmonised HTA only if the new system will have enough firewalls to protect from industry's influence. In other words, if the new mechanism will act in public health interest, it must be public to secure accountability and trust in the process.

3. WHAT IS INNOVATION WORTH?

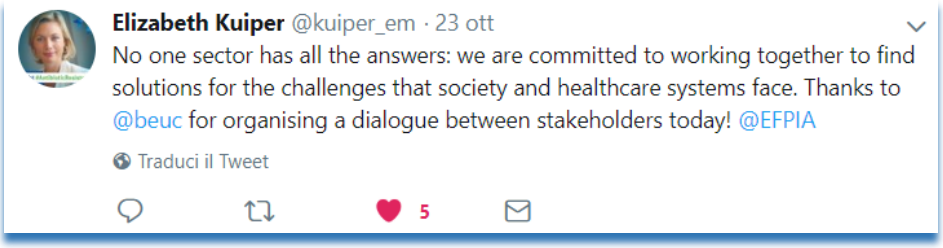
- ✓ **Need to raise the bar for medicine approval:** Many new medicines, especially in oncology, reach the market with high clinical uncertainty. This jeopardises patients' safety and wastes money that governments use for their reimbursement. Governments should review the rules and limit, for example, the use of observational data for granting marketing authorisation.

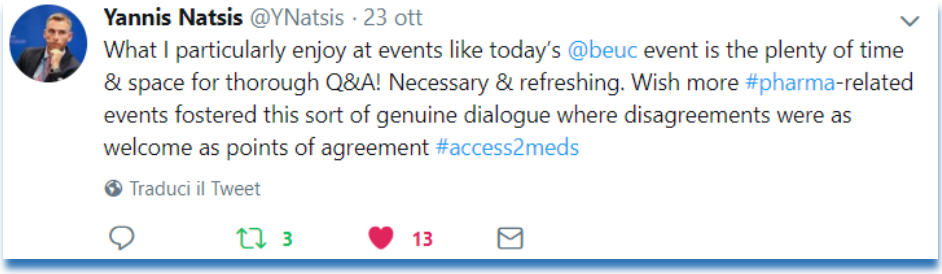
- ✓ **New drugs should be compared to the best available treatment, not to the placebo:** Today, to be approved, a product must prove to work better than a placebo. As a result, many drugs are 'new' but not innovative. To foster innovation, regulators should consider comparative trials when granting marketing authorisations.

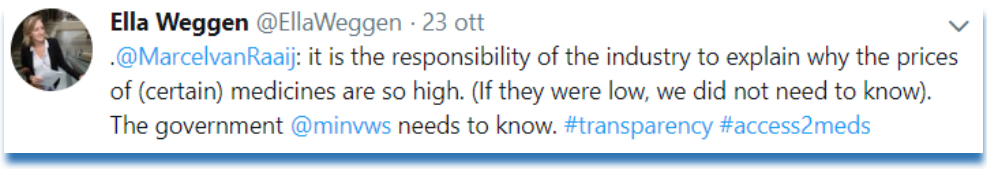
- ✓ **Governments should implement rules to withdraw inefficient drugs:** Today, governments struggle to withdraw from the market medicines that prove to be inefficient or for which the manufacturer fails to provide further evidence of its effectiveness. For both cases, rules are in place to withdraw the medicines from the market, so national authorities should enforce them.

- ✓ **New EU rules should call for compulsory marketing across Europe:** European countries are struggling with medicine shortages. One of the causes is when companies decide to market drugs only in limited countries. EU governments should consider reviewing the current legislation on marketing authorisation to make sure that companies market the product in all EU countries.

Selection of tweets







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