

Community pharmacists' recommendations on medicines shortages

Over the years we saw the **number of shortages growing progressively worse in all European countries**. Despite continued pharmacists' efforts to find solutions, we witness a **significant negative impact on patients' health** and a concerning erosion of patients' trust in the healthcare system. This situation generates **frustration and stress for pharmacists** and **imposes an additional administrative burden** on pharmacies' daily work. In 2023 we estimated that every pharmacy across the EU spent on average close to **10 hours per week dealing with medicine shortages**.

To tackle this crucial challenge, PGEU calls for **effective policy measures to strengthen supply resilience and allow for shortages mitigation**, including:

The implementation of a **common definition of medicine shortages across the EU** and across the full supply chain to better identify and evaluate medicine shortages and to accelerate a coordinated response.

Timely reporting by marketing authorization holders to allow community pharmacists to be informed about future and ongoing shortages and their expected duration and find solutions.

Allowing community pharmacists to make full use of their skills, knowledge and experience to find alternative treatments for their patients, being it by dispensing the same medicine in a different formulation or pack size, performing generic substitution or therapeutic substitution, through an adequate shared decision-making process or compounding.

Enhancing transparency and authorities' oversight of the upstream supply chain and ensures that manufacturers have robust shortages prevention and mitigation plans in place.

Fostering EU solidarity and coordination among Member States to facilitate the redistribution of medicines to those in need.

Optimizing European and national stockpile management by progressively building buffer stocks without generating unnecessary waste.

Better using procurement to secure long-term availability, encouraging the use of MEAT criteria and splitting tender awards in procurement processes to achieve **supply chain diversity** and **reduce downward price pressure** while **improving demand forecasting** from public sources and buyers.

Clarifying and better enforcing manufacturers' and wholesale distributors' supply obligations.

Evaluating and addressing the impact of parallel trade and manufacturer-initiated supply quotas and allocations.