

3. Ensure improved access to medicines



The EU urgently needs an overarching position and strategy on access to medicines that is coherent across policy areas such as public health, internal market, research and development, international cooperation and trade.

4. Strengthen public health safeguards



The EU must strengthen legal public health safeguards to protect patients and the public interest from abusive pricing practices. At the moment market monopolies enable companies to set prohibitively high prices for life saving medicines, thereby undermining the right to health.

Case study: Hepatitis C

The price for hepatitis C treatment Sovaldi (Sofosbuvir) is emblematic of how high-priced medicines erode health care systems around the world, including in Europe.

Due to the high price, between €20,000 and €80,000 per patient, health care systems in Europe rationed the medicine, providing it only to small groups of eligible patients.

Patients with a less severe stage of the disease had to wait until their condition worsened before they were considered for treatment.



European Parliament Working Group
on innovation, access to medicines and poverty-related diseases

Seeking structural solutions so that every patient gets the treatment they need, when they need it.

Information for new members

Contact details

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Why this working group?

Access to medicines is a growing global concern. Around the world millions of patients are not able to access essential life-saving medicines.

Europe is no different: patients in member states are being denied medicines because of where they live, or because no treatment exists at all.

Several factors limit patients' ability to access medicines, yet high prices stand out as a recurring and increasingly problematic factor. High prices deprive patients of treatment, as well as threatening the sustainability of health care systems and programmes around the world.

Access to pharmaceuticals and medicine price transparency have become matters of great concern on the political agenda in Europe but also in the US and at the global fora: the United Nations, the World Health Organization, etc.

Case study: Cancer

Cancer treatments are indicative of how innovation can be inaccessible due to lack of affordability. Since 2015 the cancer drugs market has seen the entry of many high priced medicines – for example Nivolumab, a lung cancer treatment which costs €50,000 per patient per year.

With price tags in the thousands of euros per treatment, CAR-T therapies - used to treat blood cancers - are also beyond the economic possibilities not only of average citizens but also public health systems.

Medicines and the EU

Although health and medicines pricing are national competencies, many European Union policies and instruments impact these areas, including:

- Research and development of medicines
- Intellectual property rights on medicines
- The EU's trade policies and trade agreements
- Competition in the pharmaceutical market
- Transparency in the pharmaceutical market: pricing, cost of research and development, ensuring safety and effectiveness of medicines
- The EU and global health policies

The working group's aims

1. To work towards structural solutions to ensure patients get access to the treatment they require, by addressing policy and market dysfunctions in Europe and on the global level.
2. To comprehensively scrutinise medicines policy at every stage of the pipeline: from development (or lack thereof), to production, supply, trade, market authorization and pricing.
3. To work across policy areas, party lines and committees to address policy issues relevant to effective access to medicines.

#MEPs4Meds

Policy priorities for the 2019 - 2024 legislature



1. Increase transparency

Transparency around the pricing of medicines and vaccines, cost of medical research, and results of clinical trials must be increased and enforced. Clinical trial data and results should be publicly available as required by the EU Clinical Trials Regulation.

Transparency in this sector is vital for negotiating a fair price for medicines, for ensuring fair access, and for ensuring new medicines and treatments are effective and safe.



2. Explore new models for medical innovation

New models of innovation and economic incentives need to be further explored and implemented in the context of Horizon Europe – especially for neglected diseases and medicines, like new antibiotics, which do not offer a profitable market.

We particularly support innovations that delink the cost of research and development from the end price of products or that leverage public funding into pricing commitments.