

MEPs propose ways to make medicines more affordable

New medicine prices in the EU have risen over the past few decades, to the point of being unaffordable for many EU citizens and threatening the sustainability of national health care systems, say MEPs in a resolution voted on Thursday. To strike a better balance between EU countries' public health interests and those of the pharmaceutical industry, it calls for measures to improve the traceability of R&D costs, public funding and marketing expenditure.

“Public health systems in Europe are a key part of the identity of the EU and something which we value highly. Access to medicines must be guaranteed and in order to achieve that, we need to rebalance the negotiating power of EU member states compared to that of the pharmaceutical industry”, said MEP Soledad Cabezon Ruiz (S&D, ES), who drafted the resolution. The text was approved by 568 votes to 30, with 52 abstentions.

“The industry must be competitive when it comes to producing quality innovation, while at the same time responding to patients' needs with medicines which are safe, effective and accessible”, she added.

More clarity needed on R&D costs

MEPs say that the high level of public funds used for R&D is not reflected in the pricing of medicines, impeding a fair return on public investment. They call for greater clarity on R&D costs, including the share of publicly-funded research, and on the marketing of medicines. They call on the Council and the Commission to strengthen the negotiating capacity of member states in order to ensure affordable access to medicines across the EU.

The growth in pharmaceutical spending and the clear asymmetry between pharmaceutical companies and member states in negotiating capacity and pricing information calls for further European cooperation and new policy measures at both EU and national levels, say MEPs.

New legislation is needed to ensure the full transparency and effective controls of the procedures used to determine the prices and reimbursement of medicinal products in the member states, they add.

Antimicrobial resistance

MEPs stress that the gap between growing resistance to antimicrobial agents and the development of new drugs is widening. New drug-resistant diseases could cause 10 million deaths annually worldwide up to 2050, they say.

An estimated 25,000 people die each year in the EU from infections caused by resistant bacteria. Only one novel class of antibiotics has been developed in the past 40 years.

Note to editors

According to the World Health Organisation, access to essential medicines is part of the right to health. However, MEPs note that recent findings show striking differences between EU countries in the sales and availability of innovative medicines. This may be the result of several factors, including pricing and reimbursement systems, logistical supply and storage problems, low drug quality, inadequate production and inappropriate use, as well as – often overly rigid - patenting rules, they say.

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Procedure: non-legislative resolution

Further information

[Adopted text \(2016/2057\(INI\)\) will soon be available here \(02.03.2017\)](#)

[Video recording of debate \(click on 01.03.2017\)](#)

[Video of the press conference: 02.03.2017 at 13.30](#)

[EP Research: Developing health technology assessment in the European Union \(Briefing, 20-10-2016\)](#)

[EbS+ \(02.03.2017\)](#)

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