



European doctors call for a European response to medicine shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

Medicine shortages can severely limit doctors' ability to provide appropriate treatment. Today the situation is aggravated by the surge in demand due to the treatment of COVID-19 patients and additional interruptions in a globalised and fragile supply chain. We must undertake immediate actions to prevent European hospitals from running out of essential medicines and, once the emergency is over, permanent measures must be put in place to ensure a stable supply of medicines to European citizens in the future.

CPME President Prof Dr Frank Ulrich Montgomery

The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) adopted its **position on Medicine Shortages** on 3 April 2020.

Medicine shortages concern all EU countries and demand a common European response. Europe needs Member States' cooperation and the coordination of different measures in order to mitigate disruptions to the supply of medicines and ensure their equal availability for all EU citizens. Therefore, European doctors emphasise the importance of monitoring shortages at the EU level and possessing tools for information exchange among Member States. Moreover, we believe that no national measures influencing medicine distribution can sufficiently address the existing problem.

CPME recognises a need for strong leadership from the EU and the European Medicines Agency as the body best situated to lead the European response, not only during the emergency but also once it is over. Therefore, ad hoc processes and resources currently put in place for the Agency should be translated into a stronger mandate and better infrastructure to provide it with sufficient capacity in the future.

The ongoing pandemic provides unquestionable evidence of the real threat posed by overreliance on manufacturing sites located in third countries. European doctors believe that Europe needs to increase diversification of supply sources and become more independent from production sites outside Europe, most importantly in the case of essential medicines.

What is more, even though the current extraordinary situation requires different, exceptional measures to support pharmaceutical companies in increasing and reorganising their production, it cannot be overlooked that profit-oriented decision making on the part of the pharmaceutical industry is often the very reason for medicine shortages occurring in the first place.

European doctors call on the European Commission to clarify and enforce the Community Code Directive to hold companies accountable and impose a public service obligation on providers of essential medicines.

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