

## SHORTAGES OF INEXPENSIVE, ESSENTIAL MEDICINES: CALLING FOR TANGIBLE POLITICAL COMMITMENTS IN THE EU

# CALL TO ACTION

### IMPACT OF SHORTAGES

1. **Shortages of inexpensive essential medicines affect all patients**, having a significant impact on patient care.
2. **The lack of these crucial, inexpensive, medicines**, can lead to failure to treat, delayed treatment and the use of less desirable, often expensive, alternative products. This is of particular concern in the field of oncology where, in many cases, there are no alternatives for these medicines.
3. **Shortages negatively impact both** the health of European citizens and the sustainability of European healthcare systems through increased costs. For children diagnosed with cancer, the situation can be particularly devastating as the medicines affected by shortages are curative and with few proven effective alternatives.
4. **Economically, the time spent by medical staff** in trying to find alternative treatments for patients leads to increased costs for healthcare systems and higher costs of alternative treatments for payers.
5. **Medicines shortages can have a direct economic impact** on patients where the substitution with higher-cost medicines may fuel individual out-of-pocket payments.
6. **Shortages incur major time losses for medical professionals**, particularly pharmacists, who must divert precious time towards managing shortages.

### RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>1</sup>

1. **Introduce legislation** for early notification requirements for medicines shortages.
2. **Establish European strategic plans** for medicines shortages.
3. **Introduce incentives for production infrastructure improvements** including financial incentives to address the economic causes of manufacturing issues. Incentives for suppliers to remain in these markets should also be considered.
4. **Develop catalogues of shortages** based on a common minimum set of data requirements, including a common EU definition of medicines shortages.
5. **Develop national essential medicines lists** based on the World Health Organization's Model List of Essential Medicines.
6. **Establish procurement models** designed to prevent medicines shortages, including tender-cycle harmonisation.

### KEY STEPS

1. Develop an EU-wide study on the issue of medicines shortages and their overarching impact on the European Union through independent EU advisory bodies on social and economic affairs.
2. Work towards creating a common definition of medicines shortages in the European Union.
3. Position inexpensive essential medicines shortages as a key political priority for the European Union's 2019-2024 legislature.

The recommendations above have been drafted by ESMO<sup>2</sup> and received the endorsement of the following stakeholder groups:



1. The Economist Intelligence Unit & European Society for Medical Oncology. Cancer medicines shortages in Europe: Policy recommendations to prevent and manage shortages. The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited. 2017. Available from: <https://www.eiu.com/graphics/marketing/pdf/ESMO- Cancer-medicines-shortages.pdf>

2. ESMO is the leading European professional organisation for medical oncology. Comprising over 20,000 oncology professionals from over 150 countries, we are the society of reference for oncology education and information. We are committed to supporting our members to develop and advance in a fast-evolving professional environment.