

GIRP PRESS RELEASE

Ensuring the continuous supply and access to medicines: a conversation 20 years in the making

Brussels, Belgium (17 Nov) – [GIRP](#), the European Healthcare Distribution Association convened policymakers and leaders from across the healthcare supply chain today to discuss how the European institutions and the supply chain stakeholders can best work together to address the issues impeding fair and safe access to medicines for EU patients, in the context of the upcoming revision of the EU general pharmaceutical legislation.

The conference featured remarks from members of European Parliament, the European Commission and influential voices from supply chain stakeholders i.e., full-service healthcare distributors, community and hospital pharmacists, consumers, and public health non-governmental organisations to discuss how to achieve the objectives set out in the Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe of accessibility, affordability, and availability.

"The last comprehensive review of the pharmaceutical legislation was over 20 years ago. Since then, the world has changed: the pandemic has put health – and ultimately the individual – in the centre of each and every sector agenda. The new legal framework should ensure access to quality and affordable medicines, make the pharmaceutical system more resilient to crises, and increase the security of supply," reflected Mr Bernd Grabner, GIRP President.

"Even with the hardships of the pandemic and the [confronted pressures our sector is now facing from the increased costs of fuel and energy prices](#), even as we continue to distribute medicines at an ever-growing loss with margins that have not moved in over 10 years, full-service healthcare distributors have not once lost sight of our goal: the patient," he echoed.

Driving the crucial elements to be considered in this once-in-a-lifetime revision, GIRP Director General Monika Derecque-Pois outlined the [key asks for full-service healthcare distributors](#) to ensure the innovations of today can benefit the patient; This includes a separate, distinct license for full-service healthcare distributors (full-line wholesalers), separating them from other distributors.

"Our sector have proven to be the vital link to provide all available medicines, whenever and wherever needed – despite the most difficult circumstances. In order to ensure the continuous availability of all medicines in the future, the full-service healthcare distribution sector needs to be strengthened and recognised by a license which distinguishes full-line wholesalers from other distributors, who either focus on a segment of medicines or engage in direct sales as of course every manufacturer can do and should be able to do," she explains.

Another key element to be included in the revision for full-service healthcare distributors is the "right-to-be-supplied", allowing them to comply to [their Public Service Obligations](#) and to offer a one stop-shop for their customers. As Ms Derecque-Pois points out: *"Health care professionals should spend the time with their patients instead of 'shopping' around."*

Mr John Ryan, Acting Deputy Director-General, DG SANTE, European Commission also took the opportunity to highlight the Commission's key issues to be addressed in the revision of the EU General Pharmaceutical Legislation, including simplifying the regulatory environment and streamlining procedures to ultimately make the anticipated piece of legislation future-proof. Reflecting on the Commission's plans to help mitigate shortages, Mr Ryan highlighted the key role of full-service healthcare distributors and their unique, pivotal position in the supply chain in ensuring a continuous supply of medicines.

Mr Jakub Dvořáček, Deputy Minister of Health, Czech Republic also joined the conference to consider how the EU can translate the main lessons learned from the pandemic into actionable elements in the revision, namely the need for deeper dialogue on a broader platform and stronger support for all stakeholders across pharmaceutical supply chain. Referring to the Commission's newly established body "Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority" (HERA) – Mr Dvořáček identified this as an invaluable instrument to leverage as we continue to rebuild and strengthen EU health systems.

During the stakeholder-focused panel, leaders from the [Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union](#), the [European Consumer Organisation](#), the [European Association of Hospital Pharmacists](#), the [European Public Health Alliance](#) offered their perspective on the overarching measures to consider in revision. The panelists spoke to the actions needed to ensure safe, fair, and continuous access to medicines for all patients across the European Union.

Mr Tomislav Sokol, Member of European Parliament, concluded the conference by stressing his full support for full-service healthcare distributors and the urgent need to provide the sector with the proper instruments to fulfill their Public Service Obligation.

For more information please contact:

Martin FitzGerald, Deputy Director General, GIRP (m.fitzgerald@girp.eu) - +32 2 777 99 77

European Healthcare Distribution Association (GIRP)

GIRP, the European Healthcare Distribution Association, is the umbrella organisation for full-service healthcare distributors in Europe. It represents the national associations of over 750 pharmaceutical wholesalers serving 34 European countries, as well as major international and pan-European healthcare distribution companies. GIRP members employ over 140,000 people and distribute around 15 billion packs of medicines as well as a wide range of healthcare products per year. As the vital link in healthcare, they are committed to developing and providing innovative and efficient healthcare products and services to improve health and wellbeing of patients across Europe.