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European Pharmacy Leaders Meet in Athens to Discuss the Impacts of Liberalisation on Community Pharmacy and the Refugee Crises

The Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) is the European association representing more than 400,000 community pharmacists.

PGEU's members are the national associations and professional bodies of pharmacists in 34 European countries, including EU Member States, EEA/EFTA members and EU applicant countries.

For more information, please visit the PGEU website www.pgeu.eu or contact pharmacy@pgeu.eu



Athens, 5th- 6th September: the Panhellenic Pharmaceutical Association organised a meeting of European pharmacy leaders to discuss the impacts of pharmacy ownership liberalisation on community pharmacy in the EU, amongst other recent developments in the sector. Another issue of concern discussed was that of the mounting humanitarian crisis in Europe and Greece, which is putting even more strain on an already overstretched Greek health system.

During the presentations, countries who had experienced an extreme degree of liberalisation in the past presented examples that demonstrated a reduction of quality or no impact on improving the quality of pharmacy services. In some countries, the negative consequences of community pharmacy liberalisation had lead governments to consider reversing the liberalisation. Organisations and associations representing community pharmacy from 18 EU countries, members of PGEU, agreed that protection of public health is paramount. They agreed that public health is best protected by a regulatory structure for pharmacy that ensures the professional autonomy and independence of pharmacists, protects the accessibility of pharmacy services and places the professional and personalised care of patients above any financial gain or shareholder return.

Pharmacy leaders also took the opportunity to express their anguish concerning the ongoing humanitarian crisis that refugees were currently experiencing throughout the Mediterranean region which has hit Greece especially hard. They said they were ready to contribute to the relief of this crisis making the most of their capabilities as healthcare professionals. During his opening speech, the President of the Panhellenic Pharmaceutical Association Mr. Konstantinos Lourantos spoke of the refugee's plight in the Greek islands and the community



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pharmacists' contribution to the refugee relief action. He also said *'Changes in [pharmacy] legislation must not jeopardize the independence and advancement of the pharmacy profession. Accessibility of the pharmacy services needs to be preserved in particular considering the demographic challenges of an ageing society. The way forward is to enhance pharmacy services that meet today's and future society needs. A sustainable community pharmacy structure with independent highly qualified health professionals at the heart of it will help us to contribute to better patient outcomes, public health and cost savings to health system and society.'*