

PGEU OPINION PAPER

The Community Pharmacy contribution to Sustainable Health Systems



Figure 1: Health services provided by pharmacies (number of countries providing it out of 24)

The sustainability of health systems is on top of national governments' and the European Union agendas¹. In line with European and international institutions priorities², PGEU believes that expanding the role of community pharmacy and strengthening primary care systems are key policy levers to lead the way towards a more sustainable, inclusive and healthier future in Europe.

A variety of challenges including population ageing, increasing prevalence of chronic conditions and short-term costs of new therapies led to substantial rise in health expenditures³, putting sustainability of European health systems at

risk. As such, all EU Member States face growing pressures for ensuring quality, effectiveness and efficiency of their health systems within the capacity of their public budgets.

As outlined in the "Health at a Glance: Europe 2016"² report by OECD and European Commission, more attention to prevention and stronger primary care systems could reduce the burden of chronic diseases and help European population to live healthier and longer and ultimately save up to 1.2 million lives today lost largely due to a range of communicable and non-communicable diseases.

The PGEU's Economics Working Group (EWG) met on 21 September 2017 to discuss challenges to achieve sustainable and resilient health systems and the contribution of community pharmacists. PGEU EWG believes that already today pharmacies play a key role in reducing inequalities in access and quality of healthcare, as well as the number of avoidable emergency department visits and hospitalisations across EU countries. The network of 160.000 community pharmacies in Europe

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/economy-finance/joint-report-health-care-and-long-term-care-systems-fiscal-sustainability-0_en

² <http://www.oecd.org/health/health-at-a-glance-europe-23056088.htm>

³ http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/social-issues-migration-health/fiscal-sustainability-of-health-systems_9789264233386-en#.WbaHBNixWUK

provides a unique opportunity to improve access to disease prevention programmes, immunisation, health screening, etc. through provision of increasing number of health services for all citizens (Figure 1: Health services provided by pharmacies (number of countries providing it out of 24)). In line with empirical evidence, PGEU members recommend the following actions at national level to contribute to high quality, inclusive and sustainable health systems in Europe:

- Expand community pharmacy services, as integral part of primary care, such as adherence-focused new medicines service and medicines use review, screening services, vaccination, smoking cessation, minor ailment management etc., promoting prevention and better management of long-term conditions. These services showed to improve adherence and patient outcomes while being cost-effective.
- Better integrate community pharmacies in the primary care network and recognise community pharmacists as primary health care services providers to improve access to health services for example via triage service and thus help shifting the delivery of care from overburdened secondary care.
- Improve access to innovative and/or specialty (biosimilars and biological) medicines by increasing the supply of these products via community pharmacies with appropriate patient follow-up via community pharmacies. This is a unique opportunity to combine the dispensing service with the support of their safe and effective use by patients in the pharmacy. Reward the use of real-world evidence including evidence generation in community pharmacies to evaluate effectiveness and therapeutic added value of innovative medicines in practise.
- Incentivise generics uptake by community pharmacy to make medicines more affordable while rewarding community pharmacists for this important economically sustainable service.
- Involve pharmacy in national action plans to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR)⁴, improve vaccination coverage and risk minimisation plans for other medicinal therapies⁵.

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*The **Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU)** is the association representing community pharmacists in 31 European countries. In Europe over 400.000 community pharmacists provide services throughout a network of more than 160.000 pharmacies, to an estimated 46 million European citizens daily. PGEU's objective is to promote the role of pharmacists as key players in healthcare systems throughout Europe and to ensure that the views of the pharmacy profession are taken into account in the EU decision-making process.*

For more information please visit www.pgeu.eu

⁴ "PGEU Best Practice Paper on AMR", available at <http://www.pgeu.eu/en/policy/6:antibiotic-resistance.html>

⁵ PGEU Pharmacovigilance & Risk Minimization Best Practice Paper, available at <http://www.pgeu.eu/en/library/574:pgeu-best-practice-paper-on-pharmacovigilance-and-risk-minimisation.html>