

PRESS RELEASE

Chronic medicine shortages still lack effective solutions

From antibiotics to cardiovascular to respiratory, most types of medicines continue to be in short supply. [PGEU annual medicine shortages report](#) indicates that in 2023 the situation grew worse compared to previous years. In the Netherlands alone 2.292 shortages were registered last year affecting about 5 million people. Other countries like Sweden, Portugal and Spain saw a significant increase in the number of shortages.

PGEU President Aris Prins said *“Despite pharmacists continued best efforts to find solutions, shortages still leave many patients without their prescribed treatment. This situation causes frustration and inconvenience for patients and erodes their trust in pharmacists and in the healthcare system. They also cause stress for pharmacy staff and impose an additional administrative burden on pharmacies daily work”*.

In 2023 every pharmacy across the EU spent on average almost 10 hours per week dealing with medicine shortages. This time has tripled over the last 10 years; precious time which could be devoted to other useful tasks such as providing patients advice on the safe and effective use of medicines. Pharmacies struggle even more to provide patients solutions for shortages given the current healthcare workforce shortage.

Strong differences exist among countries regarding the options that pharmacists can explore to find alternatives – for example substitution or compounding – in case the prescribed medicine is unavailable. Pharmacists should be granted greater flexibility and enabled to leverage their skills, knowledge, and experience to efficiently assist patients.

“The reform of the EU pharmaceutical legislation is a unique opportunity to build a more resilient supply chain and improve shortages prevention, monitoring, and management. However, we need more immediate measures to address this chronic problem and reverse the negative trend that pharmacists have been denouncing for over a decade. We urge for earlier notification of shortages, for a timelier information to pharmacists and a fairer redistribution of medicines across countries” Prins added.