

Europe is underusing its largest primary care network: PGEU calls for policy changes to unlock the full potential of community pharmacy in cardiovascular health

Community pharmacists are among the most accessible healthcare professionals in Europe, providing first-line care to more than 46 million people every day across over 160,000 community pharmacies. In its new **Position Paper on Cardiovascular Health**, PGEU outlines how empowering pharmacists to take a **greater role in prevention, screening, and long-term medication management could improve patient outcomes, increase system capacity, and strengthen the overall resilience of Europe's health services.**

The safe and appropriate dispensing of medicines remains a core service of pharmacies, which is being further enhanced by patient-focused cardiovascular services. Across Europe, pharmacists deliver lifestyle counselling, risk screening and risk factor management, vaccination administration, medication reviews, therapeutic adherence support, anticoagulation counselling, dose titration, referral and care coordination, and digital follow-up services that empower patients. These services have been shown **to improve outcomes, reduce hospitalizations and complications, and support adherence**, particularly long-term conditions and underserved areas.

PGEU President, Clare Fitzell said: *"The vast majority of premature cardiovascular disease is preventable, and pharmacists are uniquely positioned to help patients take action early. Through our extensive local pharmacy networks, we provide accessible cardiovascular prevention, screening, and pharmaceutical care services that support communities across Europe. However, we could do even more if fully enabled. With appropriate remuneration structures, access to relevant health data, and a clearly defined role within clinical care pathways and public health policies, pharmacists could further strengthen preventive care, identify warning signs earlier, and ultimately save lives while reducing the burden on Europe's health systems."*

Recent years have also exposed **persistent shortages of cardiovascular medicines**, disrupting treatment continuity. In 2024, cardiovascular medicines were reported in short supply in approximately 96% of 28 countries surveyed, with pharmacists spending around 11 hours per week mitigating shortages, time that could otherwise be dedicated to direct patient care. Securing supply must be a strategic priority. To advance pharmacy services in cardiovascular health, PGEU calls for:

- **Integration of community pharmacists in national and EU cardiovascular programs**, including the forthcoming European Commission Plan on Cardiovascular Health and the European Parliament's own-initiative report.
- Formally **promote, recognize and remunerate pharmacy services** that contribute to **CVD prevention, screening, and management.**
- **Expansion of pharmacists' scope of practice across Europe** to ensure equitable access to preventive, diagnostic and therapeutic services.
- **Security of supply** of essential medicines and stronger EU coordination to prevent and mitigate shortages.
- **Pharmacists' integration in the European Health Data Space (EHDS)**, with read/write access and the ability to contribute with relevant patient health data.
- **Responsible use of AI and digital tools in pharmacy practice** to enhanced screening, early detection, and personalized support, with healthcare professional oversight.

PGEU's Position Paper underlines community pharmacists' contribution to earlier prevention, safer treatment and better long-term care for people at risk of, or living with, cardiovascular disease, through modern regulation, sustainable financing and interoperable digital infrastructure.

For more information, read: [PGEU Position Paper on Cardiovascular Health](#)