



Community Pharmacists Exemplar Role as Primary Care Providers in the COVID-19 Pandemic

PGEU Annual Report 2021





About PGEU - Mission and Vision

The Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) is the association representing European community pharmacists. PGEU members are the national associations and professional bodies of community pharmacists in 32 European countries, including EU Member States, EFTA countries, the UK and EU candidate countries.

PGEU's vision is to see community pharmacists recognised as key health professionals delivering a dynamic, sustainable and evolving contribution to the health of people while strengthening Europe's health systems. European community pharmacists work at the heart of communities, providing high-quality, professional advice on the safe, effective and rational use of medicines. Often, community pharmacists are the first and the last point of contact between the patients and the health system and they make an invaluable contribution to public health.





Foreword Alain Delgutte, PGEU President 2021



2021 will mark a milestone in the history of community pharmacy as a year of resilience and progress. All across Europe, community pharmacists endured, rallied up and expanded their action to assist patients, to protect access to treatments and to deliver health services to their respective communities. In many countries, they played a key role in the swift and wide rollout of unprecedented COVID-19 vaccination campaigns, while ensuring the success of testing strategies to curb the spread of the virus. As the pandemic placed enormous pressure on European healthcare systems, community pharmacists have shown that they could do a lot and that patients can count on them, even in such difficult times. With this in mind, we all should be proud of their invaluable contribution and incredible hard work throughout the past year. This trying experience highlighted the identity and mission of community pharmacies, as resources close to citizens at the forefront of health systems, providing advice on treatments and beyond, ready to adapt and convey each and every public health message and action to serve patients.

2021 was a very busy and prolific year for PGEU too. With the crisis calling for a pragmatic approach, PGEU focused its work on drawing lessons from the pandemic crisis, which points to the importance of broadening the scope of community pharmacy practice and recognising the value of pharmaceutical services that have proven their relevance over the past months. PGEU's Annual Conference in Nice was dedicated to this learning exercise, focusing on three key challenges: new pharmacy services, medicines shortages and digital health. The conference crossed best practices and expertise from PGEU members, health authorities, pharmaceutical, scientific and digital experts, supported by a summary leaflet on community pharmacists current and future contribution to healthcare systems and a comprehensive overview of crisis-proof pharmacy services.

Throughout the year, PGEU continued its work through videoconferences, in order to reflect and stake out common positions. We did our most to contribute to major European dossiers such as the upcoming revision of the

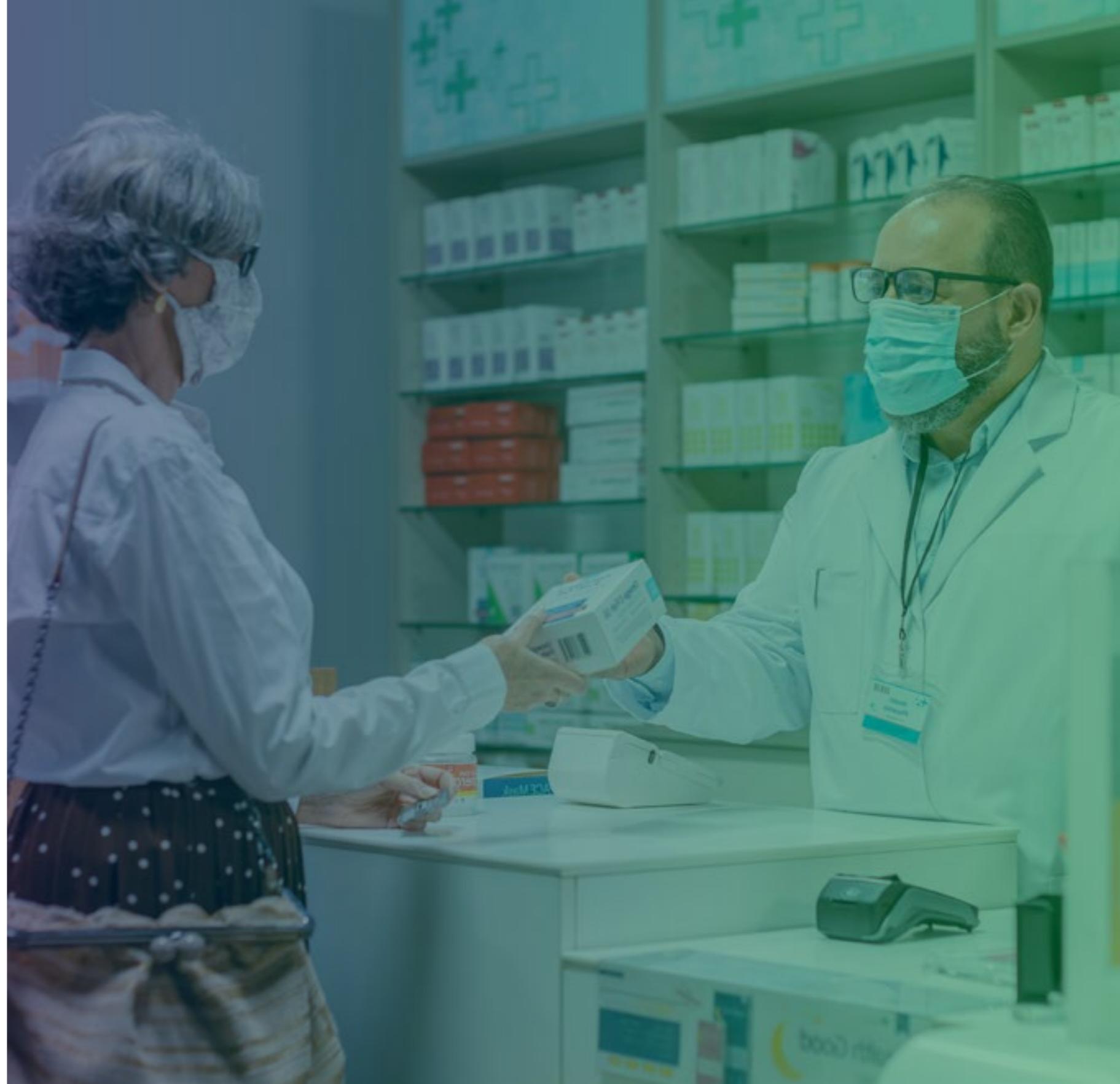


All across Europe, community pharmacists endured, rallied up and expanded their action to assist patients, to protect access to treatments and to deliver health services to their respective communities. In many countries, they played a key role in the swift and wide rollout of unprecedented COVID-19 vaccination campaigns, while ensuring the success of testing strategies to curb the spread of the virus.”



EU general pharmaceutical legislation, the update of minimal training requirements for pharmacists, the assessment of the directive on cross-border care and the future European Health Data Space. We also reflected on crosscutting strategic issues, such as healthcare digitalisation (including cross-professional perspectives and reflections on electronic product information), green and sustainable pharmacy, Europe's beating cancer plan and professional skills. Throughout the year, PGEU remained dedicated to cooperation with European authorities, other healthcare professions and supply chain actors, a public health commitment perhaps epitomised by our participation in the Coalition for Vaccination to promote the uptake of vaccines among healthcare professionals and their patients. Our work remained based on continuous exchanges of information and monitoring of professional developments, bearing fruits such as our Medicines Shortages Survey or call to action for the 2021-22 flu vaccination campaign.

It has been a true privilege and a very rewarding experience to serve as PGEU President. My sincere gratitude goes to all PGEU members and to PGEU Secretariat for their unwavering dedication and commitment to the service of pharmacy, patients and health systems. I have no doubt that PGEU will continue to lead the change necessary to enhance the role of community pharmacists for health in Europe.





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Meeting with DG SANTE Director-General on Vaccination

On 6 January, PGEU met with the European Commission's (DG SANTE) Director-General Sandra Gallina to discuss the COVID-19 vaccination communication strategy and a European COVID-19 vaccination certificate. PGEU was invited together with the other co-chairs of the European Coalition for Vaccination, namely the Standing Committee of European doctors and the European Federation of Nurses.

EU4Health 2021-2027: a vision for a healthier European Union

On 22 January, PGEU attended a webinar on the EU4Health Programme 2021-2027 hosted by the European Commission (DG SANTE). The webinar explained the programme's objectives, highlighted possible actions and funding opportunities. Participants were also able to provide input on health issues in the EU and how the EU can address them.

The European Commission indicated that the EU health program's expenditure in 2021 will amount to €327 million and stressed that while it was a pandemic that put health at the forefront of the EU agenda, the health program isn't just a response to COVID-19.



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Meeting with the European Commission on cross border health care

On 1 February, PGEU met with the European Commission Unit in charge of the implementation of the Directive on the application of patients' rights in cross border health care. The European Commission encouraged PGEU to participate in a study on the implementation of the legislation that the European Commission was about to launch and to provide feedback and best practices with regard to the provisions on the recognitions of prescriptions.

European Consumer Organisation debate on the EU Pharmaceutical strategy

On 3 February, PGEU participated to an online debate on the EU Pharmaceutical Strategy organised by the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC). We presented the PGEU position on medicines availability and the results of the PGEU annual survey on medicines shortages. Other speakers included the European Commission Director Andrzej Rys and the European Parliament rapporteur on the Regulation expanding the mandate of the European Medicines Agency, MEP Nicolás González Casares. All participants stressed the need to urgently address the root causes of shortages and improve shortages prevention and management. Other topics discussed were medicines affordability, stockpiling and bringing the production of certain medicines and chemicals back on Europe to secure supply.

EU JAMRAI Final Conference

On 11 and 12 February, PGEU attended the EU Joint Action on Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare-Associated Infections (JAMRAI) Final Conference. EU JAMRAI has come to an end after three and a half years of work, developing and implementing One Health policies to fight AMR. For its final conference, the Joint Action presented all of the achievements obtained by the project and discussed future prospects. One of the main aspects of the conference was to engage stakeholders and AMR key players to ensure concrete results to address AMR and adopt a path of action for the future.



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Meeting with ENVI rapporteur on the Proposal for a Regulation on a reinforced role for the EMA

On 18 February, PGEU together with the General Council of Spanish Pharmacists, met with MEP Nicolás González Casares (S&D Group, Spain), who has been the European Parliament ENVI committee rapporteur on the Proposal for a Regulation on a reinforced role for the European Medicines Agency (EMA) in crisis preparedness and management for medicinal products and medical devices. PGEU presented its position on shortages together with the results of the PGEU Medicine Shortages Survey 2020 and discussed the proposed PGEU amendments to the text. The General Council of Spanish Pharmacists presented the CISMED information system they use in Spain to detect and report shortages.

European Parliament European Semester Conference

On 22 February, PGEU followed online the European Semester Conference as a kick off event of the European Parliamentary Week 2021, jointly organised by the European Parliament and the Portuguese Presidency. In particular, PGEU attended a session on synergies of the European Green Deal compared to a more resilient Health Union. The event was chaired by MEP Mr Pascal Canfin, Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). Shortly after the opening, the word was given to Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans of the European Commission responsible for the portfolio of the European Green Deal, followed by Laurence Boone, Chief Economist at the OECD. The discussion with MEPs focused especially on the environmental aspects of the recovery, namely on how to orient the EU funds to foster the European Green Deal and to promoting sustainable economic growth.



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High-level launch event of the structured dialogue

On 26 February, PGEU Vice-President Mathias Arnold, participated to the high-level launch event of the so called “Structured dialogue” organised by the Vice President of the European Commission, Margaritis Schinas, by the EU health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides and by the EU Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry Breton. The structured dialogue has been proposed by the European Commission as part of the Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe, adopted on 25 November 2020, with the idea of strengthening cooperation between the actors in the pharmaceuticals manufacturing value chain, namely public authorities, patient and health nongovernmental organisations and the research community to ensure that Europe can provide for its pharmaceutical needs, including in times of crisis.

The aim of the meeting was to gain a better understanding of the functioning of global pharmaceutical supply chains and identify the causes and drivers of vulnerabilities and dependencies threatening the supply of medicines in the EU. PGEU Vice President contribution focused on the need to implement concrete and urgent solutions to the problem of medicines shortages, expanding the role of pharmacy practice and allowing pharmacists to use their knowledge and experience to ensure continuity of treatments.



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Meeting with the Executive Director of the European Medicines Agency (EMA)

On 10 March, PGEU met with the EMA Executive Director Emer Cooke and colleagues to discuss key issues for European community pharmacists. PGEU presented its positions on medicine shortages whilst also outlining PGEU activities and practices from members on pharmacovigilance the role of community pharmacists in COVID-19 vaccination. The EMA Executive Director expressed her gratitude for the key contributions of community pharmacists in translating regulatory decisions and actions into meaningful contributions for patients in primary care, especially during the pandemic. EMA also thanked PGEU for its constructive contributions to the work of the EMA in the framework of the healthcare professionals working party and both parties expressed their commitment to further enhancing the relationship between EMA and PGEU.

DIA Executive Forum

On 16 March, PGEU spoke at the DIA Executive Forum. The Forum brought together senior EU policy makers and stakeholders including Emer Cooke, Executive Director of the European Medicines Agency, Andrzej Rys, Director at DG SANTE (European Commission) Andrea Ammon, Director of ECDC and Sibilia Quilici, Executive Director of Vaccines Europe. The discussion focused on the most important lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic about the functioning of the healthcare and regulatory systems in Europe. PGEU stressed that the main lessons learned, from the community pharmacists perspective, are the need to maximise the use of community pharmacies by expanding the scope of pharmacy practice and the need to invest more on primary care.

PGEU Best Practice Paper on Green and Sustainable Pharmacy in Europe





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Workshop on EU4Health Programme: "Potential solutions for a healthier European Union"

On 24 March, PGEU attended a Workshop on the EU4Health Programme 2021. EU4Health is the EU's response to COVID-19, providing funding to eligible health organisations and NGOs from EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme. The workshop built on the outcome of the 22 January EU4Health Webinar and further explored potential solutions for EU-wide health challenges under the four strands of the Programme by gathering stakeholder feedback, including from NGOs, associations, businesses, Member States' policy makers, patients' organisations, etc. The main workshop sessions focused on Digital, Crisis Preparedness, Health Systems and Disease Prevention. These sessions gathered input on potential solutions to health challenges that could contribute to the objectives of the EU4Health programme.

The structured dialogue initiative

On 25 March, PGEU participated to the first meeting of the Structured Dialogue Initiative. The purpose of the structured dialogue initiative was to strengthen the resilience of pharmaceutical supply chains and ensure the security of supply of medicines. The initiative brought together and facilitates discussions with and between the actors in the pharmaceuticals manufacturing value chain, public authorities, research community, health professionals and patient organisations.

COST Action CA15105 meeting on medicine shortages

On 26 March, PGEU presented the results of the PGEU Medicine Shortages Survey 2020 as well as the European twinning project on exchanging comparable (pharmacy-reported) information on shortages at the COST Action CA15105 meeting on medicine shortages. The COST Action CA15105 is a framework supporting trans-national cooperation among researchers on medicine shortages across Europe. During the meeting, several stakeholders and country representatives presented ongoing developments and best practices on shortages.



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EDQM Pharmacare Stakeholder Day

On 9 April, PGEU spoke at the EDQM Pharmacare Stakeholder Day. EDQM is the Council of Europe Directorate for the Quality of medicines. We made a presentation on the community pharmacy contribution to quality of care and patient safety across Europe. We also presented the results of the study on pharmacy services that we published at the end of 2020.

PGEU Position paper on the European Commission roadmap/inception impact assessment on the Evaluation and revision of the general pharmaceutical legislation

IMMUNION Kick-off Meeting

On 13 and 15 April, PGEU participated in the kick-off meeting of IMMUNION, an EU-funded project on vaccination in which PGEU participates as a partner and co-chair of the EU Coalition for Vaccination. During the meeting, the different work packages were presented and discussed. PGEU will have an active role in work package 4, which focuses on strengthening the Coalition for Vaccination. The general objectives of this project are to support EU efforts to improve vaccine uptake by strengthening joint efforts amongst Coalition for Vaccination member associations and other stakeholders in order to deliver better vaccine education to health professionals and better information to the general public.



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PGEU Response to the European Commission Consultation on Demographic Change in Europe – Green Paper on Ageing

On 20 April, PGEU submitted its response to the European Commission Public Consultation on Demographic Change. PGEU expressed support for the approach outlined by the European Commission in its Green Paper on Ageing, suggesting a comprehensive policy response to meet the health and long-term care needs of an ageing population by promoting investments in quality health care services and infrastructure. In line with this approach, we suggested that maximizing the scope of community pharmacy practice can be a key policy lever for EU Member States to address common challenges related to demographic change.

European Commission HTA Stakeholder Pool Meeting

On 26 April, PGEU participated to the HTA Network Stakeholder Pool meeting organized by the European Commission. The meeting provided an opportunity for the European Commission to update stakeholders on their most recent activities related to HTA and to discuss developments regarding EU Cooperation on HTA, further to the Council agreement on its negotiating position with the European Parliament on the Proposal for an EU Regulation on HTA. In particular, the discussions were focused on how to ensure meaningful stakeholder involvement in joint HTA activities as envisaged in the new HTA framework foreseen under the Proposal.



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PGEU feedback on European Commission Roadmap on the cross-border healthcare directive

PGEU feedback on the Evaluation roadmap and Inception Impact Assessment on 'a European Health Data Space'

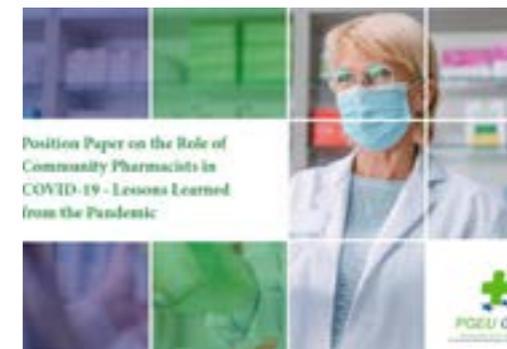
EURIPID Stakeholder Dialogue Platform Meeting

On 11 May, PGEU participated to the 4th Meeting of the European Integrated Price Information Database (EURIPID) Collaboration' Stakeholder Dialogue Platform. During the meeting, a DG SANTE official presented the initiatives that the European Commission is undertaking in the area of affordability of medicines, including promoting cooperation via regular meeting and best practices exchange with a group of national competent authorities for pricing, reimbursement and public health (NCAPR). In addition, DG SANTE is also supporting the OECD to promote work on pharmaceutical innovation and access to medicines. Furthermore, the EURIPID Secretariat provided an update on the state of play of the EURIPID cooperation and on their ideas to improve transparency.

PGEU Position Paper on Electronic Product Information



PGEU Position Paper on the Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic





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Collaboration Towards the Acceptance of the European Health Data Space

On 21 May, PGEU attended a meeting organized by the European Commission with the members of the eHealth Stakeholder Group interested to collaborate towards articulating policy options and solutions for the acceptance of the European Health Data Space (EHDS).

ANF Discussion Forum

On 25 May, PGEU presented its position paper on COVID-19 at the virtual Discussion Forum event, organised by the Portuguese National Association of Pharmacies (ANF) for young pharmacy professionals and students in Portugal. PGEU presented the main impact and contributions of community pharmacy during COVID-19 across Europe and highlighted the lessons learned along with some national best practices.

Inaugural Meeting: Stakeholder Contact Group for Europe's Beating Cancer Plan

On 28 May, PGEU was present at the first meeting of the Stakeholder Contact Group for Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. With the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan in place, the European Commission has taken a major step towards a new era in cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care. Decisive and swift action is now needed to put its policy objectives, flagship initiatives and supportive actions in place. A strong commitment of the wider stakeholder community is vital. In order to support the Member States in the implementation of the Cancer Plan and monitoring of its actions, the European Commission has established a Stakeholder Contact Group under the Commission's Health Policy Platform. This will be the forum for discussion and engagement with all relevant stakeholders on cancer prevention and care.



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Study on medicines shortages

On 1 June, PGEU participated to a meeting organized by Technopolis, the consultancy who conducted a study on root causes of medicines shortages in Europe on behalf of the European Commission. During the meeting the consultancy presented the results of the study - including the two surveys on potential solutions to medicines shortages PGEU contributed too – and we were given the opportunity to make comments and further recommendations. We raised the need to extend the scope of pharmacy practice as a practical and immediate solution to address the problem of shortages and help patients finding alternative treatments. We also shared our position on electronic product information leaflets which the industry mentioned as a potential solution to shortages.

PGEU Position Paper on Pact for Skills



European Commission Workshop on the revision of the EU minimum harmonised training requirements for pharmacists under Directive 2005/36/EC (PQD)

On 28 June, PGEU participated in the European Commission workshop on the revision of the EU minimum harmonised training requirements for pharmacists under Directive 2005/36/EC (PQD). PGEU delivered a presentation on the topic “Community pharmacy advancements in patient-centred care across Europe”, focusing on aspects of pharmaceutical care, clinical pharmacy and social pharmacy in relation to the PQD.



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European Commission tweets on PGEU



PGEU Position Paper on Digital Health





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Meeting with the European Commission on Artificial Intelligence

On 6 July, PGEU met with European Commission (EC) DG CNECT official in order to discuss the content of the EC Proposal for a Regulation on Artificial Intelligence (AI). The key points discussed were the conformity assessment procedures for medical devices which have a high-risk AI system component and the interaction of the AI Regulation with the relevant sectorial Regulations 745/2017 and 746/2017 listed in the Annex II of the AI Regulation.

CED-CPME-EFN-EPF- PGEU Consensus Framework on digital transformation of healthcare

PGEU Feedback on European Commission Proposal for an EU Regulation on Artificial Intelligence

On 20 July, PGEU submitted its feedback on the European Commission Proposal for an EU Regulation on Artificial Intelligence, expressing support the European Commission’s general objective to ensure that the development and uptake of AI across the Single Market is conducted in a trustworthy way. While we see great value in using AI in healthcare for enabling meaningful innovation, supporting health professionals and enhancing patient care, we are aware that it may also entail significant risks, for example in relation to the use of health and patient data. Therefore we support the Proposal put forward by the European Commission as it provides a good basis to address use of AI systems which may affect health and safety of users and consumers as well as their fundamental rights.



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E-Health Stakeholder Group meetings on European Health Data Space (EHDS)

In August, PGEU attended two working groups meetings within the eHealth Stakeholder Group in order to discuss co-creation of legislation on the European Health Data Space (EHDS). The two working groups focused on key policy recommendations proposal on the cross-border uptake of digital health services and of Artificial Intelligence in healthcare.





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PGEU Statement on Flu Vaccination 2021 – 2022

European Commission webinar on the acceptance of the European Health Data Space (EHDS)

On 10 September, PGEU attended a webinar organised by the European Commission which aimed at presenting the outcome of five stakeholder working groups (WG) which were set to design solutions on acceptance of the EHDS for end-users and identify concrete topics as input for the European Health Data Space. The WG leaders reported the outcome of each of the 5 WG dealing with the following topics: (1) interoperability, (2) cross-border re-use of health data for research and policy-making, (3) cross-border uptake of digital health services and products; (4) cross-border uptake of AI for health care; (5) and sharing of health data between public and private partners.

High-Level Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AI)

On 14 and 15 September, PGEU attended the “High-Level Conference on AI: From Ambition to Action”, jointly organized by the European Commission and by the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council. This event was organized as the first open discussion following the Proposal for a Regulation laying down harmonised rules on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the updated Coordinated Plan on AI, published by the European Commission in April 2021. The Conference unfolded around a number of panels, discussing, among other topics, the role of law and regulation to foster uptake of trustworthy AI, the importance of human-centric AI approach, as well as aspects such as governance, standardization and liability for the use of AI. The Conference also included two high-level political panels on the content of the EC Proposal on AI Regulation (also known as AI act) and a keynote speech by the Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry Breton, who outlined how in his view the AI act will foster AI development in Europe especially among small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as it enhances trust and legal certainty which can boost investments in the field and since it allows for regulatory sandboxes to promote innovation among SMEs.



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EMA Healthcare Professionals' Working Party

On 21 and 22 September, PGEU participated in the European Medicines' Agency (EMA) Joint Patients' and Consumers' (PCWP) & Healthcare Professionals' (HCPWP) Working Party. On pharmacovigilance, PGEU was invited to deliver a presentation on the community pharmacists' reflections on publication and dissemination of Direct Healthcare Professional Communications (DHPCs), which were based on the results of the PGEU Survey on Pharmacovigilance and Risk Minimisation. During the meeting also an update on COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and safety surveillance was provided, highlighting the very high amount of suspected adverse drug reaction reports received from healthcare professionals and patients. There was also an update on the work of the Big Data Steering Group announcing the launch a pilot project that aims to determine the regulatory benefit of access to raw data.





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Community Pharmacists Supporting Healthcare Systems: Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Crisis

The infographic features a green header with the title and the PGEU GPUE logo. Below the header, there is a photograph of a pharmacist in a white coat and mask working at a pharmacy counter. The main body of the infographic is dark blue with white text. It includes a paragraph about the role of community pharmacists during the COVID-19 crisis, a quote from DECD, and a list of three key lessons learned, each with a small green icon.

Community Pharmacists Supporting Healthcare Systems: Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Crisis

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the network of pharmacies near people's homes has been playing a vital role in supporting local communities and ensuring their continued access to treatments and care. Community pharmacists have been accessible 24/7, even during lockdowns, and have been the first line of advice, treatment, and referral for many people in Europe on common ailments, successfully preventing unnecessary visits to emergency rooms.

Community pharmacists make an invaluable contribution to the health of over 500 million people across Europe and they are ready to further help strengthening health systems.

The pandemic should be seen as a wake-up call and an opportunity to improve preparedness and response of healthcare systems to current and future health challenges. For community pharmacy, COVID-19 has shown the need to:

- Maximise the benefits of the community pharmacist's intervention for patients and healthcare system through systematically undertaking and supporting sustainable pharmacy services which bring value both to patients and healthcare systems.
- Support community pharmacists, as trusted sources of health information, to help progress the safe digitalisation of healthcare while maintaining their invaluable personal connection with patients.
- Reduce the burden of medicine shortages on patients and healthcare professionals.

“Crisis situations like the coronavirus epidemic can provide opportunities to change the traditional roles of different health care providers and expand the roles of some providers like nurses and pharmacists, so that they can take on some of the tasks from doctors and thereby allow them to spend their time more effectively on the most complex cases.”

DECD

Coalition for Vaccination meeting

On 12 October, PGEU co-chaired the Autumn Coalition for Vaccination meeting. The meeting was opened with introductory words from the PGEU President. During the meeting's two sessions, participants heard from the European Commission, Coalition member associations, and the coordinators of the IMMUNION project. Participants specifically discussed important updates related to the EU's COVID-19 vaccine rollout, and collaboration on the Commission's wider vaccine communication efforts. Student associations also presented on their activities over the summer and discussed the support that they can both offer and receive from participating in the Coalition. Coalition members then discussed the activities conducted on behalf of the Coalition by the IMMUNION project since its kick-off in April. Upcoming Coalition and IMMUNION activities were also presented, which will serve to increase the overall visibility of the Coalition, enhance vaccine communication training and knowledge exchange opportunities for healthcare professionals, and provide further structure for the long-term governance and sustainability of the Coalition's work.





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PGEU Annual Conference and General Assembly in Nice

On 26 and 27 October, PGEU held its first hybrid meeting during the French Presidency in Nice, France. The Annual Conference explored the specific impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the provision of digital health services across Europe, on the availability of medicines across Europe and what lessons can be drawn from it. It also put forward the role and value of pharmacy services in response to patients' and healthcare systems' needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.





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AESGP Webinar on Artificial Intelligence

On 9 November, PGEU presented at an AESGP (European self-medication industry) webinar on Artificial Intelligence. The event also included presentations from the European Commission, IQVIA and AESGP. PGEU presented its position on artificial intelligence, including the submitted feedback to the European Commission proposal feedback on the European Commission Proposal for an EU Regulation on Artificial Intelligence. In addition, several ongoing practices from PGEU members in the area of AI & big data were presented to the audience.

EMA annual PCWP/HCPWP meeting with eligible organisations

On 24 November, PGEU participated in the annual PCWP/HCPWP meeting with eligible organisations organised by the European Medicines Agency (EMA). Among the topics presented and discussed were European collaboration between regulators and Health Technology Assessment (HTA) bodies, clinical trials and repurposing of medicines. The meeting also offered the opportunity to discuss future challenges and key priorities for patient and healthcare professionals' organisations related to the EMA work.

European Commission meeting for national health professionals' and students' associations in EU Member States with low uptake of COVID-19 vaccines

On 29 November, PGEU co-chaired a European Commission meeting for national health professionals' and students' associations in EU Member States with low uptake of COVID-19 vaccines (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia). The purpose of the online meeting was to identify in which ways the Commission could support health professionals and students in those countries in terms of advocating for COVID-19 vaccination, e.g. in terms of communicative efforts. The PGEU members present contributed actively to the discussion and several potential follow-up actions were identified. These were further discussed between DG SANTE Director-General Sandra Gallina and the 3 Coalition for Vaccination co-chairs (PGEU, EFN, CPME) immediately after the event.





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PGEU Position Paper on the revision of the EU general pharmaceutical legislation

State of Health in the EU 2021

On 13 December, PGEU attended the launch event of the “State of Health in the EU 2021”. Experts from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (Observatory) prepared a set of 29 Country Health Profiles, covering all EU Member States, as well as Iceland and Norway. The State of Health in the EU’s Country Health Profiles are designed to be a one-stop-shop for knowledge and information on a country’s health system, put into the perspective of a cross-EU comparison. They are a comprehensive resource that covers the latest health policy challenges and developments in each country.

Each Country Health Profile provides:

- a short synthesis of the health status in the country
- the determinants of health (focusing on behavioural risk factors)
- an account of the organisation of the health system
- an analysis of each health system’s effectiveness, accessibility and resilience.



The contribution of community pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic



On average, a pharmacy in the EU serves 4122 patients



On average, there are 32.3 pharmacies per 100000 inhabitants in the EU



On average, there are nearly 3 practicing pharmacists per pharmacy in the EU

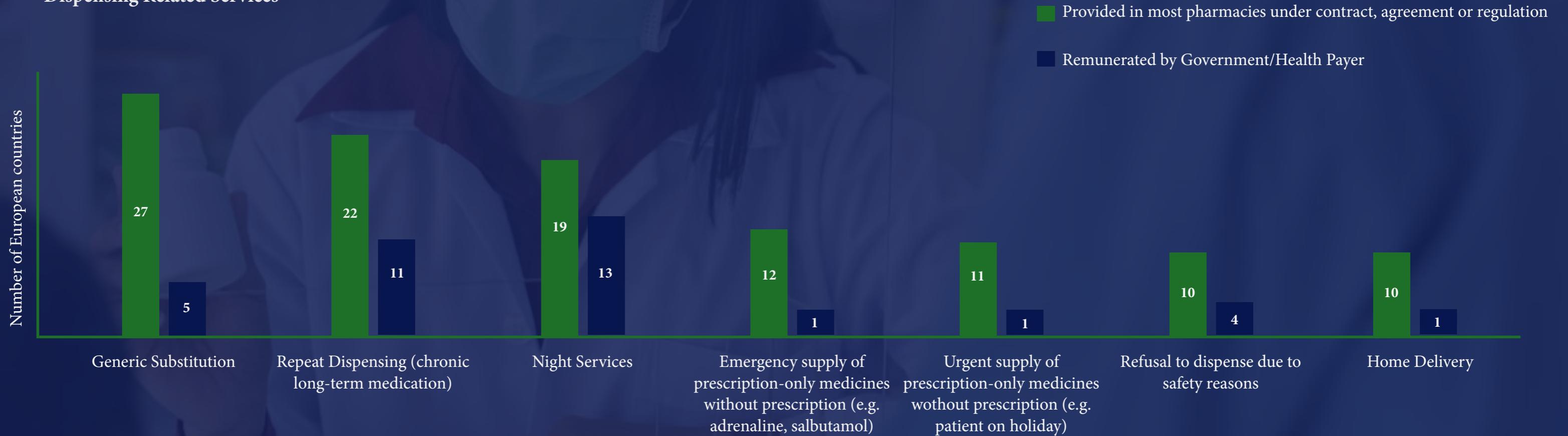




The contribution of community pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic

Overview of available community pharmacy services across Europe

Dispensing Related Services

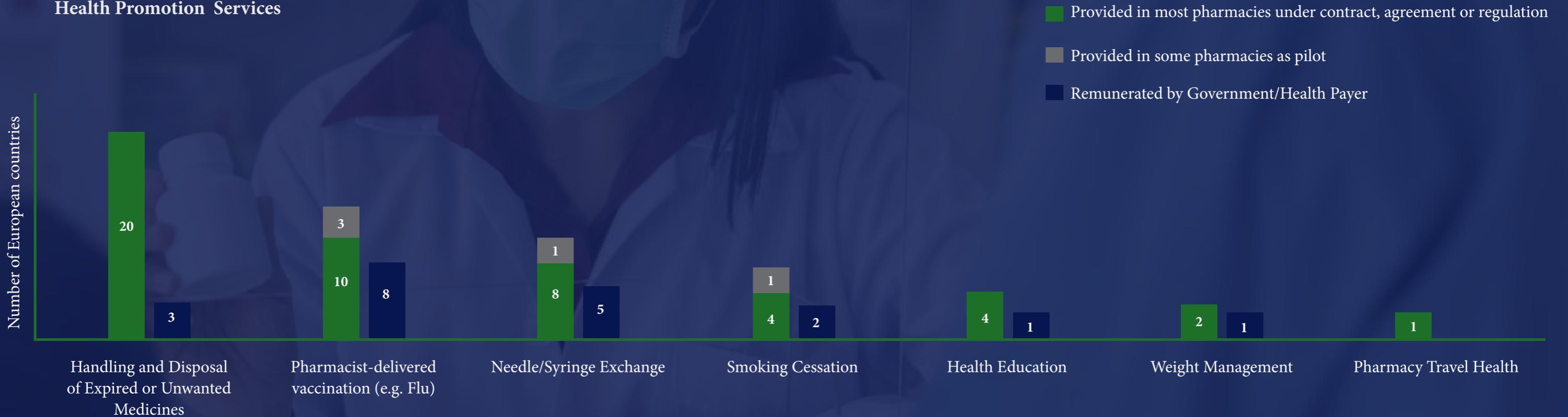




The contribution of community pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic

Overview of available community pharmacy services across Europe

Health Promotion Services

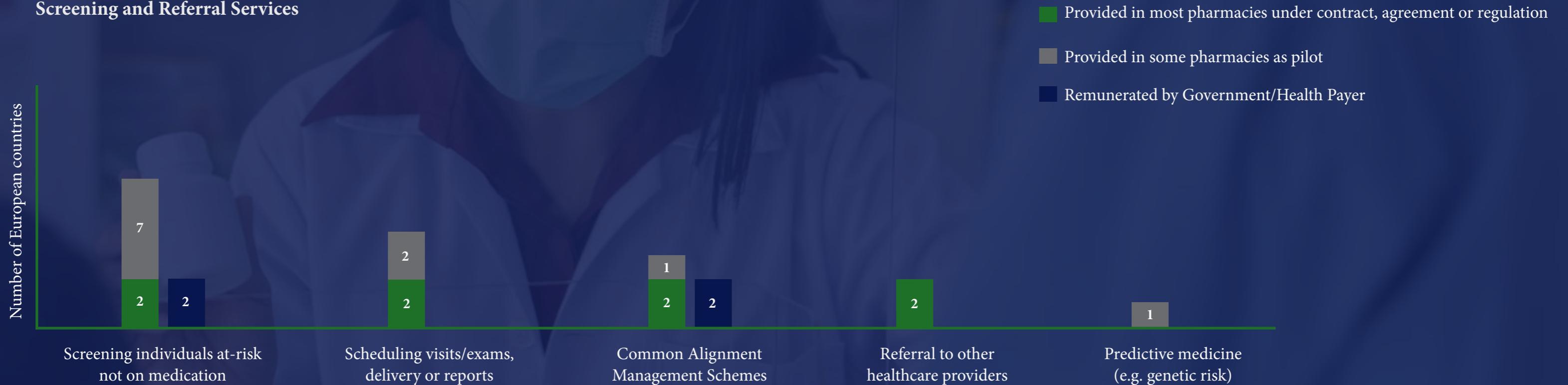




The contribution of community pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic

Overview of available community pharmacy services across Europe

Screening and Referral Services





The contribution of community pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic

Overview of available community pharmacy services across Europe

Disease Management Services

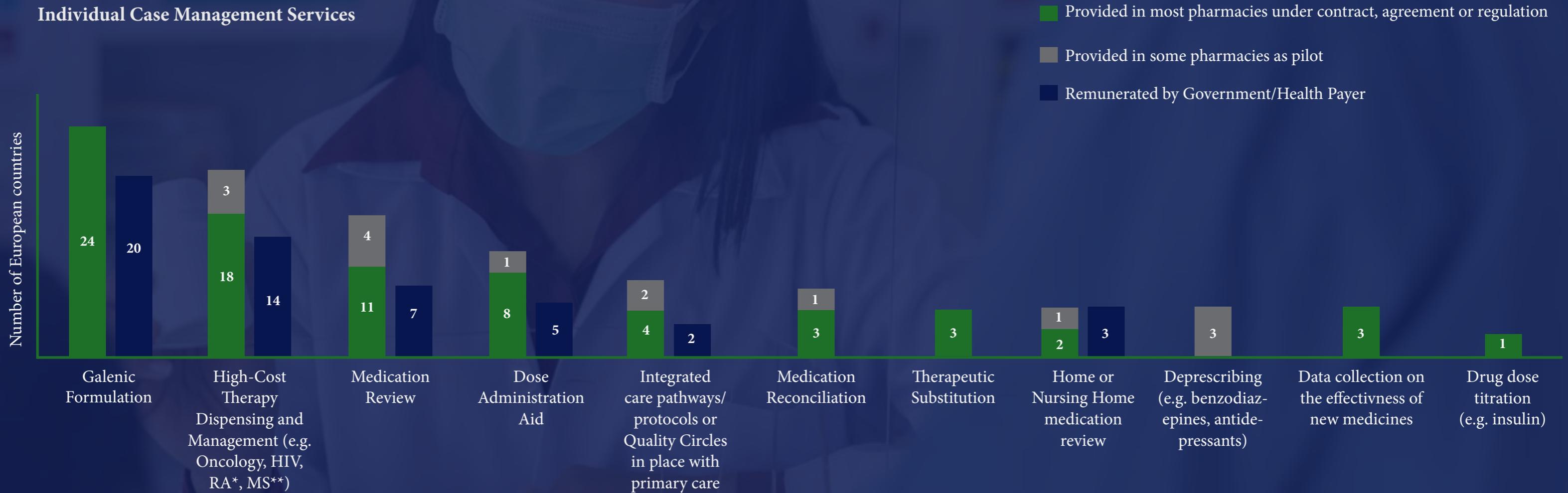




The contribution of community pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic

Overview of available community pharmacy services across Europe

Individual Case Management Services



*RA - Rheumatoid Arthritis, ** MS - Multiple Sclerosis



The contribution of community pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic

Stories from community pharmacy daily practice across Europe



1. Pharmacist Fatima convinces people for COVID-19 vaccination in front of her pharmacy in Brussels

Source

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2. Italian pharmacist saves life of fainting colleague in the pharmacy with a defibrillator

Source

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3. Irish pharmacist Jess McNamara explaining where to get information on COVID-19 vaccines, encouraging young people to get fully vaccinated when they can.

Source



X

In Brussels (Belgium), Fatima's pharmacy has become a mini vaccination centre. Fatima is one of the first community pharmacists in Belgium allowed to administer vaccines in the pharmacy as part of a local pilot project. And the advantage is that she knows the inhabitants of her neighbourhood very well. She discusses, reassures and explains how the vaccine works. Without obligation. And it works!

"People who do not speak French come to us spontaneously," says Fatima Zohra Khayar. She believes that her "triple hat", as a local pharmacist, an Arabic-speaker of Moroccan origin and a health specialist, is reassuring to her customers. "They come looking for information because they read and hear a lot of fake news. "I tell them that for some of them vaccination is vital. That they could end up in intensive care tomorrow.

According to Fatima, the young people on their side "do not always understand why they have to be vaccinated". Several factors contribute to this. "They are not sick. But for them, we only take medicine when we are sick. I make them understand that they are doing a service to their parents, their grandparents. They understand that it is something serious, but not necessarily that it can also come from them". And then there is always the fake news. "They are afraid of so-called dangerous substances, they fear for their fertility, for not having children..."

The pharmacy enabled the vaccination of 56 people in a single day, September 17. "Word of mouth goes very quickly," pleads the owner of the pharmacy. "We go through the door, we ask a question, we decide. There is no need to put on a big show.





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X

Paolo Betti, pharmacist and president of Federfarma Trento (Italy), tells us this story, as he recently saved the life of a 52-year-old colleague thanks to the timely use of a semi-automatic defibrillator.

“It was early in the morning about ten days ago - recalls Betti - and we had already started administering the antigen tests when my colleague, a 52-year-old collaborator who is my right-arm in the pharmacy, looked at me and said: “Paolo I think I'm fainting”. I was next to her and I took her in my arms, laying her on the floor. I had thought of a drop in blood pressure, among other things also because she is a healthy person, who eats the vegetables from her garden, does not smoke and does not drink. But instead I didn't feel her heart beating anymore, and she didn't wake up. Thank God we had followed a project of the Province of Trento which had supplied a defibrillator to pharmacies that wanted to have it, but which I had never used until then. When I saw that the heartbeat was gone and there was no breathing, I started heart massage and I used the defibrillator, waiting for help”.

Betti, still moved, is keen to clarify that “thanks to the defibrillator but also to a series of coincidences” (the pharmacist did not fall and did not hit her head, the ambulances arrived in a very short time) they ensured prompt help and “we were able to save her life”. A dramatic experience: “Doing a heart massage on a mannequin is one thing, doing it on a beloved one is completely different. But luckily we saved her and, thanks to such an early intervention, I can say that she is responding well to treatment”.





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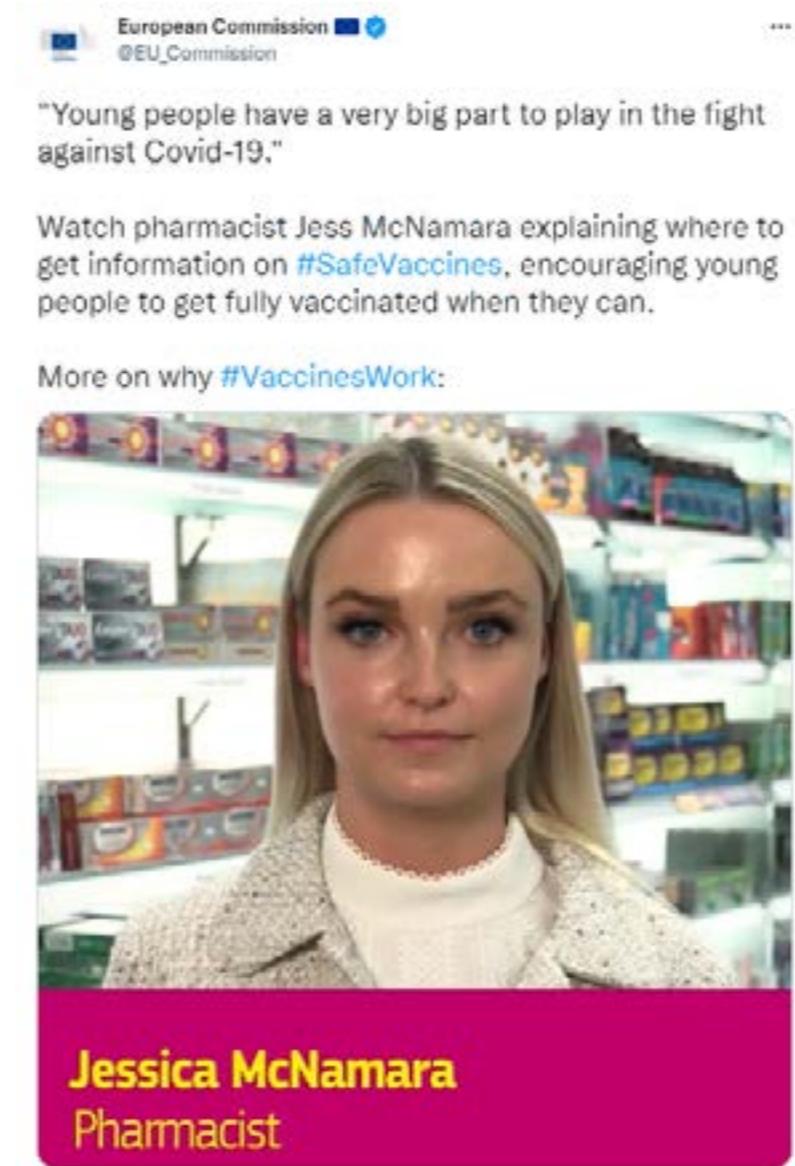
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A look forward



COVID-19 is becoming an enduring experience which is putting individuals, governments, and health care systems under unprecedented pressure. The last two years have been very challenging but the pharmacy green crosses always switched-on all-over Europe - even when everything else was switched off - have made all of us in the PGEU family feel more privileged and prouder than ever to work for the pharmacy profession.

The pandemic has created a unique window of opportunity for a transformative change in health policy. It has imposed many boundaries between people with social distancing, masks and plexiglass screens but it has also made fall many walls, among researchers, pharmaceutical companies and among health care professionals. This gives us the possibility of strengthening even further our collaboration both at policy and practical level with other health care professional organizations and the stakeholder in the pharmaceutical sector to provide high quality health care to patients. It has also reinforced the case for more investment in primary care and for an enhanced role of community pharmacists in the health care system.

As community pharmacists in the front line continue working tirelessly in the fight against COVID-19 and are playing a vital role in COVID-19 vaccination and testing, at PGEU we will continue doing everything we can to provide them tangible support by being their ambassadors in Brussels and contributing to define a regulatory framework that maximizes their knowledge and experience and help them in the pharmacy daily practice.

Our top priority in 2022 will be the revision of the European pharmaceutical legislation that the European Commission will launch at the end of the year. We will work to ensure that the revision will put the needs of patients at the center, will improve access and availability of medicines especially by addressing shortages and that it will strengthen health systems financial sustainability.

Another important priority will be the creation of the European Health Data Space which give us the opportunity to shape digital transformation in a way that truly supports pharmacists, that promotes interprofessional collaboration, that ensures data protection but also guarantees transparency and facilitates the collection of data to improve regulatory decisions and advances medical progress.

We will also work with the other stakeholders in the supply chain to reduce the negative impact of pharmaceuticals on the environment and we will continue our fight against antimicrobial resistance.

Lastly, we look forward to continuing in our role as co-chair of the EU coalition on vaccination and our contribution to the work of the European Medicines Agency in the framework of the EMA health care professionals working party.



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USPO - Union des Syndicats de pharmaciens d'officine (Trade Union of Community Pharmacists)

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UK National Pharmacy Association

Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland





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