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Citizen's Summary

Commission Communication on the Pharmaceutical Sector¹

1. WHY THIS INITIATIVE? WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The pharmaceutical industry contributes to the well-being of citizens through the availability of medicines, economic growth and employment.

Much has been achieved. However, major health, economic and scientific challenges lie ahead:

- Europe has been losing ground in pharmaceutical innovation. It is important to slow down or even reverse this trend.
- Shortcomings exist in the availability of medicines in the EU which affect patients' access to medicines and the competitiveness of the industry;
- The increasing globalisation of the sector brings new opportunities but also challenges: New markets are opening up, but at the same time new challenges arise such as the threat of counterfeited medicines or the organisation of clinical trials in third countries;
- Science revolutionizes the way medicines are developed and prescribed, and treatments become more and more personalised.

2. WHAT IS THE AIM?

To address these challenges, this Communication outlines the Commission's vision to ensure that European citizens will benefit from a competitive industry that generates safe, innovative and accessible medicines. Concrete objectives are proposed:

- (1) To make further progress towards a single and sustainable market in pharmaceuticals and;
- (2) To take on the opportunities and challenges of globalisation;
- (3) To make science deliver for European patients and restore the EU's role as the natural home for pharmaceutical innovation.

3. WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED ACTIONS?

The Communication sets out 25 different measures on various topics:

- (1) It sets the scene for several legislative proposals that are being presented together with the Communication:

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/pharmaceuticals/pharmacommunication/futurpharm_en.htm

- to tackle the growing issues of counterfeiting and illegal distribution of medicines;
- to better protect patients by strengthening the EU system for safety monitoring ('pharmacovigilance') on medicines;
- to enable citizens to get high-quality information on prescription-only medicines.

(2) In addition, it suggests several non-legislative initiatives such as:

- to discuss with Member States ways to improve market access by making pricing/reimbursement decisions more transparent;
- to develop initiatives to boost EU pharmaceutical research;
- to intensify cooperation with major partners (US, Japan, Canada) to improve medicines safety worldwide;
- to strengthen cooperation with emerging partners (Russia, India, China).

4. WHY ARE THESE ACTIONS USEFUL FOR EUROPEAN CITIZENS?

Citizens will benefit from the actions outlined in the Communication in many ways. First and foremost, they will be better protected against important health threats such as counterfeit medicines or unsafe products. They will have better access to information on the medicines they need. The affordability of medicines within Europe should also be improved.

Secondly, European citizens and the EU economy will benefit from a strong EU-based pharmaceutical industry. A more competitive and innovative industry will generate more growth and sustainable jobs for European workers and also foster the development of new medicines for unmet medical needs.

5. WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

The Communication will be discussed in the European Parliament², representing citizens, in the Council, representing Member States³, and in the European Economic and Social Committee⁴, the consultative body representing Europe's economic and social interest groups.

² <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>

³ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/>

⁴ <http://eesc.europa.eu/>