



# EU can do more for equitable access to medicines

Brussels, 12 January 2023

The Hungarian Permanent Representation to the European Union hosted the event **“Sustainable ways to finance innovation”** organised in collaboration with the Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad 4 Group, the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands and Medicines for Europe.

As demonstrated by the recent crisis, medicines are essential goods and policies must be aligned to support modern, resilient and robust European healthcare environment. At the same time, accordingly to the World Health Organisation (WHO), each year 700,000 people die as a result of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). This silent pandemic should be equally tackled by promoting antibiotic appropriate use, while encouraging manufacturing, also via non legislative measures other than transferable exclusivity vouchers which would break the founding principle of the relationship between innovation and reward. Pricing policies for old antibiotics must urgently be reviewed so that they remain viable to produce and supply.

The EU Pharmaceutical strategy can significantly deliver on equitable access to medicines for patients through support for:

1. Competition and uptake measures to encourage greater access to off-patent medicines.
2. Flexible regulatory system that facilitates timely access for patients.
3. Addressing the root causes of shortages with EU legal guidance on medicines procurement.
4. New types of incentives to address market failure and availability of antimicrobial products across the EU, such as annual revenue guarantee facilitated through HERA as well as direct financial incentives.

Opening the workshop, **Katalin Molnár Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of Hungary to the EU** said *“National health systems in Europe are famous for their inclusivity and that no patient is left behind. This is a fundamental value we have to preserve. A good balance needs to be found and we need to identify unmet medical needs and free-up as much resources as possible to extend equitable access to well-functioning therapies. Moreover it is important to recognize the vulnerability of global pharma value chains. Therefore need a pharmaceutical regulatory environment that supports European manufacturing and consolidates distribution channels. This is even more alarming in the light of the chronic crisis of pharmaceutical shortages.”*



Speaking at the event, **Mária Malová, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the EU**, said *“Medicines cannot be considered as ordinary goods, but as special goods that heal and save human lives therefore we should aim for solutions, which will work for people and public budgets and the whole pharmaceutical sector. We cannot allow AMR to pose a risk undermining the achievements of modern medicine and taking us back to a time where even routine hospital interventions could become lethal.”*

Intervening at the event **Damiët Onderstal, Health attaché, Permanent Representation of the kingdom of the Netherlands to the EU** said *“The revision of the pharma legislation is a big opportunity to improve the system. The current system of incentives has failed to stimulate the development of novel antimicrobials, as well as keeping them on the market. It is clear that we need solutions to tackle the emerging global crisis of antimicrobial resistance. We do need a coordinated European approach to be able to find a solution. Instead of the transferable exclusivity vouchers, we need direct financial incentives, that are not necessarily legislative in nature, and could be facilitated through HERA.”*

Speaking at the event, **Medicines for Europe Director General Adrian van den Hoven** said *“Healthcare provision in Europe has been in crisis since the start of the pandemic. For years, we have known of inequities in access to medicines depending on where in the EU you live. This is unacceptable, when a ready-made solution exists in the smart use of off-patent medicines. The review of the pharmaceutical legislation this year must focus on strengthening and supporting the off-patent medicines sector, given the value we are delivering for health systems.”*

