

## Meeting with European social partners on the Pharmaceutical Strategy and Europe's Beating Cancer Plan 12 November 2020

The purpose of the meeting is to have an exchange of views between the Social Partners and Vice-President Schinas and Commissioner Kyriakides on the upcoming Pharmaceutical Strategy to be adopted on 24<sup>th</sup> November and the presentation, planned for 9<sup>th</sup> December, of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

### Policy Context of the Pharmaceutical Strategy

- The overall goal of this initiative is to help ensure the EU's **supply of safe and affordable medicines to meet patients' needs** and to **support the EU pharmaceutical industry** to remain an innovator and world leader.
- The pharmaceutical sector is a **major contributor to the EU economy** as a knowledge-intensive sector with more than 800,000 direct jobs and a trade surplus of more than €100 billion. The global pharmaceutical market is estimated to grow in the coming years, offering a growth potential for EU industry. To make the most of this potential, the EU workforce needs to have the appropriate skills.
- **Innovative technologies** such as artificial intelligence and analysis of data collected from clinical experience (real world data) are challenging the way products are developed and may impact therapeutic approaches and business models.
- At the same time, given that the EU has an ageing population, a rising burden of diseases and is faced with emerging health threats such as the COVID-10 pandemic, new therapies need to be clinically better than existing alternatives as well as cost-effective to ensure the **financial sustainability of Member States' health systems**.
- There has been recurring political debate about **access, availability (including shortages) and affordability of medicines**. Council conclusions have focussed on 1) how to reconcile the need to ensure wide access to innovative medicines for unmet medical need and financial sustainability of health systems and 2) access to medicines through a life-cycle approach. The European Parliament has adopted resolutions on options for improving access to medicines, on antimicrobial resistance and on shortages.
- The current COVID-19 crisis has further exacerbated **vulnerabilities in the supply of medicines** and has shone light on new problems, e.g. absence of good monitoring of supply and demand of medicines. The Pharmaceutical strategy will include early lessons learnt from the current pandemic, but is much more than a crisis response.
- There is a need to build a **holistic, patient-centred, forward-looking Pharmaceutical strategy** for Europe which covers the whole life cycle of medicines from, scientific discovery over authorisation to patient access. It will create synergies with relevant EU policies, such as in areas of research and innovation, industry, competition, environment and sustainability.

- The strategy will cover:
  - Unmet medical needs
  - Patient access to medicines, including affordability
  - Research, innovation and digital transformation
  - Global value and supply chain
- The strategy will include a number of **high-level actions** to be further elaborated in the implementation phase, which will start as from 2021.
- **Actions will be legislative and non-legislative** and will be rolled out through the mandate of this Commission, and beyond. In the implementation phase, **consultations with stakeholders will take place for specific actions.**

### Policy Context of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan

- While it is estimated that 40% of cancers can be prevented, 3.5 million people in the EU are diagnosed with **cancer** every year, and 1.3 million lose their lives to it. Beyond the enormous physical and emotional pain and distress caused to patients, it also places a **heavy burden on healthcare and social protection** systems and on the economy at large, including the work force and employers.
- More ambitious action on health **promotion and prevention** is needed, as the **cost of cancer care** in the EU is increasing at an unprecedented rate, putting significant pressure on societies and economies. Overall, the **economic impact** of cancer in Europe is estimated to exceed **€100 billion** annually.
- The influence of EU **legislation** and norm setting, **financial support** programmes and **research**, can substantially reinforce prevention (e.g. EU legislation on tobacco control, on alcohol and tobacco taxation, EU cancer registries, screening guidelines, legislation on food labelling).
- **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan** is one of the Commission's **flagship initiatives** and a main priority in the area of public health. It is a crosscutting priority of the von der Leyen Commission as a whole, with **many policy areas** making important contributions, including our preparedness and response in dealing with the **COVID-19** pandemic.
- The **overall objective** of **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan** is to reduce the suffering from cancer in the EU, putting **citizens and patients at the centre** and addressing cancer in a holistic way through its four pillars: 1) prevention 2) early detection; 3) diagnosis and treatment; and 4) quality of life of cancer patients and survivors.
- The Plan will have a '**health-in-all-policies**' approach to ensure the strong involvement of social and environmental sectors and address inequalities horizontally to help to reduce the current health inequalities that persist between and within the Member States, as well as between different socioeconomic population groups, for example regarding access to diagnosis and treatment, as well as survival rates.
- Europe's Beating Cancer Plan will aim to significantly **reduce the increasing burden** on national health and social systems, reduce the pressure on governmental budgets and promote the productivity and growth of the economy, including a healthy workforce.

- The implementation of legislation in view of reducing **exposure to hazardous substances and radiation** at the work place, where 52% of annual occupational deaths in the EU can be attributed to work-related cancer, will be a priority under the prevention pillar of the Plan.
- To ensure quality of cancer care, Europe's Beating Cancer Plan will support the cancer workforce through targeted training and continuous education initiatives, supporting Member States to address skills gaps.
- Europe's Beating Cancer Plan will include a combination **of legislative and non-legislative measures** with tangible actions designed to make a real difference to people across the EU. A more level playing field for patients, fewer inequalities and a new focus on effective prevention are objectives which can be implemented through several EU policies and instruments.
- The Plan will link to **other relevant EU initiatives** such as the Pharmaceutical Strategy, the Green Deal, Farm to Fork and Zero Pollution strategies, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Health Data Space and the 1+ Million Genomes Initiative, the Chemicals Strategy, as well as initiatives related to health professionals such as the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions.

### Key issues for discussion

The discussion will focus on the following key questions:

- What do you expect as future trends with regard to the sectors concerned by these initiatives, notably as regards jobs, skills (training) and investment needs?
- What do you see as the challenges which can, and should be addressed at EU level in this regard?
- How could, based on the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sectors concerned by these initiatives be supported at EU level to be more resilient, in face of future public health crises?
- What are your positions and recommendations with regard to possible - legislative and non-legislative - EU measures, notably in the pharmaceutical sector?