

Request for EU-Industry cooperation to share information on EU-wide demand for ICU medicines and on member state actual inventories for Covid-19 second wave risk planning

Brussels, 15 September 2020

Ms Von der Leyen,
President of the European Commission

Ms Stella Kyriakides,
Commissioner for Health, European Commission

Dear President Von der Leyen, Dear Commissioner Kyriakides,

As you are aware, our pharmaceutical trade associations joined forces to coordinate a project on the supply of critical ICU medicines for Covid-19 under the guidance of a Commission Decision on 6 April 2020. The purpose of this project was to respond to the massive demand for ICU medicines required to put patients on mechanical respirators during the first wave of the pandemic. Through a combination of industry scale up and cooperation with EU authorities for regulatory flexibility, we were able to massively increase the supply of these critical medicines (in some cases up to 900% increase over the same period in 2019) and to work closely with the EU to ensure solidarity to move the medicines across borders to patients in need. We were also able to maintain a careful assessment of demand and supply with some technical support from our companies and AT Kearney. Throughout this process, we have involved the relevant EU officials or agencies and shared the data generated by our project. Where necessary, we have worked closely with the Commission to prevent hoarding, to support a functioning internal market and more generally EU solidarity.

We have maintained our industry coordination to plan for the risks of a second wave of the pandemic, which we had anticipated to be this autumn, due to the relaxation of lockdown measures, the movement of people on vacation and the risk of a flu outbreak in combination with Covid-19. As our industry depleted their stocks to supply for the first wave and because of strong demand from other regions around the world, our companies are now replenishing inventories (raw material or other supplies such as vials needed for production) to plan for a second wave risk in Europe.

We urge the Commission to continue to encourage Member States to work with industry on this matter. Currently, we lack clear information on patient demand (as, for example, hospitalisation rates relative to infection rates have changed considerably) and on national inventories of ICU medicines that have been held over from the first wave by hospitals and by Member States. Companies are extremely challenged in rebuilding inventories and planning for allocation based on patient need and EU solidarity to Member States without this information. We note that a recent EMA survey of the Member States indicates that they have shared this information with industry locally, but this contrasts with the views expressed by all of the companies in our ICU medicines project which are the major suppliers of these medicines in Europe.

We kindly request that the Commission continues to ensure EU level cooperation and coordination in planning for the risk of a second wave of Covid-19. This will require increased transparency on critical data, especially demand estimates and existing inventory levels. Industry, coordinated by our associations for this project, is ready to engage constructively and cooperatively on this with you and the Member States in the interests of European patients.

Thank you for your time and urgent consideration.

Best wishes,

Sent electronically, original signed by:

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Medicines for Europe

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EFPIA