

## European Green Deal

### GIRP position on sustainable and green full-service healthcare distribution

GIRP, the European Healthcare Distribution Association, is the umbrella organisation for pharmaceutical full-service healthcare distributors in Europe. It represents the national associations of over 750 full-service healthcare distributors serving 33 European countries, as well as major international and pan-European healthcare distribution companies.

GIRP welcomes the commitment and continuous efforts of the European Commission towards tackling climate change and securing a sustainable future for all. GIRP members, full-service healthcare distributors, share the widespread concern of climate change and the undesirable effects that pharmaceuticals may cause in the environment. GIRP actively supports the ambitious strategy set out by the European Commission for the European Green Deal and its various initiatives, as well as the repeated resolution to deliver on its objectives.

As the vital link in healthcare, GIRP members play a crucial role in ensuring the efficient and timely delivery as well as the continuous availability of all medicines, whenever and wherever they are needed. Full-service healthcare distributors also hold a pivotal position in the healthcare supply chain, uniquely placed to support pharmacists and other healthcare professionals in their efforts to increase public awareness by promoting the prudent use and proper, safe disposal of pharmaceutical waste in order to reduce pharmaceuticals' harmful impact on the environment, as well as actively advocating for compliance with environmental standards and legislation.

Aware of the transversal and multifaceted challenges posed by climate change and conscious of their central position in the pharmaceutical supply chain, GIRP members are committed to strengthen the links between all stakeholders involved in health products distribution in order to meet the patients' need while simultaneously making the conscious effort to reduce their overall carbon footprint by adopting greener and more efficient distribution practices.

Some best practices already implemented by full-service healthcare distributors include<sup>1</sup>:

- efficient recycling and waste reduction,
- increase in use of sustainable energy,
- reduction in energy consumption,
- greener transportation,

Another salient initiative led by full-service healthcare distributors to ensure a more efficient distribution scheme within the pharmaceutical supply chain, is the function of bundling of products from pharmaceutical manufacturers, i.e., a better pooling of products per delivery. In turn, this function, unique to full-service healthcare distributors, contributes immensely to a considerable reduction on carbon emissions.

#### Efficient recycling and waste reduction

GIRP and its members are committed to reducing their carbon footprint by minimizing waste and recycling efficiently through various initiatives such as the use of recyclable canvas tote bags at all GIRP events and meetings, preparing all possible orders with reusable plastic as well as recycling all types of carton, paper and packaging materials which are then revalued by recollection companies who specialised in recycled cardboard and paper.

---

<sup>1</sup> Further information on all efforts is detailed in the annex "[GIRP members' best practices for green and sustainable healthcare distribution](#)"

In addition, GIRP members work towards an efficient recovery of plastic and paperless policies through digitalisation: All internal processes are now paperless and close to all communications with customers and providers have moved to a digital format and finally, our relationships with national agencies and health authorities are based on electronic communications.

Externally, GIRP members have equipped their drivers with PDA featuring geo-positioning system and electronic documentation. In practice, this entails a new type of commercial relationship with the sectors clients by deploying the use of electronic invoices. In Spain for example, GIRP members are working closely with the AEMPS (Health Agency) using this communication system to use and validate narcotics whereas before every narcotic transaction needed an official paper version; now everything is electronic and safer for the patient, the pharmacy, and the wholesaler. In addition, they are using new technological tools such as the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) system and others electronic setups to improve our communications without paper.

On a long-term basis, GIRP remains committed to putting/dedicating further efforts towards protecting the environment and fighting climate change through even more ambitious paperless policies and adopting greener, more efficient distribution practices, including relying on the shift in sector towards digitalisation to reduce the use of paper to a minimum, as well as avoid the use of plastics and non-essential packaging.

### **Reduction in carbon emissions and energy consumption**

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), climate change is amongst the greatest health threats of the 21st century with rising temperatures, extreme weather conditions and air pollution determined to affect disease patterns in the future. As the umbrella organisation for full-service healthcare distributors in Europe, GIRP understands its responsibility to approach climate change as preventive care in an overall effort to improve human health and well-being across Europe.

With the storage and transportation of medicines at the core of the full-service healthcare distribution sector, GIRP understands the salient need to counterbalance their consumption of electricity and fuel on the margins of the current legal requirements for the temperature control of medicinal products during storage and transport by adopting sustainable best practice and energy-efficiency-increasing and emission-reducing measures.

GIRP members are actively pursuing ambitious targets linked to climate change, prioritising their respective agendas to further reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and increase energy efficiency in the future by monitoring their energy consumption via energy monitoring systems and recording their emissions in carbon footprint analysis, operating energy management systems compliant with ISO 5000, and performing energy audits on a regular basis. Temperature monitoring systems also are in place for daily warehouse operations. In addition to implementing concrete measures, our member companies also train their employees on environmentally friendly behaviour in their everyday work.

Across Europe, various energy-saving measures have been introduced, including ongoing LED modernisation, the optimisation and automated control of heating and air-conditioning systems and the use of smart heat (and cold) recovery technology in ventilation systems. In addition, comprehensive modernisation and refurbishment measures are being carried out to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and increase energy efficiency like renewal of building insulation, roof refurbishment or renovation measures for pharmacies. Furthermore, investments are being made in energy-efficient technologies and equipment like air compressors and state-of-the-art cooling technology with more environmentally friendly refrigerants.

### **Use of sustainable energy**

GIRP members have already committed to significant business model changes towards protecting the environment, recognising that a sustainable future can only be built on a viable foundation of integrated components such as environmentally friendly best practices and carrying out climate-conscious business; Electric vehicles are replacing fuel-powered means of transports and solar panels, wind-powered energy sources, as well as other sustainable sources of energy are also being in factor.

GIRP members are committed to advocating for and providing input on coherent policy frameworks – in line with the Paris Climate Agreement and latest climate science such as initiatives that encourage environmentally responsible public and private investments in greener infrastructure and business – as well as to mobilising action at scale across the supply chain.

As Europe aims to be climate-neutral by 2050 and to limit global warming to well below 2°C, GIRP embraces the ambitious strategy of the European Commission and awaits the next developments towards the realisation of the European Green Deal. GIRP furthermore encourages a close cooperation between the European Commission, the European Medicines Agency (EMA), Member States and all Stakeholders in the healthcare supply chain to ensure balanced policy results considering both a greener future and the needs of all patients and citizens across Europe.

### **GIRP**

European Healthcare Distribution Association  
Brussels, February 2022

Annex:

**[PowerPoint Presentation "GIRP members' best practices for green and sustainable healthcare distribution"](#)**