

Press Release

GIRP welcomes EC guidelines on optimal and rational supply of essential medicines for COVID-19

9 April 2020

Brussels, Belgium – GIRP welcomes the publication of the European Commission (EC) guidelines on the optimal and rational supply of medicines to avoid shortages during the COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance document focuses on the rational allocation of essential medicines (medicines used strictly in the context of COVID-19) in order to prevent their shortages during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

We applaud “these EC guidelines as a strong statement of support to the ultimate goal of protecting public health while preserving the integrity of the EU Single Market” – Bernd Grabner, President, GIRP said.

GIRP, the voice of full-service healthcare distributors (with pharmaceutical full-line wholesaling as core function) highly appreciates and fully supports the EC calls to EU Member States for supply chain optimization which asks them to:

- Ensure necessary **support to the full-service healthcare distribution sector**. The guidelines recognise that full-service healthcare distributors are responsible for distributing medicines within the EU/EEA and must be allowed to continue operating at full capacity and supply medicinal products to hospitals and pharmacies. Their employees should have access to the necessary PPE. In order to ensure deliveries, vehicle drivers should also receive permits to travel without restriction and access hospitals, pharmacies and other dispensing sites (especially in quarantined areas).
- **Lift export bans and export restrictions** within the EU which can have detrimental impact on the availability of medicines on the EU market. Such **restrictions can lead to shortages** in other EU Member States. The guidelines remind that many of the current **export bans are illegal**.
- Fully **implement ‘green lanes’** as production and distribution are multinational and border delays affect them.
- **Avoid national stockpiling**.
- Ensure **fair distribution of supply** within Member States and ensure that wholesale distributors, community pharmacies and hospitals receive their usual stocks of medicines.
- The possible **extension of expiry dates** of essential medicines by the Marketing Authorisation Holder (MAH), based on their stability data.

GIRP also welcomes the proposal for the optimisation of the retail sales to introduce limits on the amounts of essential medicines that patients can purchase via their retail pharmacies.

Early in the crisis GIRP published a statement calling on EU institutions and national authorities to support the full-service healthcare distribution sector by calling for:

- full-service healthcare distributors to be recognised as part of the critical infrastructures;
- national authorities to support stock optimization measures by full-service healthcare distributors or their customers;
- ‘Green Lanes’ for vehicles carrying medicines and medical supplies across all EU/EEA territories;
- export bans on medicines to be lifted where they have been applied.

Monika Derecque-Pois, Director General, GIRP stated: "We are very pleased to see that most of our early thinking and calls have been reflected in the EC guidelines and believe the rapid adoption of national measures to apply the guidelines should be a top priority for all national authorities in their fight against the COVID-19."

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European Healthcare Distribution Association (GIRP) ([website](#))

GIRP, the European Healthcare Distribution Association, is the umbrella organisation for pharmaceutical full-line wholesalers and distributors of healthcare products and services in Europe. It represents the national associations of over 750 pharmaceutical wholesalers serving 34 European countries, as well as major international and pan-European healthcare distribution companies. GIRP members employ over 140,000 people and distribute around 15 billion packs of medicines as well as a wide range of healthcare products per year. As the vital link in healthcare, they are committed to developing and providing innovative and efficient healthcare products and services to improve health and wellbeing of patients across Europe.