

10 June 2026 - Statement of the Beneluxa Initiative on a more unified European approach to access to and affordability of pharmaceutical products

Countries in the European Union and the European Economic Area differ in how they organise, insure and provide health care. Yet there is one important unifying factor: access to health care is broadly considered to be a social right¹. With patients' interests and social accountability in mind, their citizens can rely on universal health care systems that have delivered health outcomes ranking amongst the best in the world².

The Beneluxa Initiative has explored the opportunities and challenges in European collaboration since 2015. We therefore welcome collaborative approaches by Member States to address shared structural challenges within a European framework rather than through uncoordinated individual national responses, while still respecting national competences. Support from the European Commission in facilitating continued dialogue and collaborative working would enhance the ability of Member States to achieve this. This approach endorses Europe as an attractive location that guarantees legal stability and safeguards scientific advancement. This is a goal we share.

In turbulent geopolitical times, we believe that the current developments in the pharmaceutical system require unity and coordination to safeguard long-term affordable pharmaceutical care for European patients, while providing a strong and targeted approach to innovation in Europe.

Although Europe remains an attractive economic and innovative place for the pharmaceutical sector, recent geopolitical developments have highlighted more fundamental challenges in pharmaceutical policy across Europe. These challenges require a fundamental review.

System optimisation

We believe that there is an opportunity for deeper cooperation to further strengthen and support the way in which pricing and reimbursement is carried out in Europe. European health care systems fundamentally distinguish between economic and health care outcomes. Medical interventions are assessed on the impact they have on population health, rather than their economic impact alone. Maintaining this strong, science-based

¹ European Social Charter of the Council of Europe, art. 11

²Background paper on the European pharmaceutical market (April 2026), Network of Competent Authorities on Pricing and Reimbursement (NCAPR)

approach, while fully respecting national competences, joint efforts could aid in reducing lead times to new, valuable products. Among others, increased information sharing, quickly expanding the uptake of HTA-R outcomes and streamlining P&R procedures on a mutually agreed collaborative basis, should ultimately lead to a more unified European approach to pricing and reimbursement of new treatments. Collaborative approaches on pricing and purchasing, including those facilitated by the Critical Medicines Act, should be explored. In turn, we welcome a debate on moving toward a more demand driven system that allows countries to determine what their true unmet needs are and what their willingness to pay for products that meet those needs is.

Experiences gained through existing regional collaborations can facilitate this debate. The Beneluxa Initiative is willing to contribute with its lessons learned.

Fundamental choices on innovation – Discovered and developed in Europe

There is a need for a comprehensive analysis of Europe's unique and important innovative and industrial qualities. Global competition for investment in R&D and production has increased, with some regions surpassing the efforts made in Europe and the United States. Pursuing traditional incentivisation instruments alone can only partly address our challenges on innovation. While several potential mechanisms have been discussed in European fora, these require productive, collaborative critical scrutiny and development before being advanced as EU-level policy positions.

Alongside supporting innovation and the security of supply of medicines in Europe, sustainability is a central concern for health systems across the region. Our citizens are living longer lives, and more of them will require the services and treatments provided by our health systems as this continues. If we are to achieve this, we must ensure that our expenditure on medicines remains sustainable to protect access for patients now and into the future. We must take advantage of collaborative opportunities to support this goal, which we all share.

Collaborative efforts across the Union have delivered for our citizens. Members of established collaborations, including the Beneluxa Initiative, have experienced the benefits that can be realised from partnership in pharmaceutical policy. Future collaborative efforts undertaken by Member States should ensure that the patient remains the focus of their goals, and their activities are carefully considered to further enhance access, availability, and affordability of medicines in Europe. It is our shared goal to preserve Europe's solidarity-

based systems to guarantee equitable access to safe and effective health care for all patients.