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Self-Care Key To EU Pharmaceutical Strategy, Says Rapporteur

by [David Ridley](#)

Only with help of the non-prescription medicines sector will the aims of the new European Union pharmaceutical strategy be achieved, argues MEP and rapporteur Dolors Montserrat at the AESGP Annual Meeting.

Europe's non-prescription medicines sector is key to achieving the objectives of the European Commission's updated pharmaceutical strategy, European Parliament representative Dolors Montserrat has insisted.

"People need safe and secure solutions to protect their health," Montserrat, who is a Member of European Parliament and rapporteur on the EU Pharmaceutical Strategy, told delegates at the Association of the European Self-Care Industry's 58th Annual Meeting in Madrid, Spain.

"It is clear that self-care medicines can contribute to guaranteeing the sustainability of our national healthcare systems," she said.

Adopted on 25 November 2020, the Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe aims at "creating a future-proof regulatory framework and at supporting industry in promoting research and technologies that actually reach patients in order to fulfil their therapeutic needs while addressing market failures," according to the Commission. (Also see "[Radical Shake-Up In Store For Entire EU Pharma Legislation](#)" - Pink Sheet, 25 Nov, 2020.)

Based on four pillars, the new strategy will: ensure access to affordable medicines, support the competitiveness, innovation and sustainability of the EU's pharmaceutical industry and the development of high quality, safe, effective and greener medicines; enhance crisis preparedness and response mechanisms, diversified and secure supply chains; and ensure a strong EU voice in the world, by promoting a high level of quality, efficacy and safety standards, Montserrat explained.

“There is no doubt that non-prescription medicines are key for the achievement of these objectives,” she maintained.

They have a long track record of effectiveness and safety, provide substantial benefits for consumers and societies and are rarely affected by supply issues, which makes them “even more important in times of emergency,” Montserrat noted.

Economic Benefits

Echoing a point made by AESGP president Birgit Schubauer earlier on in the Annual Meeting, Montserrat pointed to indirect contribution that OTC medicines make to the regional economy.

By “enabling people to self-manage their ailments while allowing doctors to dedicate more time to more serious diseases,” OTC medicines “play a crucial role in securing the economic sustainability of our national health systems with estimated savings of €34bn per year across Europe,” she explained.

Looking ahead, Montserrat suggested that the digitalization of healthcare will represent “one of the biggest challenge ahead for the European Union.”

In terms of medicines, a key stepping stone in the digitalization process will be the introduction of electronic patient information leaflets (ePILs), which has been “strongly recommended” as part of the revision of the pharmaceutical strategy. (Also see "[EU Regulatory News Round Up: NSAIDs During Pregnancy, Estragole Excipients, ePILs](#)" - HBW Insight, 4 May, 2022.)

For non-prescription medicines, ePILs are particularly important, Montserrat argued, as there may be no interaction with healthcare professionals.

Strengthen Pharmacy

Learning from the pandemic, Montserrat said that the role of community pharmacists also needs to be strengthened to achieve the aims of the new pharmaceutical strategy. (Also see "[Why GSK Is Backing Community Pharmacy – Q&A With VP Tess Player](#)" - HBW Insight, 6 Dec, 2021.)

AESGP Annual Meeting, Day 2 (Part 1): The Future For Europe's Self-Care Industry Is Bright And Digital

By [David Ridley](#)

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Day 2 of the AESGP's 58th Annual Meeting in Madrid, Spain begins with optimism about the future of the European self-care industry. Google and IQVIA Consumer Health analyze COVID-19 trends to help industry prepare for the post-pandemic new normal, while Convert Group and Swedish e-pharmacy Meds.se emphasize the opportunity presented by e-commerce for consumer health.

[Read the full article here](#)

“We saw the guiding role of pharmacists and their significance as primary care providers for minor ailments during the pandemic as medical doctors and hospitals were overwhelmed by the emergency,” she said.

“In order to release the full potential of self-care, we need EU health policies and explicit political commitment to support the involvement of community pharmacists and their closer co-operation with physicians,” she argued.

In conclusion, Montserrat said that the new framework being built will only achieve “wider and better access to healthcare for all Europeans and the resilience and sustainability of our national healthcare systems if we promote health policies that will include and incentivize responsible and well informed self-care.”