

EuropaBioPatient BioForum: Advancing patient access to innovative treatments

NEWS RELEASE

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2021 marks the start of the implementation of the **European Health Union** and the new **EU Pharmaceutical Strategy**. This week, **EuropaBio's Patients BioForum** (hereafter, the BioForum) met to discuss avenues for enhancing the access of EU patients to novel biotechnology-derived treatments, in particular in the area of rare diseases.

The first Session of the meeting focused on the EU Pharmaceutical Strategy review of incentives for medicines for rare and paediatric diseases. **Dimitrios Athanasiou, Board Member of the European Patient Forum**, spoke of the importance to match unmet needs with innovation and centralised and agile regulatory procedures. *"We need to think of Europe as a global leader if we want it to become a global leader"*, said Athanasiou.

Maciej Gajewski, Co-chair of the EuropaBio WG on medicines for rare and paediatric diseases, discussed effective ways for fostering medicine development for unmet needs of paediatric and rare disease patients. *'If we are serious about addressing unmet needs in rare diseases, we need more collaboration between public and private sectors. The next chapter is just around the corner'*, said Gajewski.

Dolors Montserrat, Member of the European Parliament and rapporteur on the EU Pharmaceutical Strategy acknowledged the importance of an innovative pharmaceutical industry and sustainable health systems. *'We need to achieve world leadership for Europe in healthcare.'*, said Montserrat.

The second session discussed the importance of **improving patient access to cross-border healthcare across the EU**. **Ananda Plate, CEO of Myeloma Patients Europe** highlighted the numerous difficulties encountered by patients seeking treatment abroad which include financial burden, lack of information, procedural challenges, travel distance or language barriers. According to her, the best solution is to find ways within the current legal framework and policies to create the right incentives for research to happen in all EU countries, and not just in western Europe, for more equity and solidarity.

Caroline Hager, Team Leader Evaluation of the Cross-border healthcare Directive, DG Health, European Commission presented the EU legal framework for cross-border healthcare and encouraged the participation of the patient community in the stakeholder consultation on cross-border healthcare before July 27. The Commission welcomes views and concrete examples of specific administrative burdens patients face to access treatments across borders.



Key takeaways of the Forum:

- We need to think of Europe as a global leader in healthcare innovation and work to make it so.
- We should build on post-COVID momentum of making health an EU policy priority, e.g. in the framework of the European Health Union by capitalising on its several new and stronger instruments.
- In the context of the implementation of the EU Pharmaceutical Strategy, we need to build a streamlined and coordinated healthcare ecosystem that involves all stakeholders working in a predictable and sustainable continuum.
- We need to de-risk innovation, match that innovation to unmet needs, and work centrally and collaboratively to ensure broader patient access.
- We need to actively find ways within the current legal framework and policies to create the right incentives for research to happen in all EU countries, to the west and east, north and south, for more equity and solidarity.

The next EuropaBio Patients BioForum will take place in autumn 2021 . More information will follow.

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About EuropaBio

EuropaBio, the European Association for Bioindustries, promotes an innovative and dynamic European biotechnology industry. EuropaBio and its members are committed to the socially responsible use of biotechnology to improve quality of life, to prevent, diagnose, treat and cure diseases, to improve the quality and quantity of food and feedstuffs and to move towards a biobased and zero-waste economy. EuropaBio represents corporate and associate members across sectors, plus national and regional biotechnology associations which, in turn, represent over 2500 biotech SMEs. Read more about our work at www.europabio.org.

