

Press release

Pharmaceutical Package – an opportunity to demonstrate commitment to the safety of Europe's citizens

Brussels, 17 February 2009 - EFPIA, the voice of the pharmaceutical industry in Europe, today urged the European Parliament to make the Commission's proposals for safe, innovative and accessible medicines for European citizens a priority. Enterprise Commissioner Günter Verheugen will meet today with the Parliament's Health Committee to make their initial exchanges on the recently launched European Commission's Pharmaceutical Package.

Ahead of this exchange of views, Brian Ager, EFPIA's Director General, called upon the Parliament and Member States to act decisively and to make the issue of patient safety a priority; "It is the responsibility of EU decision-makers to ensure safety for its citizens; this exchange of views provide the platform for the European Parliament to demonstrate their commitment to this duty of care."

The hearing, which will mark the beginning of the Parliament's review of the Commission proposals, is expected to be one of the few remaining occasions for discussion before the election of a new Parliament. Mr. Ager added; "This is a pivotal meeting; we have already experienced delays in getting these measures out, this is the opportunity to re-energize the process and give it the momentum it deserves".

The Commission's proposals, welcomed by EFPIA for their Commission's recognition of the importance of the pharmaceutical sector to Europe, were announced in December 2008. The package of measures includes three separate legislative proposals; on modernizing pharmacovigilance to improve the safety of medicines; on improving patient safety by reducing the infiltration of counterfeit medicines into the supply chain; and on improving patient access to high-quality health and medicines information.

The proposals have to be discussed by both the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers as part of the codecision procedure before the proposal can be translated into law.

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About EFPIA

EFPIA represents the pharmaceutical industry operating in Europe. Through its direct membership of 32 national associations and 43 leading pharmaceutical companies, EFPIA is the voice on the EU scene of 2,200 companies committed to researching, developing and bringing to patients new medicines that will improve health and the quality of life around the world.

The pharmaceutical industry accounts for no less than 19,3% of global business R&D expenditure. It is the sector with the highest ratio of R&D investment to net sales (15,9%). However, between 1990 and 2007, R&D investment in United States grew 5.2 times whilst in Europe it only grew 3.3 times, and there is rapid growth in the research environment in emerging economies such as China and India.

Today around 645,000 people work in this sector and it is estimated that three to four times more employment is generated indirectly both upstream and downstream. A significant proportion of people employed are highly skilled and 107,000 work in research and development. The European research-based pharmaceutical industry generates a substantial trade surplus, which was estimated at about €49,000 million for 2007. It has contributed significantly to reducing the European Union's trade deficit in high-tech products – today almost a quarter of the EU's high-tech exports are pharmaceutical products.