

# WHO Fair Pricing Forum 2021

Contribution from the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)

The [WHO Fair Pricing Forum 2021](#) made it clear that greater **transparency** in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sector is urgently needed, as a tool to take **informed decisions**, support **solidarity**, and **improve regulatory systems** across the globe.



## ECL Access to Medicines Task Force definition

*A 'fair price' is **justifiable, predictable and cost-effective** within the aims and priorities of the healthcare systems and the available budget.*

*At the same time, a fair pricing policy that takes into account the ethical and financial dimensions of patient access to care, affordability, and sustainability of healthcare systems should be encouraged and rewarded.*

ECL invites stakeholders to reflect on 3 main questions addressed in our ['What is a Fair Price?' paper](#), which offers a new definition of a fair price, and suggests ways forward for policymakers and pharmaceutical companies on how to achieve it:

### 1. Are the new treatments bringing a **real added value**?

While faster access to new medicines is something patients advocate for, fast approvals underpinned by weak evidence can lead to inefficient health care decisions. On the one hand, there might not be robust documentation and, on the other, these medicines come with a high price.

### 2. How can we guarantee that **prices fit within the aim and priorities of healthcare systems** and health care budgets?

### 3. Is there a **reasonable relationship** between the cost of bringing the product to market and the price?

Including and going beyond the cost of R&D.

## WHO question n.1: What do you see as most urgent priorities for action?

- An attitude and paradigm shift is needed when talking about health and the price of medicines. **Health is a public good** and, as such, it cannot be discussed as a marketing product. From a global perspective, the **right to health is a fundamental human right** and we need to strive to achieve health-related Sustainable Development Goals.



- **Pool resources and enhance collaboration between countries throughout the entire medicines access pathway**, to prepare health systems for (i) the arrival of new medicines and technologies, (ii) conducting high-quality Health Technology Assessment (HTA) and (iii) sharing information about **prices and pricing and reimbursement strategies**, to enhance countries' ability to (a) prioritise medicines with higher clinical value, (b) review and adjust prices based on new evidence, and (c) effectively and **fairly negotiate the prices of medicines**.
- **The system of incentives needs to change** to ensure that awards for innovation do not lead to a lack of competition and monopolistic prices. **Research and innovation and investments should be driven by patients' needs**. In particular, when it comes to investments from public sources, rewards should nurture a virtuous ecosystem that supports advancements in science and addresses patients' needs.
- Ensure that **criteria and processes for priority setting** in health care are **patient-centric, transparent** and that there is a clear link among priorities, national pricing policies and practices, and the actual price of medicines. Furthermore, pricing and reimbursement authorities and industry should be transparent about their decisions, how they are made, what criteria are used, and who is involved in the process. Instead, we see skyrocketing prices, inequalities, lack of transparency, and non-disclosed data on cost and not only.
- In February 2021, the European Commission accepted the commitments made by global pharmaceutical company Aspen to (i) reduce prices for 6 off-patent cancer medicines (by 73% on average across Europe for the next 10 years), and (ii) ensure continued supply of the medicines in all countries where they are currently sold for up to 10 years. This case is an example that much can be done to stop the constant increase of prices of medicines. **Strict enforcement of EU competition rules accelerates the quest to reach fair prices and fair pricing of life-saving and life-prolonging drugs**. Conditionalities for the responsibility for access and sustainability of healthcare systems as part of industry's market access and pricing strategies for pharmaceuticals shall be foreseen.

#### **WHO question n.2: How can stakeholders better work together to improve the transparency of markets and access to essential medicines, vaccines, devices, diagnostics, and other health technologies?**

- In Europe, the **ECL Access to Medicines Task Force** suggests establishing a **High-Level Working Group on fair pricing** which would connect all relevant stakeholders, to define a fair price and identify opportunities and challenges connected to different pricing models. Open communication channels would avoid mistrust, skyrocketing prices, and the widening of inequalities.
- There is a clear need to increase transparency and **information-sharing** on the cost of R&D, on the criteria to assess prices of medicines, and criteria to assess their added value compared to other available products or already existing products. A higher level of transparency is needed about end-user prices, documentation of product value, the cost of developing and bringing the pharmaceutical products to the market, as well as reimbursement decision-making processes.
- **Expand existing structures** (e.g., the **EURIPID database**) to share information on net prices of medicines and strive towards the full implementation of the **WHA Resolution** to restore the balance in pricing and reimbursement negotiations among governments, payers and multinational pharmaceutical companies.
- **Attach conditionalities** to both national and European public funding (e.g., **Horizon Europe, Innovative Medicines Initiative**), and ensure that public investment in R&D is accounted for and that medicines resulting from publicly funded research are available for a fair and affordable price.



## About ECL Access to Medicines Task Force

Established in 2016, the ECL Access to Medicines Task Force connects 30 national and regional cancer societies in 25 European countries, representing over 570 million Europeans. It aims to make safe and effective medicines available to all cancer patients in Europe, by insisting on accessibility, availability, affordability and increased transparency related to medicine prices, ultimately leading to sustainability of healthcare systems. The Task Force strongly believes in the power of constructive dialogue. We urge all stakeholders to push for accessibility to high quality treatments, improving both survival and the quality of life of cancer patients.



### Get in touch with ECL:

- Ms Linda Abdelall (ECL's Policy & Projects Officer)

[linda@europeancancerleagues.org](mailto:linda@europeancancerleagues.org)

- Dr. Ward Rommel (Chair of Access to Medicines Task Force)

[Ward.Rommel@komoptegenkanker.be](mailto:Ward.Rommel@komoptegenkanker.be)

- Website

[www.cancer.eu](http://www.cancer.eu)

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