



BEUC The European
Consumer
Organisation

The Consumer Voice in Europe

Impact of medicine shortages on consumers and policy recommendations



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HMA/EMA multi-stakeholder workshop on shortages

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BEUC is proud of its members



MEDICINE SHORTAGES ON THE RISE



PÉNURIES DE MÉDICAMENTS

DEVANT LES COMPORTEMENTS DÉLÉTÈRES DES
LABORATOIRES, LES POUVOIRS PUBLICS DOIVENT
SORTIR DE LEUR COMPLAISANCE



www.quechoisir.org

UFC-Que Choisir

Département des Etudes et du Lobby
09/11/2020

In France, the number of reported shortages for medicines of major therapeutic interest triplicated from 2016 (405) to 2019 (1.200) (1)

In Spain, notified shortages multiplied by 12 in a decade (2)

SALUD

OCU alerta del desabastecimiento de medicamentos

13 feb. 2020

- Desde 2009 las notificaciones de problemas de suministro de medicamentos se han multiplicado por 12
- En algunos casos podría tratarse de una forma de presión de la industria a Sanidad por las bajadas de precios
- OCU exige investigar los problemas de desabastecimiento y aumentar la cuantía de las sanciones cuando no estén justificadas

Según datos de la Agencia Española del Medicamento (AEMPS), el número de notificaciones de desabastecimiento de fármacos ha pasado de 137 a 1.650 en diez años. O lo que es lo mismo, se ha multiplicado por 12. Normalmente existe la alternativa de

1. UFC Que-Choisir <https://www.quechoisir.org/action-ufc-que-choisir-penuries-de-medicaments-devant-la-responsabilite-criante-des-laboratoires-les-pouvoirs-publics-doivent-sortir-de-leur-complaisance-n84943/>
2. Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios, <https://www.ocu.org/organizacion/prensa/notas-de-prensa/2020/desabastecimientomed120220>

CONSUMER SURVEYS

- Test Achats / Test Aankoop, Belgium
- Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios (OCU), Spain
- Altroconsumo, Italy
- DECO, Portugal
- Forbrukerrådet, Norway

*The first four organisations used a common methodology. For more details see slide 8

FACTSHEET Medicine shortages in EU: alarming survey results from some countries

People increasingly experience problems in getting the medicines they need because of shortages. Between 2000 and 2018 for example, notifications of shortages in France have **shot up 20-fold**, while in Spain, they have **multiplied by 12** in a decade.² These shortages can have a devastating effect on consumers' health and their quality of life. Surveys carried out by consumer groups in 2019 and 2020 in a number of European countries³ have revealed the ways in which medicine shortages are hitting consumers. Here is what we learnt.

Huge numbers of people are affected

Medicine shortages are common across the countries surveyed. There are more and more medicines which are in short supply. In 2019, Norway's national shortage list had **1,200** medicines on it, which is double the number on the list in 2018.

Country	Percentage of respondents who had been unable to get their medicine at least once in the last two years
Belgium	28%
Italy	38%
Portugal	46%
Spain	40%
Norway	20%

A medicine shortage often has implications for a person's health

Between a **third and half** of the consumers unable to get the medicine they needed said the shortage had an impact on their health. For many of those people, the medicine shortage caused anxiety, as in **54%** of cases in Spain or **47%** of Belgians. But the medicine shortage could also cause a **worsening of their symptoms**, which in most of the countries⁴ was the case for close to one in three people who experienced some form of health complications. Among those who suffered health complications in Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Italy, almost one in five people was obliged to take sick leave as a result of their medicine shortage.

The medicines involved are usually for important health problems and require a prescription

In around nine in ten cases when there was a shortage, the medicine was prescribed, which indicates the medicines were deemed essential or even life-saving. The four types of medicines most frequently affected by shortages were almost always the same: those treating problems linked to the **nervous system**, to **cardiovascular problems**, to **infections**, and to **respiratory problems**.

Callouts from the map:

- Belgium and Portugal:** the medicines most often in short supply were those treating problems with the nervous system like depression, anxiety or epilepsy.
- Spain:** the shortages most likely were for treating cardiovascular problems and those against infections, such as antibiotics or antivirals.
- Italy:** shortages were most common for medicines treating cardiovascular problems and blood disorders, such as hypertension or anti-coagulation.
- Norway:** the medicines where shortages were most common dealt with blood pressure.

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Republic of Norway
The European Commission

SHORTAGES IMPACT CONSUMERS' HEALTH

- In around nine in ten cases the medicine was prescribed
- Between a third and half of the consumers said the shortage had an impact on their health
- Shortages caused anxiety
- Other impact*
 - Worsening of symptoms (28%)
 - Side effects due to new medication (13%)
 - Dosage mistakes (11%)
 - Temporary sick leave (17%)
 - Hospitalisation (3%)

*Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain, within respondents who experienced a problem

SHORTAGES IMPACT CONSUMERS' POCKETS

- In four of the countries*, between 12% and 14% of the people who faced a shortage had extra costs:
 - Median cost ranged between €5 (Italy) and €12 (Belgium)
 - More expensive alternative treatments
- One in four Norwegians who experienced a shortage had to travel to a different city or region to find their medicine

* Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain

BEUC RECOMMENDATIONS

- EMA extended mandate for crisis situations is welcome but more is needed
- Shortage of antibiotics shows we need preventative measures
- Revised EU pharmaceutical legislation must require:
 1. Shortage prevention plans
 2. Safety stocks
 3. Stock monitoring systems by competent authorities
 4. Earlier shortage notification
 5. Dissuasive sanctions
- Consider non-profit production models

SURVEY METHODOLOGIES

Italy, Portugal, Spain, Belgium:

Survey conducted by BEUC members Altroconsumo (Italy), DECO (Portugal), OCU (Spain) and Test Achats/Test Aankoop (Belgium) as part of the Euroconsumers group

Data collection: November 2020

Age of respondents: 25-74

Research question: *During the last 2 years, have you or someone in your household gone to a pharmacy or to a hospital getting a medicine and was told it wouldn't be available in less than 24 hours due to lack of stock?*

Norway:

Survey conducted by BEUC member Forbrukerrådet, the Norwegian Consumer Council

Data collection: December 2019

Age of respondents: +18

Research question: The survey was split in two. First, consumers were asked if they had not been able to buy a medicine for themselves or on behalf of others in the last two years, and whether this was due to supply issues to pharmacies. The second survey reached out to those who replied positively to this question and focused about the impact of the shortage.



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