

CCMI/251 FACTSHEET: EU MEDICAL COUNTERMEASURES AND STOCKPILING STRATEGIES



As a follow-up to the Preparedness Union Strategy, the European Commission has adopted two communications concerning the health sector: one on medical countermeasures for health emergencies and another on strategic stockpiling to reinforce material preparedness for all types of crises. Opinion CCMI/251 presents the EESC's recommendations on both.

The COVID-19 pandemic made health a central geopolitical issue. Persistent shortages of critical medicines in the EU demonstrate the need for coordinated action to strengthen supply resilience and European production. At the same time, rapidly evolving security risks require reinforced preparedness and response capacity.

Building on EESC Opinion CCMI/240 on the Critical Medicines Act, this opinion underscores the urgency of a more integrated European approach to the production and distribution of medicines and medical products. It aligns with the Commission's 2025–2029 priorities, the Critical Medicines Act, and the Draghi and Letta reports, highlighting the EU industry's drive for strategic autonomy, competitiveness and preparedness.

KEY FACTS: THE URGENCY TO ACT



35,000 deaths per year in the EU/EEA are caused by antimicrobial resistance (AMR)



AMR-related deaths in the EU/EEA are projected to reach **390,000 per year by 2050**



In March-April 2020, Austria, Italy, and Spain reported **shortages of 48 COVID-19-related active substances**



EU data show that **13% of shortages** involve oncology drugs, about **60% biologics**, and since 2020 **27% on-patent medicines**



In 2022-2024, EU National Competent Authorities reported **136 critical shortages** to the European Medicines Agency (EMA)



EMA data for January 2013-July 2023 show a **rise in reported drug shortages** after **COVID-19**, peaking in 2023



In January 2024, 19 European countries faced **shortages of common antibiotics**, including 11 critical cases



HERA Invest will double to **EUR 200 million by 2027** for EU-based SMEs developing medical countermeasures



EUR 225 million pledged by the Commission for next-generation influenza vaccine development



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EESC OPINION

The EESC calls for a coordinated, well-funded and innovation-driven EU approach to medical countermeasures and strategic stockpiling. Key proposals include:

- **Strengthen EU crisis preparedness:** Manage stockpiles and medical countermeasures transparently, with clear mobilisation rules and close coordination with Member States, industry and civil society.
- **Prioritise efficient, demand-driven stockpiling:** Focus on safely stored products, supported by real-time digital tracking, product-based thresholds and affordability safeguards.
- **Make EU stockpiling fully operational:** Define clear EU and national responsibilities with secure funding, strengthen training and monitoring, and provide fair incentives for industry, including SMEs.
- **Reinforce Europe's pharmaceutical base:** Create stable industrial conditions and a skilled workforce to expand EU production and reduce external dependencies.
- **Invest in workforce skills:** Include lifelong learning, regular simulations and harmonised public-health competencies to reinforce EU crisis response capacity.
- **Establish a European health innovation hub:** Develop a CERN-like entity to unite top researchers, foster innovation and support HERA and other EU agencies.
- **Secure flexible EU funding:** Provide sufficient Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) resources for countermeasures and stockpiles, encouraging public-private partnerships while avoiding duplication.
- **Create a dedicated EU pharma fund:** Support new facilities, R&D and regulatory costs, and attract investment in active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and medicine manufacturing.
- **Strengthen the stockpiling network:** Involve social partners and civil society, prioritise EU-owned safety stocks, ensure fair cost-sharing and support storage, cold chain and dual-use infrastructure.

ALIGNMENT WITH EU COMMISSION PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION (2025-2029)

The recommendations support the Commission's preparedness agenda by strengthening innovative and competitive countermeasures and stockpiling sectors, and ensuring essential goods remain available in any crisis. Specific links:

Commission Priorities 2024–2029

- Strengthen foresight and early-warning capacities
- Address emerging threats, including Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN)
- Support medical countermeasures through joint procurement and stockpiling

Critical Medicines Act (2025):

- Fast-track strategic projects for critical medicines, with simplified procedures and improved financing
- Expand collaborative procurement coordinated by the Commission to improve equitable access
- Strengthen global partnerships to diversify supply chains and reduce single-supplier reliance

Draghi Report (2024):

- Increase EU R&D investment through public-private partnerships and EU funding
- Scale up EU production of critical medicines and APIs to reduce dependencies
- Create a European Health Emergency Authority to coordinate stockpiling, procurement and crisis response

Letta Report (2024):

- Build a stronger European Health Union with coordinated investment and joint procurement
- Reinforce pharmaceutical resilience by diversifying supply chains and expanding shared purchasing
- Deliver an EU Strategy for medical countermeasures, including CBRN-related preparedness and stockpiling