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Access to healthcare

EU must act to address prohibitively high price of life-saving medicines

The European Parliament last night debated the issue of life-saving medicines and the excessively high pricing in certain member states. Speaking in the context of the debate, Green vice-president and health spokesperson **Michele Rivasi**, who initiated the debate, said:

"The astronomical prices of some life-saving medicines is meaning those suffering from these illnesses are unable to afford their treatment. This is a scandal in itself but it is an even greater scandal that the European Commission is refusing to address the issue, notably by tackling the issue of monopolies and abuse of market position. While Sofosbuvir, the drug used to treat Hepatitis C, has catapulted this issue to prominence (at a cost of up to €60,000 per patient for a 12-week course), this is far from the only example

"The Commission has tried to shirk its responsibility, claiming it is up to EU member states alone, but this is not true. Pharmaceutical companies are only able to demand such astronomical prices because they are granted virtual monopolies through patents. Creating monopolies through patenting is not the only way to promote medical research. There are legal ways to remove patents when necessary and we would urge the Commission and EU governments to do so in the general interest.

"While the EU is facing this crisis of access to healthcare, we are also concerned about the future direction of the European Commission in terms of healthcare. President-elect Juncker has announced he is moving the competence for medicines and medical devices to the industry directorate in the European Commission. That such a sensitive area in terms of the general public interest is to be approached from a purely commercial logic is clearly a cause for concern and we intend to raise this in the forthcoming European Parliament hearings."

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Michèle Rivasi

Member

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