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# WEEKLY EU HEALTHCARE NEWS UPDATE

06 MAY – 12 MAY 2023

# DRUG SHORTAGES ON THE AGENDA OF EU MINISTERS

EU Health Ministers gathered in Stockholm last week to address the issue of drug shortages in the EU. Shortages of antibiotics, paracetamol, and ibuprofen were reported all across the bloc in the winter, with similar fears emerging ahead of the upcoming cold season. During the meeting, ministers discussed the recent EU proposal for pharmaceutical legislation, which introduces the EU list of critical medicines, enhanced industry accountability, and an increased role of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) in monitoring and coordinating supply-related issues.

The Belgian minister for social affairs and public health, Frank Vandenbroucke, welcomed the proposals but highlighted the importance of taking immediate action and suggested several initiatives, including a voluntary solidarity mechanism and a list of critical medicines. 18 EU countries, including Poland, backed this idea. In his turn, Karl Lauterbach, Germany's federal health minister, emphasized the need for speedy action to address the issue's root causes, including a lack of geographical diversification when sourcing key ingredients and medicines and perceived regulatory complexity. Access to innovative treatments was also discussed, with Poland calling for European mechanisms to support less wealthy countries.

The Commission's proposal for the pharmaceutical strategy aims to ensure affordable medicines are available to more patients across the EU and includes an incentive system to encourage companies to bring new medicines to all member states more quickly. Discussions on access to medicinal products will continue.

Source: [https://www.euractiv.com/section/health-consumers/news/eu-ministers-impatient-to-address-shortages/?fbclid=IwAR33moR1EQtY2bT1\\_3snjBvfT3-oOKSBlgqm6VayjD0S1wFCrHLNDo2sN0A](https://www.euractiv.com/section/health-consumers/news/eu-ministers-impatient-to-address-shortages/?fbclid=IwAR33moR1EQtY2bT1_3snjBvfT3-oOKSBlgqm6VayjD0S1wFCrHLNDo2sN0A)

# MEDICAL EXODUS: DOCTORS' MIGRATION TRENDS IN POLAND

**According to the article from EURACTIV Poland, the growing migration of doctors from Poland has not yet significantly influenced the country's healthcare system. However, stakeholders believe that if the current trend continues, the impact will be felt in the future.**

Polish doctors are actively seeking certificates from the Supreme Chamber of Physicians (NIL) to confirm their qualifications and pursue careers abroad, motivated by hopes of better working conditions and higher salaries. While the outflow of doctors is most noticeable in hospitals, not all doctors leaving Poland go abroad; many also take jobs in private and public clinics and infirmaries that offer better conditions and wages.

It is important to mention that 2022 saw a significant increase in the number of certificates issued, with more than 50% compared to previous years - In 2022, NIL issued 887 certificates, 220 documents for dentists, and 346 specialty equivalence letters. These numbers could be attributed to doctors' fatigue with the inadequacies of the system, which the pandemic exposed. However, recent changes in the Polish healthcare system have made it more competitive, such as the abolition of limits on specific procedures, which has eliminated financial motivations for seeking work abroad. As for the salaries, the health ministry officials said they were increased in recent years and are now “comparable” with the cost of living in other EU countries.

Source: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/health-consumers/news/polands-health-system-not-affected-yet-by-increasing-doctors-exodus/>

# UN REPORT HIGHLIGHTS STAGNATION IN MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH

**According to a recent report from the United Nations (UN), progress in reducing deaths of pregnant women, mothers, and babies has plateaued over the past eight years due to declining investments in maternal and newborn health. The report reveals that over 4.5 million women and babies die annually during pregnancy, childbirth, or the first weeks after birth. One death occurs every 7 seconds, primarily from preventable or treatable causes.**

The COVID-19 pandemic, rising poverty, and worsening humanitarian crises have further strained healthcare systems and intensified the challenges. Funding for maternal and newborn health has decreased in three-quarters of conflict-affected and Sub-Saharan African countries since 2018. Insufficient funds hamper the implementation of healthcare plans, while disruptions to essential services persist, including pregnancy and postnatal care and services for sick children. Underinvestment in primary healthcare exacerbates survival prospects.

The report emphasizes the importance of addressing harmful discrepancies targeting the poorest and most vulnerable women for lifesaving interventions, at the same calls for increased investments in primary healthcare, innovative approaches, and strengthened partnerships to accelerate recovery and advance the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for maternal, newborn, and stillborn mortality reduction by 2030.

Source: <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-05-2023-global-progress-in-tackling-maternal-and-newborn-deaths-stalls-since-2015—un>

# Thank you for your attention!

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