

POLAND BECOMES THE FIFTH MEMBER COUNTRY OF THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF PHARMACY CHAINS

The Polish Association of Pharmaceutical Employers PharmaNET joined the European Federation of Pharmacy Chains (EFPC) as its fifth member country in October 2020. Apart from Poland, the EFPC's members include pharmacy chain associations from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Overall, the EFPC represents more than 5,500 pharmacies and 31,700 specialists from Central and Eastern Europe.

Prague, 21 October 2020 – The Polish Association of Pharmaceutical Employers PharmaNET represents over 3,000 pharmacies and 18,000 pharmacy professionals, which translates into 25% of the entire pharmaceutical sector in Poland. According to Executive Director Zdeněk Blahuta, Poland's joining of the EFPC has been long overdue, *"We are very pleased that Poland has finally become a regular EFPC member because PharmaNET officials helped during the establishment of our federation and took active part in defining its mission."*

PharmaNET brings to the EFPC its expertise and experience from the Polish market, where significant intrusions into the ownership rights of pharmacy owners have taken place in recent years. *"It is the long-term objective of all EFPC members to use the federation as a platform for opposing such intrusions into matters of private ownership. All EFPC members are resolved to do their utmost to prevent such actions and efforts as well as to provide information about the consequences for patients of disparities caused by such interventions,"* said Daniel Horák, EFPC Executive Committee Chairman.

The Sejm, the Polish parliament's lower house, is currently debating a bill of the Pharmacist Profession Act (UoZF), which patients, pharmacy owners and workers, and pharmaceutical wholesalers regard with significant concerns. If the proposed legislation enters into effect, the continuity of supplies to pharmacies might be disrupted, which would hinder patients' access to medications.

"Until now, the bill contained a clause stating that the license of a pharmacy or a pharmaceutical wholesaler can be revoked if its operator continues to violate professional independence requirements that apply to pharmacists. However, one of two amendments that have been introduced proposes that a pharmacy license could be revoked already if such a violation were no more than suspected. It means that a simple disagreement between a pharmacist and the operator of a pharmacy could be used as pretext for revoking the pharmacy's license," explains Marcin Piskorski, Chairman of the PharmaNET's Administrative Board.

"The other amendment, which complements the first one to some extent, aims to introduce the option to shut down a pharmacy, or even a pharmaceutical distributor, effective immediately for a period of up to three months. All things considered, running a pharmacy in Poland is becoming a highly risky business," Piskorski adds.

Piskorski points out that the recent legislative developments would not improve the quality of pharmaceutical care and are liable to jeopardize the availability of pharmacy services for all patients in Poland.

Marcin Piskorski has been appointed a new member of the EFPC's Executive Committee.

Zdeněk Blahuta
Executive Director