

## REPRESENTATIVES OF PHARMACY CHAINS CALLED ON THE EU CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE TO INVOLVE EUROPEAN PHARMACIES IN THE EU4HEALTH INITIATIVE

The European Federation of Pharmacy Chains organized its third international conference, this time in Warsaw. The conference was held under the title "Pharmacy Care - What are the Barriers to Pharmacy Development?" and was attended by pharmacists, politicians, health experts, representatives of pharmacy chains, deans of pharmaceutical faculties, as well as pharmacy students and representatives of patient associations. In three thematic panels, it was discussed, for example, how the COVID-19 pandemic manifested itself in the development of new pharmacy services or where outdated regulation stands in the way of this development. This also played a role in another of the topics: the promotion of the pharmacy assortment and services in connection with the self-medication of patients and their awareness. The highlight of the conference was a joint declaration by representatives of pharmacy chains to the main representatives of the European Union with an appeal for pharmacists to be fully counted among health professionals within the framework of the accepted European initiative EU4Health.

**Warsaw, 19 October 2022** – The conference was a good opportunity not only to exchange views and experiences across the European region, but also to sign a joint call and request for the involvement of European pharmacies in the EU4Health initiative. It currently brings together all important stakeholders of the European healthcare sector. The call was addressed to the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and Stella Kyriakides, the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety with an appeal to support the participation of representatives of European pharmacies in this important initiative.

*„With the document we signed, we request the inclusion of pharmacists in the EU4Health initiative, which has a number of projects related to European health care, and we believe that pharmacists can also play an important role in some of them. The declaration was signed by representatives of all EFPC member states – Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Serbia. In these, but also in many other countries, the pandemic has shown that pharmacists are an important primary contact for patients, and for this reason we want the pharmacy segment to be included in this initiative. We are ready to actively participate in the projects and help create an effective health care system for Europe, where we hope the pharmacy will play an important role,“* says Daniel Horák, Head of the EFPC Board.

The conference was attended by a number of speakers, including deputy health ministers from host Poland, as well as from the Czech Republic (currently EU presidency state). Czech Deputy Minister Jakub Dvořáček appreciated that this was an event organized by the pharmacists themselves. "This cannot be said about any of the other medical conferences that I have had the opportunity to visit, this event is the first of its kind," added Jakub Dvořáček.

The activity of pharmacists is bearing fruit, which can be seen, for example, in Poland, where the law allows vaccination in pharmacies as well as in surgeries. "The effectiveness of the vaccination program

*against COVID-19 and seasonal flu in Poland shows the great potential of pharmacies, especially chain pharmacies. But vaccination is only the first step. In Western Europe, the range of services that can be provided in pharmacies is much wider and can respond to other health challenges of the population, not only those related to infectious diseases, but also, for example, the no less serious civilizational disease epidemic," explained Marcin Piskorski, president of PharmaNET Pharmaceutical Employers' Association.*

The fact that the introduction of such new services in pharmacies is a purely political decision was alleged during the conference by the lectures of not only Polish, but also British representatives, where vaccination in pharmacies, whether against flu or covid, was part of government policy, the strategy of the Ministry of Health and had considerable support insurance companies. *"At the same time, for our network, we have not recorded any serious side effects of vaccination that would threaten the health or even the life of patients vaccinated in pharmacies,"* said Niral Dawda, head of retail strategy and transformation at Rowlands Pharmacy (UK), in his speech.

*"The future of pharmacies is in the specializations that differentiate them from each other. Some will focus more on vaccinations, others on providing consultations, the most important part of which will certainly be prevention. I believe that preventive programs are effective tools to save significant amount of money for the health system and should be more perceived by politicians, insurance companies, but also by patients themselves. I also think that pharmacists should be more visible and should tell themselves how they want their profession to be in the future and how they want to specialize. Warsaw declaration is just one of the steps to include pharmacists in the system and remind them that pharmacies must be counted with in the future,"* added Daniel Horák.

During the conference, it was emphasized many times that, from the point of view of interest, pharmacies have enormous organizational, logistical and material potential and are an integral part of European health systems, which is proven by the existing services provided, but also only by the opening hours of pharmacies. Many offer 24/7 patient support across the European region.

*"The importance of pharmacies for ensuring continuity of treatment and general health safety during the pandemic was considerable. It is worth reminding that the average time of a patient's visit to a pharmacy tripled in that time in Poland. When addressing the petition to the EU authorities, we tried to contribute to everything, how important pharmacies can be for the health of Europeans,"* concluded Marcin Piskorski.