

Consumer group surveys on drug shortages

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BEUC

- Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs
- Established 1962 by consumer groups from 6 countries
- Now 46 members in 32 countries → EU27, UK, Iceland, North Macedonia, Norway and Switzerland
- **Mission** = To represent consumers at the EU(ropean) level and defend their interests
- **Funding** = Membership fees (27%), EU operating grant (29%), EU projects (38%), Donors (5%), other income (1%)

PRIORITIES OF THE BEUC NETWORK



Food



Digital rights



Sustainability



Energy



Safety



Consumer rights



Financial
services



Redress & Enforcement



Health



Competition



Trade

MEDICINE SHORTAGES: AN ALARMING PROBLEM

Medicine shortages are a growing public health problem in the European Union:

- Rising shortage notifications
- Detrimental effect on consumers' health and their quality of life



MEDICINE SHORTAGES ON THE RISE



In France, the number of reported shortages for medicines of major therapeutic interest triplicated from 2016 (405) to 2019 (1.200) ⁽¹⁾

In Spain, notified shortages multiplied by 12 in a decade ⁽²⁾

SALUD

OCU alerta del desabastecimiento de medicamentos

13 feb. 2020

- Desde 2009 las notificaciones de problemas de suministro de medicamentos se han multiplicado por 12
- En algunos casos podría tratarse de una forma de presión de la industria a Sanidad por las bajadas de precios
- OCU exige investigar los problemas de desabastecimiento y aumentar la cuantía de las sanciones cuando no estén justificadas

Según datos de la Agencia Española del Medicamento (AEMPS), el número de notificaciones de desabastecimiento de fármacos ha pasado de 137 a 1.650 en diez años. O lo que es lo mismo, se ha multiplicado por 12. Normalmente existe la alternativa de

1. UFC Que-Choisir <https://www.quechoisir.org/action-ufc-que-choisir-penuries-de-medicaments-devant-la-responsabilite-criante-des-laboratoires-les-pouvoirs-publics-doivent-sortir-de-leur-complaisance-n84943/>
2. Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios, <https://www.ocu.org/organizacion/prensa/notas-de-prensa/2020/desabastecimientomed120220>

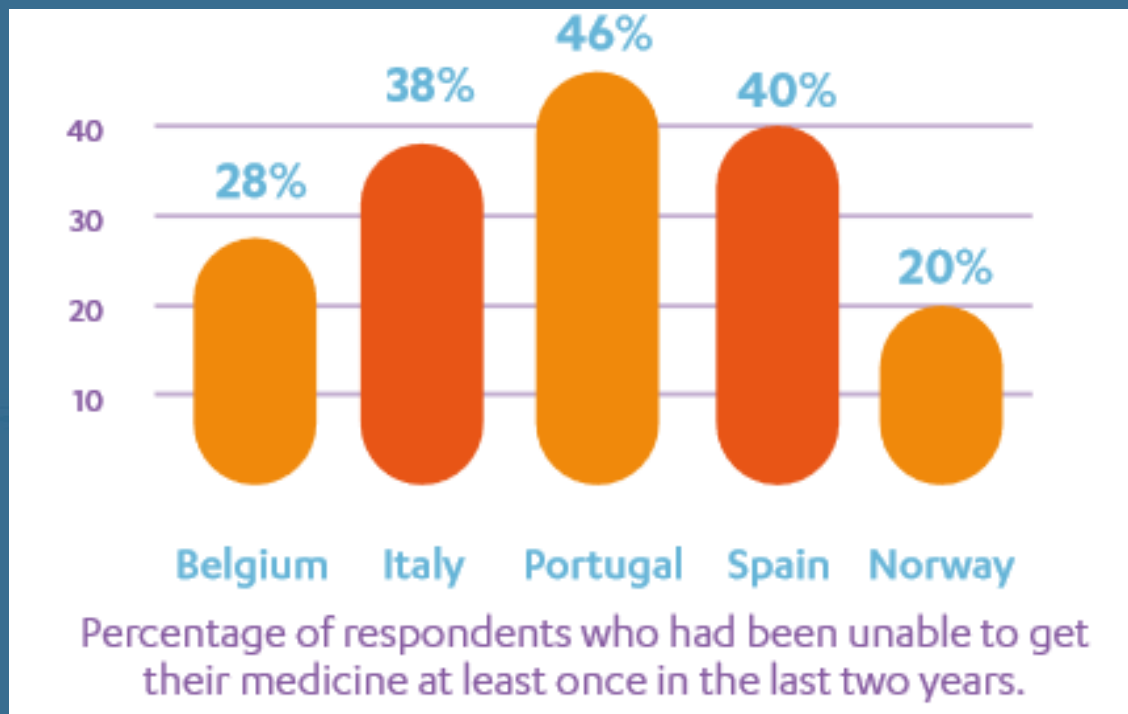
CONSUMER IMPACT

Consumer surveys carried out
in 2019 and 2020 by:

- Test Achats / Test Aankoop, Belgium
- Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios (OCU), Spain
- Altroconsumo, Italy
- DECO, Portugal
- Forbrukerrådet, Norway



MANY AFFECTED PEOPLE



BE, IT, PT, ES:

Age of respondents: 25-74

Research question: *During the last 2 years, have you or someone in your household gone to a pharmacy or to a hospital getting a medicine and was told it wouldn't be available in less than 24 hours due to lack of stock?*

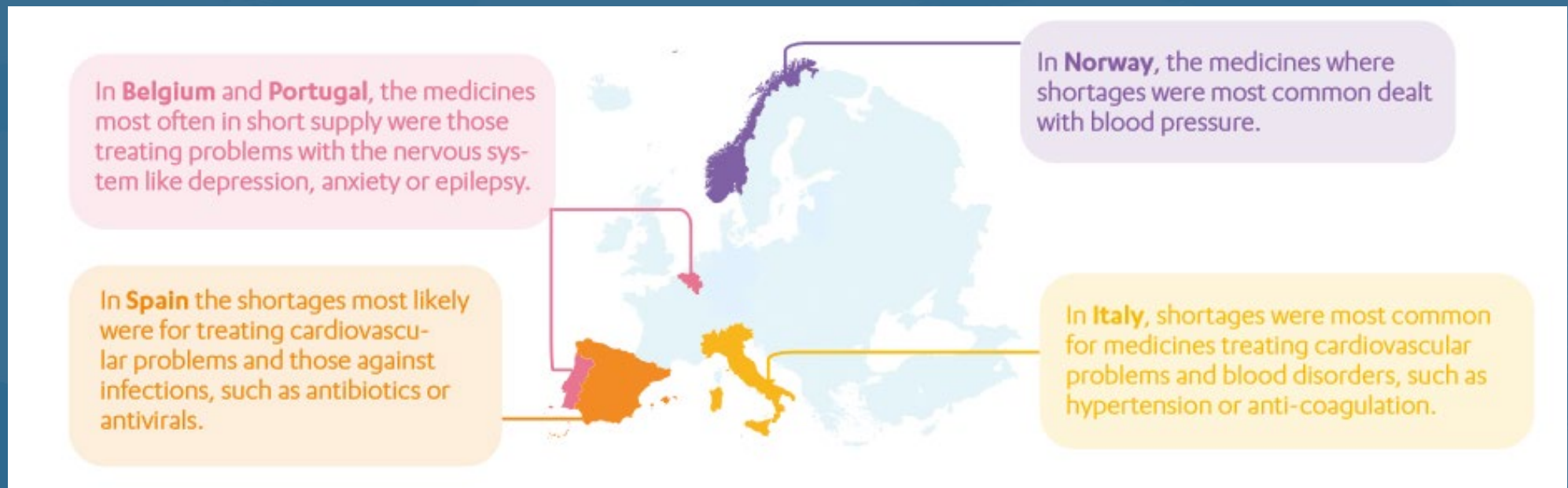
Norway:

Age of respondents: +18

Research question: The survey was split in two. First, consumers were asked if they had not been able to buy a medicine for themselves or on behalf of others in the last two years, and whether this was due to supply issues to pharmacies. The second survey reached out to those who replied positively to this question and focused about the impact of the shortage.

MEDICINES INVOLVED ARE USUALLY FOR MAJOR HEALTH PROBLEMS

In around nine in ten cases when there was a shortage, the medicine was prescribed



SHORTAGES OFTEN HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR A PERSON'S HEALTH

- Between a third and half of the consumers unable to get the medicine said the shortage had an impact on their health
- For many, the situation caused anxiety, as in 54% of cases in Spain or 47% of Belgians
- Medicine shortages could also cause a worsening of symptoms, which in most countries* was the case for close to one in three people who experienced a problem

* Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain

SHORTAGES IMPACT CONSUMERS' POCKETS

- In four of the countries*, between 12% and 14% of the people who faced a shortage had extra costs:
 - Median cost ranged between €5 (Italy) and €12 (Belgium)
 - More expensive alternative treatments
- One in four Norwegians who experienced a shortage had to travel to a different city or region to find their medicine

* Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain

CONSUMERS SOMETIMES WAIT A LONG TIME TO GET THEIR MEDICINE

- Consumers were often split between waiting for the medicine (27% in Belgium, 30% in Portugal) or accepting a generic version or a drug with another active ingredient
- Waiting times of more than 3 days for 60% of cases in Belgium, 21% in Italy and 31% in Spain
- In Norway, more than seven in ten people who waited for their medicine did so for week or longer, with almost four in ten people waiting more than a month

BEUC RECOMMENDATIONS

- EMA extended mandate will help improve medicine availability in crisis situations, but more is needed
- Revision of EU General Pharmaceutical legislation brings an opportunity to:
 - Reinforce prevention and monitoring of medicine shortages
 - Adopt stronger sanctions for pharma companies
 - Improve public communication and enable consumer reporting on shortages

Thank you for your attention

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