CHESSMEN

Coordination and Harmonisation of the Existing Systems against Shortages of Medicines – European Network

PRESS RELEASE

CHESSMEN FINAL CONFERENCE

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Building stronger, more coordinated responses to medicine shortages

The European Joint Action CHESSMEN (Coordination and Harmonisation of the Existing Systems against Shortages of Medicines – European Network) held its Final Conference on 25 November 2026 in Lisbon, hosted by INFARMED, the Portuguese National Authority of Medicines and Health Products.

The Final Conference provided an opportunity to present the main outcomes of the Joint Action, reflect on the progress made and discuss future activities, namely how the results can be translated into national and European practices to improve medicine availability.

In his opening remarks, Professor Rui Ivo highlighted the importance of ensuring the practical implementation of the findings: 'New tools, methodologies and recommendations do not automatically translate into better medicine availability. The real measure of our success will be how effectively we translate these developments into improvements for patients and healthcare professionals.'

Medicine shortages remain a major public health challenge across Europe. Differences are observed between Member States in the identification, management and mitigation of medicine shortages.

CHESSMEN contributed to a better understanding of the root causes of shortages, while identifying differences between countries in the reporting and classification procedures. Collecting consistent and comparable information is crucial for the development of effective European prevention strategies.

Another major achievement was the development of a common protocol for monitoring, reporting and managing medicine shortages, while providing recommendations on monitoring activities, impact assessment of shortages, national lists of critical medicines and communication

with patients, healthcare professionals and other stakeholders. The objective is not to impose identical procedures on every country, but to establish a consistent approach across Europe while recognising countries' specificities regarding national healthcare systems and regulatory frameworks.

Work was also undertaken on the timely forecasting of medicine demand through the assessment of existing national practices and the exploration of statistical methods that could support national competent authorities and the European Medicines Agency in estimating future medicine needs.

To guarantee the quality and interoperability of shortage information exchange systems, CHESSMEN identified a minimum common dataset for the development of IT systems and a framework to support interoperability between national IT systems.

Important achievements were also made at the level of existing preventive and mitigation measures that can be implemented by national competent authorities, while taking into account each country's specificities. The work resulted in the development of an implementation plan and a set of common recommendations covering, for example, stakeholder engagement, internal coordination within national authorities, communication and transparency, regulatory flexibilities, shortage prevention and mitigation plans.

The outcomes of the Joint Action were considered not to be merely theoretical, but to offer practical opportunities for Member States to strengthen their existing systems and adopt approaches that have already demonstrated their value elsewhere.

The Final Conference marked an important milestone in European cooperation on medicine availability. Although CHESSMEN is expected to end in January 2027, continued European cooperation in harmonisation efforts remains essential.

Further information on the Joint Action, its activities and all public deliverables is available at www.ja-chessmen.eu.