# Missing Medicines campaign

Our system for developing medicines is broken. Relying on drug patents to fund biomedical research and development (R&D) model means that medicines are too expensive or simply missing for those who need them. You can the full briefing (to share with Members of European Parliament) on our website.

## Why is our system for developing medicines failing?

Millions of people are missing the medicines they need because our current R&D system relies on funding through drug patents. This leads to:

- **High Prices:** pharmaceutical companies have a 20-year monopoly on the new drugs they produce, meaning they have no competition and can therefore charge extremely high prices.
- **Skewed incentives:** medical research is driven towards the medicines likely to earn the most profit, meaning that if the development of vital medicines is not profitable they're not developed.
- **Inefficiency:** sharing of knowledge between researchers is disincentivised, meaning the progress of scientific research is hindered and research is often duplicated.

The failing R&D system is a global issue; not only does it affect developing countries but also many of us in the European Union, for example we lack new antibiotics and are unable to afford expensive cancer or Hep C drugs. To ensure access to affordable medicines, we must address the threats that are currently emerging in trade negotiations and support longer term reform of our R&D model.

## The dangers of Free Trade Agreements

Despite the growing understanding that the patent model is failing, we continue to rely on drug patents as the main source of funding for R&D. As a result, Free Trade Agreements negotiated by the EU often seek to strengthen these monopolies. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement (TTIP), now under negotiations, is a significant threat to affordable medicines.

Yet, the EU, including the Dutch EU Presidency, acknowledges that Intellectual Property (IP) can have on a negative impact on access to medicines as it supports developing countries in implementing TRIPS and uses TRIPS flexibilities.

Many of the provisions foreseen for TTIP will put industry interests ahead of patients' health. If adopted, they will make it impossible for governments to make certain changes later on.

- TTIP could weaken the negotiating power of governments to make medicines affordable for patients
- TTIP could extend the length of patents and delay price-lowering generic competition, which allow drug developers to charge higher prices for longer.
- TTIP will include trade secret protection. This may restrict access to information that is in the public interest, such as medicines safety as well as technical information that enables generic competition.

- The inclusion of any investor-state dispute settlement mechanism in TTIP could jeopardise public health. This would allow foreign companies to use private courts to challenge government decisions that safeguard public health and other public interest concerns

- TTIP may weaken policies that developing countries use to access affordable generics. This could lead to health systems being even less able to provide care and treatments to patients due to a lack of funds

With this in mind, I ask that you **stand against TTIP** and any Free Trade Agreement that **threatens our access to medicines by strengthening intellectual property law and hampers generic competition.**

Whilst these measures will defend our access to medicines in the short-term, longer term R&D reform is both essential and possible.

## An historical opportunity to reform our biomedical R&D system

As you may know, the World Health Organisation (WHO) created the Consultative Expert Working Group (CEWG) to seek solutions. They recommended a package of reforms that would seek:

- **Introduce alternative incentives** to producing new medicines, such as cash prizes, to replace patent monopolies and ensure affordability while still providing the innovator companies with an ample return on investment.

- **Prioritise health research** according to need rather than profit by supporting the development of a global R&D Observatory at the WHO.

- **Establish a pooled fund for R&D** financed by all countries contributing 0.01% of GDP to ensure the R&D burden is shared.

These reforms should be realised through a new, legally-binding global framework - similar to the convention on Human Rights - called The R&D Agreement. By 'de-linking' the profit incentive from the cost of R&D, it has the potential to unlock access to affordable and appropriate treatment globally. A global agreement appears to be imperative – a point reflected by the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Access to Medicines, convened in November 2015.

In light of these high-level discussions, **I kindly ask you to urge the European Commission to support the CEWG recommendations and push for global progress on creating a global R&D agreement.**

### What can campaigners do?

1. Find out who your MEPs are (http://www.europarl.org.uk/en/your-meps.html) and send them this letter.
2. Tweet your MEPs with a photo of yourself holding up a sign that says 'Health is the greater wealth' (a Ghandi quote) and include the link to the MEP briefing.