

COUNTRY REPORT - FINLAND

A short update from the year 2012

Anni Svala

The Finnish Pharmacists' Association

The Finnish Pharmacists' Association is a trade and professional union for professionals in the field of pharmacy, i.e. dispensers, pharmacists and students of pharmacy, with comprehensive services to further the members' economic and professional interests. The Association has been promoting the working conditions, professional skills and social position of its members since 1917. With nearly 9,000 members today, it is a credible player in both professional and economic decision-making processes.

The Pharmacists' Association is the biggest member organization of the Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland (Akava) who independently negotiates the collective labour agreement. Membership in Akava, which is an umbrella organization for one-half million professionals with academic education, enhances the Pharmacists' Association's social position and influence.

The Council of the Finnish Pharmacists Association, made a reform of its statutes in 22.11.2012, which means that a person can directly be the member of the Finnish Pharmacists' Association. Today, the members of the Finnish Pharmacists Association belong to member associations which have independent decision-making processes and own boards. Required changes in membership will be implemented during the year 2013. Member Associations will end, and the members are directly members of the Finnish Pharmacists Association without intermediate steps. The reform will increase the unity of the members and empowerment. Union policy will be common to every member.

Regional activity will continue and will be renewed and developed even further. Regional activities will be implemented through regional networks. Action starts with the existing networks of 14 regional member associations. The activity will be based on the different functional areas. It leads to the establishment of regional management teams, which are formed from the groups of different qualifications and working sectors. Union and its networks that organize activities and events are open to all members, regardless of working sector. Finnish Pharmacists association wants to further strengthen our members' sense of collaboration and professional identity.

Suomen Farmasialiitto (Finnish Pharmacists association) 20.3.2013
<http://www.farmasialiitto.fi/>

Couple of headlines from the year 2012 concerning Pharmaceutical Industry in Finland

Another survey made by authorities confirms inexpensiveness of prescription-only medicines in Finland (8.3.2012)

According to 2012 published statistic compiled by the authorities, Finnish wholesale prices of medicines are at the lower end among the European reference countries and cheapest in the Nordic countries. The proposed cut of the medicine wholesales prices by 5% as of the beginning of 2013 will bring Finland's price level under that of Greece, restricting the selection of reimbursable medicines available to patients.

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February 2012 saw the publication of two surveys on medicine wholesale prices made by the authorities, with Finland as one of the countries included in the comparisons. According to the results, Finnish medicine wholesale prices are at the lower end among the European reference countries and cheapest in the Nordic countries.

More information, please see the website: PIF 15.3.2013
<http://www.pif.fi/frontpage/media/bulletins?itemid=21&from=ap>

Pharma Industry Finland: reform of medicines reimbursement system is urgent (21.9.2012)

Pharma Industry Finland (PIF) submitted its written opinion on the reform of the medicines reimbursement system to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The opinion focuses on the savings proposed in the medicines reimbursement expenditure in the context of the Government's austerity measures.

PIF fully understands that the difficult economic decisions make it imperative to find ways to save expenses. However, the additional 113 million euro savings now proposed may jeopardise the availability of medicines. Moreover, it will become more difficult for the pharmaceutical research to develop and launch new therapy forms that would improve the efficacy of the entire healthcare system.

The expenditure is already under control as a result of the consistent cuts imposed on the medicines reimbursements earlier in the 2000s. According to the working group for the development of the medicines reimbursement system instituted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the annual increase of the medicines reimbursement expenses was 1.4 per cent in the years 2005 - 2009 while the other healthcare costs rose by 4.8 per cent annually during the same period.

The working group continues to elaborate on these issues. Pharma Industry Finland PIF encourages the Ministry and the working group to take courageous decisions. Recorded in the Government's programme, the objective to reform the medicines reimbursement system must be put to practise, seeking to create a system that is uncomplicated, fair and cost-based.

More information, please see the website: PIF 15.3.2013
<http://www.pif.fi/frontpage/media/bulletins?itemid=24&from=ap>

EU Commission: medicines available to patients with less delay (12.3.2012)

The so-called transparency directive relating to the openness of medicines price and reimbursability decisions is going to be revised. The directive determines the basic criteria for the medicines reimbursement decisions (reimbursements paid by the Social Insurance Institution Kela), including the decision-making deadlines, impartial examination criteria and obligation to motivate the decisions.

The EU States make their independent decisions regarding the coverage of the medicines reimbursement regimes included in their social welfare systems. More detailed EU legislation has been enacted only on the application procedure related to the reimbursability of medicines. In Finland, the decisions are made by the Pharmaceuticals Pricing Board PPB which works under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

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The Commission updates the current regulations dating back to 1989 to make rules more compatible with the current requirements and practices, such as effectiveness analyses and agreements related to the decisions. The revision is also underpinned by the fact that certain EU countries take very long to issue the reimbursement decisions on inexpensive generics. Finland does not have this problem – generics enter the reimbursement system at a rapid pace.

The main principles of the directive will not change dramatically. The major amendments focus on the need to accelerate the decision-making by the regulatory authorities. In the future, the decisions on the price and reimbursability of new medicines should be issued in 120 days, instead of the current 180 days. If the application includes a health economy evaluation of the medicine's therapeutic and economic value, the current deadline will be applied. Moreover, the Commission intends to intensify the control of compliance of the Member States as regards the deadlines.

The Medicines Policy 2020 document published in 2011 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health undertakes to develop the processes related to the medicines price and reimbursability applications.

More information, please see the website: PIF 15.3.2012

<http://www.pif.fi/frontpage/media/bulletins?itemid=22&from=ap>