

# SELF-CARE

IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

57<sup>TH</sup> AESGP Annual Meeting

26 - 27 May 2021 — Online



## Conference Report

The 57th AESGP Annual Meeting – the annual gathering of the self-care sector in Europe – was held on 26 and 27 May 2021 for the first time in a virtual format, taking into consideration the state of the COVID-19 pandemic and its related health measures. Despite the challenges posed by a fully digital event, the conference successfully brought together Industry, regulators, policy-makers and other stakeholders in compelling discussions. Under the title 'Self-care in times of pandemic and beyond', the conference looked at the impact of COVID-19 on the self-care industry and lessons for the (new) post-COVID-19 reality. It explored how lockdowns have sped up the uptake of technology and changed our health and wellbeing choices, offering new opportunities for the self-care industry and citizens.

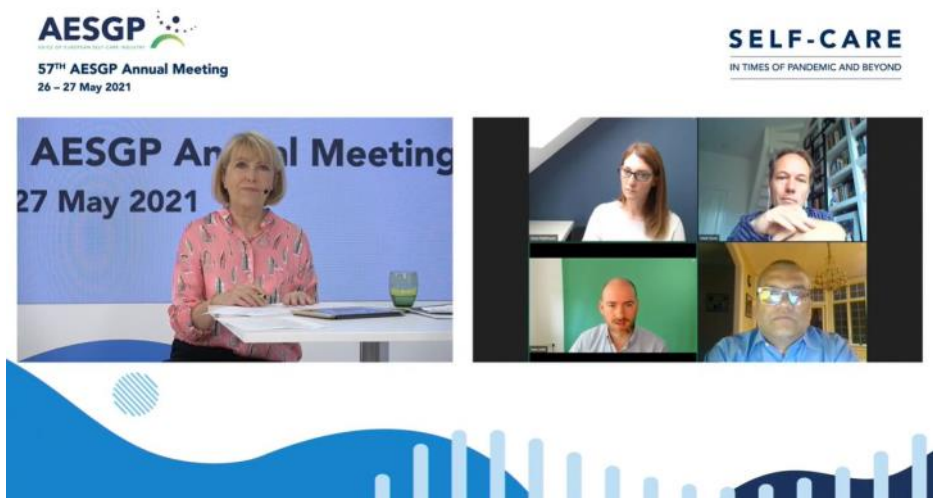
### Aftermath of COVID-19: what is next for the self-care market?

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted priorities and spending habits of people, who have become more focused on staying in control of their emotional, mental and physical health and wellness. The opening session explored this shift in consumer behaviour and how it should best be addressed by the industry. It further reviewed market trends that have emerged during the pandemic and discussed the long-term impact of COVID-19.

**Mark Visser**, General Manager, Kantar Consulting Amsterdam, shared insight into concrete consumer behaviour changes during the pandemic, emphasizing those that will likely be maintained in the “new normal”, such as the broader adoption of e-commerce. Consumers are also increasingly valuing the importance of sustainability, with an emphasis on products and services that are local and produced in an ethical manner.

**Amit Shukla**, Global Head, Consulting Services and Thought Leadership, IQVIA Consumer Health, presented the impact of the pandemic on the self-care industry, sharing the latest market numbers for Europe and globally. He highlighted that consumers' behaviour will continue to evolve and, accordingly, companies will need to adapt continuously. Lockdowns have boosted the uptake of e-commerce and e-pharmacy, a trend that is here to stay.

**Sven Göth**, Founder & CEO, Digital Competence Lab, presented the necessary skills to succeed in the XXI<sup>st</sup> century. He highlighted the importance of technology, especially combining hardware and software. Digitalisation offers a vast potential and companies should look at how they can improve their products and services by using all available technologies. This could be done by either buying resources or technologies, or engaging in new strategic partnerships. Companies should be able to change and adapt to a new kind of customers, but also build trust by getting to know them and their expectations.



From left to right: **Cathy Smith**, former BBC presenter and correspondent, and Founder, Speak-Easy Communications ; **Anna Nightingale**, Vice President, Head of R&D EMEA, GSK ; **Mark Visser**, General Manager, Kantar Consulting Amsterdam ; **Sven Göth**, Founder & CEO Digital Competence Lab ; and **Amit Shukla**, Global Head, Consulting Services and Thought Leadership, IQVIA Consumer Health

COVID-19 was a wake-up call for the industry, as was acknowledged by **Anna Nightingale**, Vice President, Head of R&D EMEA, GSK. She outlined key areas for the self-care industry going forward. It is necessary to improve health literacy and encourage individuals to become more confident in managing their health. Pharmacists are key enablers in the promotion of self-care, yet their potential is not utilised as it should be. Unleashing it should be an essential task. Prioritising prevention offers an opportunity for encouraging self-care while contributing to more sustainable health systems. These challenges should be tackled through a more supportive policy with a stronger focus on self-care and

prevention, and by creating an ecosystem where both private and public actors can cooperate.

The panellists agreed on the importance of building partnerships and going beyond the usual Industry partners. The concept of “unmet self-care needs”, and the access to self-care products across the continent, presents opportunities for the industry. It is expected that innovation will focus on prevention and treatment as well as offering services with products. The self-care industry needs to listen and keep up with the evolving consumer while also bringing regulators in.

## The role of self-care in resilient healthcare systems

There are numerous positive effects of self-care, both at the individual and societal levels. The positive aspects of self-care have been even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when self-care was the first choice for many. It has helped to relieve the significant pressure on European healthcare systems, and it continues to do so.

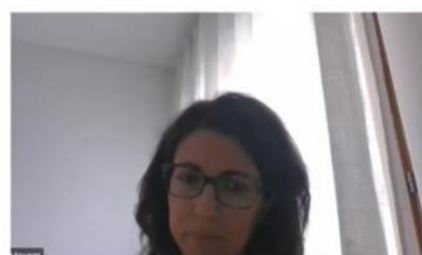
**Pr Uwe May**, Researcher, May and Bauer, Germany, presented the results of a study commissioned by AESGP on the economic and societal value of self-care. The study reveals that, collectively, Europeans currently self-manage 1.2 billion minor ailments, often with the assistance of pharmacists, which translates to €23.18 billion savings for health systems and an additional €10.42 billion savings for national economies. The study evidences that there is still room for further potential

savings if people practise more self-care, either by thinking “self-care first” or by having more options available as a self-care treatment. From the health economic perspective, introducing more self-care in our lives would mean savings, not only for the health systems, but also for consumers themselves, mainly thanks to efficiency gains by saving personal and/or working time.

**Dr Ilaria Passarani**, Secretary General, Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU), presented the highlights from the PGEU’s recently published position paper on the lessons learnt during COVID-19. The available evidence confirmed the wide scope of interventions provided by the pharmacists. During the pandemic, pharmacists were often the only face-to-face contact in health systems offering the first line of advice, treatment and referral for many European citizens. This



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proved that they are very reactive and adaptive, and confirms that their professional role should be extended and supported. Expanding the scope of community pharmacists' activities would relieve the pressure on and positively contribute to the sustainability of healthcare systems.

During the panel discussion, **Jurate Švarcaitė**, AESGP Director General, explained that the study commissioned by AESGP aims to complement existing evidence and bring new ideas to policy-makers and governments when they will rethink health systems after the pandemic. As a next step, AESGP will look at the political and legal framework that enables self-care, and will explore what conditions should be created in countries

where self-care is not as prevalent. It is however important to still consider the cultural differences across Europe, as a complete harmonisation is not the goal and might even prove to be counterproductive.

The panellists agreed that fundamental changes are needed through policies supporting the uptake of self-care, either at the national or European level. More self-care can be achieved by encouraging the expansion of the pharmacists' role, possibly by introducing more innovative or "first-in-class" switches. COVID-19 showed the strengths and weaknesses of the healthcare systems, which will need to be rebuilt in a way that makes them more resilient and efficient, with self-care at their core.

## Day One of the new Medical Devices Regulation: Taking stock

The first day of the AESGP 57th Annual Meeting coincided with the date of application of the new Medical Devices Regulation (MDR), which sets the legal requirements for the marketing of medical devices in the EU, including of self-care medical devices in the scope of AESGP. The initial date of application of the MDR, which was 26 May 2020, was postponed to 26 May 2021 as a result of the disruptions brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The groundwork has been done, but there is still work to be done to provide the means for fully implementing the MDR. The session looked at the implementation state-of-play, highlighting some of the challenges of the process.

**Oliver Hartmann**, Legal and Regulatory Affairs Manager at AESGP, opened the session announcing the release of a new [AESGP Medical Devices Database](#).

**Dr Paul Piscoi**, Policy Officer, Unit Medical Devices, Health Technology Assessment, DG SANTE, European Commission, provided an update on what has been done so far to prepare for the application of the MDR, namely the legislative, procedural, administrative and guidance documents. He further noted that there remains a lot to be done to be ready for the end of the grace period, which expires on 26 May 2024. He mentioned some of the challenges of the implementation, in particular the availability of notified bodies, manufacturers preparedness, the impact of COVID-19 and the availability of competent authorities for other regulatory frameworks.

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From left to right: **Oliver Hartmann**, Legal and Regulatory Affairs Manager, AESGP ; **Sabina L. Hoekstra-van den Bosch**, TÜV SÜD, Vice-President of Team NB ; **Oliver Bisazza**, Director General, MedTech Europe ; and **Dr. Paul Piscoi**, Policy Officer, Unit Medical Devices, Health Technology Assessment, DG SANTE, European Commission

**Sabina L. Hoekstra-van den Bosch**, TÜV SÜD, Vice-President of Team NB, mentioned some of the issues related to the notified bodies designation process, which has been much slower than expected. She noted some additional concerns about the lack of qualified people and the amount of work that notified bodies will face at the end of the grace period.

The main requests from the sector going forward in the implementation were addressed by **Oliver Bisazza**, Director General, MedTech Europe. Access to notified bodies remains a key concern. The implementation must be done in a harmonised manner as there currently are differences between the Member States. He also noted the challenges of harmonising the EU medical device rules with those of other regions.

## Communicating risk in times of uncertainty

Risk communication and engagement are key in effectively managing uncertainty and building public trust in products and health authorities. This session looked at the lessons learnt on effective communication during the pandemic and discussed how we can apply those lessons to risk and crisis communication post-COVID-19.

**Ms Emer Cooke**, Executive Director, European Medicines Agency (EMA), talked about how the EMA has addressed the challenge of communicating during this period, often having to communicate interim and uncertain information. As an unprecedented visibility was given to the medicines regulatory network and its work, the EMA has become more proactive and has increased communication activities targeting the general public through press and social media. Engagement and collaboration with other organisations and agencies were essential. A key lesson for the EMA was that, if one does not communicate, misinformation will fill the void. It has been however challenging to manage the increasing appetite for instant information, when the aim is to communicate sound science.

Risk communication is a core part of a pandemic response, as was stressed by **Dr Gaya Gamhewage**, Head of Learning & Capacity Development, Health Emergencies Programme, World Health Organisation (WHO). She shared the principles of effective communication in times of crisis and how different from today communication was during the 2009 swine flu and Ebola outbreaks. Trust is key to effective communication and it should be built by engaging communities prior to

crises. Risk communication should be integrated into the system by training people and putting necessary logistics in place. She also highlighted the importance of health literacy, underlining that risk is not necessarily about facts but rather about perception.

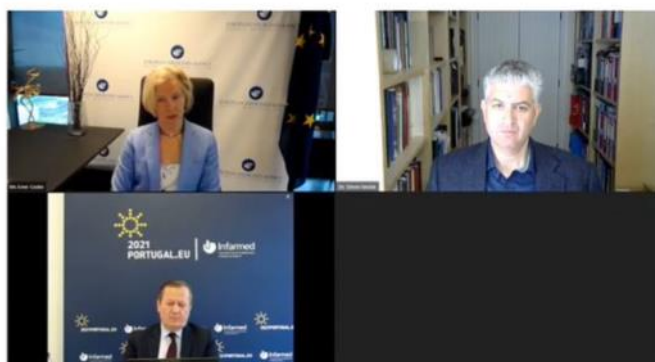
**François Houÿez**, Information & Access to Therapies Director & Health Policy Advisor, EURORDIS, shared his experience, as a patient representative throughout the pandemic, on communication on therapies and preventive measures. EURORDIS took the initiative to filter the information needed for patients and has actively approached different stakeholders to get accurate and relevant information. Based on their experience, he concluded that effective communication should consist of informing as well as listening.

In recent years, risk communication has become increasingly relevant for self-care companies. **Dr Simon Sinclair**, Chief Safety Officer, Reckitt, shared his views on the changing role of companies in risk communication of their products. The industry has become very interested in appropriate communication and the concept of consumer safety has been elevated. People have become far more engaged and proactively look for information. He shared his experience with misinformation and the premature communication regarding ibuprofen (Reckitt owns a flagship ibuprofen brand) that spread in March 2020, and how his company has worked since then to re-establish the risk-benefit of ibuprofen in this new context.

**Dr Rui Santos Ivo**, President, Executive Board, Na-

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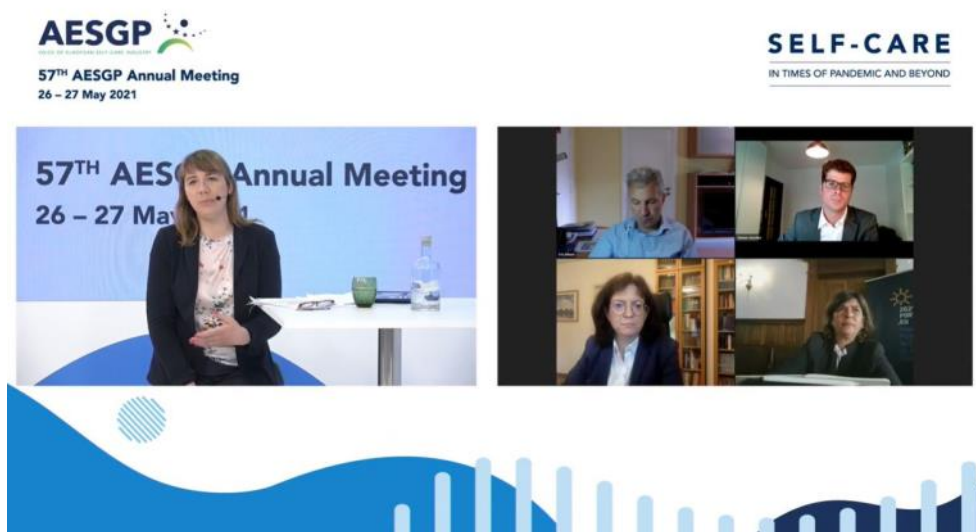
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tional Authority of Medicines and Health Products (INFARMED), Portugal, talked about the communication strategy at INFARMED. At the beginning of the pandemic, the agency set up a taskforce aiming to look into all aspects of the pandemic, including on communication. He shared the key lessons learned, which include the constant need for adaptation, clarity and transparency, coherence of information across various channels and combined effort of different actors.

During the discussion, it was acknowledged that, while all organisations do not have the same response depending on the context and their individual role, coordination remains essential. The panellists discussed the challenges posed by social media and whether it is possible to take advantage of it, either by listening and reacting or by actively joining the conversation.

## (e)-Internal Market of food supplements: how to foster harmonized implementation?

Food supplements are well known for their nutritional and physiological benefits, which differ from the therapeutic effects of medicines and medical devices. This food category, created almost 20 years ago to reflect the increasing demand for products supplementing the normal diet, is a continuously growing market. The COVID-19 pandemic has further confirmed this trend, with a rise in self-care awareness and interest that has also shone a light on the many challenges related to the digitalisation of the marketplace. The session, moderated by **Maud Perrudin**, AESGP Deputy Director General, discussed how these are addressed by regulators and provided some reflections on the legal and regulatory framework for food supplements.



From left to right: : **Maud Perrudin**, Deputy Director General, AESGP ; **Eric Marin**, Deputy Head of Unit, DG Health and Food Safety (SANTE), Unit G4 – Food hygiene and fraud, European Commission ; **Dr. Dennis Raschke**, Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety ; **Dr. Evelyn Breitweg-Lehmann**, Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety ; and **Dr. Ana Batalha**, Chair of the Council Working Party on Foodstuffs - Senior Advisor for Health and Food Safety, Ministry of Foreign Affairs - DGAE, Portugal

**Eric Marin**, Deputy Head of Unit, DG Health and Food Safety (SANTE), Unit G4 – Food hygiene and fraud, European Commission, presented the outcome of the recent European Commission Action Plan on online offers and advertising of food in relation to COVID-19 including related claims to share the learnings from this exercise for the future. He addressed the practical collaboration between the Commission and national authorities in the context of (i)RASFF and provided some examples of hazards found in food supplements notified via RASFF.

**Dr Dennis Raschke**, Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL), Germany, shared the experience from the national authority's standpoint and presented the German approach G@zielt on online official controls. He elaborated on his practical experience of control plans on food supplements offered online, including the use of the 'new' official online sampling tools and the engagement towards e-commerce and online actors and other stakeholders.

**Dr Ana Batalha**, Chair of the Council Working Party on Foodstuffs - Senior Advisor for Health and Food Safety, Ministry of Foreign Affairs - DGAE, Portugal, presented the work of the Portuguese Presidency in the area of

food supplements, which they identified as a priority. Their work aimed to look at how to move towards further harmonisation in this area. The Presidency presented to the Ministers for Agriculture a preliminary report which then was submitted by the Council to the Commission to act in due time. Sharing some of the conclusions from the report, she highlighted that a modern legal framework that meets the challenges of innovation is needed.

**Dr Evelyn Breitweg-Lehmann**, Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL), Germany, presented the German approach and the status of the work regarding the regulation, at the national level, of substances in food supplements other than vitamins and minerals, in particular the development of plant listings. She shared the objectives and state-of-play of the work ongoing between national authorities and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in the context of the Head of (Food) Agencies Working Group on food supplements, and in particular its negative list project that aims to identify other substances that are classified non-controversially by Member States. The objective is to have a common approach and reduce the workload for all competent authorities.

## ePharmacy: what has changed during COVID-19 and what is here to stay

During the COVID-19 pandemic, ePharmacy sales have been growing way above the market average in line with the general development of online channels. This session looked at the available market data and examined some of the trends that have emerged in online sales of self-care products during the pandemic.

**Jyoti Shah**, Director, Global Insights, IQVIA Consumer Health, explained the impact of COVID-19, providing a market overview (brick and mortar vs online) of selected European countries. In countries like Germany, France, Poland and the Czech Republic, online sales have grown double digits in the last year. She further focused on the evolving consumers, who are becoming more aware of their health and long-term health needs, relying less on check-ups but increasing their attention to their day-to-day health.

Building on Jyoti Shah's notes, **Eddy Gilissen**, IQVIA's Senior Director, Supplier Alliances EMEA, explained that, going forward, the online and offline consumer journey will overlap. This could be seen as a challenge for manufacturers on how to create an "offline merging online" consumer offer.

**Tobias Brodtkorb**, Managing Partner, SEMPORA Consulting, provided an overview of the German market, as the largest online market in Europe in the last two years and a half, providing the figures by categories

as well as some of the biggest brands online. There has been an organic shift towards e-pharmacy, which will likely increase in the next years with the upcoming launch of e-prescriptions in Germany. He shared insights into the strategies of non-traditional players, such as Amazon and Zalando, that are expanding their range of products with supplements and beauty brands that used to be exclusively sold in pharmacies.

**Sophie Even**, Sales Vice President, Europe Personal Health Care & Pharmacy Go to Market, Procter & Gamble, also focused on the changing European consumer. Consumers have become more conscious about their health and increasingly seek health information. Services and information are very important for shoppers, and this reality should be taken into account by the retailers.

**Paul Martingell**, Region President for Europe & Eurasia, Sanofi Consumer Healthcare, talked about trends, such as health and wellness, and the importance of pharmacy during COVID-19, also sharing the view that e-commerce and e-pharmacy are here to stay. He emphasized the important role of the pharmacists in healthcare, highlighting that e-pharmacy should be considered as an opportunity for them to become a source of trusted, reliable information and products. They play a significant role in certain categories and they should maintain it, even online.



From left to right: **Cathy Smith**, former BBC presenter and correspondent, and Founder, Speak-Easy Communications ; **Eddy Gilissen**, Senior Director, Supplier Services, IQVIA ; **Sophie Even**, Sales Vice President, Europe Personal Health Care & Pharmacy Go To Market, Procter & Gamble ; **Jyoti Shah**, Director, Global Insights, IQVIA Consumer Health ; **Tobias Brodtkorb**, Managing Partner, SEMPORA Consulting ; and **Paul Martingell**, Region President for Europe & Eurasia, Sanofi Consumer Healthcare

## RWE/RWD in the self-care space: what is stopping us to use more of it?

Access to digital tools and the vast amount of health information, available at everyone's fingertips, is changing our experience with self-care products. Nowadays, this experience can be captured and retained. Real-world data (RWD) and real-world evidence (RWE) provide relevant insights into how medicines and other self-care products are used in real-world settings. The session, moderated by **Paul-Etienne Schaeffer**, Life Sciences Regulatory Affairs Manager, AESGP, looked into how we can take full advantage of real-world evidence and real-world data in the self-care space.

**Dr Peter Arlett**, Head of Data Analytics and Methods Taskforce, EMA, and Co-chair, HMA-EMA Big Data Steering Group, provided an overview of the recent initiatives and activities on RWD/RWE from the side of the EU regulatory authorities, underlining that now is the time for RWD/RWE. He focused on the work of the Big Data Steering Group and DARWIN EU, which is a network of data holders and expertise. Their work aimed at enabling RWE as a trusted and accepted source of evidence, which will be available to decision-makers to support quality decisions.

As one of AESGP's lead experts on RWD/RWE, **Dr Emese Csöke**, Global Head of Regulatory, Medical, Safety and Compliance Strategy & Change Program Director, Bayer Consumer Healthcare, presented AESGP's efforts to stimulate a RWE-enabling environment. She noted that, compared to prescription medicines, there has been little focus on the potential role of RWE for non-prescription medicines. The RWD definition should be defined broadly by the regulators to reflect the specificities of non-prescription medicines. RWD would not replace randomised clinical trials, but help to fill data gaps by improving the understanding of how non-prescription medicines work outside the controlled setting.

**Dr Andreas Ehret**, Director Clinical Development, Bayer Consumer Health, noted that digital health tools play a disruptive role in collecting primary data and can include retrospective and prospective observational studies, as well as wearables and mobile health apps. Secondary data sources can include publicly available information such as social media in combination with AI and machine learning. Data are also available from sources such as electronic health records, but these rarely cover self-care products.

There are a lot of uncertainties regarding the use of RWD/RWE and there is a need to initiate a dialogue between the self-care industry and regulators to define the framework for the self-care industry.

**Dr Volker Spitzer**, Senior Director Global R&D Services, IQVIA Consumer Health, noted that the current RWD sources for self-care are limited to the already established big data sources. By using digital health tools such as wearables, companies could continuously get real-time data. This would allow them to learn much more about consumers' activity, than through a survey.

**Julie Sutherland**, Marketing Director, Johnson & Johnson Consumer Health, shared an example of their nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) mouth spray that, via an app, empowers and helps consumers to quit smoking by allowing them to set their own goals and decide when they want to quit. The app tracks NRT usage and cigarette usage across the period, shows money saved by doing so, pops up motivational messages, etc. Awareness and education are what keeps people away from smoking. Overall, the digital tool allowed for a deeper understanding of the smoking cessation process and gave insights into different user groups, improving features and utility of the app, and leveraging the data to improve health outcomes for the users.

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## Circular economy and sustainability: what is the role of our Industry?



From left to right : **Bengt Mattson**, Chair, IAI-PiE Task Force ; **Linda Kren**, Environment and Responsible Care, ScienceINDUSTRIES Switzerland ; **Bernard Mauritz**, AESGP Vice-President & Director General, Nprofarm ; **Jan De Belie**, Professional Affairs Advisor, Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) ; **Frithjof Laubinger**, Environment and Economy Integration, Environment Directorate, OECD ; **Jody Lodge**, Managing Director, J&J/McNeil AB ; **Lars Münter**, European Health Futures Forum & Self-Care in Europe ; and **Francesca Stevens**, Managing Director, European Organization for Packaging and the Environment (EUROPEN)

Environmental sustainability is high on the political agenda worldwide. This global challenge requires a collective response across all sectors and value chains, including the self-care industry. This session, moderated by **Bengt Mattson**, Chair of the Industry Inter-Association Task Force on Pharmaceuticals in the Environment (PiE), looked at some of the existing practices and initiatives across Europe and how they can collectively meet the objectives of the European green agenda.

**Frithjof Laubinger**, Environment and Economy Integration, Environment Directorate, OECD, talked about the impact of pharmaceutical household waste, namely unused and expired medicines that become waste. The OECD report on managing pharmaceutical household waste will be published shortly, and will include policy implications and high-level recommendations. Household disposal practices greatly vary in Europe, depending on the availability of separate collection systems and population's awareness. He highlighted the different measures that exist to minimize the impacts of unused pharmaceuticals, from waste prevention to the proper collection and treatment of unavoidable waste.

**Francesca Stevens**, Managing Director, European Organization for Packaging and the Environment

(EUROPEN), highlighted that well-designed packaging should be fit for the product it is protecting and should minimize the economic and environmental impacts. Pharmaceutical packaging already entails specific challenges, and sustainability considerations add to that complexity.

**Linda Kren**, Environment and Responsible Care, ScienceINDUSTRIES Switzerland, shared the example of end-of-pipe measures in Swiss water treatment plants and how these measures are financed in order to be ready for cleaning substances of emerging concerns.

**Jody Lodge**, Managing Director, J&J/McNeil AB, presented the CO<sub>2</sub> neutral J&J site in Helsingborg, Sweden. Becoming CO<sub>2</sub> neutral required a switch to a more energy-efficient infrastructure and more sustainable energy sources. Going beyond the site, employees were also given solutions and advice to manage their lives in a more sustainable manner.

**Jan De Belie**, Professional Affairs Advisor, Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU), focused on the aspects of waste reduction and waste collection. Based on the community pharmacists' experience, many improvements have been seen in waste prevention. He highlighted the important role of pharmacists in



improving adherence, thus reducing medicines waste. It is essential to improve information and public awareness on the collection and disposal of medicines, as well as to promote a better communication on prudent use.

**Lars Münter**, European Health Futures Forum & Self-Care in Europe, emphasized one important aspect related to waste reduction, which is the prevention of diseases. He further explained that the appropriate use of products is, in a broader sense, part of sustainability.

## Conclusions

Despite the numerous challenges and difficulties it has brought in personal lives and businesses, the COVID-19 pandemic has also encouraged positive changes, including the uptake of new behaviours and the acceleration of innovation. As showed by the two-day discussions, the pandemic experience provided many lessons for the self-care industry and its partners. The importance of self-care for people and society has been accentuated by the pandemic, and the AESGP 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting provided insights into how to best go forward and take advantage of these changes.

The interest in self-care has increased during the pandemic, resulting in the further recognition of the value of self-care for both people and society. The evidence on the economic value of self-care is available and will be published soon. It should be acknowledged by policymakers and other stakeholders when rethinking and rebuilding healthcare systems post-pandemic. Further steps are needed to make self-care the first and obvious choice in Europe.

The changing consumer has been at the forefront of all discussions. The pandemic has encouraged consumers to become more proactive, connected and engaged, albeit they are not yet confident when taking health-related decisions. Health literacy has been underlined as being of outmost importance to empower individuals to take better care of themselves.

The use of internet to look for health-related information has increased during the pandemic and has often led to questionable sources providing incorrect or even harmful information. Since the very first day of the pandemic, the World Health Organisation, the European institu-

**Bernard Mauritz**, AESGP Vice-President & Director General, Neprofarm, mentioned certain initiatives established in the Netherlands, that focus on involving all the stakeholders across the value chain. He emphasized the Dutch “chain approach” to reducing pharmaceutical residues in water, which is supported by the government and involves a wide network of stakeholders.

tions as well as Industry have fought misinformation circulating on social media and the internet. However, most of the times, those efforts have been reactive and could not prevent all the wrong information from spreading over the internet. More needs to be done to ensure that people find their way to reliable sources of information, especially in times of crises.

Mandatory social distancing and avoiding unnecessary contacts have also stimulated the uptake of remote consultations with healthcare professionals, such as general practitioners. Telemedicine and pharmacists-led care during 2020 have proven to be viable alternatives to face-to-face appointments with doctors, and effective complementary tools to assist the population. Community pharmacies have remained open, even in the worst moments of the pandemic. In many countries, the scope of pharmacists' activities has been expanded, allowing them to take a greater role in the delivery of care, including through dispensing self-care products and bringing health services closer to people.

The AESGP 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting has provided exciting examples of what the self-care industry is doing to meet the challenges of a (post-)pandemic world and take advantage of the ‘new normal’, notably by offering new services, leveraging new technologies, engaging with new partners and exchanging with the consumers.

Environmental sustainability and protection are undeniably important elements to build trust in the industry and to contribute to better health for the population. A multi-stakeholder approach is key to make sustainability efforts a success.

## Invitation to the next AESGP conferences

Closing the 57<sup>th</sup> AESGP Annual Meeting, **Jurate Švarcaitė**, AESGP Director General, invited the participants to the [AESGP Regulatory Conference](#) planned on 25 November 2021 in Lisbon, Portugal, and to the [58<sup>th</sup> AESGP Annual Meeting](#), planned from 7 to 9 June 2022 in Milan, Italy.

