

Improving access to affordable medicines

EPW core priorities and flagships

Moving towards universal health coverage

WHO collaboration

Technical guidance
Country cooperation strategy

Latvia's share of out-of-pocket payments in health spending is consistently among the highest in the EU, making it difficult for many residents to afford essential treatments. Recognizing this, the country embarked on reforms to reduce this financial burden and improve access. In collaboration with the Regional Office, Latvia developed a roadmap focused on revising the pricing and coverage of medicines.

The Regional Office provided essential support through expert consultations, data analysis and stakeholder meetings. This collaboration identified high wholesale and pharmacy markups and relatively low levels of coverage as major factors driving up medicine costs for patients. The Regional Office's report on the significant role of outpatient medicines in undermining affordable access to health care was pivotal in gaining political backing for new regulations, which cap markups and mandate doctors to use International Non-proprietary Names in prescriptions to reduce user charges for covered medicines.

The impact

As a result of these reforms, Latvia is moving forward in efforts to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for medicines. In July 2024 co-payment rates for eligible medications were reduced to 25% and 0%, depending on the severity of the diagnosis. Additionally, new regulations on pharmacy and wholesale markups, set to take effect on 1 January 2025, aim to further lower medicine costs and ensure fair pricing.

Lessons learned

- WHO's technical knowledge brings credibility to new policy proposals.
- Learning from other countries helps shape an approach to reducing medicine costs and out-of-pocket payments.
- Involving stakeholders from the public and private sectors is essential to overcome roadblocks in the reform process.

Donors and partners

National Health Service; State Medicines Agency; patient organizations; pharmaceutical manufacturers; pharmacy associations



European Region



Since July 2024, co-payment rates for eligible medications in Latvia have been lowered to 25% and 0%.
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“Do not hesitate to involve international experts when discussing policy reforms. Their credibility and experience can serve as powerful tools for change.”

Ms Inese Kaupere, Director of the Pharmaceutical Department, Ministry of Health, Latvia

What's next?

Latvia plans to continue its collaboration with the Regional Office to evaluate the impact of the new regulations and make necessary adjustments. The government will also seek to explore strategies for improving access to innovative medicines and addressing any new challenges that arise in the pharmaceutical sector.