

Press Release

Open borders that prioritise essential goods key to medicines supply in Europe

The renewed EU Schengen strategy includes many of the lessons learned from COVID-19

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The open border Schengen system is key to EU mobility and internal market, including of essential medicines. Its coherent implementation between Members States is crucial to ensure medicines can continue to flow between countries, moving from factories to supply of thousands of hospitals and pharmacies in other countries.

The experience from the outbreak of COVID-19 in Europe has shown just how crucial this system is. As countries closed borders in March 2020, tailbacks of cargo trucks carrying essential medicine built up across Europe. This was eventually eased by the creation of EU green lanes for medicines, to ensure there was no critical shortage of supply due to border closures. This was one of the key successes of the EU response to the outbreak and kept medicines moving during the emergency period.

The European Commission proposal on a newly strengthened Schengen zone, [published today](#), is an important milestone in Europe's progression and lessons learned from COVID-19. The contingency plan to allow for reactivation of the green lane mechanism is especially welcome and prudent, given the importance of inter-EU circulation of essential goods.

Commenting on the publication of the Schengen strategy, **Medicines for Europe** Director General Adrian van den Hoven said *"Our industry provides the majority of medicines dispensed in the EU. During the outbreak of COVID, we were providing the vast majority needed in ICU to ventilate critically ill COVID patients. We remember too well the queues of traffic containing essential goods, blocked at internal EU borders and not in the hospital where they were needed most. I am happy to see the proposal for a renewed Schengen zone, integrating many of the recommendations we advocated for last March, including green lanes for essential goods."*

Medicines for Europe

Medicines for Europe represents the generic, biosimilar and value-added medicines industries across Europe. Its vision is to provide sustainable access to high quality medicines, based on 5 important pillars: patients, quality, value, sustainability and partnership. Its members directly employ 190,000 people at over 400 manufacturing and 126 R&D sites in Europe and invest up to 17% of their turnover in R&D investment. Medicines for Europe member companies across Europe are both increasing access to medicines and driving improved health outcomes. They play a key role in creating sustainable European healthcare systems by continuing to provide high quality, effective generic medicines, whilst also innovating to create new biosimilar medicines and bringing to market value added medicines, which deliver better health outcomes, greater efficiency and/or improved safety in the hospital setting for patients. For more information please follow us at www.medicinesforeurope.com and on Twitter [@medicinesforEU](https://twitter.com/medicinesforEU).