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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council

Subject:	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting on 8 December 2017 Lack of drug availability in Greece – <i>Information from the Greek delegation</i> (Any Other Business item)
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Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Greek Delegation on the above-mentioned subject to be raised under "Any Other Business" at the session of the Council (EPSCO) on 8 December 2017.

Lack of drug availability in Greece

It is well-known that the market in the drug sector causes problems in several MS. Patients' access to effective and affordable medicines is threatened either due *inter alia* to the high and unsustainable prices or by the fact that new products are not available in national markets due to business and economic strategies. As a result, individual countries have limited influence in those cases.

Greece has made efforts to stabilise, reconstruct and strengthen its public health system based on the principles of universal coverage, equity, and person-centred care. Such efforts are undertaken in a setting of fiscal constraints and guardianship, which is extremely demanding, stifling sometimes, and which, among other things, requires the control and rationalisation of public spending on health.

In this context, and in an effort to achieve the difficult balance between a fair and accessible to all health system, as well as its funding sustainability, specific measures have been taken aiming to control the total public health spending, particularly in the pharmaceutical sector which has been greatly affected by mechanisms of induced and manipulated demand, always in agreement with the creditors of Greece and in line with our obligations under the memoranda. The aforementioned measures are applied without discrimination and concern all pharmaceutical companies active in Greece.

In this context, a well-known Swiss-based multinational company, requested the removal of a cancer drug (indicated for a specific category of patients with unresectable metastatic melanoma) from the Greek positive drug reimbursement list, claiming that marketing the drug in Greece is no longer in its interests due to recent government regulations (additional 25% discount for new on-patent drug) creating an important issue to the patients under treatment.

Taking into account that the European Commission, WHO-Europe, as well as each and every one of the MS have repeatedly stressed the value of solid, sustainable and reliable health systems for the well-being of the European citizens, it is important to inform all the MS on this very important issue. There is a need to develop strong and systematic synergies in the policy of the pharmaceutical area particularly on bargaining power in order to prevent unfair trade practices that are especially inappropriate in this very sensitive area.

At this critical time, we do feel that this goes beyond narrow national interests; the current issue concerns all European partners and there is a need for solidarity and for enhancement of the relevant political discussion.
