Protecting patients in the event of a no-deal Brexit

As the prospect of the UK leaving the EU without a negotiated agreement remains a real possibility, the European healthcare sector is highlighting the importance of prioritising the safety of patients and public health in a no-deal scenario.

A "cliff-edge" exit from the EU by the UK has very real and tangible consequences for patients across the whole of Europe. From the healthcare sector's perspective, the transition period envisaged in the withdrawal agreement and political declaration would have given critical "breathing space" for healthcare partners to adapt to new regulatory requirements, customs, manufacturing and supply issues, with the aim of ensuring an uninterrupted supply of medicines and medical products to patients. The sudden ending of current arrangements would present a massive challenge.

The scale of the task should not be underestimated. Two examples:

- Around 45 million packs of medicines leave the UK destined for patients in the EU every month, with 37 million heading the opposite way. In total, that's around 1 billion packs of medicine crossing the border between the UK and EU each year.
- When large scale trauma incidents such as recent terrorist attacks in both the UK and EU countries arise, free movement of goods across the EU means that emergency trauma packs can be flown in at a moment's notice from anywhere in the EU. These products are not normally stored locally in sufficient quantities to cope with sudden unexpected demand, for efficiency and shelf life reasons, so stocks can quickly run low.

In order to ensure that patients and the public are not damaged by the effects of "no deal", the European health sector is calling for urgent contingency measures to be put in place.

We call for immediate action in the event of a no deal scenario:

- **Co-ordinated contingency plans for prioritising imports of medicines and medical goods, including clinical trials materials, active pharmaceutical ingredients and raw materials for manufacturing medicines. This could for example include exempting certain goods from customs and border checks, fast-tracking them at ports and airports and/or enabling paperwork and regulatory checks to be completed away from the physical border**
- **An extended deadline for transferring UK-based testing of medical products to EU countries, so that UK-tested products can continue to be placed on the EU market after Brexit for the benefit of EU patients**
- **Mutual recognition by the UK and EU of all CE marked medical technologies granted by notified bodies**

- **Continued participation by both EU and UK patients in clinical trials of innovative new medicines and treatments**
- **Continued UK participation in key data sharing platforms that protect the public from health threats such as pandemics, unsafe medicines and products, and unsafe practitioners**
- **Continued collaboration and knowledge exchange in medical and scientific research and innovation, and networks such as European Reference Networks**
- **Reciprocal healthcare arrangements for EU and UK citizens visiting, working or living across the UK/EU border**
- **Mutual recognition of healthcare professionals' qualifications so they can practise across the UK/EU border.**