

Corporate sponsorship linked to EU patient and consumer groups' policy perspectives

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HAI Europe's latest research has established a link between patient and consumer groups' perspectives on EU medicines policies and the funding they receive from the pharmaceutical industry. Worryingly, these findings highlight the potential for the erosion of the patient and consumer voice in pharmaceutical policy debates at the European level.

Currently under debate, this EU legislative proposal, known as *Information to Patients Directive and Regulation*, could loosen the controls on medicines information generated by the pharmaceutical industry, allowing companies to communicate directly with patients about its products.

The research, published earlier this month, analysed the responses given by 12 patient and consumer organisations, eligible to work with the European Medicines Agency, to a questionnaire concerning this particular proposal. Relevant policy documents from 14 organisations were also examined. The overall analysis was then contrasted with the corporate sponsorship these groups received. Final results showed that those organisations receiving company funding supported an expanded role of the pharmaceutical industry as an information provider.

"This latest research suggests that corporate financing could jeopardise the unique voice of patients and consumers in specific policy debates," said Katrina Perehudoff, HAI Europe Project Officer.

"From these findings we recommend that public institutions pay considerable attention to democratic participation of patients and consumers in medicines policy," she adds.

The complete research article *The patient & consumer voice and pharmaceutical industry sponsorship* is available at www.haieurope.org

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