



The Brussels Declaration on the Responsible Disposal of Unused and Expired Medications in Europe

We, the European experts gathered in Brussels on Thursday, June 26th, 2025, for the scientific symposium titled *Minimizing the Ecological and Economic Burden of Medication Waste in Europe*, hereby issue a formal call to improve the management of unused and expired medications across the European Union.

Drawing upon the latest scientific evidence, policy analyses, and shared best practices, we underline the urgent need for coordinated action to mitigate the environmental damage, economic inefficiencies, and safety risks resulting from improper disposal of household medications.

We call upon the European Commission, Member States, national regulators, and all relevant stakeholders to adopt the following three-pronged strategy:

1. Launch Coordinated Awareness Campaigns Targeting Patients and Citizens

Public awareness remains critically low across much of Europe regarding the correct disposal of unused and expired medications. We urge Member States to invest in and coordinate national and EU-wide information campaigns that:

- Clearly explain how to dispose of medicines safely;
- Highlight the environmental and health consequences of improper disposal;
- Encourage the return of unused medicines to designated points, such as community pharmacies

These campaigns must be culturally adapted, visible, and sustained over time to change behaviours at scale.

2. Introduce Clear and Standardized Graphical Symbols on Medicine Packaging

We call for the implementation of intuitive, easy-to-understand visual symbols on all medication packaging, supported by EU-wide regulatory guidance. These symbols should convey essential instructions such as:

- “Do not dispose of in household waste”
- “Return unused medicines to your pharmacy”

Such standardization will ensure that patients across

Europe receive consistent and understandable guidance, regardless of language or literacy level.

3. Develop National Information Platforms for Safe Disposal Guidance

Each Member State should establish and maintain a user-friendly, accessible digital platform — such as a website or mobile app — providing citizens with:

- Up-to-date lists of local return points (e.g., pharmacies, municipal collection sites, etc.);
- Clear instructions on what can and cannot be returned;
- Practical explanations of the risks associated with improper disposal.

These national platforms should be promoted through healthcare providers and public campaigns, and coordinated at the EU level to ensure consistency and interoperability.

As experts from the fields of public health, pharmacology, environmental science, waste management, health policy, and the pharmaceutical industry, we stress that the time for action is now. The evidence is clear: improper disposal of medicines is widespread, harmful, and avoidable.

We urge European and national authorities to act decisively and collaboratively to ensure that the lifecycle of medications ends in a manner that protects both human health and the environment.

For a healthier, safer, and more sustainable Europe — this change is both necessary and achievable.

Done at Brussels, on 26 June 2025

