## ****PRESS RELEASE****

**For immediate release**

### ****Brussels Symposium Calls for Coordinated EU Action on the Disposal of Unused Medications****

**New Findings from the DISPOSAL Study Inform the “Brussels Declaration”**

Improper disposal of unused or expired household medications remains a widespread issue across Europe, contributing to unnecessary public spending, environmental pollution, and significant safety risks. To address this growing concern, a new cross-European study - DISPOSAL - has been launched to explore national frameworks, practices, and public awareness surrounding the safe disposal of medicines.

Led by the Medical University of Lodz (Poland), in collaboration with the Syreon Research Institute (Hungary) and supported by experts across the EU, the DISPOSAL study aimed to provide the first-ever comprehensive evidence base for shaping future policies on the disposal of unused or expired household medications.

The DISPOSAL study gathered insights from national experts in healthcare, pharmaceutical regulation, environmental policy, and waste management through an extensive survey. So far it covered 29 European countries and focused on six key dimensions:

* Legal frameworks and national legislation
* Medication collection systems
* Real-world practices and any existing medicine reuse policies
* Public awareness campaigns
* Economic costs and funding mechanisms
* Environmental impact and final disposal methods

### ****From Evidence to Action: The Brussels Declaration****

Findings from the DISPOSAL study were presented on **June 26, 2025**, during the international symposium in Brussels titled “Minimizing the Ecological and Economic Burden of Medication Waste in Europe.” At this strategic event, experts from 15 European countries issued a joint statement - the **Brussels Declaration on the Responsible Disposal of Unused and Expired Medications in Europe** - calling for immediate and coordinated EU-wide action.

The Declaration outlines a three-pronged strategy to improve medication disposal practices:

#### ****1. Launch coordinated awareness campaigns targeting the general public****

To address the low public awareness of correct disposal methods, the Declaration calls on 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.

#### ****2. Introduce clear and standardized graphical symbols on medicine packaging****

Experts urge regulators to adopt intuitive, EU-wide visual labelling that provides clear instructions, such as:

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

#### ****3. Develop national digital information platforms for citizens****

Each Member State should provide an accessible digital platform (e.g., a website or app) that:

* Offers up-to-date lists of local return points;
* Clarifies what medicines can be returned;
* Explains the risks of improper disposal in practical terms.

### ****Shared Responsibility, Urgent Action****

“The environmental and economic impact of medical waste is too significant to be ignored. With this project, we are building a strong foundation for evidence-based policymaking and practical change across Europe,” says **Prof. Przemysław Kardas**, principal investigator of the DISPOSAL study and Head of the Medication Adherence Research Centre at the Medical University of Lodz.

The DISPOSAL project also examines issues such as the reuse of safe, unexpired medications, the disposal of prefilled syringes and pens, and the allocation of financial responsibility among governments, pharmacies, and pharmaceutical companies.

The Brussels symposium — hosted under the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU — brought together key stakeholders from health, environmental, and regulatory sectors. The **Brussels Declaration** represents a unified call from scientific experts for sustainable, scalable solutions to reduce medication waste across the EU.

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