



Pharmaceutical transparency: from resolution to reality

Snapshot of the implementation of WHA resolution 72.8 on transparency of pharmaceutical markets with country examples and recommendations

Executive summary

Transparency of the pharmaceutical sector is a critical issue. All over the world, policymakers, academics and civil society organizations are developing initiatives to increase pharmaceutical transparency to determine fair prices for health products and improve the overall accountability of the sector.

The global attention paid to the topic demonstrates the widespread understanding of the implications of decisions related to pricing and reimbursement of health products. These decisions must be made in a socially responsible manner.

This report highlights the steps taken in selected regions and countries to improve the transparency of medicine pricing since the adoption of World Health Organization's (WHO) transparency resolution in 2019. It also highlights what can be done next to translate commitments made in the resolution into reality, at the national, regional and global levels.

The report summarizes key developments at the global and European level and in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, United States of America, and South Africa.

WHA resolution 72.8, a milestone

In 2019, growing calls for transparency of pharmaceutical markets resulted in a groundbreaking resolution at the 72nd World Health Assembly (WHA). After lengthy negotiations, WHA resolution 72.8 'Improving the transparency of markets for medicines, vaccines, and other health products' was adopted by consensus by the WHO Member States.

The resolution calls on governments to enhance the transparency of pharmaceutical markets. More specifically, it asks WHO Member States to ensure

public disclosure of net prices of health products paid by national authorities, and to improve the reporting by suppliers on sales revenues, prices, units sold, marketing costs, subsidies and patent-related information.

Despite being a watered-down version of the original draft – for example by making disclosure of sensitive research and development (R&D) information voluntary rather than mandatory – this resolution acknowledges the importance of transparency of markets for medicines, vaccines and other health products. It also provides countries with direction on how to achieve this.

Good practices: implementing initiatives to improve transparency

Several countries have taken initiatives in line with the objectives of WHA resolution 72.8. Governments of other countries can learn from these actions to develop and implement effective and suitable national policies. View a selection of good practices below.

Harmful practices: protecting further price secrecy

While many countries are developing initiatives to increase pharmaceutical transparency, Germany and Switzerland are taking worrying steps in the opposite direction. Pushed by the pharmaceutical industry – which has a significant presence in these countries – both governments are adopting or proposing new legislation to protect and increase secrecy of the prices they pay for new medicines.



This report was published by Health Action International (HAI) and Wemos in May 2025. Access the full report via the QR code.

These examples show how much the pharmaceutical industry has a grip on government policy, rather than the other way around. The consequences extend beyond the country's borders. By legislating the secrecy surrounding the prices they pay to pharmaceutical companies, the German and Swiss governments sidestep accountability for how they spend taxpayers' money. In addition, they leave other countries without reference for their price negotiations with pharmaceutical companies.

Confidential price agreements go against the spirit of transparency and damage the interest of public health by hindering the effectiveness and efficacy of public spending. They affect price negotiations and prevent traceability between costs and prices.

The need to foster international collaboration

We see that individual countries can be reluctant to develop and implement transparency measures, arguing that they cannot change the system on their own. In addition, there may be a fear that pharmaceutical companies will not market their products in a country where they are heavily regulated or where price agreements will be disclosed.

Therefore, effective transparency policy does not only require national legislation but also – in parallel – international collaboration. Several countries in Europe have already set up alliances and platforms to exchange information and negotiate together, aiming to maximize their purchasing power thus lowering the prices of expensive medicines. These alliances should be strengthened and expanded and serve as examples for other regions of the world.

Summary of recommendations

The report provides recommendations for WHO Member States, the WHO and civil society organizations to effectively contribute to greater transparency of pharmaceutical markets.

WHO Member States should:

- Implement legislation to increase transparency of – at least – the net prices paid, R&D costs and public funding of R&D of health products.
- Review (or actively contribute to) national legal, administrative and regulatory frameworks governing access to data about prices, costs, clinical data and health technology assessments in order to ensure better informed price negotiations and provide relevant information for patients.
- Ensure that medicines selection procedures are open to public scrutiny, transparent on the evidence they are based on and allow for public engagement.
- Recognize that confidential price agreements with pharmaceutical manufacturers go against the interests of public health and good governance.
- Target excessively high prices and condemn infringements linked to anticompetitive practices such as the misuse and abuse of IP protection tools, in accordance with competition law and human rights treaties.
- Foster collaboration among public procurers and payers to share their data and publish them in a consolidated manner to inform the public.
- Invest in capacity building, including human resources and technology, to improve capabilities on price setting, cost assessments and information dissemination.
- Use the information obtained through transparency to apply a calculation model to determine the part of public share and a fair price.

WHO should support Member States in designing and implementing national legislation and policies, and facilitate initiatives for international collaboration.

Civil society organizations should monitor relevant political and legislative developments, as well as advocate and support positive steps towards greater transparency.

Selection of good practices



Chile

Combatting anticompetitive pharmaceutical practices

Chilean institutions responsible for ensuring free competition in markets have been advocating for increased transparency to enhance access to medicines. At the same time, executive and legislative branches proposed modifications to the healthcare legislation, aimed at preventing price collusion between manufacturers and sellers of medicines, and establishing a national observatory of medicines. This national observatory would enable price monitoring as well as oversight by the government and citizens.



Italy

Pioneering legislation for R&D cost disclosure

In 2020, Italy achieved a major milestone by enacting a decree with criteria and methods to determine prices of new medicines. The decree demands the disclosure of biomedical R&D costs and the amount of public funding of R&D of health products considered for reimbursement. It also requires pharmaceutical companies to provide a comparative evaluation of costs of therapeutic alternatives, and to annually report on sales, turnover, marketing costs and patent status of the reimbursed product. The decree still needs to complete the administrative process to enable implementation and enforcement.



The Netherlands

Citizen research into what is socially acceptable

The Dutch healthcare institutions and the national competition authority have started a programme to identify – in a transparent manner – which costs and prices for new medicines are socially accepted, which elements play a role in this and how these elements can be implemented. The programme entails interviews with relevant stakeholders and experts and citizen research. The citizen research will capture a public perspective on which prices are socially acceptable, and which elements are important in this regard, such as transparency. The programme will provide policy advice to the Ministry of Health.



Spain

Government push for transparency

To promote transparency and safeguard the right of access to public information, Spain has established a special institutional body: the High Transparency Council. Through this entity, citizens and entities can request access to government-related information, including on decisions regarding pricing and procurement of health products. Several civil society organizations have already successfully requested the disclosure of prices of certain expensive medicines. In addition, the Ministry of Health is currently working on two decrees aimed at obliging laboratories to declare the costs of research, development and production of a product.



South Africa

Transparency enshrined in the Constitution

South Africa acknowledged the importance of transparency by enshrining it in the country's Constitution, back in 1997. All institutional bodies that enter into contracts for goods or services, “must do so in accordance with a system that is fair, equitable, transparent, competitive and cost-effective.” After an appeal to the Constitution, all contracts and negotiation-related documents for the procurement of Covid-19 vaccines were made public in 2023.



This report was published by Health Action International (HAI) and Wemos in May 2025. Access the full report via the QR code.

For questions or more information about the report or the topic of pharmaceutical transparency, please contact: Aliénor Devalière (Wemos) via alienor.devaliere@wemos.org, or Jaume Vidal (HAI) via jaume@haiweb.org.

More about HAI: www.haiweb.org

More about Wemos: www.wemos.org

