

# A CALL FOR COMPREHENSIVE EU ACTION ON MEDICATION WASTE AND MANAGEMENT

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# MEDICATION WASTE ACROSS EUROPE

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Evidence from Member States highlights the scale of the problem:

- Greece — €1 billion unused medicines annually
- France — 17,600 tonnes of unused or expired medicines (2018)
- Belgium — 700+ tonnes of unused medicines recovered (2024)
- Spain — 104.4 g per capita of medication waste collected (2022)



# MEDICATION WASTE AS A SIGNAL FOR SYSTEMIC CARE FAILURES

## Drivers

- Non-Adherence
- Inappropriate prescribing
- Inadequate training and patient education
- Failures in treatment adaptation

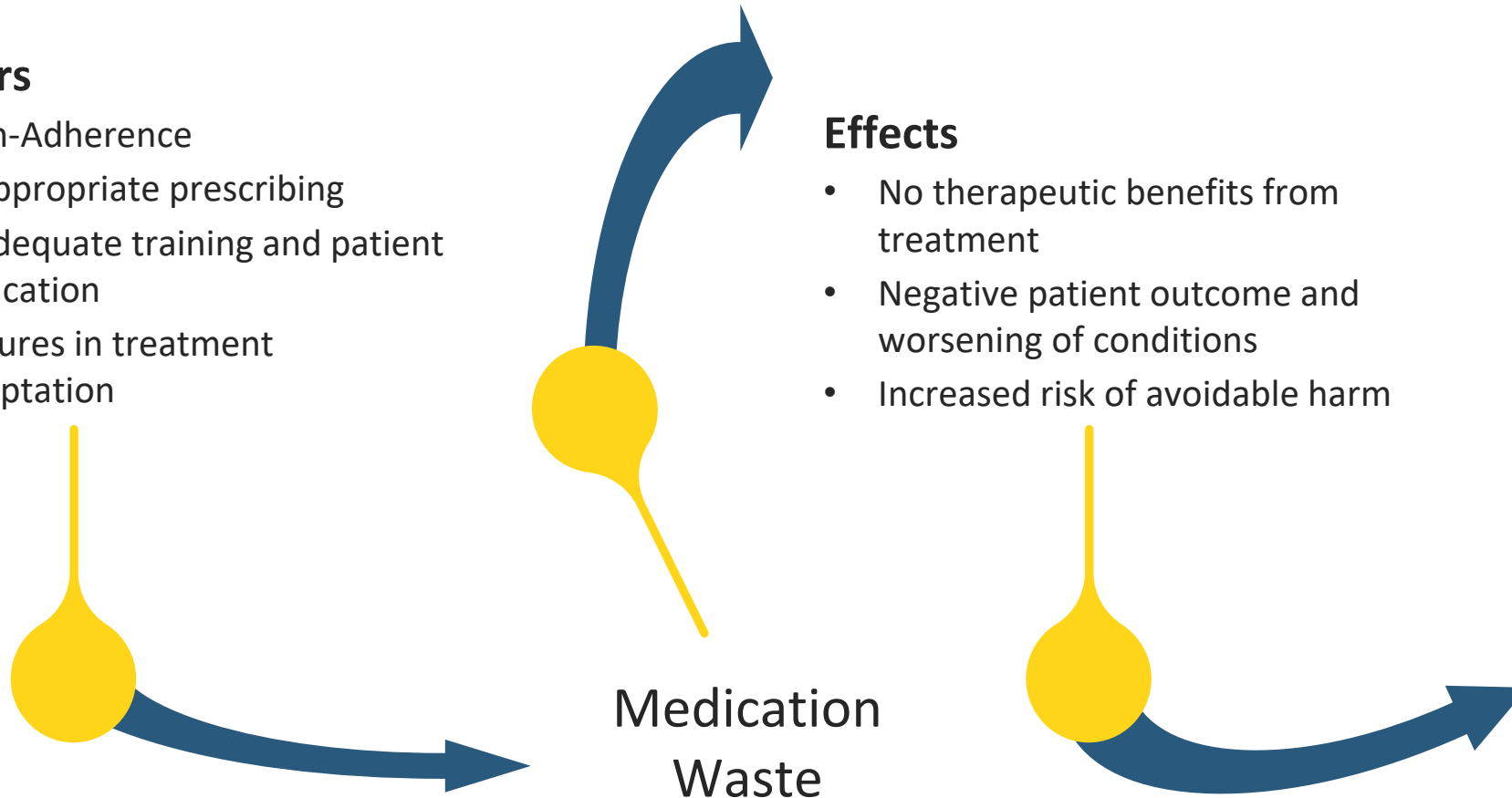
## Effects

- No therapeutic benefits from treatment
- Negative patient outcome and worsening of conditions
- Increased risk of avoidable harm

## Economic Impact

€80–125 billion annual losses in Europe from:

- Preventable hospital admissions
- Emergency care utilisation
- Disease progression and premature mortality



# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF MEDICATION WASTE

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## Pharmaceutical residues

150 active pharmaceutical ingredients detected in European environments

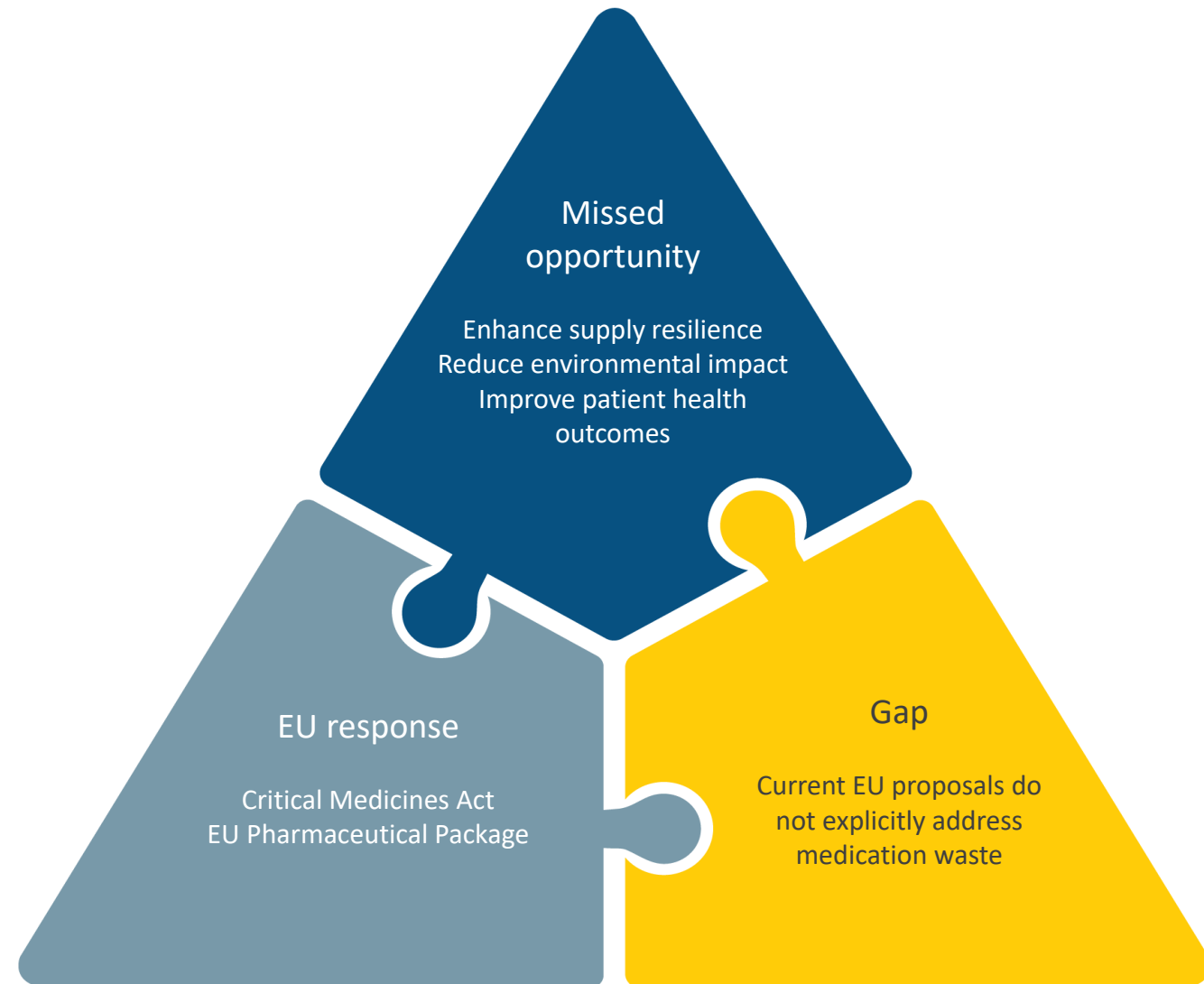
## Exposure hotspots

Downstream communities near pharmaceutical manufacturing sites  
Hospital effluent discharge points  
Areas with weak wastewater infrastructure

## Environmental risks

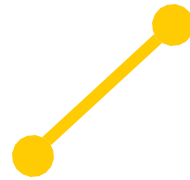
Low concentrations in water and soil (below therapeutic levels)  
Long-term effects of chronic low-dose exposure remain uncertain

# THE PARADOX: WASTE vs MEDICINE SHORTAGES



# SYSTEMIC DRIVERS OF MEDICATION WASTE

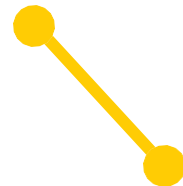
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BEHAVIOURAL: medication non-adherence



CLINICAL: polypharmacy and clinical complexity, treatment changes, inadequate medication review, patient mortality



STRUCTURAL and ORGANISATIONAL: pack size and dispensing policies mismatch, weak disposal infrastructure, limited medication redistribution systems

# ADDRESSING MEDICATION WASTE THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES

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Reimbursement models

Health  
literacy

E-prescribing

Medication  
review

Dose  
dispensing

Digital  
tools

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Medication optimisation

Optimise medication use and strengthen professional capacity



## Industry responsibility

Address pack size mismatch & improve bulk availability

## Strategic EU leverage

Leverage EU legislation to address medication waste

## Surveillance integration

EU-wide medication waste monitoring & policy integration

## Innovation

Promote innovative digital and health technologies

## Collaboration

EU multi-stakeholder platforms & coordinated action

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The evidence is clear.  
**The priority is implementation.**  
Advancing medication management  
means moving from fragmented efforts  
to integrated solutions that deliver  
**efficiency, safety, and sustainability at  
scale.**

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**THANK YOU**

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