Summary Event Report

European Alliance for Transformative Therapies (TRANSFORM) MEP Interest Group 2023 Conference

COUNTDOWN TO EU ELECTIONS

HOW CAN POLICYMAKERS SECURE THE PROMISE OF ADVANCED THERAPIES FOR PATIENTS OVER THE NEXT 6 MONTHS?

12 October 2023

European Alliance for Transformative Therapies

EVENT REPORT

Executive Summary

On 12 October 2023, the TRANSFORM MEP Interest Group hosted a conference titled "***Countdown to EU elections: How can policymakers secure the promise of advanced therapies for patients over the next 6 months?"*** Some key points and recommendations were raised amongst speakers during the exchange:

- The proposed EU Pharmaceutical Package, adopted by the European Commission on 26 April 2023, is **a unique opportunity to deliver a regulatory and legislative framework appropriate for the full lifecycle of Advanced Therapeutic Medicinal Products (ATMPs)**. Panellists agreed that the revised legislation must be fit-for-purpose and future proof, and agreed to work together in the coming months to ensure the specificities of ATMPs were reflected in the text.
- **The EU's Research and Development (R&D) ecosystem must remain attractive to developers of advanced therapies.** Ways this can be achieved include maintaining strong incentives in the legislation and supporting investment in the necessary infrastructure for these technologies.
- Token patient participation must be avoided: it is paramount to **involve and educate patients, from the use of their data to the collection of their feedback concerning a therapy**. A **patient-centric and multistakeholder dialogue, extended to national bodies**, must be implemented to ensure that all voices are heard in regulatory decision making.
- **Cross-border health rights must be strengthened to enable safe and timely access to advanced therapies for all citizens**, including those affected by rare diseases. The involvement of all Member States, including smaller ones, in leveraging existing and new pathways is needed to widen access to advanced therapies across the EU. Patients should not face unnecessary delays in receiving life-changing treatments, and this requires improved coordination and infrastructure.
- Europe is undergoing a digital revolution, and the **use of data and Real-World Data is steadily growing**. Their collection must be harmonised amongst Member States. The European Health Data Space (**EHDS**) will be a critical infrastructure for managing and sharing health data.

Investing in this space can accelerate the use of Real-World Evidence in ATMP development, leading to better-informed decisions and improved patient access to these therapies.

- A **strong and effective EMA** is crucial for the development and approval of ATMPs. Governance improvements can help ensure that the agency can adequately oversee the complex regulatory processes required for these therapies. Simplifying and accelerating EMA's approval procedures for ATMPs can help expedite the availability of these transformative treatments to patients. Reducing bureaucratic obstacles is vital.

Opening words

MEP Ondřej Knotek (Renew Europe, Czechia), Chair of the TRANSFORM MEP Interest Group opened the event.

> ***"We need to improve patient access to innovative therapies regardless of their geographical or socioeconomic situation, find alternative pathways in cross-border healthcare, and come up with innovative and sustainable payments for those therapies".***

- MEP Knotek welcomed attendees on behalf of the MEP Interest Group and highlighted the importance of the TRANSFORM Alliance in enhancing patient access to innovative therapies. He reminded the audience of the 2022 TRANSFORM MEP Charter with policy recommendations.
- MEP Knotek underlined the Interest Group's focus on the revised Pharmaceutical Package and expressed pride in the Alliance's Position Paper on the Pharmaceutical Package, which has recently been updated to include a new position on unmet medical need. He also stressed the need for improved patient access to Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products (ATMPs), innovative cross-border healthcare solutions, effective governance of the European Medicines Agency, and incentivising developers of ATMPs for the EU to be able to compete with the United States and China.

Welcome from TRANSFORM Steering Group representatives: the importance of a multi-stakeholder dialogue for ATMPs

Alexander Natz, Secretary General, EUCOPE and **Martine Pergent, President, IPOPI** emphasised the need for collaborative efforts to improve timely access to ATMPs.

> ***"Together, we can ensure that these innovative treatments are not only accessible and affordable, but also safe for all European citizens. This event, hosted by the Transform MEP Interest Group in collaboration with the TRANSFORM multi-stakeholder Alliance, marks a crucial step in our journey toward a brighter future for healthcare in Europe." – Martine Pergent***

- Alexander Natz provided an industry viewpoint, highlighting the distinct characteristics and challenges of ATMPs, emphasising their high cost to develop and produce given their complex technology. He emphasised the need for strengthening cross-border healthcare pathways and sustainable payment models, as well as the use of Real-World Evidence (RWE) to improve patient access to ATMPs.
- Dr Natz also mentioned the importance of a well-structured European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the need for Europe to become more attractive for investment in research and manufacturing of innovative therapies. He discussed the need for incentives and intellectual

property rights for companies and investors, as well as the importance of real-world evidence in monitoring ATMPs' long-term effectiveness and safety.

- Martine Pergent emphasised the potential of ATMPs to revolutionise healthcare and provide hope for patients with rare and debilitating diseases. She discussed ongoing challenges in the development and accessibility of these therapies and the importance of EU-level health legislative proposals, such as the Regulation on Substances of Human Origin, the EHDS, and the Pharmaceutical Package.
- Both speakers stressed the need for collaborative initiatives such as the TRANSFORM Alliance involving representatives of regulatory bodies, healthcare professionals, patient organisations, academia, and the industry to increase the availability and affordability of ATMPs while ensuring patient safety.

Panel 1: Is forthcoming EU policy fit for ATMPs? The case for why cell and gene therapies are unique

- **Eleni Antoniou,** Senior Policy Officer, Thalassemia International Federation (TIF)
- **Claire Booth,** Board Member, European Society of Gene and Cell Therapy (ESGCT)
- **Giovanni Migliaccio,** Board of Directors, European Paediatric Translational Research Infrastructure (EPTRI)
- **Anne Kerber,** Senior Vice President, Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS)
- Concluding remarks: **MEP Billy Kelleher** (Renew Europe, Ireland)

Each of the four panellists presented their perspective on the challenges and opportunities related to ATMPs, underlining the necessity for legislative adjustments, flexibility in regulation, early and continuous dialogue with stakeholders, and the collection of real-world evidence to ensure patients can access these transformative therapies effectively.

- **Eleni Antoniou:** ***"The legislative landscape must evolve to be future-proof, patient-centric, and adaptable to the unique challenges of ATMPs."***

Eleni Antoniou stressed the transformative potential of ATMPs as a patient organisation representative. She emphasised that ATMPs represent a significant advancement, offering the potential for a cure, and thus should be considered a fundamental human right. Ms Antoniou pointed out that while existing pharmaceutical legislation is being reviewed, it is crucial to ensure that these revisions are not only suitable for the current state of ATMP development but also future-proof. She advocated for a multistakeholder approach that involves patients actively in determining research priorities and decision-making, highlighting the importance of considering their perspective in improving access to ATMPs. Furthermore, Ms Antoniou stated that the concept of unmet medical need as defined in the Commission's proposal is concerning to the patient community as it provides a strict, narrow definition, thereby failing to capture the diversity of patient groups and their unique needs. Ms Antoniou explained that TRANSFORM is calling for a change in the proposal towards broad principles to be considered when assessing unmet medical need, such as patients' quality of life and disease burden. Additionally, she underlined the necessity of achieving equal infrastructure and conditions across all EU member states to guarantee consistent access to these therapies. She called

for an interoperable and collaborative approach, both within and outside the EU, to effectively address the access challenge presented by ATMPs.

- **Claire Booth:** ***"We need a regulatory framework that recognises the uniqueness of ATMPs, embraces flexibility, and fosters early and continuous dialogue among all stakeholders for the benefit of patients."***

Claire Booth provided a deep dive into the clinical uniqueness of ATMPs from the clinician viewpoint. She underscored that these therapies often bring significant improvements to patients' lives, thanks to their personalised nature. As noted by Professor Booth, rare diseases and orphan diseases are currently the primary targets for ATMPs, requiring specialised centres for treatment which are not present in all EU member states, highlighting this access challenge. Furthermore, she pointed out the ethical challenges in conducting traditional randomised controlled trials (RCTs) for ATMPs, particularly when dealing with small patient populations. She advocated for early and continuous dialogue with healthcare professionals and patients to collect RWE, which is essential for regulatory compliance. Professor Booth also highlighted the importance of securing EU funding to support research related to ATMPs and considered public registries as a positive step forward in enhancing access to these therapies.

- **Giovanni Migliaccio:** ***"ATMPs are reshaping the landscape of medical innovation, and the regulatory challenges they present are unique. It's crucial to recognise that academia plays a vital role in understanding these novel therapies and that flexibility within agencies is essential to adapt to emerging technologies and novel approaches."***

Dr Migliaccio provided a researcher's perspective on ATMPs, focusing on their novelty and how they differ fundamentally from conventional drugs. He emphasised that academia plays a significant role in generating ideas and filling gaps in ATMP development. The long research lead time to identify and develop science for use in therapies was noted, for example recalling research into mRNA for 10 years before it was used for a COVID vaccine. The presentation highlighted the need for flexibility in regulatory agencies to accommodate the unique characteristics of ATMPs, and it underlined the importance of creating a regulatory system that meets the needs of academic researchers and promotes innovation in the field. Dr Migliaccio also called for an approach that allows for continuous adjustments in regulatory processes and practices to adapt to technological developments in the ATMP space.

- **Anne Kerber:** ***"Cell therapy, like CAR-T, presents both a curative potential and formidable challenges, including stringent quality control and complex logistics. It's the future of medicine, but we must ensure that the regulatory framework is flexible enough to accommodate the specific needs of these revolutionary therapies."***

As an industry representative, Anne Kerber concentrated on the specific challenges and opportunities associated with cell therapies within the broader realm of ATMPs. One difference she highlighted is that cell therapies are used to fight a disease, whereas gene therapies are used to correct a faulty gene that causes a disease. She emphasised the complex concerning the logistics of delivering cell therapies, delving into the importance of quality control, chain of custody, and the need for consistency in production, given the unique and individualised nature of cell therapies. This has implications on cost and scale of cell therapies. Dr Kerber further highlighted the curative potential of cell therapies and the associated challenges related to cost and the scalability of manufacturing. Dr Kerber's

presentation emphasised the need for flexible language in pharmaceutical legislation to incentivise innovation and promote the accessibility of ATMPs, particularly within the cell therapy domain.

- **MEP Billy Kelleher:** ***"The success of the EU health union hinges on collaborative efforts and mechanisms that guarantee access to these ground-breaking therapies, from development to reimbursement, across all Member States."***

MEP Kelleher's concluding remarks added the political perspective on the future of ATMPs to the first panel discussion. MEP Kelleher raised the necessity of future-proofing legislation and regulations to accommodate the unique characteristics of ATMPs. He emphasised that while ATMPs hold tremendous promise, their access and reimbursement rely heavily on the cooperation of individual Member States. The MEP stressed that for the European Health Union to function effectively, there needs to be political pressure on Member States to cooperate and allocate the resources needed for ATMPs. He indicated that some mechanism must be established to ensure that transformative medicines are not only available to patients but are also reimbursed by healthcare systems, highlighting the need for a coordinated efforts and resource allocation at the EU level to fulfil the potential of ATMPs.

Patient intervention: The potential of ATMPs for the patient community - Living without Thalassaemia

Giuseppe Selvarolo and **Simona Annese** provided a first-hand account of the profound impact of ATMPs on their lives as they now live free of Thalassaemia.

> ***"I have not had a single blood transfer in over 6 years. I have my life, I can go to the gym, and I feel okay. The therapy has granted me a new lease of life."***

- The two personal testimonials offered compelling accounts of the transformative power of ATMPs. Giuseppe shared his personal journey, having battled thalassemia from a young age, marked by frequent blood transfusions and debilitating symptoms. He conveyed the hope and life-changing impact that ATMPs brought to his life, eliminating the need for constant transfusions, and significantly improving his overall health.
- Simona's story paralleled this theme, as she recounted her parents' discovery of her condition and the toll it took on her through hospital visits and health challenges. Her decision to undergo an ATMP treatment as a young adult brought a newfound quality of life and hope for the future.
- Both testimonials underscored the profound potential of ATMPs to not only provide medical treatment but also to deliver a significantly improved quality of life for people living with a disease.

Panel 2: Towards safe and timely access to ATMPs: what are the solutions for the EU's access challenge?

- **MEP Susana Solís Pérez** (Renew Europe, Spain)
- **Martine Pergent**, President, IPOPI
- **Ana Hidalgo-Simón,** reNEW Translational Ambassador, Leiden University Medical Center
- **Thomas Bols,** Head of Government Affairs and Public Policy for EMEA & Asia, PTC Therapeutics

- **MEP Susana Solís Pérez:** ***"We have a golden opportunity with the revision of the Pharmaceutical Package. This entails a critical chance for ATMP therapies and the well-being of patients. To compete on a global scale, the EU must catch up with the innovation progress seen in China, Japan, and the US."***

MEP Susana Solís Pérez began by acknowledging Europe's leadership in establishing regulations for ATMPs but stressed the need for further progress, emphasising that the current status quo is not satisfactory. She highlighted the ongoing revision of the pharmaceutical legislation as a significant opportunity for improving patient access to ATMPs and proposed streamlining EMA's approval procedures by reducing the number of Committees, as well as clarifying the role of ad hoc expert groups. She stressed the importance of making Europe an attractive destination for ATMP developers to invest in research and development and noted that Europe currently lags behind the US, China and Japan in this regard. Ensuring competitiveness will be a priority for the MEP as Shadow on the ITRE opinion on the file. As a solution to the EU's competitiveness problem, the MEP advocated for the inclusion of predictable and targeted incentives for ATMP development in the legislation. She also stressed the importance of striking a balance between maintaining the Hospital Exemption for non-routine use in specific cases and ensuring that its use does not undermine the centralised regulatory process for authorisation of ATMPs. Lastly, MEP Solís Pérez highlighted the importance of real-world evidence for ATMPs and the need to unlock the power of this data. She expressed her commitment to putting patients at the centre and advocated for stronger collaboration between decision makers, patient organizations, clinicians, academia, and industry to drive innovation and improve accessibility of ATMPs.

- **Martine Pergent:** ***"Strengthening the cross-border directive and fostering effective collaboration between academic and industry researchers is a pressing need."***

As a panellist, Ms Pergent presented three compelling cases illustrating the challenges patients face in accessing ATMPs in different European countries. These cases included difficulties related to traveling for treatment, securing follow-up care, and the lack of screening for certain rare diseases. She pointed out that both cost and access pathways pose significant challenges for patients in the context of ATMPs. Ms Pergent further highlighted the importance of outcome-based agreements as a solution to the cost challenges associated with ATMPs. She also touched on the issue of newborn screening, emphasising how some therapies offer curative benefits, particularly when administered early. Martine's contributions underscored the existing challenges in the cross-border healthcare directive, and the critical role of accessibility and affordability in ensuring that patients have the necessary access to life-changing ATMPs, further underscoring the importance of innovative pricing models and early intervention strategies.

- **Ana Hidalgo-Simón:** ***"Europe's limited share of clinical trials for ATMPs is concerning. Our academic and hospital research institutions are world-class, but we face challenges in providing an attractive environment for trials with these transformative therapies."***

Ana Hidalgo-Simón emphasised that the ongoing legislative review is bringing stakeholders with strong interests in ATMPs closer together. However, she observed that a number of ATMPs approved are no longer in the market, reflecting the challenges associated with these therapies post authorization. Professor Hidalgo-Simón stressed that ATMPs are the future, but the current regulatory system needs improvement to accommodate future innovation. Her perspective highlights the potential of ATMPs while acknowledging the need for flexible regulatory approaches that allow for adaptation to technological innovation to fully harness the transformative potential of ATMPs.

- **Thomas Bols:** ***"The pricing and reimbursement processes often present significant challenges, in part due to the novelty of ATMPs. We need to find ways to expedite the journey of these treatments to patients and navigate Payers' concerns regarding long-term effectiveness and side effects."***

Thomas Bols shared insights from the perspective of a company with a gene therapy on the market for a year. He characterised ATMPs as transformative treatments that address the causes of conditions rather than just symptoms. He noted that clinical trials involving these technologies are on the rise. Thomas pointed out that while EMA is generally well-adapted to get ATMPs approved, getting these therapies to patients is more complex. He cited challenges related to pricing, reimbursement discussions, and health technology assessments (HTA). He acknowledged that discussions around ATMPs take time due to their novelty and the need to set precedents. Long-term effectiveness and potential side effects raised concerns, especially regarding discussions with Payers. Thomas called for collaborative efforts to expedite the availability of ATMP treatments. His insights underscore the transformative nature of ATMPs and the practical challenges in getting them to patients.

All four of the panellists mentioned the importance of maintaining momentum, innovation, and patient engagement. They highlighted the need for more collaboration between academia and industry and addressing the challenge of harmonizing health technology assessments (HTA) in Europe. They emphasised the role of EHDS, the upcoming Pharmaceutical Package, the need for more accessible data for research, and addressing the issue of costs and access pathways associated with ATMPs for small patient populations.

Closing remarks: What to expect from the European Parliament over the next 6 months? Quo vadis after 2024?

MEP Tomislav Sokol (EPP, Croatia), Member of the TRANSFORM MEP Interest Group closed the event.

"The diversity in Europe's reimbursement procedures necessitates a more unified approach, marking a significant stride towards ensuring equitable access to Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products (ATMPs) in European healthcare."

- In his closing remarks, MEP Tomislav Sokol emphasized that there are three important files that significantly impact the development of ATMPs: the European Health Data Space (EHDS), the revision of the pharmaceutical legislation, and the Transparency Directive. His closing remarks also underscored the continued focus on improving access to ATMPs, addressing data concerns, and harmonizing regulatory and pricing measures for these innovative therapies.
- MEP Sokol noted that EHDS, which is close to finalising negotiations in the first reading, has great implications for ATMPs, especially concerning the secondary use of health data as it has

implications for accelerating the use of RWE over the lifecycle of ATMPs. He also shared that an opt-out consent mechanism for secondary use of health data has been negotiated in the Parliament across political groups for all types of health data except genomic data. An opt-out mechanism strikes a balance between protecting patient data and privacy on one side and ensuring that there is enough data for useful and representative research on the other.

- Regarding the Pharmaceutical Package, he expressed doubts about the legislation's completion by the current Parliament, suggesting that it might extend into the next term. He stressed the need for predictability and the right incentives for ATMP development, especially in the context of rare diseases.
- MEP Sokol also expressed his hope that in the next term, the revision of the Transparency Directive would be prioritised. The revision of this directive could provide more harmonised guidelines and principles for how reimbursement and pricing decisions are made in the EU.

Jacki Davis closed the event, reiterating that TRANSFORM brings together stakeholders from different perspectives and connects them with policymakers. This policy dialogue continues being of particular importance in the upcoming months, as the Pharmaceutical Package is analysed and discussed. The Position Paper is a living document and will evolve as the discussion continues among TRANSFORM Alliance members.

About the European Alliance for Transformative Therapies (TRANSFORM)

We invite you to join the TRANSFORM Community on Twitter and LinkedIn and keep an eye on the website to continue this important discussion online and to stay updated about the TRANSFORM MEP Interest Group and Alliance of experts' plans.

If you did not attend the TRANSFORM MEP Interest Group conference on 12 October 2023, or wish to rewatch it, the recording is available here:
https://transformalliance.eu/event/mep-interest-group-2023-conference/

You can read the TRANSFORM Alliance Position Paper on the Pharmaceutical Package published in June 2023 and updated in October 2023 here:
https://transformalliance.eu/our-positions/pharmaceutical-package/

You can read the TRANSFORM MEP Charter for EU Cooperation to Enable Safe and Timely Patient Access to Advanced Therapies in Europe launched on 13 October 2022 here:
https://transformalliance.eu/charter/

You can read the TRANSFORM Policy Asks on the Regulatory Framework for ATMPs launched on 16 June 2022 here:
https://transformalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/TRANSFORM-Policy-Asks-on-Regulatory-Framework-for-ATMPs_FINAL_June2022.pdf

You can read the TRANSFORM Policy Asks on Access to Authorised ATMPs launched on 31 March 2022 here:
https://transformalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TRANSFORM-Policy-Asks-for-Access-to-Authorised-ATMPs.pdf

You can read the TRANSFORM MEP Interest Group Policy Asks on Cross-Border Healthcare launched on 10 November 2021 here:
https://transformalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/TRANSFORM-MEP-Interest-Group-Five-Asks-on-Cross-border-Access-to-ATMPs-1.pdf

You can read the TRANSFORM Recommendations for Actions in the context of the Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe launched in June 2021 here:
https://transformalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/TRANSFORM-Recommendations-Version1.0_June2021-1.pdf

The European Alliance for Transformative Therapies (TRANSFORM) is a multi-stakeholder Alliance that connects Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and policymakers with patient groups, medical experts and associations, scientists, researchers, industry actors, networks and other relevant stakeholders. TRANSFORM aims to foster effective dialogue and provide evidence-based policy recommendations to enable safe and timely patient access to cell and gene therapies, whilst ensuring sustainability of healthcare systems.

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The European Medicines Agency is an Observer to the Alliance.

EFNA – European Federation of Neurological Associations

RI – Retina International

WDO – World Duchenne Organization

IPOPI – International Patient Organisation for Primary Immunodeficiencies

TIF – Thalassaemia International Federation

EHC – European Haemophilia Consortium

EURORDIS – Rare Diseases Europe

EPTRI – European Paediatric Translational Research Infrastructure

CCI Europe – Childhood Cancer International Europe

SIOP Europe – the European Society for Paediatric Oncology

EAHAD – European Association for Haemophilia and Allied Disorders

EU EYE – European Alliance for Vision Research and Ophthalmology

ESGCT – European Society of Gene and Cell Therapy

EUCOPE – European Confederation of Pharmaceutical Entrepreneurs

reNEW Consortium – Stem Cell Medicine