

The cost of emergency contraception pills in Central and Eastern Europe: A luxury product?

Background

Emergency contraception pills (ECPs) are an essential reproductive health commodity. In Europe, ECPs are largely procured through the private sector and paid out of pocket by users. Prices of LNG ECPs vary largely, from 4.5€ euros in Albania to over 25€ in Ireland.

Purposes

- To better understand the variability of the relative cost of buying ECPs in different parts of Europe
- To identify economic barriers to ECPs in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) countries

Methods

From June to August 2024, ECEC and ASTRA conducted a participatory survey to collect and analyse data on current cost of ECPs and gratuity schemes in CEE countries. In countries with different brands and prices, we calculated the average cost of all LNG ECPs. The average cost of LNG ECPs is measured as a proportion of the Gross Average Monthly Wage (GAMW) of each country (according to 2022 data from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe).

Results

Absolute cost of LNG ECPs in select European countries (August, 2024)

Relative cost of LNG ECPs in select European countries (August, 2024)

Average price of LNG ECPs (in US\$)*	Country
\$7,49	France
\$8,50	Georgia
\$10,63	Luxembourg
\$11,48	Poland
\$12,12	Armenia
\$13,32	Rep. of North Macedonia
\$17,75	Latvia
\$17,94	Bulgaria
\$19,09	Austria
\$19,42	Switzerland
\$21,08	Spain
\$21,92	Slovakia
\$22,53	Hungary
\$25,52	United Kingdom

Average price of LNG ECPs (2024; in US\$)*	Gross Average Monthly Wage (2022; in US\$)**	% of Gross Average Monthly Wage needed to buy one ECP	Country
\$10,63	\$6.633	0,16%	Luxembourg ³
\$7,49	\$3.654	0,20%	France ³
\$19,42	\$8.111	0,23%	Switzerland
\$19,09	\$4.312	0,44%	Austria
\$25,52	\$4.179	0,60%	United Kingdom ³
\$11,48	\$1.416	0,80%	Poland
\$21,08	\$2.551	0,80%	Spain
\$17,75	\$1.444	1,20%	Latvia
\$21,92	\$1.512	1,44%	Slovakia
\$13,32	\$813	1,60%	Rep. of North Macedonia
\$8,50	\$529	1,61%	Georgia
\$17,94	\$952	1,88%	Bulgaria
\$22,53	\$1.189	1,89%	Hungary
\$12,12	\$540	2,25%	Armenia

Conclusions

The absolute cost of LNG ECPs varies widely among countries, from 7 to 25 US\$. It tends to be slightly higher in mid- and high-income European countries, with the notable exception of France and Luxembourg. However, when measured as a portion of the average monthly salary, the relative cost of LNG ECPS is significantly lower in all mid- and high-income European countries, and higher in the rest of countries. In Armenia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Georgia, Rep. of North Macedonia, Slovakia and Latvia, individuals need to spend more than 1% of the average monthly income to buy LNG ECPs. That's between 7 and 14 times more than what is needed in Luxembourg. Campaigns and advocacy efforts could be implemented to address these specific financial barriers in Central and Eastern Europe countries. Previous cases have shown that strategic campaigns can successfully lead to ECPs price reduction (Bpas campaign in the United Kingdom, 2017: "Just say Non").

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www.ec-ec.org



www.https://astra.org.pl/

¹ Average exchange rate: 1 Euro = 1,10966 US\$ (21 Aug, 2024)

² The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Gross Average Monthly Wages by Indicator, Country and Year (2022) https://w3.unece.org/PXWeb2015/pxweb/en/STAT/STAT__20-ME__3-MELF/60_en_MECCWagesY_r.px/table/tableViewLayout1/

³ ECPs are provided free of cost directly at the pharmacy.