

# The pharmacy model's value contribution to territorial cohesion and the demographic challenge

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## Conclusions and recommendations

### **Community pharmacies play an essential role in ensuring equal access to medicines for all**

Community pharmacies are healthcare establishments that are fully integrated in the National Health System. They ensure that quality, equal and effective pharmaceutical services can be provided to all citizens across the whole Spanish territory.

### **Community pharmacies in rural areas have a wide territorial reach**

There are more than 4,400 pharmacies in small rural towns (20% of the total) that look after some 5.6 million people living in these areas (almost 10% of the Spanish population). That means a total of 90% of people living in small rural towns have access to a community pharmacy in their town.

### **Pharmacies in rural areas are facing difficulties in providing their services**

While pharmacies in rural areas offer the same services of care as those in urban areas, they face difficulties in providing these services due to socio-demographic, economic and infrastructure issues.

### **Pharmacies in small rural towns create a positive economic impact**

This economic impact adds up to almost €1,600 million per year (32.6% of which is generated by pharmacies in micro-municipalities), with a higher multiplier effect than other high value-added production sectors, such as land transport, telecommunications or IT consulting, highlighting its capacity as a driving force for other activities.



### **Pharmacies help to support people in rural areas**

Pharmacies in rural areas act as a healthcare establishment that helps curb depopulation and boost its socioeconomic development, as well as create quality employment. The econometric estimates produced by this study showed that rural towns with pharmacies saw a lower loss of people of working age and women than those without pharmacies, as well as better performance in the labour market.

### **Rural pharmacies are in danger**

83.4% of Compromised Economic Viability pharmacies are located in small rural towns and 76.0% in rural micro-municipalities. This means that one in three pharmacies located in rural micro-municipalities are compromised.

**Ultimately, in addition to being the reference health service provider, community pharmacies have proven to be an integrated contributor in rural areas which helps to drive economic development in the regions and slow down population loss.**

## **Recommendations**

- Given their outreach capacity, pharmacies must be seen as interlocutors and a useful tool in developing policies aimed at achieving social and territorial cohesion in Spain.
- In order to achieve social and territorial cohesion, it is essential that territorial and healthcare administrations reinforce their effective coordination and define common objectives. For example, in the creation of framework agreements for primary care in the autonomous communities.
- Integrate pharmaceuticals and community pharmacies in public health strategies and the new Public Health Surveillance System to help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare.
- The sustainability of professional pharmaceutical healthcare services calls for new methods to provide and pay for health and social care services, as well as studies on tax incentives. This is particularly urgent for pharmacies in rural micro-municipalities, where most Compromised Economic Viability pharmacies are located.