

# Financial relationships between the pharma & medtech industry and the Romanian medical system in 2016

ENGLISH SUMMARY - UPDATED VERSION



Romanian  
Health  
Observatory



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**Mapping transfers of value from pharma & medtech companies to  
healthcare professionals & organizations**

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Note: following notifications from sponsors and beneficiaries that their reports have been wrongly processed by the public authorities or wrongly reported, the Romanian Health Observatory has published an updated version of the report in Romanian at <https://goo.gl/AzSmYH> and this update of the English summary.

The total funding granted in Romania in 2016 by the pharma & medtech industry to physicians, hospitals, medical associations, patient organizations and other medical organizations is **47 million euros**.

The main destination of these funds were **educational events** (32.3%), followed by **material goods** (24.3%), **advertising/campaigns** (10%), **conferencing fees** (7.8%) and fees for **consultancy or advisory boards** (2.9%).

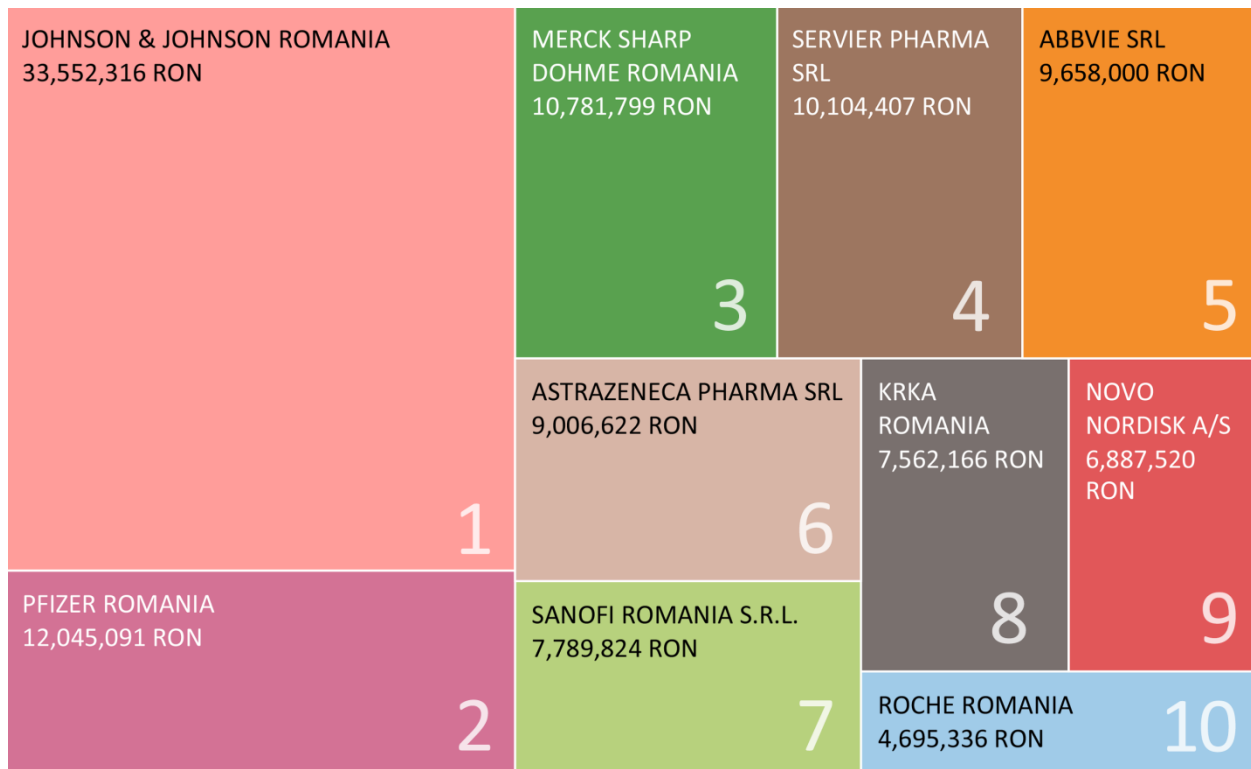
## INACCURATE REPORTS

An important conclusion of the analysis is the significant share of inaccurate or incomplete reporting: **15.5%** of the total payments reported by the industry. Following the publication in Romanian of the full version of the report, the Romanian National Agency for Medicines and Medical Devices acknowledged (*25.08.2017 press release @ <https://goo.gl/ZmAERW>*) that "some sponsors did not respect the Agency's guidelines for filling out the reports [...] which generated errors when importing the data into the data centralization system developed by the National Agency for Medicines and Medical Devices"

## TOP SPONSORS

- **Johnson & Johnson Romania** - 7.3 million euros (15.9% of total transfers of value)
- **Pfizer Romania** - 2.6 million euros (5.7% of total)
- **Merck Sharp and Dohme Romania** - 2.4 million euros (5.1% of total)
- **Servier Pharma SRL** - 2.2 million euros (4.8% of total)
- **Abbvie SRL** - 2.1 million euros (4.6% of total)

The largest five beneficiaries of industry funding in 2016 are four public hospitals, which received a total of 5.5 million euros, and a medical association.



Infographic: Top 10 industry sponsors

It is worth noting that public hospitals and medical associations are the beneficiaries of almost a third of the total payments made by the industry in 2016. For most hospitals and clinics, 90% of the funding was provided in the form of material goods: medicines, appliances, laboratory supplies etc.

Professional medical associations, on the other hand, are an important channel for funding educational events and advertising/campaigns - the two types of activities accounting for the highest share of funding received by medical associations. The top five most sponsored medical associations received over 2 million euros in 2016.

**The pharma & medtech industry is currently a very important funder of post-graduate medical education in Romania, with 14.8 million euros paid in 2016 for this type of activity.**

In terms of location of the events for which participation was funded by the industry, 51% of the funds supported participation in events taking place in Romania, while 49% supported the participation of doctors in international events. The most frequent destinations abroad are Vienna, London, and Copenhagen.

## TOP DOCTORS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The average payment received in 2016 from the pharma & medtech industry by the Romanian doctors for whom the sponsors reported was 1.060 euros. The most sponsored five specialties are cardiology, diabetes/nutrition, oncology, pulmonology, and neurology.

**A particular phenomenon is represented by sponsorships offered by the industry not to doctors, but to companies or foundations controlled by them.**

A heterogeneous category of beneficiaries is represented by patient associations and other nonprofits active in the medical field. The structure of the funding is very varied from one organization to another -- from associations whose funding is dedicated solely to the purchase of medicines and tests to be donated to patients, to associations whose funding is mostly dedicated to consultancy fees or advertising & campaigns. The Federation of Cancer Patient Associations of Romania is the main beneficiary of industry support, receiving almost 400 000 euros from pharmaceutical companies.

The European Medicines Agency recommends that transfers of value from the industry to patient associations should come from at least three different companies (if more than 20% of the funding comes from the pharmaceutical industry) and that sponsorships from one company do not reach the majority of total funding of the organization. These recommendations are generally not respected by the relevant patient associations.

Using the online visualisation tool (<https://goo.gl/51GU6S>) provided alongside the present report, Politico.eu documented **connections** between the Association S.O.S Patients' Rights, which received 180 000 euros from AbbVie, and Romanian MEP Cristian Silviu Buşoi, who appeared in a video "promoting the association's helpline – an act the Romanian audiovisual authority said wasn't allowed because it promoted Buşoi as a politician".

The correct application of the legislation ensuring the transparency of the financial links between the pharma & medtech industry and the medical world ('Sunshine Act') seeks to diminish conflicts of interest and to ensure adequate information to patients. At the same time, analyzing and publishing data collected following the 'Sunshine Act' would stimulate the industry to improve its sponsorship patterns. It is desirable to increase positive funding (e.g. drug donations, setting up independent research funds etc.) and to decrease the type of payments that stimulates the prescription of specific drugs by doctors.

## NOTES ON THE QUALITY OF REPORTED DATA

Romanian pharma & medtech companies are required since 2014 to report sponsorships and other payments made to doctors, nurses, professional organizations, patient organizations, and any other organizations active in the medical field. The obligation to report also applies to beneficiaries of the transfers of value. Aggregate sponsorship reports

are published yearly on the website of the National Agency for Medicines and Medical Devices. The usefulness of the data depends largely on the quality of the reports filed by the sponsors and beneficiaries. The structure of the report form provided by the Romanian authorities is ambiguous and generates possible overlaps and inaccuracies in reporting.

There are frequent situations in which sponsors and beneficiaries report unstandardized data without taking into account the recommendations of the National Agency for Medicines and Medical Devices. This generates a high variability in the quality and quantity of information reported by the pharma & medtech industry. Furthermore, by not publishing the aggregate reports in a downloadable, open format, the National Agency for Medicines and Medical Devices is in violation of the Romanian Government's Open Government Partnership guidelines on the transparency of public data.

For all the reasons above, the phenomenon of inaccurate and incomplete reporting is significant in Romania, representing 7.1 million euros, i.e. 15.5% of the total payments reported by the industry. As long as the responsible authorities do not validate the reports upon receipt in order to ensure that rigorous standards are met, and the guidelines for filling out the report remain vague, the usefulness of the data will be limited.

For further details you can contact the Romanian Health Observatory team at [contact@health-observatory.ro](mailto:contact@health-observatory.ro) or visit our website, [www.health-observatory.ro](http://www.health-observatory.ro).