

PRESS RELEASE:

ASOP EU - New Report “Unlock potential of online prescription medicines in Europe”

8 Feb 2024

Large-scale evidence on patients, carers and pharmacy owners asking for a greater choice that improves access to medicines and health outcomes

BRUSSELS, 7 FEBRUARY 2024 – Access to prescription medicines online is a crucial tool in enhancing healthcare, but it remains unequal across Europe, [a report has found](#). The report, released by Copenhagen Economics and commissioned by the Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacy in the EU (ASOP EU), says the chronically ill and those in remote areas would benefit the most if more Member States allowed online access through registered pharmacies.

Key findings:

- **Convenience and flexibility:** Patients value the convenience and enhanced flexibility offered by online access and home delivery of prescription medicines through registered pharmacies.
- **Better health outcomes:** Chronically ill patients cite medicine unavailability, forgetting refills, and time constraints as major contributors to non-adherence.

In light of the report findings, a set of policy recommendations is put forward:

- Improve the **availability of medicines online** by encouraging Member States to take the necessary steps towards allowing online access to prescription medicines by updating the General Pharmaceutical law under revision and reassess national restrictions.
- Strengthen the **accessibility of medicines online** by improving the awareness of existing secure supply chain safeguards whether operating offline or online.
- Facilitate **digital expansion of pharmacy operations** by removing existing regulatory restrictions.

Commenting on the report, **Michael Isles, Executive Director, Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacy in the EU** said: “This report will be instrumental in highlighting how all EU citizens should have the same rights to access their prescription medicines as in other Member States. Digital pharmacy services are rapidly developing and are a crucial tool to enhance healthcare across the EU and beyond. In addition, the sooner the public is knowledgeable about where to obtain their medicines safely online the sooner the battle against falsified medicines will be won.”

“Our analysis shows the potential for increased adherence to prescribed medication if online access is permitted and this would help to ensure better health outcomes for European patients.” added **Dr Bruno Basalisco, Director, Copenhagen Economics**. “Patients all over Europe are today more proficient digital users and value the convenience of online access. We believe these data reflect widespread unserved consumer demand for online services from registered pharmacies, which will be instrumental to help enhance the existing EU and national frameworks that regulate the sale of medicinal products at a distance.”

At these unprecedented times for EU pharmaceutical regulation, policymakers in Europe could consider the opportunities related to enhancing patient access to prescription medicines in a digitised world.

Background:

Over the past decade, online purchasing from authorised pharmacies has become an accepted practice across many EU Member States. Despite the legal framework provided by the EU pharmaceutical legislation, online access to prescription medicines remains restricted in most Member States: eight EU Member States have been operating online services safely and efficiently for many years now. The regulations in respect of dispensing medicines, apply equally to offline physical pharmacies as to online pharmacies. The medicines dispensed in all Member States have the safety features prescribed by the Falsified Medicines Directive¹, incorporated in the General Pharmaceutical Law (unique identifier and tamper evident seal). However, patients in the remaining Member States face restrictions, as national laws dictate that prescription medicines can only be dispensed at physical pharmacies.

The report focuses on France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden, providing valuable insights into patients' perspectives and offering clear policy recommendations.

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1. DIRECTIVE 2011/62/EU of 8 June 2011 amending Directive 2001/83/EC on the Community code relating to medicinal products for human use, as regards the prevention of the entry into the legal supply chain of falsified medicinal products. [↵](#)