

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000050/25
to the Commission
Gerald Hauser (Pfe)
(8 January 2025)**

Subject: Traditional medicine as a complement to conventional medicine

According to a Commission survey (2019), around 30% of Europeans regularly use traditional or alternative healing methods such as phytotherapy, homeopathy or acupuncture. This also means that 70% do not. The WHO has stated on several occasions that herbal medicines and traditional healing methods are widely used around the world and that they have fewer side effects when used in moderate doses. The EMA also recognises that herbal medicines generally pose a lower risk of side-effects, especially when used to treat chronic but not acute illnesses. However, it emphasises that correct application and dosed treatment are necessary.

Traditional medicine — always as a complement to conventional medicine — is an integral part of European culture and healthcare. Its combination of historical knowledge with modern research offers potential for sustainable and patient-centred health solutions.

1. What is the EU doing to promote traditional remedies?
2. Does the EU plan to support and foster natural, traditional medicine since it tends to have fewer side-effects?
3. What is being done to raise awareness of traditional natural remedies and increase their use in medicine?

Submitted: 8.1.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(20 March 2025)**

The EU ensures that traditional remedies are accessible, safe, and of high quality through a regulatory framework tailored to their specific nature.

Directive 2001/83/EC ⁽¹⁾, as amended by Directive 2004/24/EC, has established a simplified registration process, under the responsibility of Member States, for herbal medicinal products with a long tradition of medicinal use (at least 30 years, including 15 in the EU), which do not fulfil the ‘well established use’ requirements for marketing authorisation.

The registration is further simplified in case of herbal medicines that are included in the Community list of herbal substances, preparations and combinations thereof. All those measures facilitate the availability of these products to citizens seeking alternative or complementary treatments.

With regard to the manufacturing and quality of traditional herbal medicines, applications for registration of these products have to fulfil the same requirements as applications for a marketing authorisation.

This is important as natural is not always equal to safe and herbal remedies may interact with other treatments or may be inappropriate for individuals with certain medical conditions.

In addition, the EU under its flagship research and innovation programme Horizon Europe ⁽²⁾ funds research into traditional remedies through the EthnoHERBS Project ⁽³⁾ on medicinal properties of plants of the Balkan Peninsula.

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2001/83/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 November 2001 on the Community code relating to medicinal products for human use OJ L 311, 28.11.2001, p. 67-128.

⁽²⁾ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

⁽³⁾ See EthnoHERBS Project Fact sheet at: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/823973>