

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001957/25
to the Commission
Dimitris Tsiodras (PPE)
(15 May 2025)**

Subject: Measures to tackle the illicit trafficking of pharmaceuticals online

The illicit trafficking of pharmaceuticals online is a growing threat in the EU. According to a Europol report ⁽¹⁾, criminal networks operating in the EU exploit the vulnerability and despair of some patients by importing, exporting and producing illicit, counterfeit and unsafe products in clandestine laboratories. The trade in these products takes place primarily on the Internet, with targeted advertisements on social media or instant messaging platforms directing citizens to temporary websites that often 'imitate' well-known e-commerce marketplaces. Such trafficking threatens public health and safety, as well as the trustworthiness of pharmaceuticals, and jeopardises investment in research.

In light of the above, can the Commission say:

1. How does it intend to help prevent and tackle the trafficking of counterfeit pharmaceuticals and increase citizens' awareness of such practices?
2. How does it intend to ensure that all actors in the chain, including digital and instant messaging platforms, play their part in tackling this type of crime?

Submitted: 15.5.2025

**Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission
(22 July 2025)**

The EU pharmaceutical legislation regulates the online sale of authorised medicines to consumers within the EU. These rules also protect the legal supply chain from falsified medicines, as the online sale is only permitted via authorised online pharmacies identifiable through an obligatory logo ⁽¹⁾.

The current EU Drugs Strategy ⁽²⁾ stresses the risks of misuse and diversion of controlled substances and the importance of capacity building and awareness-raising in this respect.

The 2025 European Drug Report ⁽³⁾ also highlights the increase of synthetic drugs in the EU, the use of online platforms to sell illegally produced medicines, and the non-medical use of pharmaceutical products.

In response, the Commission will propose measures to further strengthen the EU response in a new EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan against drug trafficking, as announced in ProtectEU ⁽⁴⁾.

The Digital Services Act (DSA) ⁽⁵⁾ contains specific provisions applicable to providers of online marketplaces, e.g. traceability of traders, compliance by design and consumers' right to information ⁽⁶⁾, and additional risk assessment and mitigation measures applicable to providers of very large online platforms (VLOPs) or search engines ⁽⁷⁾.

It aims to ensure that products sold on online marketplaces are compliant with relevant product safety, transparency and other legal requirements.

To this end, the Commission engages in regular dialogue with providers of VLOPs which are online marketplaces and has opened investigations and initiated proceedings ⁽⁸⁾.

¹ '2025, Europol, The threat of pharmaceutical crime in the EU and beyond

⁽¹⁾ This logo, established with Implementing Regulation 699/2014, only applies to EU online pharmacies and can be clicked to verify the authenticity of the pharmacy on the national regulatory authority's website, where all legally operating online pharmacies and approved retailers in their respective countries are listed. The Commission prepared communication materials to raise awareness on this logo.

⁽²⁾ EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025, OJ C 1021, 24.3.2021.

⁽³⁾ European Union Drugs Agency, *European Drug Report 2025: Trends and developments*, https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/european-drug-report/2025_en.

⁽⁴⁾ COM(2025) 148 final.

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32022R2065>.

⁽⁶⁾ Articles 30 to 32 of the DSA.

⁽⁷⁾ Articles 34 and 35 of the DSA.

⁽⁸⁾ Investigative actions in relation to Shein and Amazon and initiation of formal proceedings against AliExpress and Temu: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/list-designated-vlops-and-vloses>; <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-sends-request-information-amazon-under-digital-services-act>; <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-requests-information-online-marketplaces-temu-and-shein-compliance-digital-services-act>; <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-opens-formal-proceedings-against-aliexpress-under-digital-services-act>; <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-opens-formal-proceedings-against-temu-under-digital-services-act>. In recent preliminary findings, the Commission has found AliExpress in breach of its obligation to prevent the risk of dissemination of illegal products. The Commission accepts commitments offered by AliExpress under the Digital Services Act and takes further action on illegal products: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1551.

Within the EU Internet Forum ⁽⁹⁾, the Commission developed a knowledge package on drug sales online, including synthetic opioids and medicines, to support online companies in detecting illicit sales of pharmaceuticals.

⁽⁹⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-union-Internet-forum_en.